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The DOOR in the BOOK



CHARLES BARNARD

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THE DOOR IN THE BOOK

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“ THERE WAS THE DOOR — IN HER HAND THE
KEY ”

The Door in the Book

Through which the children of
to-day pass, to walk and to talk
with the children of Bible times

By
Charles Barnard

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Illustrated by
Mary A. Lathbury

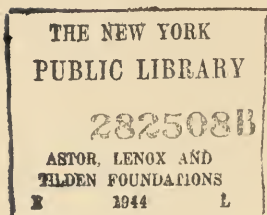


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The Door in The Book

I

THE DOOR IS OPENED

EDITH CARROLL was born in New York and at the time this story begins lived in a tall apartment house overlooking Central Park. Silence Sheldon, Edith's mother, was born in Deerfield, Massachusetts, where she had lived in her mother's house until she married Thomas Carroll of Virginia. Thus it happened Edith was related, on her mother's side, to an old Puritan family, whose early members settled in the Deerfield Valley in 1735, and who originally came from the Bay Settlements where some of the Sheldons had lived since 1640 when they had emigrated from England. On her father's side she was related to an old Virginia family whose

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successive generations had lived on the same colonial plantation for two hundred years.

These things are essential to a clear understanding of the remarkable experiences through which Edith Carroll passed when she made her first visit to her mother's old home in Deerfield, Massachusetts, in the summer when she was twelve years old. She had often heard her mother describe the old Deerfield home, but never had she dreamed that it could be so fascinating. Her father could not go with them and so it happened that Edith and her mother made the trip together, leaving New York at noon and reaching Deerfield's beautiful old street, lined with giant elms that had for a century or more sheltered its ancestral homes, just at dusk.

The Sheldon home was a great rambling house on the corner of the main street and a little lane and had been built in 1780. Edith's first entrance into the low square room, called the fore room, gave her an impression that she had

entered a house full of mystery. There were great oak beams in the corners and across the ceiling and on the walls between the narrow windows were beautiful panels carved out of great pieces of white pine and now yellow with age. Best of all, there was a huge brick fireplace in which roared with ruddy splendor great logs piled high on fantastic iron fire-dogs. And in front of the fire was a long high backed wooden seat called a settle and on the settle sat a little, white haired, old lady with pink cheeks and bright eyes. Edith's mother presented her to this charming old lady saying,

“Cousin Lizzy Williams, this is my daughter Edith.”

The old lady without rising from the settle extended one thin delicate hand to Edith, and said in a clear, silvery voice,

“You have the Williams nose and the Sheldon eyes and I am sure you are a good and wise child.”

Edith hardly knew what to say to such a curious welcome and smiled and said,

“I thank you, Cousin Lizzy. This is my first visit to Deerfield.”

“As if I didn’t know that. I have lived in Deerfield for seventy-eight years and I know every soul born in the place and most of the folks asleep in the cemetery, and all their children. My brother Theophilus was minister at the brick meeting-house for forty years and it was he who left me the Book.”

Then Edith was carried away to see the rambling, quaint old house and to be taken to her mother’s room. When they were alone up-stairs Edith asked her mother what this cousin, whom she had never seen before, meant by her reference to her brother, the minister, and the Book.

“It is a very curious story, dear. Theophilus Williams was minister in the brick meeting-house that you shall see to-morrow, for many, many years and was said to be so familiar with the Scriptures that he could name any verse or chapter at will and was believed to know the entire Bible by heart. Folks even said he

seemed to be personally acquainted with the people of the Bible, as if he had seen them and knew them as well as he knew the people of Deerfield. He had a queer old Bible bound in wooden covers and after supper Cousin Lizzy Williams shall show it to you. It's just an ordinary, very old-fashioned book, but Cousin Lizzy believes that there is some mystery about the book. What it is, nobody knows—not even dear, faithful old Lizzy Williams who lives in the memory of her sainted brother.”

After supper in the antique dining room with its curious corner cupboards and immense fireplace, its portraits of venerable worthies in wigs and strange coats, its fantastic silhouettes of long dead beauties, and its surprising secret drawers and closets beside the fireplace, Edith went to the fore room feeling that she was indeed in a mystic house in which anything might happen. She was thus, in a measure, prepared for the extraordinary events that followed in a few moments after she again met her cousin

in that low browed, old-fashioned room in this ancient house.

Cousin Lizzy Williams was already seated in her favorite corner of the big settle before the glorious wood-fire.

“Sit here beside me on the settle for I wish to tell you something.”

Edith sat on the high backed seat between her cousin and the fire with a little thrill of curious expectation.

“I am very glad your mother brought you back to the old Deerfield home for I see that you are a worthy child of all the wise and good men who have gone before. I, too, shall follow them up the old lane to the cem'try before long, for I am an old, old woman.”

Here she paused and looked dreamily into the fire as if thinking of the past and Edith thought it best not to disturb her reverie. Presently her cousin leaned forward and took from a little round table a book covered, like a library book, with white paper, now yellow with age.

“My dear,” said the old lady, “I have no property. I live on the exceeding

kindness of your mother and father and I have made no will for there is nothing to leave—save the Book. This is my only precious possession. It came to me by will from my brother, thirty-nine years ago. It was his constant companion for years and it came to him from his father, who was at one time a minister in Boston, and he received it from his grandfather who brought it from Leyden in Holland. All who have owned it were men of learning in the Word of God. All of them treasured this Book and read it. Now, that I have seen you and, as I know much of your goodness of heart, I have decided to give it to you as my last and most precious gift to any of my relatives.”

Edith was surprised beyond measure at this speech and still more at the strange gift her beautiful old relative now placed in her hands.

“Oh I thank you very much, Cousin Lizzy. I am sure I shall read it with great pleasure. What is the Book about?”

“Life, child! The life that was and that is and that will be.”

“Oh! It is a Bible.”

“Yes. It is the Bible. And”—here she paused and leaned over to Edith and spoke in a changed voice, as if deeply moved—“there is a legend about the Book. Each one of all of your forbears knew of this legend. Each one knew that there was a mystery—a precious something about this particular Book. What it is none ever knew. Perhaps, after all, they were only men—and I was only a stupid, old woman and it was not given to any of us to know. It may be that only the pure heart and fresh young eyes of a child can read the legend. I hope it is so—for your own sake, dear.”

With that the old lady leaned back in the settle and sat gazing thoughtfully into the fire, while Edith sat with this mysterious Book in her lap, lost in wonder, curiosity and expectation. She hoped that her cousin would tell her more, would repeat to her the legend of



“THE BOOK OF THE LIFE THAT WAS AND NOW
IS AND WILL BE”

the Book. For a few moments neither spoke and then her cousin rose and with feeble steps went to the mantelpiece and took down the tall candle burning in its iron candlestick that had served to light, with the aid of the fire, the quaint, old-fashioned room.

“ I must bid you good-night now for I am of country habits and retire early. Read the Book, dear, and, if in God’s Providence it is given to you to understand the legend of the Book, remember that it will be required of you to report all you see and hear that others may learn, through you, to trust in the Lord. God bless you,—dear,—good-night.”

With these words she slowly walked out of the room and taking the candle and leaving Edith sitting alone in the room now only lighted by the flickering glare of the fire. So remarkable were the words of her cousin, so earnest and sincere her manner that Edith knew not what to say. She felt she could not say anything and accepted her cousin’s blessing and benediction in silence.

What did it all mean? What was this that would be required of her? What was it that she must see and hear? What book was this surrounded by so much of mystery? After a little hesitation she slipped down from the settle and sat on the great rag rug that was spread before the hearth and opening the book tried to read it by the flickering light of the fire. Its yellow pages were thumb-marked by much earnest reading. On the narrow margin beside the deep black type she made out faint pencil marks, as if some earnest student had made marginal notes as he read. Then she turned the book over and carefully examined it inside and out. It seemed to have been kept on some shelf with other books for a very long time for the once white paper with which it had been bound was very thin and brittle. Beneath this paper cover she felt another and stronger cover and, thinking no harm would come to the book, she tried to remove the outside cover. To her surprise it split apart and fluttered to the floor in brittle, dusty

fragments and she held in her hand a book bound in brown leather at the back and having heavy wooden covers, black with age. There was no name or mark of any kind on the outside and she cautiously opened it to see if there were any marks on the back of the first cover. It was yellow with age, but perfectly clean and clear of any mark of date or ownership. Then she turned to the back of the back cover and found it also blank.

Closing the book she examined it even more carefully and close to the fire to get all the light possible. Suddenly she made a surprising discovery. There was on the outside cover the faint figure of an old-fashioned door with heavy iron hinges—just such a door as she saw as she entered this old home. With a little search she found a tiny keyhole in the door.

What did it mean? A door in a book with a hole for the key! Then there must be a key. Perhaps this was the mystery of the book—a door—and a key. Edith looked about the room in almost

frightened awe. What did it mean? What did her cousin mean by saying that perhaps she was to learn the secret of the book. She had given her the book. It was her own to do as she wished and the wish came to her to now learn all concerning this strange book. She must find the key—if key there might be.

Edith rose from the rug before the fire and sat on the settle with the book in her hand. For a long time she sat gazing at the fire wondering what she had best do—search for the key now or wait until to-morrow and ask her cousin if she knew of this door and could find the key. Her fingers holding the book suggested that she search the book, not with her eyes, but by touch. Perhaps some roughness or other indication on the cover might tell her something. She felt of the book carefully, but this search told nothing. Then she opened the covers and ran her fingers carefully over the inside of both covers—and was startled to find one spot on the inside of the back cover that seemed hard, as

if something were hidden there. She eagerly rose and going to the table soon found an old paper knife. With this knife she tried to cut the paper backing of the cover and to her surprise it split open with a dusty little snap—and there lay a tiny iron key black with age.

Edith drew forth the little key and held it in her hand in silent wonder. Then she slowly opened the book and set it upright on edge on the table. There was the door—in her hand the key.

Then came a sudden impulse to put the key in the tiny keyhole. She did so and with a little click the lock turned and the door seemed to move. Edith sat down on the settle for a moment or two gazing at this strange door. She was not in the least surprised. It seemed perfectly proper that a book should have a door. Perhaps that was the very best way to enter a book and see what it contained.

As she sat there thinking of these things the door appeared to be growing

larger and larger. It stretched down to the floor and up towards the great beam in the ceiling. Very soon it was large enough to allow any one who wished to open the door and enter the book. Then the door itself began to slowly open as if some one were about to come out, while through the crack, streamed a bright rosy light, as if the book itself were full of light. Edith thought it seemed just as if some one had turned on the electric light inside the door, just as she did every night on entering her own room at home in New York.

The door opened wider and Edith rose filled with eager curiosity to see what would happen next. The door opened still more and there, in the brightly lighted doorway, stood a beautiful young girl with dark thoughtful eyes that seemed very kind and friendly. Edith was not startled or frightened. She was not even surprised. There were people in the Bible. She had often read of them, men and women and children—and angels. Perhaps this was some angelic

visitor from the Land of the Book. It seemed all right that this girl should appear and her coming filled her with a sense of unutterable peace and quiet pleasure. She felt sure she was a friend and wished to speak to her. Then the girl looked her full in the face and smiled and said in a commanding yet gentle voice,

“Follow me.”

II

“IN THE BEGINNING ”

WHEN the door in the Book began to grow large Edith was, for just an instant, perplexed and surprised. She glanced round the room to make sure that this singular behavior of the door was not a dream. There was the fire crackling in a friendly and perfectly natural way. She could see that its light made dancing shadows beside the great oak beam in the ceiling. There was the good old Deerfield rug on the floor. She could hear her mother's footsteps in the room overhead. This was her mother's home—and yet there stood the door in the Bible now large enough for even a man to enter.

When the door opened and the strange girl appeared, it still seemed home. Did not the firelight shine on the girl's beauti-

ful face? Edith felt it was all right, must be all right. She found herself eager to examine the girl's long flowing and shining garments and even noticed that her shimmering robe was bound about her with a curious twisted girdle of some gray material and that in the knot in front a beautiful jewel sparkled in the firelight.

After an instant's pause the girl spoke again.

“Be not afraid. Follow me.”

Without fear or hesitation, without thought or wish, except to obey, Edith moved nearer to the door. The girl offered her hand and Edith took it gladly, for it seemed both invitation and guidance into some new and beautiful country, the like of which it had never entered her mind to imagine. It must be good to go where so sweet a friend would lead the way.

So it was that Edith took the girl's hand and together they entered the door in the Book. The door closed softly behind them and then the light suddenly

went out and it became quite dark. For a moment she was alarmed and said,

“Oh! Why is it so dark?”

“Be not afraid. We shall come to the light presently. Keep fast hold of my hand and I will be your guide.”

Edith was reassured and walked on a few steps more and then the darkness seemed uncertain, now black, now gray, and again gloomy as upon a stormy day. Things about them, whatever they were, seemed vast, vague and without form, and she said,

“Why are things so strange? What place is this?”

“This is the first chapter of the Book of Genesis.”

“Why is it so wild and stormy here? Why was it so black when the door closed? I thought it would be light here.”

“You entered the Book by the door and came to the first verse in the first chapter—‘in the beginning.’ Then we walked on and now we have come to the second verse. Even now the earth is without form and void. Wait a moment.

Say nothing, but wait—in silence—for the Spirit of God moveth upon the face of the waters.”

The darkness, the sudden sense of vast, unknown spaces all about her, and above all the girl's strange words, seemed to fill her with wonder and reverent awe, and she stood in this unknown place beside this unknown girl with bent head, but without fear or doubt. Then the girl said,

“Come. Let us go.”

For a moment or two Edith walked on through the gloom guided only by the friendly touch of the girl's hand. Suddenly it became strangely light, yet there seemed to be neither sun nor moon. Far away on every side spread the great and wide sea.

“Oh!” said Edith. “How beautiful. It cannot be we are on the sea—on some——”

“We have come to the third verse.”

“The third verse? I do not know what you mean. What place is this?”

The girl smiled and said,

“This is the first chapter of Genesis and we have passed through the first and second verses since you entered the door.”

“Oh! You mean we are in the Bible?”

“Of a verity—at the third verse of Genesis.”

“Oh! Yes. Now I remember—‘And God said, Let there be light.’”

“He hath just spoken it—and this is the light of the first day.”

“And I am in the Bible—and I am myself—and see the light of the first day? I cannot believe it. Tell me. Did you come here—to-day?”

“Oh! No. No. I live here all the time. My name is Cornelia. I am Concordance, the Keeper of Texts. People who wish to find a text often consult me as to where the text may be. I heard you unlock the door and I came quickly, because I thought you might wish to find a text.”

“No. Thank you, I do not care for any particular text. I unlocked the door because I wished to see what was inside the Book. And then you were so

kind as to welcome me that I felt I would like very much—well—just to see what the Bible contained.”

“Oh! You are surely welcome. It is not given to many to enter by the door, and I shall be very glad to lead you to any part of the Book you may wish to see. First, tell me your name.”

“My name is Edith.”

“Edith. I do not recall that name anywhere in the Book. It is a name of a pleasant sound. You are very welcome here, Edith.”

“And you live here—in the Book?”

“Yes. When any one wishes a text in Exodus, or perhaps in Revelation, or in Samuel or Ruth, I find it for them, for there be many readers of the Book who are infirm of memory.”

“Ruth and Samuel! Do they live here?”

Cornelia smiled and nodded.

“And do you know them?”

“Of a verity. I know them well.”

“And are they real—I mean can I see them and speak to them?”

“Of a certainty you can.”

“But it is all so strange. They lived long ago—and I live now. I don’t quite understand it all.”

“It is a mystery. Let me make it plain. By entering the Book by the door you came, though a modern child, to very ancient times, even to the beginning. You are here on this first of created days, when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters and see all things as they are, and yet, to all the people of the Book you are not yet born.”

To Edith the girl’s speech seemed full of strange contradictions and she could not help a certain perplexity and doubt.

“But I am here and I see you and hear you and I see the water and these clouds all about us.”

“Yes. Because your eyes have been unsealed that you may see all things in the Book.”

“And if I should meet Ruth, will she see and know me as I am?”

“Yes. When her eyes are unsealed.”

Here it began to grow slowly dark and Edith asked what it meant.

“It is the evening of the first day. We have walked on through the Book and we have come to the fifth verse.”

Still a little perplexed, and also alarmed, at the growing darkness, Edith stopped and stood irresolute, not knowing what to do. The girl seemed to read her thoughts and said,

“Be not afraid, Edith. No harm can befall you.”

The girl seemed so calm, so wise and so friendly and, with it all, so like a real, living girl, but a little older than herself, that Edith felt sure she could believe and trust her. They walked on together through the darkness and then, after a little thought, she said,

“It is all so new to me I haven’t thought, yet, where I would like to go. Wait. I think I would like to see that day when the first sun appeared and the first moon.”

“That is very near. It is only from

the fifth to the fourteenth verse. We can soon be there."

They both walked on through the darkness of the first night and soon, to Edith's surprise, the darkness began to slowly melt away. Before them the sky seemed to put on a pearly gray. As they walked it seemed as if they were crossing a grassy field, and she thought she saw the dim forms of trees on either hand. The air grew soft and fragrant with many flowers. Slowly the silvery light seemed to blush with glad surprise. High overhead lovely shades of blue appeared. It grew lighter at every step, and then they paused upon a sloping hillside, for the sunrise was at hand.

For the next half hour Edith stood lost in wonder and admiration at the splendid rising of the sun over the sea. The sloping grassy field on which they stood reached down to the beach, where she could see the white foam of the surf. It seemed to Edith that never in all her life had she seen or even imagined a more splendid and glorious sunrise. And she



“ AND THE MORNING AND THE EVENING WERE
THE FIRST DAY ”

and Cornelia, alone of all living things, saw the rising of the sun on this, the fourth created day. The breeze stirred the leaves of the trees in gentle whisperings, and now and then they caught the roar of the surf, but all else was silent.

“Why is it so very still? I do not hear a single bird.”

“You forget. That is not until we come to the twentieth verse. We can go on to that verse if you wish.”

“No. Not now. The world is so fresh, so new and beautiful I want to see more—as it appears this fourth day.”

Then for hours they both walked on admiring the thousand varied beauties of the land and sea. It did not seem to Edith that she felt hunger or thirst or weariness. Life seemed so sweet and fresh she could not tire of seeing more and more of the book. After a while, the evening came and the sun went down, behind great silent mountains, in heavenly splendor and Edith looked up and saw the silver bow of a new moon.

Then came out the familiar stars and she cried,

“Oh! There is Orion and the Pleiades. I never knew they could be so beautiful.”

“Ah. Now I know the text you want to find. ‘Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?’ It is the thirty-eighth of Job. Do you want to see that text?”

Edith shook her head and smiled and was silent, for she began to realize how wonderful were her opportunities in thus entering the Book by its door. She could go slowly on and see all the wonder of the first created days. If the girl was right, she could also go to other parts of the Book. What had she best do, where go first? She began to run over in her mind the people and places of the Book and she was mortified to find how very little she really knew about them.

Cornelia seemed to understand and said,
“Perhaps you would like to see other places or visit certain people?”

“And can I see any one I wish?”

“Of a truth. I will gladly lead you to Elijah or Paul or Solomon or to David.”

“Can I see David—I mean the boy David? Could I see Samuel in the Temple?”

“The boy Samuel is in the first Book of Samuel, the third chapter. It is not far. We can soon be in Shiloh.”

“And can I talk with him and shall I understand him?”

“It is given to those who enter by the door to understand. Now, would you not like to see Ruth? She is a very pleasant person and of a loving heart. And there is Esther. She is of a comely presence. Shall we not make her a visit?”

These words filled Edith with wondering delight. Never had she imagined so remarkable an experience. To meet and see these people of the Book, to visit their homes, to hear all they might have to tell her of themselves, their thoughts and their lives, would be a pleasure far be-

yond anything she had ever dreamed. If this was the meaning of entering the Book by the door she was more glad that she had come than any words could tell. Now it was she understood the full measure of the great gift she had received from her cousin when she had given her the Book with a door. Then she turned a face upon her companion that beamed with new pleasure.

“Let me first see the people of the Book.”

“You have chosen wisely. Shall we visit King Solomon or Moses, the law-giver?”

“I would prefer to see the younger people. Could I not see the children of the Book?”

“You can see any one you wish. Whom shall we visit first?”

“I hardly know whom to see first. I want to meet them all. Oh! I remember! There is the girl—I do not recall her name. I mean the young sister of Moses who met the daughter of Pharaoh.”

Cornelia smiled sadly and said, half in reproof,

“You are like many that seek my advice. You do not know any of the text concerning the infant Moses.”

“I am sorry to say I do not. When I return home I shall study the Book more carefully.”

“Why not study it now? You can meet the children of the Book face to face. Why not learn of them?”

To Edith the girl’s words seemed to promise still another and unexpected pleasure. To learn from David and Samuel would certainly be most interesting and she said,

“I wish you would take me to that girl in Egypt, to-morrow. It is night now and we might not be able to find her in the dark.”

“That need not hinder us from finding her. All the verses in the Book are like pictures. One picture may be of day, another may show the twilight or the midnight hour. It is night in this nineteenth verse. In some other verse it

may be broad daylight. You will understand this better as we go from text to text throughout the Book."

"Is the place where the girl lives far? Is it in this part—I mean is it in this part of the world?"

"No. It is in another time and place. It is not in Genesis at all, but in the second of Exodus. We might go on through the whole of Genesis, through each chapter in turn, but that would only weary you. Take my hand and I will guide you safely by another path whereby we may reach our desired haven quickly. Above all do not be frightened at the changing scene."

Edith took her friend's hand and together they walked on under the stars of that fourth night. The moon already a golden copper color, was sinking in the west and Edith saw that it would soon disappear behind the lofty purple mountain-tops lifted in solemn silence in the star-decked sky. Then, to her surprise, the golden crescent began to slowly fade and melt away. The stars grew dim and

one by one went out like dying lamps bereft of oil. Even the mountains grew dim and faint and had it not been for her friend's warning she might have cried out in terror that the very world was dissolving into nothingness before her. She felt the warm pressure of her friend's hand on her own and was reassured and held her peace though lost in wonder and surprise.

Then she began to notice that the very ground on which they walked seemed to change its character. It seemed as if they had left the grassy fields and had entered upon some sandy place like a beach by the seashore.

Presently the sky seemed to grow brighter and the air became warm and dry as of some desert place. Very soon it was broad daylight with a bright sun high in the cloudless dark blue sky. The sea and the mountains had utterly disappeared and Edith saw that they were walking along the sandy bank of a wide and muddy river. On one hand lay the great, swiftly flowing stream and

on the other stretched away a wide, undulating sandy plain.

“What place is this?”

“This is the Egypt of that King who knew not Joseph. The place in the Book is the first of Exodus.”

“Oh!” cried Edith in alarm. “Who are these dreadful people? How savage and cruel they are. Will they not see us and do us some harm with their terrible whips?”

“Nay. Fear not. To all we shall meet in the Book you are as one not yet born. They cannot see you until I unseal their eyes.”

Edith stood gazing on the extraordinary scene before her in surprise and in fear, for, in spite of her friend's words, she was terrified at the aspect of the men she saw not far away on the sandy plain. There she saw a rude heavy wooden wagon and on the wagon was a figure of an immense lion carved in rosy granite. Horses there were none and in place of horses there were hundreds of wild, savage looking men harnessed to long ropes and with

dreadful toil dragging the great wagon and its fearful load through the heavy sand. On the wagon and beside the men were others in white garments armed with long whips and beating the men as if they were beasts of burden.

“Take me away. Lead me back to the door. I cannot bear to see such terrible things. Oh! Those men are so cruel, so cruel.”

“I wanted you to see this thing because then you can understand what will follow. These cruel task-masters are the Egyptians. These men in bondage to them are the children of Israel.”

“But cannot some one help them? Cannot some man stop this cruelty?”

“There is already born in this land one who will lead these people out of Egypt. Let us go on for, haply, we may find his sister and learn more concerning him.”

They walked on along the shore of the river and the horrible scene slowly faded away. Soon Edith saw before them beautiful palms and not far away a marble

building surrounded by gardens. Beyond she saw strange monuments and statues of curious creatures with the heads of birds and the bodies of men. In the distance there arose pointed mountains of stone and she knew they must be pyramids. Off on the great river she saw beautiful boats with colored sails and, as one boat, with its many oars, passed quite near the shore, she heard curious sounds of music as of harps and cymbals. On the deck under colored canopies were many young girls and women in beautiful robes. The whole scene seemed to be full of light and joy and music as if cruel task-masters had never invaded this peaceful land.

“These are the Egyptians of this time,” said Cornelia in explanation of the scene. “You saw the children of Israel and hither comes one who can tell you much concerning her people and her brother who is one day to deliver them out of Egypt.”

Edith looked along the river bank and

saw a small child about seven years old walking towards them. She wore a single white cotton garment and her feet and arms were bare. Above her black hair, that fell loosely upon her shoulders, she wore a narrow white scarf or hood to protect her from the sun. She was gazing far off on the river and looking wistfully at the pleasure crafts that were sailing so gaily over the wide river.

“She does not seem to see us.”

“No. Not yet. I will unseal her eyes presently and then she can talk with you. I must leave you with her for a little while, for some one has been asking for a text and I must go to their assistance. Do not be alarmed if I am detained, for there be many teachers of the Word who are of a controversial mind—and they often make me journey from Exodus to Revelation looking for texts that they should know by heart.”

With that Cornelia went up to the small child and gravely kissed her upon her eyes and straightway the girl smiled and looked towards Edith and then came

forward as if curious to meet so great a stranger in her land.

Cornelia also came forward and stood by her side.

“This is Edith. She is of a far country and has asked to meet thee. I must leave you both now for a little space.” Then she said to Edith, “This maid is of the people of Israel. Abide with her until I return.”

With these words Cornelia walked away and was soon lost to view beyond some palm trees and Edith and the strange girl stood together on the banks of the Nile in ancient Egypt, surprised, yet mutually pleased at this most unexpected meeting.

III

THE STORY TOLD UNDER THE PALMS

FOR a moment or two neither Edith nor the young girl spoke, for the child seemed timid and a little suspicious, and Edith did not know exactly how to approach so singular a girl in such a strange place. Edith made the first advance by offering her hand in a friendly way. The girl seemed to be reassured and said in a soft sweet voice,

“Peace be with thee.”

Edith did not know exactly what to say to such a salutation and the girl added with just a touch of alarm,

“Art thou of the Egyptians?”

Edith smiled and shook her head.

“Thy raiment is not of any tribe I ever saw. If thou art not of Egypt then art thou one of God’s children?”

“Oh! I hope so. I suppose we must all be His children.”

“ Ah! I do not suppose—I know I am the Lord’s handmaiden.”

“ You see, I am a stranger. I only just now came here by the door of the Book.”

The girl seemed to be greatly pleased at this and at once became friendly and talkative.

“ Oh! I am most glad of that for thou art favored above all maids to have come to the Book by that way. I am truly rejoiced to meet thee for thou must be a maid beloved of the Lord. Come, let us sit awhile in the shade of these palms for I have much to tell thee concerning the great mercies the Lord hath bestowed upon my father and my mother and my little brother. And oh! I would tell thee of my fears for my brother, for he must soon leave us. I would tell thee all for haply thee may help me in my great sorrow.”

“ I am sure I hope I can.”

“ I am sure thou canst, for I judge thou hast a good heart and may be wise above all maids I have ever seen. Let us rest under these palms.”

With these words the girl led Edith to a group of tall palms whose great fluttering leaves made a spot of shifting shade on the sand. Here they both sat down and, for a moment or two, sat gazing at the beautiful scene before them. Opposite, by the river bank, were many flags and rushes growing in the shallow water. To Edith they seemed just like the tall "cat tails" she had seen in the meadows at Van Cortland Park. There was a soft warm breeze blowing over the great river and a gentle surf broke upon the beach just as she had seen it on summer days along the seashore at home. There was not a cloud in the deep blue sky and the sunlight lay warm on the shining sands all about them. After a little the girl said,

"At first, I was afraid lest thou art of the Egyptians, but now I perceive that thou art a stranger here. If I tell thee somewhat concerning my father and mother and my little brother thou wilt not betray me to the Egyptians?"

"Oh, no. Certainly I will not. I

wish to be your friend and hear more about your brother. Where is he now?"

"He is at home with my mother, for, since the day when Pharaoh's daughter found him he has been safe from the cruelty of the Egyptians. We live not far way, for father works in the brick-yard for the Egyptians. It is not a goodly place to live, but father must live near the yard for the Egyptians be hard task-masters. Thou canst know but little of the misery of my people. Pharaoh hath set over the Lord's people task-masters to afflict us with heavy burdens. Sometimes I murmur in my heart that Joseph was ruler over Egypt and that he brought the sons of Israel here, for it has ended in more misery than my people can bear. And then I repent of my repining. We are the Lord's people. Some day, in His good time, He will send us a great captain who shall lead ——"

"Oh! I am sure He will—I know He will. There is coming a great leader who will lead your people ——"

“Now I am sure thou art the daughter of some prophet in thine own country. How canst thou know of these things? Who is this leader? Hast thou seen his star in the East? All great men have been born beneath a star. Even the priests of the Egyptians will tell thee that.”

Edith was perplexed and troubled by these eager questions. How could she speak of things that could not be known to the girl? How could she ever explain to this girl, living so long ago, the many things that have happened since her time. She must not tell her anything, and yet, she might, at least, give her some little light and hope, for it was plain she was very sorrowful by reason of the oppression of her people.

“Dear heart. I am not the daughter of any prophet. I am but a girl like yourself and I would hear more about thy mother and thy brother.”

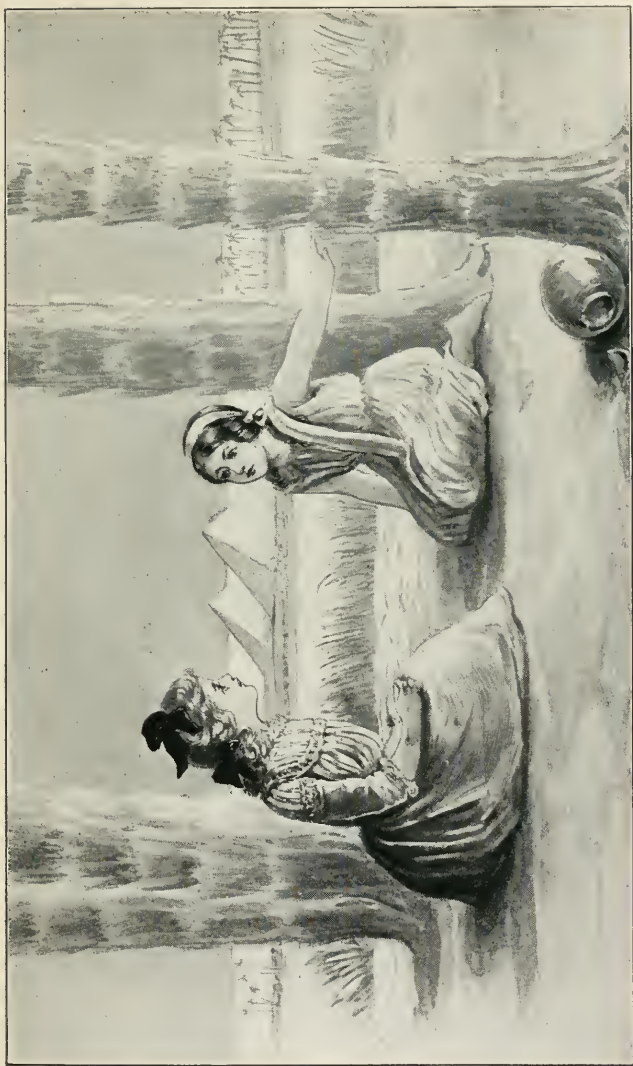
Unconsciously Edith had dropped into the language of the girl herself and it seemed to please the child and she continued her story.

“Not long ago Pharaoh commanded every one of his people saying, ‘Every son that is born of the children of Israel ye shall cast into the river.’ Think of it! So cruel, so wicked to destroy all the men children. Father was of the house of Levi and I was the eldest and then my little brother was born. I wanted to run and tell all our kinsfolk and my girl friends saying, ‘Rejoice with me for unto us a son is born.’ But I had to go about mute and only a few guessed the truth that shone in my eyes. We dare not trust any man, lest he tell some Egyptian and the Egyptian take the child away from us and we see it no more.”

The child seemed to be greatly depressed and paused as if unable to go on. After a pause Edith said,

“Tell me more, dear. What happened next?”

“We hid the boy—for three dreadful months. We let no man enter the house. Mother went out alone and I did mind the child in a little closet where there was no window. And father made as if



“IT WAS THERE IN THOSE FLAGS — WE SET THE
LITTLE BOAT AFLOAT”

he had no son—which was a hard matter for any man. And then it came that it was no longer possible to hide the child and mother and I made a little ark for him, with a cover over the top. It was woven of rushes and we closed the cracks with slime and pitch, as it were a boat, and mother laid the boy in it and early in the morning, before any stirred, we set it afloat on the water right there where thou seest the flags by the river bank.

“And mother went away, weeping bitterly, and hid herself in the house. I could not go for I was anxious for the child, but as many began to pass along the bank I feared they might see the ark and destroy it, if I watched by it, so I withdrew to these palms and hid myself behind that acacia bush where I could see the place where the ark lay and they that passed would not be mindful of my presence.

“I waited about three hours and then I heard music and singing and I knew that some Egyptian woman came with her maids to bathe in the river. I kept very

still behind the acacia bush lest they see me and as I looked I saw it was some Princess of the House of Pharaoh and I was sore afraid lest she see the ark. Then she came nearer and I saw by her dress it was the very daughter of Pharaoh come with her maids to wash. And as they passed the place where the little ark lay she must have seen it for I saw one of the maids lift up the hem of her robe as if she would wade in the shallow water. I knew the maid was seeking the ark so I prayed to the Lord for help and I walked forth and went boldly along the shore as if I were minded to go to some place down the river. Then as I approached them I saw the maid drag the little boat ashore and when she had fetched it to Pharaoh's daughter I saw the maid open the ark and show it to her mistress. Then I stopped as if I were curious to see this strange thing. They paid no heed to me for I am only a daughter of Israel.

“Then I heard her say, ‘This is one of the Hebrew's children,’ and the Lord put it into my heart to say, as it were by

chance, 'Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women?'

"And she said, 'Go.'"

"Oh!" cried Edith, "how brave and wise you were. It was a grand thing to do. Of course you called your mother."

"I walked away as if it were no great matter to me until I got behind yonder sand hill and then I ran and the moment I reached the house all breathless and full of tears of joy, I cried,

"'Come! Come quickly. The daughter of Pharaoh hath found him. She bid me find a nurse for him—and thou must be the nurse.' And mother rejoiced greatly and said it was the Lord who had dealt marvellously with us.

"And we came quickly to where the Princess stood and behold she had the boy upon her breast and the maid had thrown the ark upon the waters. And we both made as he were a strange child to us. And the Princess said,

"'Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages.'

"And mother took the child and the

Princess went her way and we brought the child home openly, for it was under the protection of the Princess. And not one of all our kinsfolk and neighbors know that it was my brother, save Simeon Levi, father's brother, a discreet man among our people."

To Edith, this story, told with such truth and earnestness, made a profound impression. It was so real, so true that she could only hold the girl's rough, brown hand in her own in silent sympathy. She sat thus looking out on the scene of this wonderful tale trying to think what she could say to cheer and comfort the girl.

"Where is your brother now?"

"At home. All I have told thee happened ten months ago. Soon my brother will be old enough to go to Pharaoh's palace. He is to be the very son of Pharaoh's daughter. He is to be educated as an Egyptian. He will grow up to forget our people."

"Oh, no, no. I am sure he will never do that. Be comforted, dear. It must

be God's will. Did He not save the boy's life, did He not bring Him back to your mother's arms? Who knows what great things may be in store for your brother. He may become learned in the Egyptian schools and yet, oh! I am sure he will never forget you or his people."

"Listen. Something of this has been in my heart, and now I am glad thou hast spoken of it so hopefully. I have dreamed that, just as Joseph was raised out of the pit to be a great ruler over Egypt, so my little brother may be raised out of the river to do great things for the Lord's people. I do not know how or when it will be. I only hope and wait."

"I know it will be so. I cannot tell you, dear, why I know, but it will be so. I am sure—oh! so sure it will be so."

"Now I know thou art of prophetic mind. Thy words have been of great comfort to me. I see thy friend is returning, and I doubt not thou art minded to go with her."

To Edith's surprise she saw Cornelia approaching along the river bank and she

and the girl both rose from their shady seat under the palms and went forth to meet her.

As Cornelia came nearer the girl ran forward eagerly and said,

“ I am glad thee brought Edith to me. Her words were as honey in my mouth. She has comforted me greatly.”

Cornelia seemed to be very much pleased and said she was sorry that she must take Edith away, and saying, “ She is my guest and we have many to see in other places.”

“ She can go her way in peace. I am rejoiced that I met her and shall treasure all her words.” Then to Edith she said, “ Thy mother must be glad in thee, for thou art comely of feature and of a loving heart. The peace of the Lord of Israel abide with thee always, Edith.”

To Edith this speech spoken by the child with such sincerity and seriousness seemed very sweet, and she impulsively stooped and kissed her.

“ Good-bye, dear. I am sure you will not be afraid for your brother. He will

not forget you or your mother, and some day you may be very glad you stayed by the little boat as it floated upon the water."

Then Edith and her companion turned slowly away and walked along the river bank in the vivid sunlight. Presently Edith chanced to look back and saw that the child had sunk down upon her knees in the sand and lifted her bare thin hands and arms to the deep blue sky as if in thanks for an angel's visit.

IV

THE ARCHER

EDITH and her companion walked on along the river bank for a few moments in silence. This meeting with the sister of the young Moses was so real, that it made a deep impression upon Edith. If it were true that she was in old Egypt in days that were gone centuries ago, why may she not see more, visit others in these strange lands and in these long forgotten days?

Cornelia seemed to anticipate her wish, for she said,

“I am called back, just now, to the Book of Genesis by some seeker after texts. I shall pass near that place in Beersheba where the boy Ishmael lives, and if you would like to meet him I can lead you to the well in the Wilderness where I doubt not we shall find the boy.”

“Oh, I am sure I would like very much

to meet him. Is it far from here? Is it a long journey? I do not wish to put you to any trouble."

"Oh, no, no. It is only a pleasure. We can easily go about from place to place in the Book and can soon be in Beersheba."

Then, even as she spoke, the great river and sandy plain seemed to slowly melt away, and presently Edith saw that they were entering upon a strange, sandy wilderness in quite another country.

"Where are we now in the Book?"

"We have returned to Genesis, to the twenty-first chapter."

"It seems a very lonely and desolate place."

"It is the wilderness of Beersheba. I see a group of young palms to the south. Let us go that way, for where the palms grow there must be water, and where the water is there we may find flocks, and shepherds or the tents and homes of people."

They walked on some little distance and, as they came nearer to the little

group of young palms standing alone on the sandy plain, Cornelia stopped and shading her eyes with her hand studied the group of trees carefully.

“He is there! I see a boy under a tree fashioning an arrow. Wait here while I go forward and speak to him and unseal his eyes that he may see you.”

Edith stopped and stood alone in the tropic sunshine, watching her friend with a curious thrill of surprise and pleasure.

Ishmael! She had read of him and, yet, was mortified to find how very little she really knew about him. She remembered having seen a picture in the old Bible at her father's home in Virginia, of the departure of Hagar and Ishmael, but the place was not like this. Now she was to see the boy, face to face, perhaps to talk with him. What could she say to him? How should she conduct herself in such a strange meeting? She had kept her eyes fixed upon her friend and now saw that she had reached the palm trees and then, to her great surprise, she saw a young boy, clad in some brown

flowing garment, come out from behind the palms. The boy seemed to recognize Cornelia, for he spoke to her as if he knew her well. For a moment they stood talking together and then Cornelia laid her hand upon the boy's eyes and he turned towards Edith and stood for a few seconds regarding her earnestly. Then she saw him nod his head to Cornelia, as if consenting to something she had said, and then they both walked out from under the shade of the palms into the full sunshine, towards the place where Edith stood gazing at them in wondering expectation.

As they drew near Cornelia said to the boy,

“This is Edith, Ishmael.”

The boy came nearer to Edith and, bowing low, said in a full, strong and yet boyish treble voice,

“The Lord be with thee.”

Edith hardly knew how to reply to this salutation, and the boy added quickly,

“Let us seek the shade of the palms where the well of water is.”

The boy turned back towards the palms and Edith and Cornelia walked on either side. Presently they came to the scanty shadows of the young palms and to Edith's surprise there was a little pool among the trees filled with clear water and about the pools grew a tiny fringe of bright green grass in strange contrast with the yellow sand of the desert all about them. Under one of the trees she saw a bow and several arrows and these the boy picked up and placed one side saying,

“Sit thou and thy friend on the grass by the well.”

Cornelia, with a look, intimated to Edith that they should accept the boy's simple hospitality and they sat down side by side, under the trees and the boy threw himself down on the grass and gazed upon Edith in undisguised curiosity.

“Where does thy father pitch his tents? Has he a good well for his flocks?”

Before Edith could reply to these

rather perplexing questions Cornelia said,

“Ishmael, Edith is from a far country and would hear of all that befell you and your mother in the wilderness.”

The boy seemed to think a moment as if recalling some boyish experience and then said,

“Dost thou mean the hour when the angel of the Lord spake to my mother concerning the well?”

“Tell us everything as it befell thee.”

Edith, surprised beyond measure at the boy's question, spoke up eagerly and looking earnestly at the boy,

“An angel spoke to your mother?”

“Yea. An angel of the Lord. I heard his voice though I was sore distressed of hunger and thirst.”

“Where—where did this happen?”

“Here! Where thou sittest.”

“By this pool of water, under these trees?”

“Nay. There was no pool here on the morning of that day, nor any palms. It was not until the angel spoke that my

mother saw the well and did give me to drink for I was nigh unto perishing of thirst."

To Edith the boy's words, spoken with such truth and simplicity, came as a wonderful revelation. She looked at his black, serious, yet boyish eyes, his abundant hair falling on his bare shoulders, his bare brown feet, his strange flowing robe, his bare arms and strong hands in mingled astonishment and conviction. She was convinced, this was Ishmael sitting on the grass before her and speaking to her in words she could understand. A boy about six years of age, yet talking of angels and of their speech.

"Tell her the whole story, Ishmael."

"That I will gladly. Twice the Lord spoke to my mother, Hagar, through His angels. The first time was before I was born, but I have often heard my mother tell of it to our kinsfolk. The second time I was with her and I heard the angel—therefore, these things be true as I have said.

“My mother was of Egypt and she was a bondwoman and we dwelt in the tents of Abraham among his people and kinsfolk. I troubled not myself with anything for I was only a boy among the children in the tents and among the flocks and cattle until the day when my mother called me to her side and said we would depart upon a journey. And I, being only a lad, set out upon the journey with much pleasure, for I thought we were to see new tents and new people and other flocks and herds. And my mother took naught with her save some bread and a bottle of water which she carried upon her shoulder.

“And we did travel until the noon hour, straight across the desert and then we did stop and I ate the bread and drank the water and I did ask my mother to what people we would go and she being exceedingly sorrowful answered me nothing and said that we should wait upon the Lord.

“Then did we journey on and rested in the desert that night. And the next day

we wandered on all the day and I was aweary and mother would fain have carried me, but I was no longer a little child. And, behold, the sun did burn my head and I did cry to my mother for water—and the water bottle was empty and there was no water to be found anywhere nor any tree for shade. And I did thirst sorely and my mother took me in her arms to comfort me, but she could not, for I was nigh to perish. Then she laid me down by a bush for the sun was sinking and the night was at hand. And my mother withdrew herself for, I know, she feared to see me die, and sat down over against me—— Let me show thee how far it was.”

With this the boy sprang up and picking up his bow and arrow stood before them, saying,

“She sat over there, as it were a bow-shot away. Where I put this arrow is the place.”

To Edith’s surprise and admiration the boy held the bow in one hand and placed the arrow in position with the other and



**“ I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE ANGEL SPEAKING
TO MY MOTHER ”**

then drew back the bow-string with all his young strength. The arrow flew out into the bright sunlight and struck the sand at some distance and stood there almost upright.

“You can use the bow well,” said Edith.

“I can and I take pride in it for my mother says when I become a man I am to be an archer.”

Boylike he seemed to take pleasure in his skill and said that when he had made a new bow he could shoot still better.

“And when did your mother discover the well of water?” said Cornelia.

“I know not for I was ill unto death and waited to die. I could hear my mother weeping even where I lay and I called unto the Lord in my distress. The Lord heard me for soon I heard the angel calling to her, ‘What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not.’ And then I heard no more for I must have fainted and I knew naught that happened after I heard the angel of the Lord speak, until my mother did lift me in her arms and did

give me to drink. And when I sat up in her lap behold this well was here in the wilderness."

"This well—this very pool of water?"

"Yea. The same. It was not here when I was ready to perish and, when the angel spoke, my mother saw it and ran to it and filled the water bottle and did give me to drink. Later, some of Abraham's bondmen did set out young palms about the well and already they are growing rapidly as thou seest."

Then for a few moments neither spoke. The boy had picked up one of his arrows and was carefully sighting it to see if it were straight, precisely as Edith had seen other boys do with their tools or playthings. The child was, indeed, a boy with boyish instincts and yet he had heard an angel speak. He had spoken of his experience in the desert as an actual event in which he was deeply concerned. He was sure the angel had come in answer to his prayer when he said, "I called upon the Lord in my distress." With childlike confidence and faith he had ap-

pealed to the Lord as a real friend and helper and the angel had come and perhaps touched the dry sand and the pool of water appeared. Even now she could see the little grains of sand under the crystal water dancing in the slender stream that bubbled up out of the desert. And the pool had remained for she could see the fresh new grass and the young palms. It was all true—true and real and she herself saw the desert, the well of water and the trees.

The wonderful story she had just heard made a singular impression upon Edith. It was not surprise, for, now that she had in a manner become accustomed to this strange experience within the Book, she did not regard it as anything very astonishing. It seemed simply real, in a vivid, lifelike and intensely human and natural way. She was sitting beside the boy Ishmael. She would accept this wonderful fact with gratitude and complete confidence. There sat her friend and companion gazing at her with a quiet smile as if to say without words, "Accept it all

—and be glad.” There sat the boy—a living, breathing boy—and yet the Ishmael of the Book. For herself she simply knew that she was alive—and yet in the desert of Beersheba. Edith rose and stood up, and supported herself with one hand against the stem of one of the slender palms. Then she looked far around over the hot, sunny, yellow desert. There seemed to be a trembling “loom” on the far horizon, just as she had once seen the hot sands loom on the sand-dunes of Nantucket. Then she brushed away a tear from her eyes and knew that it was only her tears that had come at the wonder of this experience that had made the misty horizon seem to quiver in the sunshine. And oh! to go on, to see more, to learn more, to know and see how these children of the Book felt about their own experiences in these ancient days! Already she was eager to meet others, for she feared she might not have time to make another visit like these she had made upon the girl in Egypt and the boy in Beersheba.

Cornelia here spoke to Ishmael,

“You are most hospitable, Ishmael, and Edith has greatly enjoyed hearing the story of God’s mercies to you and your mother.”

“It was to me also a pleasure,” said the boy, “for I perceive that thy friend is of a good heart. I doubt not God’s angels have already spoken to her—even if only in dreams.”

To Edith the boy’s speech seemed so truthful and so full of quiet confidence that she had not one word to say. It was a new aspect of life and many new thoughts filled her mind. Such praise had never been given her before and she could not find any words that would make a fitting reply.

Cornelia seemed to answer for her, for she said,

“He hath given His angels charge over every one of us. Now, Ishmael, we must go, for we have set our faces to a long journey.”

“Then will I go with thee upon thy way—for a little space—that ye find the road.”

“Nay. Stay in the shade and continue thy labors upon the arrows. I know the path.”

“Then I will finish this arrow, for I am minded to practice with my bow before I return to my mother’s tents. I am rejoiced that ye came.” Then to Edith he said, “May His angels often speak with thee, for I perceive thou art a maid ever ready to hear them speak. Farewell.”

Cornelia waved her hand to the boy as he sat down by the pool and took up his arrows, and he nodded and smiled in return. And so it was Edith left Ishmael and with her friend walked slowly away over the burning sands of Beersheba towards the west.

V

IN THE GROVE

WHEN Edith and Cornelia left Ishmael by the well at Beer-sheba they walked on for some distance over the hot, yellow sands of the desert in silence. Edith was busy with her own thoughts and her friend wisely left the events of this visit upon Ishmael to make their own impression upon her. They could talk about it all at some other season, when she had seen other children of the Book.

To Edith the boy had been so real, he had shown such faith in the ministrations of angels that she felt she must try to remember every word he had said. He had said that she herself must have heard some guardian angel speak to her. It was the most beautiful thing that had ever been said to her in her whole life, and for a moment it made her very happy. Then

she wondered if it were true or ever would be true. Perhaps some angel had already spoken and she had heeded it not. How would she know if an angel spoke? She could not imagine, and yet, she resolved that, hereafter, she would always wait and listen.

Presently she began to look about over the desert and was surprised to find they had come to quite another country. The dreary yellow waste had given place to a grassy plain, over which roamed great flocks of sheep and goats and herds of shaggy cattle.

“Where are we now, and who owns these great flocks and herds?”

“We are still in Beersheba—but in another neighborhood. These flocks are gathered about the well that Abraham digged. You remember that Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant concerning this well. The well is over there on your right, among those tall palms. I see some of the shepherds there, watering the flocks.”

To Edith the scene seemed wild and

lonely, for there was no sign of human habitation anywhere. She stopped and looked at the little group of palms in the distance, and for a moment wanted to go over that way and see the place.

“Shall we go to the well?”

“We have no time, for it is yet some distance to the grove that Abraham planted and where he so often walked among the trees, when he called upon the name of the Lord. I came by this path that you might have a passing glance at these days of the shepherds. Now we will go by another way to the tents of Abraham that are not far from the grove, for it is in the tents, or, perhaps, in the grove that we may find Isaac.”

“Isaac! Shall we see Isaac, the boy who went with his father to the sacrifice?”

“It is to him I am leading you. Give me your hand and we will seek him.”

Edith, in silence, took her friend's hand, for this new name inspired her

with a new eagerness to go on still farther in this journey through the Book. Then, as they walked, the whole, vast prairie all about them seemed to slowly melt and fade away. It grew darker and much cooler and strange, gigantic forms seemed to grow out of the dim light into the forms of tall and splendid trees.

“Oh! How beautiful! What a grand forest. I never saw such splendid trees, not even in the——”

She paused abruptly. How could she compare the Adirondack forests, noble as they were, with this hushed and sacred grove. No breeze stirred these leaves and the soft and sandy ground was free of underbrush. The trees were bare of branches to a great height and their lofty boughs made a green, arching roof, here and there mottled with glimpses of the blue sky. The light was subdued, and the tall columns of the trees and the faint fragrance of balsam gave the impression that this was indeed the first temple to the Lord—not made with hands.

“Oh! It is like some cathedral—such as I have seen in pictures.”

“It is God’s house, for here Abraham daily calls upon the name of the Lord, even the everlasting God. Wait. I see some one coming.”

Edith looked ahead and saw at some distance down one of the dim aisles a young boy slowly walking with his hands behind him and with face uplifted to the leafy ceiling of this grand temple.

“He is like his father,” said Cornelia quietly. “He too walks in the grove before the Lord. Wait here a moment while I speak with him.”

Edith stepped one side between two giant trees and stood watching her friend with curious interest. She met the boy not far away and he smiled and saluted her with youthful dignity. Then they both turned and came towards the place where Edith stood in the soft and fragrant gloom of the sacred grove. He seemed a boy of about her own age and he wore a robe of pure white profusely embroidered in colored threads. His feet were bare, and she

guessed at once that it was because he was in a sacred place. He was strong and well made, and, while dark, was of a singularly winning countenance. He seemed like one born to be a leader among his people, and yet of a gentle, affectionate and trusting disposition. All this she caught in one quick glance, for Cornelia led him to her and said,

“This is the maid of whom I spoke. Her name is Edith. She is from a land far from here and would gladly stay awhile with thee in this sacred grove and would hear something of your journey to the Mount of Sacrifice—even Jehovah-jireh.”

The boy smiled and bowed very low with great dignity and said,

“The Lord abide with thee, Edith.”

Then he pointed to a great tree and said,

“The grove is cool and the sand clean. Will ye not sit and rest awhile?”

Cornelia and Edith sat down, side by side, close to the stem of the great tree and the boy dropped upon the sand be-



“ HE TOO WALKS IN THE GROVE BEFORE THE
LORD ”

fore them and supporting himself with one hand looked at Edith in evident curiosity.

“Thy name, Edith, is strange to me, yet I doubt not it is remembered of the Lord’s angels. Wouldst thou hear of all that befell me on that day of sacrifice?”

“Oh! Tell me everything. When did you start upon the journey and was it a long trip and when did you return after your father sacrificed the ——”

She stopped and the boy seemed curious to know why she did not finish the sentence.

“Thou art already familiar with the story. Who could have told thee aught concerning the matter when it was but seven days since we returned? Thou must have met some of my kinsfolk, for we have every day rehearsed the story of the Lord’s mercies to my father among our people with great rejoicings. Every day since we returned to my father’s tents have I walked in the grove calling upon the name of the Lord for all His loving kindness. It was for that I am here.”

“Edith,” said Cornelia, “has heard nothing of this matter from any of thy kinsfolk and would hear the story from thine own lips.”

After a pause in which Isaac seemed to be recalling a familiar story he said,

“It was in the night season—in the dark of the moon, which is now waxing every night, that the Lord first spoke to my father. And my father said, ‘Behold, here I am,’ and the Lord said, ‘Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’ Now this was a hard saying, yet did my father murmur not.

“And I knew naught of this, neither did any of my kinsfolk. How could my father tell any one of this terrible command of the Lord? He kept it locked in his own heart. He was, indeed, serious and heavy with grief, yet he gave no sign of the great burden laid upon him. It was not until we returned

to Beersheba with great rejoicings that I or my mother or any of our household knew of the command of the Lord.

“And early in the morning after the Lord spoke to him my father came to the door of the tent where I slept with some of the young men and did call me. And his voice was shaken and his face was as of the dead. It was before the rising of the sun and I, fearing that he was sick, would call my mother and her women, but he bid me to call two of our young men and bid them prepare to go upon a journey. Then he said to one of the bondmen that he should prepare some wood for a fire and feed and water an ass and load the wood upon the beast together with food for a journey. And after the morning meal, my father and I and the two young men set forth from our tents and my mother and all our people gathered to see us depart. There were some who would prevail upon him not to go, but he only said, ‘I go to sacrifice unto the Lord’—and they were content with that. And so it was

we departed and none knew whither we went nor when we would return—save only my father.

“As for me I rejoiced to go upon the journey for the way was pleasant and the young men were good companions and beguiled the time with pleasant speech. And soon I ceased to have any pleasure in it for my father was serious and I saw his heart was heavy and I dare not ask him the cause of his grief. Three days we travelled thus, sleeping on the ground each night and each day my father’s heart grew more troubled. On the third night I awoke in the middle of the night and, looking up, I saw my father walking up and down in the starlight and I knew he called upon the Lord, with great sorrow, for his heart was broken—and yet he made no complaint.”

Here the boy bowed his head in his hands and rested them upon his knees. To Edith it seemed as if the recollection of the journey, that must be still fresh in his mind, was too much for the boy and she and her friend sat in sympathetic

silence waiting for him to proceed. Presently he looked up and said in a changed voice and manner,

“Wouldst thou hear more of my father’s grief?”

“Tell me no more,” said Edith, “if to do so is painful.”

“Nay thou shouldst hear the end, for my father’s faith was justified before the Lord. I had no thought of myself, through all the journey. My concern was for my father, for, in the morning, he looked abroad to the mountains round about, for we had come to Moriah, and pointed out to me a stony hill overgrown with thickets and told me it was the mount selected of the Lord. Then my father bade the young men unload the ass and he took from his girdle his sacrificial knife and filled a pot with coals from our camp-fire. He bade the young men tarry there with the beast until he should return. And he would have me carry the wood and so it was we departed for the mountain leaving the others to abide in the valley.”

Again the boy paused and looked dreamily away among the dim aisles of the grove as if thinking of the tragic scenes of his story. Then with an effort he said,

“In all the journey I had thought nothing of the lamb for a sacrifice. There were many flocks along the way and we could have taken a lamb from among them. As we went on alone I thought perhaps he knew of a flock upon the mountain and I said nothing to my father, for I perceived that he was very sorrowful and I would not question him concerning the lamb.

“At last we reached the top of the mount and I laid down the wood and did help my father build an altar for there were many stones in that place. And when all was ready I said to my father, ‘Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’”

Here the boy buried his face upon his knees with a sob and would say no more. Edith, moved to pity for him, rose and

came to him, and resting her hand upon the boy's head said gently,

“Tell us no more if it is such a grief. I can understand the rest. You—were the lamb to be laid upon the altar.”

The boy made a motion of assent and reaching up took her hand in his two hands and held them in mute thanks for her sympathy.

“It must have been terrible for you.”

He looked up quickly and said,

“Nay. Thee does not even now understand. It was not for myself I cared. I understood all then. If I were to die—it was the Lord's will—and I was content.”

Here he rose to his feet and brushing back the hair from his face said,

“Canst thou not see that I now understood that the Lord had bid my father do this thing as a trial of his faith? and oh! for a moment I feared my father would at the last falter, but I saw that he would not and I awaited the end without a murmur. Then suddenly I heard the angel of the Lord calling, ‘Abraham! Abra-

ham!' and I heard my father say in a voice that was not shaken, 'Here am I.'"

"The angel of the Lord bade him loose me and when I was unbound I saw a ram, not far away, caught in a thicket and we did take the ram and offered him as a sacrifice unto the Lord and called upon His name with great rejoicings."

Here Cornelia rose and going to the boy said,

"I am called to another place not far away. I would that Edith be your guest until I return presently. She has been greatly moved by the story of your father's faith. Let her walk awhile within the grove for she would talk with you concerning all these things."

"Edith can walk with me in the grove, if it gives her pleasure. I will gladly tell her all for she is a maid wise and kind above all maids I ever met. I doubt not, the Lord may also have spoken to her father, or, haply, to her mother, in her own country."

To Edith the boy's speech seemed so sincere and so utterly void of flattery

that, while she was greatly pleased, she felt he regarded her as a girl having a trust in the Lord equal to his own and she knew that this could not be true. Cornelia smiled and turned away among the trees, leaving Isaac and his young guest alone in the grove. The boy seemed to be greatly pleased with his girlish visitor and, with boyish pleasure, said,

“Wouldst thou like to see the flocks or the well, or to see our tents, or visit my mother or father?”

For a moment she hesitated. Should she accept this last invitation? The temptation was very great to go to the tents and see the boy's parents. Then she remembered that Cornelia had not suggested this and might not wish her to meet them just now. Then she said to the boy,

“I think it best I remain in the grove until our friend's return. She may not be detained more than a few moments.”

“Then let us walk in the grove.”

“That will be pleasant—then, too, I

wish you would tell me more about the angel of the Lord and about your return home. Did you really hear the angel speak?"

"Of a verity I did. And after we had sacrificed we stood before the smoking altar and the angel of the Lord spoke to my father a second time. And the Lord said, through His angel, that because of this thing and because my father had not withheld his son that the Lord would bless all his children and that we children through many generations would be as the stars in that milky path in the heavens or as the sands upon the seashore. I have never seen the sea and I know not the multitude of the sand, yet have I seen the heavens and I know no man can number the stars thereof."

"Oh!" said Edith, "I have seen the seashore and the sea and you cannot imagine how many are the grains of sand even upon one small beach, and in my country the seashore measures a thousand leagues."

“That must be a great land. Have thy people many flocks and herds?”

The boy seemed to wish to know more of Edith's home and people, but she shook her head and smiled and said,

“Let me rather hear more of your return from the sacrifice.”

The boy paused for a moment and then he said,

“Tell me one thing more. Is thy father a prophet?” Edith shook her head, for she hardly knew how to answer his question, and the boy added, “I had hoped thee might tell me how it is that my father's children are to be so greatly multiplied in the earth? Will there be pasture for all their flocks, and what cities will they conquer from the people that dwell in other lands? The angel said that the children of my father will possess the gates of his enemies, so it must be a leader will some day arise and lead my people to great victories. These things have troubled me since we returned from the mount of sacrifice, even Jehovah-jireh.”

During all this they had walked on, side by side, through the shady aisles of the grove so earnest in conversation that Edith had not noticed that the woods were growing thinner and lighter. Looking forward she saw that they had reached the end of the grove, for beyond, out in the full sunlight, she saw several low, brown tents pitched upon the grass. She stopped and the boy looked in her face, as if expecting some answer to his last question. What could she say, how answer him? Finally she said as gently as she could,

“Why not wait—and trust in the Lord?”

“Thou art wise above many maids—and yet—the angel said more. He said that because my father had not failed in obeying the voice of the Lord, all the nations of the earth should be blessed in us. How that may be I know not.”

“We cannot know these things. Such knowledge is higher than you and I. We are but children, just boy and girl in

our Father's house. Why not leave it all to His Fatherly care?"

The boy seemed to be greatly surprised and said,

"Now I know His angel hath surely spoken to thee with great wisdom. Thy words, and thy sympathy, while I told thee of my father's trial are a great treasure to me. I shall not forget thee and thy words."

Just then Edith saw Cornelia's shining garments among the trees, and she was glad she had come, for she was oppressed with her own ignorance and want of faith beside this boy of Beersheba. As her friend drew near the boy cried out to her,

"Now am I rejoiced that thou broughtest Edith to my father's grove. She has been a comfort to me, for she listened to my story with attention, and her words concerning it were kind and discreet. I feel sure some angel hath instructed her in wisdom."

"That is true," said Cornelia, "an angel whose voice you may never hear."

“I knew it was so, and her angel must stand very near the Lord.”

Edith was greatly surprised at Cornelia's speech and wondered what she meant by it. She could not recall any angel visits.

“Now,” added Cornelia, “I have finished my task here, and we must depart from the grove, for we have other tents to visit beside thy father's.”

“Whatever tents thy friend Edith visits they who dwell there will receive her with joy, for she has a good heart.” Then he said to Edith, “May His angels ever speak with thee. Peace be with thy people, Edith. Farewell.”

The boy bowed gravely before them both and stood watching them with great interest as they turned away among the aisles of the grove. They had not gone far when Edith glanced back and then stopped, for a tall man with white hair and a long, silvery beard had joined the boy. He wore a robe of white, beautifully embroidered, and, as he stood listening to something the boy was tell-

ing him, he turned towards them and Edith thought she had never seen any human being with a face of such divine majesty.

“ It is—his father ? ”

“ Yes, the boy’s father.”

VI

THE SHEPHERD

THE interview with the boy in the grove had given Edith much to think about and, as they walked on through the silent forest, she remembered that each of the two boys she had met had said that he was sure some angel had, as one of them expressed it, "instructed her in wisdom." Then Cornelia had said almost the same thing. Presently she said,

"What did you mean, dear, when you said an angel, whose voice the boy might never hear, had spoken to me? I remember no angel's visits."

Cornelia put her arm about her companion and said with a winning smile,

"May not the angels of the Lord be encamped all about us every day? We are only a little—oh! so very little lower than the angels that they may be

nearer than we imagine. May we not be more closely related to them than we think? Then, too, may not any human being who brings us glad tidings or speaks words of truth and wisdom be one of His messengers? Everywhere in the Book all angels are called His messengers."

"But why did these two boys both say, they were sure some angel had spoken to me?"

"You have read the whole Book. You have known of the Elder Brother, of whom they know nothing. It must be that, as a modern child, you have something of the Elder Brother's likeness, and they recognize it and could only explain it as an angelic visitation."

While they were thus talking they had walked on for some distance and Edith had not noticed that the scene had gradually changed and that the forest had disappeared. Presently she realized that they were walking upon the grassy slope of some high, rugged mountain. There was a fresh, cool breeze blowing

and Edith looked up and saw that they were standing on a lonely mountain-top with still other mountains round about them on every side.

“Why, what place is this?”

“It is Beth-lehem.”

“Not the place where the manger stood? Oh! I should so like to see Bethlehem.”

“No. Not that little town. I have not brought you so far into the Book as that. We have now come to the First of Samuel and are at the fifteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter.”

Edith looked about with the greatest curiosity and presently saw a small flock of sheep and near them, seated upon a large, flat rock, was a boy clothed in a curious garment fashioned out of the woolly skin of a sheep.

“Is that one of the children? I don't remember him.”

“It is David, the son of Jesse.”

Just then the boy stood up and looked about and Edith saw that he was a handsome, strong and well-made boy, a little

older than herself and with an earnest and thoughtful face. His feet and arms were bare and brown from exposure to the sun and his complexion was ruddy with health and his eyes were keen and bright. He presently shaded his eyes with his hand and looked anxiously down into the green, wooded valley far below.

“He seems to be expecting some one.”

“There is a terrible war come upon Israel by reason of the Philistines. His three elder brothers are already with the hosts of Saul and he is impatient to join them. I will bring him to you for I wish you to see him. Then I must leave you for a little time and you may abide with the boy until I return.”

Cornelia went to the boy who seemed very glad to meet her and they talked pleasantly together and then she led him to where Edith stood, saying to her,

“I have told David of your coming, Edith, and he is greatly pleased to be able to meet you.”

“The Lord be mindful of thee,” said

the boy with dignity. "Thy country and people are not known to me, yet art thou welcome. Abide with me for a while until thy friend returns."

This strange presentation to a handsome and yet half-wild boy upon this lonely mountainside was for a moment, confusing and she hardly knew what to say, and all she could do was to show that she was glad to meet him. Then Cornelia left them and neither seemed to know what to do or say and Edith looked timidly about to see if there were any houses or people near for the place seemed very wild and lonely.

"Sit upon this stone," said the boy.

"Thank you," said Edith as she took the proffered seat. "You are sure it is quite safe here? There are no wild animals about?"

"There are lions here and sometimes a bear. Be not afraid. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. They shall not molest thee. Listen. I was once with the sheep upon this very mountain, and a lion and a bear came forth and took a lamb out of

the flock, and I ran after him and smote him and delivered the lamb out of his mouth : and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and smote him and slew him.

“It was not I alone did this. It was the Lord who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear. And to think that I must stand here idle all the day long tending these few poor sheep when that wicked giant defies the armies of the living God. Every day he cometh forth from the camp of the Philistines and defieth the armies of Israel to send out a man to fight him. And our people are afraid. Oh! If I were there I would slay him as I slew the lion and the bear.”

“I fear you would have a very poor chance against such a giant as Goliath.”

“Ah! Thou, too, knowest him. Hast thou seen him? Is he truly so great of stature? I hear he is six cubits and a span high and wears a coat of mail, and his shield is so heavy that a stout man bears it before him. They tell me his

spear is like the beam of a weaver's loom."

To these eager questions Edith could only reply,

"I have heard of him from others. I never saw him. He is not of my people."

"Yea. Thy speech showeth that, yet I would know more of him, for, in my heart, I feel the Lord will some day give me strength to deliver him into the hands of our people. Sometimes upon these lonely mountains I seem to hear the voice of the Lord calling, calling me to save His people.

"The Lord God spoke to Abraham concerning Isaac. He hath spoken also to me. They that hear Him are as the angels that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. When I think of these things my spirit would break forth into singing. Listen. Alone upon these mountains have I lifted my voice in His praise. Let me sing for thee a new song?"

He paused a moment and drew forth



“ IT WAS NOT I ALONE DID THIS ”

from his coat a little pipe that seemed to Edith like a flageolet. He put it to his mouth and it breathed a soft note, and thus he spake in the tone of his pipe,

“Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honor and majesty: Who coverest Thyself with light, as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens as a curtain. Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire. Bless the Lord all ye His hosts, ye ministers of His that do His pleasure.”

He paused abruptly and sat down on the grass at her feet and buried his face upon his knees. To Edith his song seemed like some grand psalm. She could only sit there and gaze far off over the mountains and valleys and up at the wide blue sky. It seemed to her as if the place must be some grand cathedral where an unseen organ filled the shadowy aisles with music—so deep, so grand, that it seemed music from some heavenly choir.

Then she turned and looked at the boy at her feet. He seemed greatly cast down

after his song. She wanted to speak to him and yet dared not intrude upon his grief. Then her eyes wandered over the mountainside and presently she saw a man coming slowly up the long grassy slope at their feet. She slid gently down from her seat and knelt upon the grass beside the boy, and laid one hand upon his bare brown arm.

“Be comforted. Perhaps even now the Lord sends some one to tell you of His pleasure.”

The boy looked up and said,

“It is my brother. He hath some command from my father.”

“Arise and meet him. Who knows what call to duty he brings?”

“Ah!” said the boy, standing up quickly, “Now I know of a truth thou art the daughter of some prophet in thy own country. Wait thou here by the sheep while I speak with him.”

To her surprise he ran swiftly down the long slope towards the man. She rose from the ground and sat upon the stone to watch the boy and the man. They

met not far away and she saw the boy throw up his hands over his head as if greatly excited over something the man said. Then the man went away and the boy came running back to where she sat on the stone.

“Now rejoice with me. The Lord God hath called me to the battle. My elder brothers are with the armies of Saul, encamped before the Philistines, and my father hath prepared an ephah of parched corn and ten loaves and ten cheeses, and I am to take them to my brethren and to the captain of their thousand. Now, let no man’s heart fail because of this giant, for I, even I, the servant of the Lord, will go forth to fight with this Philistine.”

To Edith the boy seemed suddenly to have become a man. His eyes were shining and his whole manner was proud and self-reliant. And yet how pitiful it all seemed. What could this shepherd boy do before Goliath? He seemed to guess her thought and said,

“It will not be of my own strength.

Did not the Lord deliver the lion to my hand, and shall He not give me this man's life who defies the armies of the living God?"

"I know all that, and yet I wish you had a coat-of-mail."

"Nay. I need no mail, for the Lord will protect His servant in time of need. I have my staff and my sling. Look you. There sitteth a bird upon the limb of that tree. I will sling a stone and break the branch and the bird will fly away unharmed. I have a pebble in my script and I will put it in my sling."

Edith did not in the least believe he could hit so small a thing as the branch of the tree at such a distance and felt sure the bird was quite safe. She watched the boy with breathless interest, and, yet, feeling sure he would fail. Then he took a hempen sling from his leather girdle, and from a bag hanging from the girdle he took a small round stone. A moment later the sling was singing round his head and the branch of the tree broke off

and fell down and the startled bird flew quickly away.

“That was well done. You have a strong arm and a good eye.”

“It is not I. It is the Lord giveth me strength. And shall this Philistine prevail when the battle is to the Lord? Ah! Thou didst not mind the sheep and they have wandered away.”

“Oh! I forgot. I am very sorry.”

“It matters not. What are a few poor sheep when the Lord God calleth me to do battle in His name?”

“When shall you see Goliath? I almost wish I could be there.”

“Nay. Thou art a maid, and it were not seemly for a maid to go to a battle. I shall meet him on the morrow.”

“I did not mean exactly that, but it would be grand to know that the Lord will give you the victory.”

“Farewell. The Lord calleth me to do His work. Wait thou here until thy friend returns. There is none here to molest thee or make thee afraid. Thou hast spoken wisely to me and I am glad

thy friend brought thee to me. The Lord give thee strength and wisdom, Edith. The Lord God calleth me to His service. I hear the thunder of the battle and the shouting of the captains. I come—I come in the name of the King of battles, the Lord of hosts. Farewell.”

With this he ran swiftly down the mountainside, leaving Edith seated upon the stone. She looked about, and there was no living thing to be seen. Even the poor timid sheep had wandered away, and she was alone.

VII

IN THE TEMPLE AT SHILOH

EDITH looked about over the vast, wild country. She knew perfectly well that she was alone in this strange place, and she was quite content to sit a while and think of all she had seen since she entered the door in the Book. Already something of this boy's faith and courage had entered her own heart. And that girl in Egypt! She trusted her little brother to Pharaoh's daughter, because she trusted in the Lord. Would that she herself might be like her. And the young archer and the boy in the grove! How much they had said to her that she felt was true and that she must remember. How much there was in everything she had seen that she must remember, if only for her mother's sake.

Presently she saw her friend returning and gladly went to meet her.

“A man called the boy and he said it was a summons from the Lord to go forth to battle. And he sang to me—a psalm—oh! more, more beautiful than anything I ever heard in my life.”

“He is to be a great singer in Israel—and yet he is but a boy and knows it not. Come, let us go, for there is another child who abides not far from here, a dear child whom the Lord called in the temple at Shiloh. Shall we not see him also?”

“Oh! You mean Samuel. I shall be very, very glad to see him. Is it far from here?”

“Only to the third chapter of Samuel in the Book and in quite another place. Come. We can soon be in the little town of Shiloh.”

Edith saw the wild country about them slowly fade and she knew they would quickly pass to other scenes in another part of the Book, and she watched the changing scene with the keenest interest, for, of all the children in this part of the Book, this was the one child she remembered best and wished most to see.

In a few moments she found they were walking in the middle of a narrow street paved with stones, and having low stone walls on each side, and over these walls she thought she saw the tops of white, flat-topped houses and the tops of trees as if the houses stood in the midst of gardens. There were many people walking in the street, but they seemed not to know that she and her friend were there.

“What city is this?”

“Shiloh—that city to which Hannah brought her son to give him to the Lord. You must have read the third chapter of the First Samuel. It is to that place in the Book we are come. See. This the House of the Lord.”

They had reached the end of the narrow street and now came to an open square, and in this square there stood a fountain, and a large building, and Edith knew that this must be the Temple. It seemed to be late in the afternoon for the twilight had come, and she only dimly saw the outlines of the great building. There was a large door in the middle and

a curtain hung in the doorway. Every few moments the curtain, that opened in the middle, was pulled aside, and men and women passed in and out. Waiting a moment until there was no one passing, Cornelia then drew the curtain aside and they entered the great building.

For a moment Edith was confused and clung to Cornelia for guidance. The place was empty and dark, and the few lights, here and there, seemed only to show massive wooden posts that seemed to support a huge canvas, as if the place were a great tent with stone walls and an awning for the roof. Through the rifts in the canvas she saw the stars. At the foot of one of the posts there was a stone seat, and to this seat Cornelia led the way, saying,

“Sit here until your eyes become accustomed to the light.”

Edith sat down on the stone seat in awed silence. It seemed like some great cathedral, and she wondered at the vastness, the lights and the silence. Would there be hymns and prayers soon?

Would there be any music? She was alone yet she was not in the least afraid. How could she be afraid in God's House, even in this far time and country? She leaned back against the rough wooden post and was glad she was soon to see the one dear child of all who lived in the Book. She even remembered having seen pictures of the boy, and once she had seen in a church a christening font, and beside it there was a white marble figure of a boy kneeling upon a cushion. Would he look like any of the pictures or the white marble Samuel?

Half dreaming thus in the House of God at Shiloh, she was startled by the voice of her companion,

“Edith, this is Samuel.”

She sat up, surprised and more pleased than words could tell. There on the marble floor stood the most beautiful child she had ever seen. He wore some curious linen garment that left his arms and feet bare. He wore white sandals and a beautiful girdle was bound about his coat. His complexion was olive and

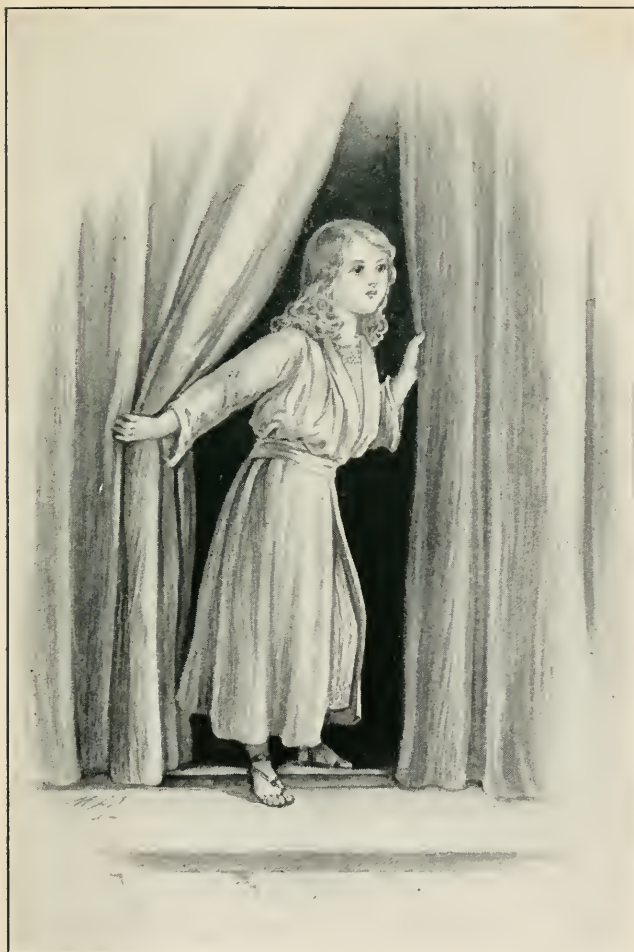
his face oval in shape, his great eyes were black and fringed with heavy lashes. His wavy hair fell upon his young shoulders in dark tawny masses. She could not tell in the dim light whether it was a deep, dark red or black with dark brown lights upon it. He seemed to be about six years old and his soft pale olive hands and arms showed that he was a child accustomed to live indoors. Edith was so surprised and charmed that she had not a word to say, but sat gazing at the boy in silent admiration.

“She tells me thy name is Edith. It is a strange name. Of what tribe art thou?”

He spoke softly and gently and with a grave dignity that gave her the impression that he was much older than he seemed.

“You would not understand, Samuel,” said Cornelia. “Edith is from a far country and would talk with you concerning that night—you remember, Samuel? You are not busy just now with your ministrations in the Temple?”

“No. The lamp of God is still burning



“ THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CHILD SHE HAD EVER
SEEN ”

before the Ark of God. There are none here now who need my services."

"Shall we sit here awhile?"

Edith made room upon the stone seat and the boy sat down beside her, while Cornelia sat also, with the child between them. The boy seemed to be pleased with Edith and nestled closely up to her. One brown hand rested gently upon her shoulder and its touch seemed to thrill her, like as a benediction. She put one arm about him and drew him to her for she was full of peace and a great joy and love for the child.

"Thou art like my mother. I am sometimes aweary here—without mother. I see her only once a year—and yet I am content for do I not dwell in God's house, do I not minister to His people every day? Besides, since that night—I know of a truth that God, the Lord hath spoken to me. It was but a week ago—come next Sabbath day eve. Yet, if it were a year I should remember it well. Thou seest that door yonder, beyond the Lamp of God that swings by its chain from the

roof, that door with the light beyond it. That is the door to the house of the Priests. Eli lives there with his two sons. He hath a chamber convenient to the temple, lest any that suffer needs call him. My own place is on this side over there behind that post of the temple, though I go to the priests' house when we do eat. My room is a little place, just a stone seat on which is a mattress of wool and a linen sheet. You know that my mother lent me to the Lord and I must stay where I can attend His ministrations. Before that night I did sometimes wish I might go out as do other children. But not now. I re-pine no more."

"Was it late—when the Lord spoke to you?"

"I know not the hour. It could not be very late because when I went to my rest the Lamp of God was still burning just as you see it now. It usually goes out in the night, but I know not at what hour. Eli must have lain down in his place also for he is an aged man. I know not how long I slept, when I awoke I thought

Eli called me and I arose quickly, put on my sandals and went across the temple before the Ark of God and came to the door over there. It was very still and I feared sore evil had befallen him so I spoke softly at the door and said 'Here am I; for thou callest me.' And he turned himself and said 'I called not. Lie down again.' I was heavy with sleep and I thought, haply, it was a dream, so I went back to my place and slept again. I know not how long it might be that I slept when I heard a voice calling me—'Samuel! Samuel!'"

The boy spoke these words in a whisper, soft, yet clear and Edith instinctively drew him closer to her.

"Thou art like a mother who pitieth her children. Shall I tell thee more?"

"Yes. Yes. Tell me more. He spoke—again to you?"

"Yes, and again I thought it was Eli and again I put on my sandals and hurried to his place and I came to his bed and said, 'Here am I; for thou didst call me.' And he was troubled and said, 'I

called not, my son ; lie down again.' I perceived not it was the Lord and went again to my place and was soon asleep. And behold, again the voice called me, 'Samuel! Samuel!' This time I did not hasten, because I would not that Eli should reprove me a third time. And as I came to this spot I found the Lamp of God had gone out and the temple was dark and chill and the moonlight lay white and cold on the floor and I wrapped my little coat about me and stood by Eli's bed and said again, 'Here am I ; for thou didst call me.' Then was I greatly troubled for he said nothing for the space of a moment and then he said, 'Lie down again, and it shall be if He call thee, that thou shalt say, 'Speak, Lord ; for Thy servant heareth.' Then I knew it was the Lord's voice I had heard and with great fear in my heart, I went back to my place and lay down again, but could not sleep for trembling.

“And after a little space I heard a voice—a very still small voice calling——”

The boy stood up and seemed to be listening. "Hark! Nay. It is nothing. Since that night I often think I hear Him speak again."

Edith listened in breathless attention, leaning forward to catch every word.

"I cannot forget it. I start sometimes in my sleep or in my ministrations before the Ark of God, thinking I hear that voice calling, 'Samuel! Samuel!'"

He paused a moment as if hesitating to go on and the two girls waited in silence for every word.

"It came again. It seemed to be a voice in the temple and I arose, but I put not on my sandals for I knew, as did Moses at the burning bush, that God was near. And then I went out into the temple and when I came to this place where we are sitting I perceived the Ark of God and it burned as with fire and I, trembling and fearful, fell upon my knees and bowed myself before the Ark and said, 'Speak; for Thy servant heareth.'"

For a moment Edith sat absorbed in contemplation of the child to whom the

Lord had spoken. This child had heard the voice of God. It seemed perfectly natural that he should stand there before her, clothed in such heavenly beauty. She wanted to fall down before him and clasp his knees and look up to him as to an angel. The boy himself told them no more. It seemed enough. The message God gave to him was not of so much consequence. The one great fact was that the boy had heard the voice of God. He seemed to desire sympathy and comfort as if the burden of the great honor that had been paid to him was more than he could bear, for he sat down again and laid his head upon Edith's shoulder and she put her arm about him and kissed him upon the forehead.

“Thou art as a mother to me. Sometimes I feel the Lord hath placed a heavy burden upon me. Yet am I not cast down. I shall grow up in His strength to do His will.”

“Oh! I am sure of it—sure of it.”

“Art thou a Prophet's daughter in thy country?”

“Oh! No, no, and yet when I go back to my own country I shall tell every one that I meet of all you have told me.”

“I am rejoiced at that. I doubt not that the Lord will speak to many in the days to come. I know not when it will be, yet, I cannot believe that I alone am to hear the voice of the Lord. He called me. He may call you and others. Thou must remember that?”

“Yes, yes, I am sure I shall. Oh, I know there will be many others, but none could be more sweet and simple about it than you.”

“Thou art kind to say that, yet am I only the least of God’s servants seeing I am but a child like yourself.”

Then he rose and said,

“I fear the hour is already late and perhaps thou art minded to return to thy home. I have much to do in the morning and must seek my rest. I am more glad to have met thee than I can tell. Farewell. Abide in peace this night.”

A moment later Edith and Cornelia

parted the great curtain and stood in the deserted streets of Shiloh. The moonlight lit up the dark front of the great temple and Edith looked back at the building in wonder, hardly daring to think of all the things she had seen and heard. Never could she forget the beautiful boy who had heard the voice of God in His temple.

VIII

THE LITTLE MAID IN THE GARDEN

WHEN Edith and her companion came out of the temple they found themselves once more in the great square in Shiloh. It was a fine clear night and the stars in the deep, purple-black sky shone with wonderful brilliancy and a glorious moon flooded the silent, deserted square with light and touched the brilliant ornaments on the wall of the temple as with silver fire. In the middle of the square there was a stone fountain and a tiny, tinkling stream from a stone pipe filled it to the brim with water that reflected the moon as in a mirror. Edith had seen in her grandfather's old Bible in his home in Virginia a picture of just such a fountain and with women in long robes drawing water in great stone jars that they carried away on their shoulders. In the picture one

woman sat on a stone seat before the fountain. As they came nearer to the fountain it gave Edith a new impression of the vivid reality of her experience in this strange journey to see a broken stone water-jar standing on the edge of the fountain and to find a stone seat, worn smooth by much use, around the fountain. This place was indeed Shiloh.

They both sat down upon the seat to rest awhile and, as Edith said,

“To think it all over.”

Presently Cornelia said,

“I knew when first I saw you enter the door that you had a kind and sympathetic heart. Your affection for Samuel was a great comfort to the boy. Then, while you were with David I went back to Exodus and saw the sister of Moses and she inquired diligently concerning you and your people. Your sympathy was more precious to her than anything you could have given her, even more precious than this ruby in my girdle and that is a jewel of great price.”

Edith looked at the wonderful gem in

the girl's girdle and wondered that it glowed with such fire even in the night. She wished to ask what it meant, but thought it perhaps rude to inquire. After a moment's thought she said,

"I could not help trying to comfort the girl. The Elder Brother would have done so."

"Yes. He would. And you are growing to be like Him."

"I try to be. We must all do that." Then she added abruptly, "Oh! Tell me. There is one strange thing about all these children. They are true and real, are like boys and girls I know—and yet there is such a difference."

"In what way?"

"These children seem to know that God is ever near them."

"He cannot be far from every one of us."

"Yes. We say that, but these children know it, know it surely and truly and trust in Him. Why, David actually told me he was going off to fight with a giant with only a sling—though I must say he can use it with wonderful skill. I saw him

cut a twig of a tree in two and the bird that sat on the twig flew away unharmed. Boys that I know would have shot the bird. Why was it David had such faith in his victory over Goliath? Is it because in these old times in which he lives God is nearer than, say,—in my own times?”

“First of all, He was never nearer than in the very times in which you live. Then David, Isaac and Samuel have less to do and see and think about than you at home and God is more often in their hearts and minds. Do not ever say that He has gone away—for it is not true.”

“Forgive me, dear. I did not think that—and yet poor Samuel seemed a little lonely and sad—as if he missed the companionship of other children.”

“Yet, you saw he was not wholly unhappy.”

“No. He had heard God speak and after that he could not be unhappy. Do you know, it reminded me of a beautiful song I once heard. It was like this:—” and with these words Edith leaned back

against the great stone seat and to the accompaniment of the tinkling fountain under the silver moon in old Shiloh she sang softly these few words:—

“He watching over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps.”

For a little space neither spoke for they had much to think about. Then Cornelia said:

“There is another child you should see. You remember the little maid in Syria?”

“A little maid in Syria? What was her name?”

“She has no name. Her place is in the fifth chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Then, while we are in that part of the Book, I want you to see the Shunnammite woman.”

“The woman whose boy died after the sunstroke?”

“Ah! I am glad you know that story. It is in the fourth of the Second of Kings. Would you not like to meet them both? It is not far. Come. Let us go down into Syria.”

So saying Cornelia stood up and Edith

eagerly took her hand and they walked slowly away. The moonlit square, the tinkling fountain and the dark mass of the temple faded softly and presently they were walking in a narrow lane between high stone walls. The night had slowly changed to a warm, tropical, sunny afternoon. In the walls on either side there were narrow doorways with heavy wooden doors and presently Cornelia stopped before one of these doors. Over the top of the walls they could see trees with dark, shining leaves and above the door beside them was a vine having white flowers that gave out an overpowering fragrance. Edith had never seen any flowers more beautiful. There was behind the wall a sound as some one slowly grinding two stones together and with this strange sound came the drowsy hum of many bees busy among the flowers.

Cornelia knocked at the narrow door and presently it was slowly opened and they saw the face of a little girl. She seemed to recognize her for she smiled and opened the door wider.

"Thou art welcome. Come in. My mistress is asleep for the day is warm."

"Wait a moment, dear. I have one with me who would gladly meet you."

So saying she stooped and kissed the child's eyes and straightway the child stepped out of the narrow door and looking up to Edith, held out one thin, small hand, that seemed to be covered with flour, and said gravely,

"The peace of the man of God abide with thee. There is none in the garden save myself and I was busy grinding meal. Come into the garden with me."

Edith was greatly moved at the sight of the child and took her flour-stained hand in her own and said simply,

"I shall be very glad to come."

The child led the way and a moment later Edith stood in a beautiful garden, before a low, flat-roofed house, half hidden among flowering vines. Cornelia seemed to be familiar with the place for she said,

"We would abide with you in that

part of the garden where you sit when grinding meal."

The child led the way to a vine covered trellis of rough poles over which grew a grape-vine, filled with great clusters of dark purple grapes. Under this trellis was a long stone seat and on the ground at one end was a pair of small round stones placed one over the other. The upper stone had a pair of upright wooden handles and, on the ground beside this ancient mill, was a bag of wheat and a wooden bowl half filled with coarse dark flour. The child pointed to the stone seat and then knelt on the ground beside the stone mill.

"I have not yet done the tale of meal my mistress asked of me."

Edith was greatly surprised that such a mite of a child should be set so heavy a task and said :

"Do you not get very tired?"

"Yes—often, but I am a slave to Naaman's wife."

"Now, dear," said Cornelia, "you sit in the shade and rest while I do your

task. Talk with Edith. Tell her of your home and of Naaman and of his visit to Elisha, the man of God."

The poor child seemed to be very tired and gladly rose from the ground and sat beside Edith on the stone bench. Cornelia poured a little of the wheat in the hole in the middle of the upper millstone and then gave the stone a few turns. She seemed very strong and the stones turned easily under her hand.

The child seemed to be greatly interested in Edith's frock and her shoes and said simply :

"I know not of thy country, and thy name is strange to me. Dost thou live in a far country? Is it more than a Sabbath day's journey?"

The child's forlorn and dreary life, a slave to some hard mistress, appealed to Edith so strongly that she drew her towards her as if to comfort her. The child wore only a coarse blue cotton garment over some thin undergarments and her knees and feet were bare and her thin brown arms were dusty with flour and

she seemed to be very small and slight to be doing such heavy labor.

The child sighed as if weary and nestled closer to her and rested her tumbled head of hair upon her breast.

“Now I know thou hast the heart of a mother in Israel who gathereth her little ones about her as a hen gathereth her flock under her wings.”

“Tell me about your mother, dear, and of your home.”

The child gave a little convulsive sob and Edith felt a warm tear fall upon her hand and she bent down and kissed the poor little head. Presently the child said :

“We lived in Samaria, not far from the mount where dwelt Elisha, the man of God. And a great company of Syrians came upon the land of Israel and there was great trouble and the Syrians stole me away and brought me to Syria and gave me for five pieces of silver to my lord, Naaman, who is a captain in the host of the King of Syria, and he gave me to his wife. Now Naaman was a leper and it was only a few weeks



“TELL ME ABOUT YOUR MOTHER, DEAR”

ago that he went upon a journey and came back cured of his leprosy."

The child sat up and with her flour-stained hands swept back the thick black hair that fell over her forehead. Then she added with a flush of conscious pride :

"It was I, even I, a little maid, who was moved by the Lord to speak to my mistress and out of it all came great good and all they who heard of it now know that the God of Israel is a great God and Lord over all the gods of the Syrians. Naaman was often in the house trying to hide his affliction and I was moved to pity for him and one day I said to my mistress, 'Would God my Lord were with the Prophet that is in Samaria for he would recover him of his leprosy.' I doubt not my mistress told the King of Syria for I am sure the Lord was mindful of my words that they fail not. How be it, I knew not of these things until afterwards when Naaman returned with great rejoicings from bathing in our beautiful river in the land of Israel. Thou hast never seen the Jordan?"

“No,” said Edith gravely, “I may—some day.”

“It is one of God’s best gifts to Israel. Thou shouldst see it.”

“You must have been very glad, dear, to have been the means of Naaman’s cure.”

“Nay. It was not I. It was the Lord put it in my heart to speak. I was but the servant of the Most High, that all people might know that God is the Lord. When Naaman returned there was great feasting and rejoicing, both here and in the palace of the king, and Naaman came in haste to see his wife. It was the hour I wait upon her and he came in quickly and did tell her of all God’s great mercy to him. And I, being mindful of his words, forgot to give my mistress her box of ointment and she was wroth and chided me.”

“And did not Naaman reward you or thank you for what you had done?”

“No. They forgot in their rejoicings that it was I who said he should go to Elisha.”

“Oh! I am so sorry for you, dear. It was very, very hard for you. One would have thought that Naaman would have set you free.”

“I had thought he would do that, but he did nothing. It matters not now, for I hear that the fame of this thing has spread through all lands and that many have turned from their idols to worship the God of my fathers. Was I not the servant of the Lord that all might see His majesty and glory? What can all else matter now?”

Edith gently drew the poor little mite closer to her. It all seemed so strange and pitiful. She had spoken in compassion for a man in great affliction and he had been cured through her advice and had forgotten her. And yet she seemed content to be the nameless and unknown means of bringing many people, even great kings and captains to see that God is the Lord. Edith even hoped that something of this child's brave, strong love of God might, by some miracle, come even to her own modern heart.

“What led Naaman to follow your advice, dear?”

“I know not how it came about, but they that are of our household told me afterwards that the King of Syria sent Naaman with many rich gifts to the King of Israel and that the King of Israel was greatly troubled for he said that none, save God, can cure the leper. Haply Elisha heard of it and sent word to the King of Israel saying, ‘Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a Prophet in Israel.’

“And Naaman went to the house of the man of God and Elisha sent out a message that he should wash in Jordan seven times. My master is a proud man and he expected that Elisha would come out and do some great thing before all the people and cure him and he went away in a rage, saying that Abana and Pharpar were better than all the waters of Israel. Oh! And I know he was mistaken there. There is no river in all the world like our Jordan. Thou wilt say that when thou seest it.

“Then they that were with him prevailed upon my master to bathe in Jordan. And so it was he was cured and I saw him when he returned and he was clean and his wife fell upon his neck and kissed him. I, even I, saw all this and I know it is true, and Naaman said to his wife and I heard him say it, ‘Behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.’ And his wife believed with him and all his household. And when I heard it—I was content for the Lord had been mindful of me and the words of my mouth had not failed.”

The child stopped as if weary and leaned her head upon Edith’s shoulder and for a moment there was no sound in the little garden save the drowsy humming of the bees. During the story Cornelia had left the mill and came and sat down next to the child.

Presently she said to the child,

“Be comforted, dear, the fame of all you have done will be kept as a remembrance for ages and ages to come and

more people will hear of all you did than you could ever imagine might dwell in the world."

The child looked up in Edith's face and said,

"And wilt thou tell thy people aught of me?"

"I shall tell many in a far country that I saw you and heard from your own lips the whole story. I shall tell all I see what a dear, brave and patient child you are."

"Nay. It is not of myself thou must speak, but of the Lord who put it in my heart to say my master should go to Elisha to be cured that all men might believe in the God of Israel."

"I will do as you say—and yet I cannot help thinking Naaman might have set you free."

The child's eyes filled with tears.

"Nay. It is God's will, though I have at times dreamed of my mother—and my home in Samaria and I have been heavy with sorrow in the night—yet in the morning I am content, because

of all the Lord did through me, His hand-
maiden.”

Here the child looked towards the little stone mill and, seeing the bag that held the wheat folded and resting on the mill, she said,

“Oh! Thou hast done the whole tale of flour. Thou art strong of arm to have done that.”

“That’s all right,” said Edith. “She did it to give you a little rest.”

“Come,” said Cornelia. “Show our friend some of the pleasant places of the garden.”

“That will I gladly.”

So saying the child rose and taking Edith’s hand led her out of the shady vine-covered arbor into a broad gravelled walk among fruit trees and flowering shrubs. For more than an hour the three girls wandered through a wild tangle of trees, vines, fountains and shady arbors. The child, free from care and labor, seemed to grow young and happy. She named many of the plants and flowers, but to Edith the names were

all so strange she could not remember one of them. And then, as if remembering her home in Samaria, the child described to Edith the flowers of her own dear country and told her of her mother and father and her brothers and sisters. To Edith it was a picture she knew she could never forget as long as she lived.

“Perhaps, dear, some day you may go back to Samaria.”

“Nay. That will never be. I have not been out of this walled garden here for two years. If it be the Lord’s will His handmaiden abide here I shall be content.”

By this time they had come back to the door and Cornelia opened the door as if to go out.

The child’s smiling face grew suddenly very grave.

“Must ye depart? I have had great pleasure in this visit. It has been more to me than the visits of angels.” Then turning to Edith she said, “Thy mother is most fortunate among women.”

Edith not knowing precisely what she meant, said,

“I thank you, dear. I shall tell my mother what you said.”

Then the child gravely put up her face and said,

“Kiss me for a remembrance unto the Lord. May His peace abide with thee always. It is a very precious thing and more to be desired than rubies or much fine gold. I know this, for, was I not His handmaiden when Naaman went up to wash in our Jordan? Thou wilt not forget to go to Jordan and perhaps some of them that dwell there will show thee the mountain where the man of God dwelleth in Israel.”

Edith knelt upon one knee and put her arms about the thin, small mite of humanity with the great heart and high courage and kissed her. Then it seemed as if she could say no more and she went out quickly through the door into the lane and Cornelia followed her and softly closed the door.

As they walked slowly down the lane

they heard the little maid singing to herself one of the songs of her beloved Samaria.

“ I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously.”

IX

THE LITTLE CHAMBER UPON THE WALL

EDITH listened a moment to the voice of the child singing to herself in the garden and then said to her companion,

“What song is that?”

“It is an old, old song handed down from father to son through many generations. It is the song of Israel after the overthrow of the hosts of Pharaoh in the Red Sea.”

“Poor little maid! How beautiful she seemed when she walked with us in the garden!”

“She was happy in your company and trust and faith make people beautiful.”

By this time they had walked on down the lane and presently came to the end of the little town and they soon saw the open country spread out before them under the setting sun, and smiling with

yellow wheat-fields, dark groves of olive trees and vineyards purple with grapes.

“Shall we visit the Shunammite woman—she who built the chamber on the wall wherein the man of God might rest? Shunem is not far and we can take the very road Elisha travelled when he passed her house.”

Edith was more than ready to go and presently the wheat-fields, the vineyards and groves melted away and after a little she found they were walking up a winding road that climbed a steep mountain-side. Near the top she saw that the road led past a large walled estate or castle. There were many people coming and going along the dusty road, some carrying sheaves of wheat, some with great water jars upon their shoulders and others carrying baskets of grapes. None of the people paid the slightest attention to Edith and her friend and with a little care they easily avoided all the people and went up the road towards the white-walled castle.

As they came nearer Edith saw that the place consisted of a group of buildings

completely surrounded by a high stone wall. She soon saw a large square door closed tightly by double doors and in one of these was a little wicket or smaller door just large enough to admit one person at a time.

“Wait here beside the road a moment while I prepare the woman for your visit.”

Edith found a flat stone under a tree and sat down while Cornelia went to the little wicket and knocked and then she saw a man open the wicket and Cornelia disappeared. Edith looked about with the greatest curiosity. Not far away were wheat-fields and she saw both men and women gathering the wheat by cutting it down with sickles. There were also young girls who followed the reapers and gathered up every stalk that none be lost. It reminded her of Ruth gleaning in the fields. Thus watching the reapers and the people in the road the time passed quickly and presently the wicket opened and Cornelia looked out and beckoned her to come.

A man stood just within the little wicket and held it open that Edith might enter. He gravely bowed low before her as if receiving a princess and Edith smiled and said,

“Thank you.” But the man did not seem to understand her and closed the wicket and sat down beside the great door. Edith saw that they had entered a large court-yard surrounded by low stone buildings and filled with horses, camels and mules and great piles of fresh cut grass. There were several men about, feeding the animals, but none paid any attention to her or to Cornelia.

“Come this way. The mistress of the place is within, and is ready to welcome us.”

Cornelia led the way to a door in one of the buildings and then up a few stone steps and they came to a curtain of heavy red cloth. This she pushed aside and Edith saw a large square room lighted from a great opening in the roof. In the middle of the stone floor was a square pool filled with water. On three sides of

the room, next the wall were low wooden seats covered with cushions and red and yellow rugs. There were plants in great stone jars on the floor by the pool and as they entered the room a tall, red flamingo that stood in the water raised his head and spread his gorgeous wings and then, seeming not to see them, he gravely stood on one leg in the water and closed his eyes. To Edith the room seemed strange and barbaric, yet it was evidently the home of some very wealthy woman.

Then a narrow curtain at one side of the room was pushed aside by a young girl in a purple robe who entered and held the curtain, and a tall, dark and beautiful woman appeared. She was clad in a long flowing robe of the color of gold and it seemed to sparkle and shine with a thousand silver ornaments embroidered upon it. The robe was open at the top and showed a white silken scarf embroidered with garnets. Her black hair was loose about her shoulders save where it was bound about her brow with a band of gold. Edith thought she had never

seen a more queenly and beautiful woman. The maid let the curtain fall and disappeared and the lady advanced towards Edith and said with a smile,

“Come, sit upon my right hand in the place of honor, while thy friend sits upon my left.”

With these words she arranged the cushions upon one of the broad seats and motioned to Edith to sit beside her. Then she said to Cornelia,

“Thou tellest me that thy friend’s name is Edith. I never heard of such a name. It is not of any tongue I know.” Then turning to Edith, she said, “Thou art welcome to my house, Edith.”

“Edith,” added Cornelia, “is a stranger and would learn of thee something concerning the man of God, for whom thou didst build the chamber upon the wall.”

“That I will gladly do,” said the woman to Edith. “My husband’s father was a man of Shunem and so also was my father and so it was my husband and I were children together in Shunem and when he became a man he asked my

father of me for a wife and my father did give me in marriage with great rejoicings and my husband built this house for me and my heart was lifted up with joy and pride. And the Lord prospered my husband greatly until he had three score of horses and many she asses and camels and five score sheep and much land. And I, being hard of heart and of a vain pride was cast down, for the Lord denied me a child. And I being disappointed forgot God and murmured greatly.

“One day as I was beyond the gate I saw a man pass by and he seemed very weary and ahungered and I bid him enter and partake of bread. And when he brake bread with us in the house I perceived that he was a man of God—and a great hope sprang up in my heart.

“And then every time the man of God passed our house, he tarried and did eat with us and speak with us and my heart burned within me at his words and I ceased my repining and trusted again in God.

“And I asked my husband to build a

little chamber upon the wall and he did so. Then I placed a bed, and a table and a stool, with a candlestick, in the room and when next the man of God passed this way I bid him rest and he gladly did so. And often, when he sat with us at meat, he told us many things concerning that greater Prophet, Elijah, whose own mantle he wore, and also of the widow woman of Zarephath with whom Elijah abode at the time of the famine, and of the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil that failed not through God's mercy."

"She had a son, had she not?" said Cornelia.

"Yea. She had a son and marvellous things did the Lord do unto her—and to me also. Even as the widow's son died and was made alive again so was it to befall my own son, for God was gracious to me His handmaiden and gave me a son. And I forgot God in my great joy in the man child He had given me. And the child waxed strong and was a delight to my eyes. And one day when he was in the fields with his father the sun smote

him and he cried to his father saying, 'My head! My head!' and his father sent him to me by one of the lads in the field. And my heart was sore afflicted and, in my fear, I cried unto the Lord and He heard me not, for about the hour of noon, my son died in my arms. And I, being distracted with grief, took him to the little chamber of the man of God and laid him upon the bed and closed the door and came quickly to my husband for I was minded to go to the man of God, even to Mount Carmel."

She paused as if overcome with the remembrance of her trouble and for a moment they all sat in silence. Then the woman, growing calmer, drew Edith to her side with an affectionate embrace and told of her hasty journey to Mount Carmel and of the return of the Prophet to her home where the child lay dead in that little chamber.

"The man of God returned with me and went alone to the room with the boy and I know not what he there said or did. I only know that after awhile he opened

the door and his face shone with a radiance as of an angel of the Lord and he bid me take up the child. And I, being fearful, entered the room and the boy held up his arms to me and I gathered him in my bosom in a passion of joy and thanksgiving unto God, for was not this my son that was dead, alive again? And I told my neighbors and kinsfolk and all rejoiced with me in exceeding great joy. And the fame of it went out to all lands and men believed in God the Lord through His great mercy to me His hand-maiden."

Edith sat with her head against the beautiful woman's breast and heard this simple story, told with such truth and earnestness, with a thrill of wonder and surprise. It was all so real, so true, true and true. Was not the woman's warm breath upon her hair, was not her arm about her? Did she not almost hear her heart beating with joy over the marvelous return of her son? How could she doubt a word of it? And, oh, how like the stone rolled away from the sepul-

chre? The woman seemed lost in a happy dream and for a moment or two neither of them spoke. Then Edith felt that the woman saw something or some one and she sat up and looked in her face. Her lips were parted and a light as of heavenly happiness shone in her eyes. Edith looked towards the curtain and saw that the great red flamingo had stepped out of the pool and stood looking towards the curtain. The curtain parted and a young boy entered the room. For a moment Edith sat in silent admiration, gazing at the child. She had never imagined any child could be of such heavenly grace and beauty. He was clad in a yellow silk robe embroidered with delicate silver threads and upon his bare feet were red sandals. His deep brown eyes seemed to glow with the light of some celestial fire and his bare arms were like living alabaster veined in red and blue. His jet black hair fell in curls upon his beautiful shoulders and his hands seemed of exquisite delicacy and refinement as if accustomed to touch-

ing the strings of heavenly harps. The tall, red flamingo walked gravely up to the boy and the child stroked his long neck as he gazed in undisguised curiosity at his mother's guests. To Edith the boy was like a vision of an angel. Where had the boy been—what had he heard, what had he seen—when he lay so still in the Prophet's chamber?

“My son. Come hither and welcome this stranger within our gates.”

“Yes, mother. In a moment. Let me first give the bird this cake thy hand-maiden baked for me.”

So saying he took from the fold in his robe a small cake and offered it to the flamingo. The bird took the cake in its bill and walked solemnly into the pool and dropped the cake into the water as if to soften it.

“Oh! mother,” said the boy with a laugh, “the bird dippeth the cake in the sop.”

Just like a boy, thought Edith, and then she mentally regretted the unspoken speech for was not this boy

apart from all other children in the world?

“My son! I bid thee come hither.”

“Yes, mother. I am here.”

“This is Edith. She is a stranger within our gates and thou must do her honor.”

The boy came nearer and made a low bow to Edith and then to Cornelia. And then he said to Edith,

“God’s peace abide with thee.”

To Edith this simple speech seemed like a blessing. Had not this child but just returned from heaven? She wanted to ask him a hundred questions and yet knew not how to begin.

“Thou art come from a far country?” said the boy. “Tell me about it.”

“She is of they who come to the Book by the door,” said Cornelia. “Thou wouldst not understand anything she told thee, for the glory of one country is not like the glory of another and yet God did make them all.”

Edith gave one look of gratitude to Cornelia, for the boy’s question had

troubled her. How could she possibly explain to him America or the twentieth century?

“My son,” said the boy’s mother, “thou art forgetful of thy duties to the stranger within our gates.”

“I forget, mother, and I crave the stranger’s forgiveness.” Then turning to Edith he said, “I have four horses and a hundred sheep my father gave me as a heritage. Wouldst thou like to see them?”

“I would like to see them very much, if it is not too much trouble.”

“Thou art a strange maiden,” said the boy. “Hospitality can be naught but a pleasure. Come. Shall we go?”

“Go, both of ye,” said the woman to Edith and Cornelia, “and then return to me and we will break bread together.”

For an hour Edith and her companion followed the boy through the yards and stables where the horses and cattle were kept. The boy wished them to see and admire everything, but to Edith it all seemed very crude and wild and it did



“THIS IS EDITH. SHE IS A STRANGER WITHIN
OUR GATES”

not interest her. She had only one thought and that was to see and hear the child himself. Cornelia assumed the honors of the occasion and asked the boy many questions about his life, his duties and pleasures in this his father's home, and so kept up an interest for them both in the things that interested the boy. Then, having seen all, the boy led the way back to the house. This seemed an opportunity for Edith to ask the boy the one question she was most anxious to ask. To draw his attention to the matter she asked if she might see the little chamber on the wall.

“Thou art welcome, though it is but a plain little room.”

“It is the room of the man of God?” said Cornelia.

“Yes. And mother says it sanctifies the whole house. It was there mother placed me—when I fell asleep in the Lord. I go there whenever the man of God is here—to give thanks for all the mercies the Lord God bestowed upon me and to listen to His Prophet, for mother

says I must incline my heart unto wisdom."

To Edith this was a new and unexpected side to the boy's character. Before, he had seemed to be merely an exceedingly beautiful child. Now she was eager to hear more, eager to ask him what he had seen and heard—while, as he expressed it, he had been "asleep in the Lord."

Cornelia seemed to divine what was in her mind and said,

"Is not this the stair to the little chamber?"

They had been standing by the wall of one of the buildings and near a flight of narrow stone steps leading to a curious little building perched on the top of the great wall that surrounded the houses and stables.

"That is the chamber of the man of God. There is no one there and ye canst visit it, if ye wish. I will sit here in the sun and wait your return."

Cornelia led the way up the steps and

Edith followed her feeling a little disappointed at leaving her questions unsaid. A moment later Cornelia pushed aside a heavy red curtain and they both entered a tiny room with bare stone walls and rough wooden floor. There was a small square opening high on the wall that served for a window, there were also a few plain, rude pieces of furniture, and yet it seemed to Edith some sacred place and she stood just within the curtain gazing in silence at the little room.

As she stood there, in wondering awe, her companion put her arm about her and said,

“Edith, I have learned to love you, therefore I must chide. Do not ask the child aught concerning the time he was asleep. No man can know the things of God. It hath not entered the heart of man to conceive of the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. The child could not tell you anything: no one can ever tell anything whatever of the life to come. We could not bear the wonder and glory of it all. Ask

nothing, for such knowledge is too high for any one of us."

"Oh! pardon me. I didn't think. I am glad now I did not ask him."

"The boy remembers nothing. It is as if a man came out of a dark place suddenly into the full light of noonday and instantly went back to his ancient darkness. He could recall nothing for the very brightness of the sunlight."

"But, dear. He is so beautiful. He seems—so heavenly—you understand."

"Yes. I see what you mean and I can tell you only this: Before the child died he was less beautiful and it must be that he caught and brought back a marvellous beauty as if the heavenly radiance had touched him with a diviner grace. His mother sees that plainly and worships the child with a new love, because she thinks it is a sign that the angels of the Lord smiled upon him while she was away upon that dreadful journey to Mount Carmel to call the man of God in her misery."

For a moment they stood looking at

the bare little room and then Edith turned away and went silently down the stairs. She could not speak. It was as if she had been to some high and holy place, a place to dream about and to remember forever and forever.

At the foot of the stairs they met the boy again and he led them back to the room where they had met his mother. She was already there and invited them to sit beside her, while a little maid, in a long, flowing robe of red woollen, handed them little cakes and tiny cups of honey. Then, having been refreshed, Cornelia said they must be upon their journey. The boy and his mother came with them to the gate to bid them farewell in God's name.

To Edith, the touch of the boy's hand, as, with a smile of heavenly serenity, he said, "The peace of the man of God go with thee," seemed a benediction from heaven. The woman wished them a pleasant journey under God's guidance and then they both turned away and went down the road.

X

THE NIGHT IN THE DESERT

THIS visit to the Shunammite woman left Edith anxious to go on farther into the Book and to see more, and as they walked slowly down the mountain road she said to her companion,

“Can we not go on farther into the Book? May I not see the rising of the star in the East? May I not now take the road to Bethlehem?”

Cornelia put her arm about her friend and said with gentle gravity,

“You are not yet ready, dear. Wait—until another season. Let us, rather, go back to the beginning when the world was younger. Let us visit that Dreamer who became a Prince in Egypt.”

“Oh! You mean Joseph. Let me see him as I have seen the others—not as a

great ruler in Egypt, but as the boy with the coat of many colors.”

“We have only to return to the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis and we can find him wandering in the wilderness in search of his brethren. Then, too, if you wish, we can go with him to Dothan, even to the pit in the wilderness.”

Edith was more than willing to go and gladly took her companion's hand, for she knew they would now journey to a far distant part of the book. They walked on for some time and slowly the landscape about them faded away and after a while Edith saw that they had entered a broad and grassy valley with here and there groups of trees among low, wooded hills. Presently Cornelia stopped and shading her eyes with her hand looked far off over the plain as if searching for some one.

“I see a man tending some sheep off to the south. This place in the book is the thirty-seventh of Genesis and the fifteenth verse and it was here that Joseph lost his way on his journey to Shechem.

It is possible the flock of sheep off there belongs to the man who found the boy wandering in the fields. Let us go that way."

They walked on over the grassy plain for a few moments and then Cornelia said,

"I see him. I will meet him and you follow me a little way behind and then I will speak to him and bring him to you."

Edith paused and looked all about over the wide green plain, but saw no one. Her companion seemed to have seen some one for she walked confidently towards a large oak tree that stood like a great leafy tent in the sunny prairie. She came to the tree and then she stopped and beckoned to Edith to follow her. As she came nearer to the tree she saw in the shade, by the huge stem of the tree, something that seemed like a mass of mingled colors. Cornelia raised her hand to her lips as if commanding silence and Edith walked more slowly on the soft grass. As she came to the edge of the shadow of the great tree she saw a boy clad in a loose flowing robe of red, embroidered and

decorated in white, brown and green. He was seated upon the ground with his bare head resting upon his knees as if in great trouble.

The two girls stood looking at him in silence for a moment and then Cornelia said softly,

“ Joseph ! ”

To Edith's surprise the boy lifted his head and turned upon her friend great, solemn, black eyes that seemed bright with tears. The boy at Shunem had a face of heavenly beauty. This boy was not beautiful, but rather of a kingly dignity and majesty, as if he were a youthful prince born to rule a nation.

“ Why do you linger here ? ”

“ My father sent me to seek my brethren in Shechem. Alas ! I have lost my way and know not where to find them.”

“ Perhaps the way will be shown—at the right season. As that time has not come we would abide here awhile and talk with you of your father Israel. I have with me one from a far country who would be very glad to meet you.”

So saying Cornelia laid her hand gently upon the boy's eyes and he looked up and seeing Edith he rose to his feet and came nearer to her and with a low bow said in a rich and beautiful voice,

“Now may the Lord bless thee and thy people. I judge thy country must be beyond the uttermost sea, far to the west, for I saw not any maid of thy appearance before.”

“Edith comes from a far country, even beyond the going down of the sun.”

“Thou art beloved of the Lord for thou hast a pleasant name though it is new to my ear. Is thy father a great King in thy country?”

Edith smiled and shook her head.

“Perhaps his tents are spread beside rich pastures and his sheep are led by his shepherds beside pleasant waters.”

Edith again shook her head and the boy added,

“It matters not, for I perceive that the Lord hath looked upon thee with favor. Will ye not both rest awhile in the shade for the day is warm?”

“I am now called away to assist some one who is seeking a text. I will leave Edith in your care until I return and you can tell her of your father and of his vision at Bethel.”

“I too, have had a dream from the Lord.”

“Tell Edith of both thy dreams. Edith, tarry with the lad for he is the son of his father, Israel.”

“The maid is my guest. No harm can befall her,” said the boy with manly dignity.

Cornelia smiled and waved her hand to them in farewell and disappeared among a group of trees not far away. For a moment Edith did not know what to do. The boy had the face of a lad about fourteen years of age, yet he had the stature and bearing of a young man and bore himself with great dignity as if he were conscious of the kingly future before him. How would he treat her and how should she conduct herself before a youth whom she knew would be a great ruler in Egypt? He set her mind at rest very

quickly for he showed that he was, in truth, a boy, with a boy's simplicity and naturalness.

"Wilt thou not sit on the grass by the tree while I sit at thy feet, for I perceive that thou art come from the Lord."

Edith sat down with her back to the great stem of the tree and the boy sat on the grass a little below her as if she were a guest of honor and he the humble host. Then the boy waited, for he evidently thought it proper that she should speak first.

"Your father! Was he not Jacob—when he was young?"

The boy nodded and smiled and said, "I knew thou art of the family of some Prophet of the Lord."

"I am a stranger here. Tell me about your father's dream."

"Hast thou ever been to Beersheba as thou goest towards Haran?"

"No. All these places are new to me."

"I am sorry for that, because it was by that way my father went when he had that dream at the place we now call



“TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FATHER'S DREAM”

Bethel,—though there be some that call it Luz. My father hath told me the story many times. He was a young man, at the time, his father Isaac sent him to Padan-aram. Now it came to pass that as he journeyed the sun went down and he lay down to sleep and using of the stones of that place such as would serve as a pillow for his head. Thou knowest my people dwell in tents. When with the sheep or upon a journey men often sleep out of doors. Is not the sky the roof of God's house and the stars the lamps thereof? They that trust Him are within the Lord's house everywhere. Then my father slept and 'Behold, it was a ladder set up on the earth, even unto heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.' And my father in his dream heard the voice of the Lord speaking to him and the Lord did promise to be with him and with all his children and saying that in us should all the families of the earth be blessed."

The boy paused in his story and sat

regarding his visitor with some anxiety. Then he said,

“Thou art from a far country. Canst thou interpret my father’s dream to me?”

For a moment Edith was confused by the boy’s question and she said nothing.

“I had hoped thou couldst interpret the dream. How can it be that in us all the families of the earth are to be blessed? We are very few, a handful of men and women. How can all men be blessed in us who are such a feeble folk?”

To Edith the boy’s question seemed to imply a doubt or, at least, a feeling that the promise of the dream would not be fulfilled for a very long, long time. It filled her with regret, that knowing all that she did of the Book, she could tell him nothing of the glory and wonder of his own future and of the future of countless generations that should follow him. After a pause she said,

“What does your father think of the dream?”

“That it is of the Lord.”

“Then is not that enough? Tell me more of your father’s dream.”

“There is no more. My father awakened at the rising of the sun and arose and bowed before the Lord saying, ‘Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.’ Then my father set up the stone that he had used for a pillow and poured some oil, that he had within the skin of a kid, upon the stone to sanctify it unto the Lord and did call the place Bethel. And to this day the stone is the sign of the Lord’s promise to my father and his children forever. And after that my father journeyed to the people of the East and then it was he met my mother, Rachel.”

“Perhaps the blessing had begun,” said Edith with a smile.

“Yes. For my father loved Rachel and yet—that may not be the interpretation of his dream. There may be another meaning.”

“I am sure there is another meaning. What it is I cannot tell you.”

“I wish thee could, for thou seemest

to be a maid of discernment. Later my father built an altar at that same place and the Lord spake again to my father concerning the promise of the dream and bid my father change his name to Israel as he is known to this day of all men."

"Have you not also had dreams?"

"Yea. Two and both were of the Lord, though He spake not to me in words, as to my father, but in signs and wonders. I dreamed and 'behold my brethren and I were binding sheaves in my father's field: and, lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright: and, behold, all my brothers' sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to my sheaf.' I told my brethren of this my dream and they hated me and spoke harshly of me to my kinsfolk. And again the Lord spoke to me by a dream. Behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. This dream hath troubled me for I know not its meaning. I wish thou might read the interpretation thereof."

Edith smiled and shook her head.

She felt she knew—and yet must not and could not tell him, so she contented herself with saying,

“If it is of the Lord—wait.”

“Yea. I can wait for now I know this of a verity: The Lord abideth forever and ever and His promise is sure. If I am to be a King or Ruler—it will be so—if I be worthy of it.”

Edith moved forward a little and took the boy's hand. He seemed grateful for he turned upon her his large, steadfast, serious eyes and said simply,

“His blessing rest upon thee for I know by that sign thou believest my dream.”

Then he rose and looked off over the plain and said, “I see thy friend returning and it is time I sought my brethren.”

Edith saw Cornelia approaching and rising she went forward to meet her while the boy remained by the tree.

“The hour is at hand,” said Cornelia. “He will now go to his brethren and they will tear off his coat of many colors and cast him into a pit to perish, for they

are greatly angered at his dreams. And after that they will sell him as a slave into Egypt. Yonder is that certain man of this place with his sheep. Let us hear what he says to the boy."

The flock of sheep in feeding had moved up towards the tree and the shepherd apparently saw Joseph for he went to him and said,

"What seekest thou?"

"I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks?"

"They are departed hence," said the man as he pointed with his staff towards a low gap in the hills to the south, "for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

Joseph seemed to be pleased with this information and thanked the man and then the man followed his flock across the prairie. Joseph then came to where Edith and Cornelia stood and said,

"I go now to my brethren at Dothan."

"May we not go with you?"

"Nay. My brethren hate me by reason of my dreams. They are so angered with me that I know not what they

might say or do if they saw two maids with me."

"We shall be to them as they that are not."

"I wish I could go with you," said Edith, "for there may be much before you that may be hard to bear. We may not be able to help you—but, at least, we can give you our sympathy. Besides, I want to hear more of your home and of your father, Israel. Is it far to Dothan?"

"About two hours' journey. I am rejoiced that thou carest to go with me for I perceive that thou art of a good heart and wise above all maidens I ever met."

"Then we will both go," said Cornelia.

Through the long afternoon and the brief twilight of the coming night Edith passed through the most tragic experience of her young life. Of all her visits to the children of the Book this seemed the most sad and yet it was the most deeply interesting for it showed her a youth confident in the promise of a dream he believed sent from the Lord, and sustained by a trust that seemed

to abide through every trial and disappointment.

The boy led the way over the level prairie towards the south where there seemed to be a valley between the hills and, Edith and Cornelia on either side, gladly followed him. It was not difficult with a few questions to lead him to talk of himself, his short young life, of his home in his father's wandering tents. He seemed to show them the more youthful and boyish side of his character for he talked pleasantly as he told of many things that were to Edith strange and most interesting. She asked many questions about his home and experience and he smiled at what seemed to him to be strange mistakes and still stranger questions. He seemed really happy in his companions' society and once or twice laughed as he told of some memory of his boyhood.

To Edith, this walk and friendly talk with the boy, while it was very pleasant, had a certain sadness, for, at every step, she knew he was drawing nearer to his

tragic fate. She began to wonder what this, now light-hearted boy, would do when sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites. Would he shrink in cowardly fear or would he be brave and strong in a real trust in the Lord?

Cornelia, older and more experienced in the Book than Edith, led the boy to talk chiefly of himself and of his home, partly because thereby would Edith learn the more of his time and people and partly because of kindness to the boy that he might enjoy in pleasant converse the last few moments of his freedom.

So it was the three companions walked across the plain and coming to the hills entered a narrow canyon that led them by a stony winding path through the hills into quite another country. The canyon ended abruptly at the edge of a vast and sandy plain spread out before and below them. Close beside the hills there was a strip of rather poor grass and beyond this ribbon of green spread the dreary yellow desert reaching to the very

horizon where already the descending sun burned crimson in the cloudless west.

Suddenly the boy stopped and said,

“I see my father’s flocks. My brethren must be near, for it is time to fold them and set a watch for the night.”

They walked on a little farther and then Edith saw a number of rough-looking men, dressed in sheep’s skins, gathered about a little camp-fire. The men seemed to discover Joseph for they pointed at him and she could see that they were greatly excited about something and were plainly quarrelling among themselves. To herself and her companion they paid no attention whatever and she knew that they did not see them.

“It is the camp of my brethren. I shall abide with them to-night and to-morrow journey back to my father’s tents in the vale of Hebron.”

“And here we must leave you,” said Cornelia. “If any mishap befall, keep up a good courage for the Lord is with you always.”

“Do not forget your dreams—even if things do look dark. It will be all right—in the end, I am sure,” said Edith.

“I thank thee, for I perceive of a truth thy people are a discerning family. I have had thy company with great pleasure. May the Lord abide with ye both this night. Where will ye go, for, lo, the sun goeth down?”

“We, too, are with the Lord,” said Cornelia. “We have help thou knowest not of. Farewell.”

The boy said farewell also and turned away towards his brothers' camp and leaving Edith and her friend standing in the little path that led down to the great plain below.

To Edith's surprise the tragic ending of this pleasant afternoon came quickly. The men advanced to meet Joseph, still quarrelling among themselves. One of the younger men seemed to protest against something the others wished to do, but he was only one against many. The next moment three of the men met Joseph, and with loud cries of anger and

derision tore his beautiful colored coat from his back and, rending it in shreds, threw it upon the ground leaving the boy clad in some white undergarment that covered him like a robe. In vain, the poor boy made tearful protests. In vain the younger of the men tried to protect him. One of the older men raised his staff as if to strike the boy, and calling him a dreamer, cried that they would see that his dreams never came true.

“Take me away,” said Edith to her companion. “I cannot bear to see such cruelty.”

“Nay. Be not troubled. These men are but unwitting instruments in the Lord’s hands. They will not harm him seriously, but will cast him in a pit digged for wild beasts. We cannot aid him if we would. Let us then turn aside awhile till the night cometh. There is a tree. Let us seek its shelter.”

Cornelia led the way and presently they came to a low and leafy tree and here they sat down on the grass out of sight and sound of the dreadful scene they had

just witnessed. Here too they had a wide view over the vast, sandy desert below. The setting sun, a ball of crimson fire, was just sinking in the cloudless yellow sky. The last red touch of the sun disappeared and the purple night came quickly out of the East and spread over all to the West. Just as this dusky twilight faded Edith saw off on the horizon the figures of tall ungainly beasts, marching, in silhouette, against the sky in a long, trailing procession.

“What is that moving on the horizon?”

“Some merchant’s caravan laden with spicery and journeying into Egypt. They will follow the trail till it brings them nearer and then they will turn off towards the south.”

Soon after this the stars came out and then the great white moon rose above the hills to the east and filled all the desert with silvery light. Then, after they had rested awhile, Cornelia rose and said,

“Come. The hour is at hand. Let us go.”

Edith rose and took her companion's hand and together they went back to the place where they had left Joseph and his brethren. There was no one in sight. Even the little camp-fire had gone out and there was nothing save the stony path leading down the hill to the vast, dim desert—no sight or sound of life anywhere.

“ Surely they have not —— ? ”

She felt she could not speak the dreadful thought and was glad when Cornelia said,

“ They have unwittingly carried out the Lord's will and thrown him in a pit by the edge of the desert. Come. Let us find him.”

With these words she led the way down to the path towards the desert. Presently, as they came nearer to the edge of the sandy plain, Edith saw twinkling lights in the distance.

“ What are those lights over there ? ”

“ It is the caravan going to Egypt that we saw at set of sun. These merchants often travel in the night to avoid the

heat of the day. Stop a moment. The place must be hereabouts. Be careful, for there is a pit digged here for a well or for a trap for wild beasts."

Edith looked carefully about in the moonlight and presently saw that they had come to the ragged and irregular edge of a pit or excavation in the sandy soil. It seemed very dark and still and she drew back in alarm. Cornelia advanced cautiously to the edge and then kneeling down peered into the black pit.

After a moment or two she called softly, twice,

"Joseph! Joseph!"

Then out of the blackness below came the boy's voice but strangely altered by terror and misery.

"Have pity on me, oh! Lord."

"Nay. It is not the Lord calling thee, but thy friends. Is it well with thee, Joseph?"

"Ah! It is thou. Now am I rejoiced. Thou must help me to escape."

It seemed dreadful to Edith to stand there helpless and unable to rescue the

boy and she waited anxiously to see what her friend would do and say. For herself, her first thought was to rescue the boy and to send him back to his father Israel.

“Joseph,” said Cornelia, with a firm and commanding voice that was touched with infinite pity, “the hour is at hand when the Lord shall deliver thee. Be of good heart for He is ever with thee.”

“Nay. Ye might help me to escape.”

“Joseph,” said Edith as she knelt at the edge of the pit, “remember your dreams. The interpretation of your dreams may be grander and more splendid than you can ever imagine.”

“Ah! Now I know thou must be the daughter of a great Prophet in thy country. Thy words are a comfort to my heart.”

“Are you in any pain? Is the water deep?”

“The pit is dry and my hurts are soothed. Unless some wild beast find me in the night I may live for a day or two longer before I perish for lack of food.”

Here Cornelia touched Edith on the shoulder and said,

“Come. The end is at hand.”

Edith called down into the pit and said,

“Be of a good heart—and trust in your dreams.”

They then both rose and walked away for a little space, for the caravan had arrived and stopped not far from the mouth of the pit. Then from the long line of men and animals standing there in the moonlight a man came forward as if to examine the pit. He picked up a stone and threw it into the pit, but there came no sound out of its black depths. Then the man went back to his companions, saying to them,

“There is no water. The pit is dry.”

Then Edith saw the men loosen the harness of the camels and the tall awkward creatures lay down to rest on the sand. Some of the men made little fires, as if to prepare supper, while other men fed the camels. She stood watching the strange scene with the greatest interest and wondering what would happen to

the boy in the pit. She hoped the stone the man had thrown into the pit had not hurt him and was glad that he had given no sign that he was there.

Presently, as they stood watching this singular scene, Cornelia said in a whisper,

“Hither come three of Joseph’s brethren.”

“What do they mean to do? Do they mean to rescue him?”

“One of them would do so, but he is not among these. They have another plan that will, through its cruel mischief, carry out the Lord’s will—and lead to the fulfilling of the poor boy’s dreams.”

The three shepherds passed quite close to where Edith and her friend stood, but paid not the slightest attention to them and soon mingled with the men of the caravan who were seated beside their little camp-fires. It was then made plain that the three shepherds proposed some bargain to the merchants for there was a great deal of discussion and rather voluble dispute, though the men were all too far away to catch a word that was said.

Then, after an exchange of some money that Edith saw by the moonlight was silver, the three shepherds borrowed a rope of a camel driver and going to the pit quickly drew Joseph out and led him away to the merchants. One of the merchants bound the boy's hands behind his back with a cord and then tied a rope round his neck and tied the other end to the harness of one of the sleeping camels. The three shepherds, the boy's own brothers, looked on in utter indifference and silently took the path up the hill and disappeared.

Edith saw all this in silence. She seemed so helpless in the matter that she almost felt herself as if in some sense suffering with him. Cornelia put her arm about her and kissed her upon the cheek as if to brush away the tear that had fallen there.

“Dear heart. Be comforted. They who read of these things see all things as through a glass, darkly. It has been given to you to see this young shepherd boy who is to be a King, face to face and

to know the real interpretation of his dreams. We stand one side and see things as God sees things for we know whereof Joseph knows not. He feels only the cords that bind his hands, he feels the cruel desertion of his brethren—and yet does he trust in the Lord. Come, let us speak with him before he departs into Egypt.”

So saying she led Edith to the caravan. Neither the men nor their beasts paid the slightest attention to them and presently they found Joseph standing with his face to the silver moon—a white statue in the night.

“Ah. Thou art come to mock at my misery.”

“Oh! No. No. You know we could not be so unkind. We have only regret and pity for you.”

“Thou art like the dove that flew back to the Ark in the days of Noah—a sign of comfort. May the Lord bless thee for thy words.”

“And you will not doubt your dreams—will you?”

“Nay. Thou misjudgest me for now I know of a verity that God is the Lord. I communed with Him in my misery while in the pit. Did not Isaac trust in Him even when laid upon the altar? I go a slave unto Egypt yet do I not doubt anything.”

“Your dreams may be nearer to their unfolding than you imagine.”

“Yea. Thou art a maid wiser than all the maids of my people, and I tell thee that out of the stones of that pit I too, have builded Bethel—as did my father Jacob.”

“Come,” said Cornelia. “The master of the caravan is calling. The halt is over. God abide with thee, Joseph.”

“The Lord have ye both in His keeping. Your visit has been a balm to my sore heart. Farewell.”

Edith and Cornelia hastily withdrew to one side of the trail as the ungainly beasts rose to their feet. Then came loud cries and a cracking of whips and the tinkle of many bells and the long procession of men and camels took up its

lonely way through the silent night to far off Egypt. Last of all came a camel and a young man walking beside it. He did not seem to see them for he held his head high as if gazing upon the stars—the very stars that in his dream made obeisance to him—a Prince of the House of Israel.

Edith watched the strange, wild procession until it was lost in the darkness and silence of the desert. Then they both quietly turned back upon the path that led to the hills. Just as they approached the empty pit they saw a young man clad in sheepskins approaching. He did not pay any attention to them, but went directly to the pit and kneeling down on the edge called aloud,

“Joseph! Joseph! Where art thou?”

There was no answer and the man threw up his arms in despair and disappeared in the darkness.

“It is that other and more compassionate brother who hoped to rescue Joseph.”

“He is too late.”

“Yes—too late.”

XI

THE SEVENTH DAY

TO Edith the tragic ending of her little journey in the company of Joseph made a profound and rather sad impression. Even now she could see the black, empty mouth of the pit. Behind her lay the vast, gray, moonlit desert into whose gloom the boy had just disappeared. The intense reality of all she had seen chilled her young heart and, for a moment, she forgot that she knew he was safe and that all this shame and misery were but steps to higher things and happier days.

Then she felt her friend's hand upon her arm and in the white moonlight she saw her beautiful face close to her own and her eyes dewy with girlish sympathy.

"Dear heart. Be comforted. Let your own faith be as this boy's faith."

"I wish it were."

“ You did wisely to comfort and sustain him at the last with words of confident hope.”

“ I felt I must tell him that his dreams were coming true. I knew they would come true.”

“ Yes. And Joseph had faith without knowledge, which was a greater faith than yours. Come. Let us go.”

“ Where? ”

“ Back to some quiet spot near the door where we can sit awhile and, for a moment, ponder upon the things we have seen.”

Edith silently gave her hand to her friend and suffered her to lead her where she would. She had seen so much of life in these ancient days that she felt it would be a relief just to sit down quietly in some pleasant corner of these strange lands and talk it all over.

Absorbed in her own thoughts and trusting implicitly in her friend's care she walked on unheeding the changing scene, till, in the growing light of a beautiful morning, she saw a new world,



“ SHE SAW A NEW WORLD ”

so fair, so wonderfully beautiful that she paused in wonder and delight.

“Oh! How lovely—how perfectly beautiful.”

“Yes. It is the morning of the seventh created day. We have come back to the first verse of the second of Genesis. The heavens and the earth are finished. Last night, at the going down of the sun, was the evening of the sixth day.”

“Why, it is so calm and sweet, so fair and still that it seems like a Sunday morning in June.”

“It is the Seventh day. And God rested on the Seventh day from all His work which He had made. Let us sit here on this mossy bank under these flowering trees and watch the sun rise on this first Sabbath morning.”

Edith gladly sat down, for the splendor of the Eastern sky filled her with wonder and she wished just to sit still and look at the glory of this first Sabbath morn. The vast landscape of splendid, inspiring mountains, whose snowy tops were already blushing rosy red in the

west, graceful hills and smiling meadows, noble forests that clothed the mountains as with a garment, the bewildering profusion of flowers and over all the immense and gorgeous sky made a picture unlike anything she had ever seen. The air was vocal with a thousand birds and when the sun, at last, appeared they seemed to join in wheeling choirs rejoicing together before the Lord.

As the sun rose higher a river caught its light and sent out silvery reflections along all its winding way.

“What river is that?”

“It flows westward—out of the garden, which is to the eastward. It parts into four ways beyond the mountains and this we see is Pison which compasseth the land of Havilah.”

“The Garden! Is it near?”

“It is to the eastward—about a day’s journey.”

“Is it more beautiful than this?”

“It is very different, less wild and mountainous, more quiet, more like a place of pleasantness.”

“Oh! What is that? What are all these creatures?”

“Every beast of the field, the fowls of the air and the creeping things.”

Edith gazed for more than an hour at the multitude of living creatures that roamed the wide fields all about her. There were beautiful and gentle lions and graceful and playful leopards, lambs, doves, rabbits, and silver-coated foxes, every manner of living creature that she had ever seen and hundreds she never saw before and all freely mingled together in friendly and peaceful neighborhood as if there were none to harm them or make them afraid. It seemed to her the most wonderful sight she had ever seen in the Book.

Then, at last, as the sun rose higher and the day grew warmer the birds ceased their songs and all living things seemed to rest in leafy shades and a sweet and holy calm filled all the wondrous scene.

All this made a profound impression upon Edith and she turned to her

friend and said with just a little sigh of regret,

“I must tell mother everything I have seen since I entered the Book. I wonder—can I remember it all?”

“It will be given you to remember these things.”

“I hope so. There was that poor forlorn little thing in the garden in Syria. She seemed to care nothing for herself. She forgot her own hard lot in the thought that, through her, so many were brought to worship the God of her fathers. I wish I had a little of her patience.”

“It will be so. It is borne in upon me that it was for this you were permitted to enter the Book by the door. Listen, dear. You have seen the life that was, you are living in the life that now is, you met the boy who saw, even if only a brief moment, the life that is to be.”

“Oh! I’m sure I can never forget that child’s heavenly beauty.”

“You will forget none of these you have seen. Each and all brought you a lesson. Remember them and something

of their trust and faith, patience and courage will grow up in your own heart. It cannot be that you should have seen them and not have learned from each some lesson."

"Oh. I am sure I hope it will be so."

"It will be so—be sure of that. Come. Let us go."

Cornelia had risen and Edith stood beside her and offered her hand.

"Lead me, dear, where you will."

They walked on a few steps and then Cornelia said,

"We are again—at the door."

"Oh! Is it so near? Must I go? Must I leave you?"

"Dear heart. Take this comfort with you. It will be given you to remember every word spoken by all those you met. I perceive that already you are greatly changed."

"I—changed—how can that be?"

"Something of the spirit of each of the two nameless maids, something of the spirit of David and Samuel, Joseph and

all the others is already growing up in your own heart."

"Oh! I am very glad—if that is true."

"It is true and will be more true as you remember these things. Here is—the door in the Book."

Edith looked up and saw the door partly open before them. She could even see the firelight of her mother's home shining in at the door. As it opened wider she saw the settle, the hearth and all the familiar room. The firelight shone on the beautiful face of her friend and Edith cried,

"How can I leave you? I shall never cease to remember and love you."

"The love of God abide with thee, Edith, forever and ever. Farewell."

"Kiss me once—dear—for a benediction."

An instant later Edith passed through the open door and it closed softly and Edith sat down upon the settle and gazed in wonder upon the familiar fire flickering among its logs upon the hearth. Then she looked at the table and there

stood the Book upon the table just as she had left it and with the little key still in the door. She rose and went to the table and with trembling fingers took out the precious key and held it in her hand.

What should she do with it? Then she suddenly remembered the little gold cross that she wore suspended by a gold chain from her neck. She often wore the cross under her dress. It had lain there close to her heart through all the time she was in the Book. She gently drew it forth and touched a spring and the back of the cross opened, showing a place for a tiny picture or a lock of hair.

She slipped the mystic key in the cross, closed the opening and slipped it back beneath her dress. She would always wear the cross and the key thus—next her heart.

A moment later her mother entered the room.

“Why, Edith, dear. How well you look. Deerfield air must agree with you. You seem very happy. What have you been doing? You look as if you had

seen something too wonderfully beautiful for words."

"I have—it is too wonderful for words — Where is Cousin Lizzy Williams?"

Just then she saw her cousin enter the room.

"I am here, dear. I was wakeful and restless and I did not retire and when I heard your voice I came to you."

She stopped abruptly by the door and then said,

"It is not possible, child—you found the legend?"

"She has found something, for I never saw a child so changed in my life. What does it all mean?"

"I will tell you—mother—for I can never forget it as long as I live. Sit down both of you—and I will tell you everything."

So it was Edith told her mother and her cousin everything concerning the door in the Book—except the hiding-place of the key. It seemed as if she must keep that a secret and wisely told them so and they consented that she

should keep its whereabouts a secret as long as she wished. Neither of them could ever enter the door. That must be for a child like Edith herself. She told all, of every visit, of all that each one had said to her, and of every scene she had passed through. In the next few days Edith's mother wrote out every word that Edith had told her concerning her journeys in the Book.

And all that Edith said is here set forth, just as Edith told her mother, not forgetting a single word, for had not Cornelia said truly, "it will be given you to remember these things."

THE END

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