

Auto biography.

Draft
Re-written in
49

Part VIII. My Life Work.

Fourth College Session.

1885.

Autumn Term (10) Sept 29: —

1886.

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[Written Nov 1926 — see p. 132]

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1885. Oct. Term. (Oct 15)

In reading the external account of this new Session, it may appear a good & happy one, but it was neither. I went with hope, & physically stronger than before. I write down that it is years since I had a September at home without visitors to be entertained, & I tell of the long fragrant days in the Hop-garden, distributing the fallen apples & sometimes little books among our village friends; then there was a fine harvest of everlasting-flowers to be reaped & stored, & those glorious Zinnias in the upper garden to be arranged, & the hidden furlong where I could walk & meditate & pray. There were lectures to prepare too. I had dabbled in Logic, but now I was to deliver a real course for the B.A., & better still, the marvellous analogy of the laws of Light opened out before me, & I wrote a course of Bible lessons on the Solar spectrum & its meaning. Then for the College, I had secured J. Willoughby as resident Lecturer, & May Petrie B.A. as non-resident, & for more entering to work at a higher level, - was it not good?

Alas & alas, it was not. The first trial was the lack of Students. I had really worked hard, organising & taking more Meetings than I have mentioned & explaining about the College, yet, while the first Session doubled our numbers & rose from 5 to 15, this the fourth Session had only brought up our number to 16. All the Council were discouraged, & some were angry. More acute than this was the almost forcing upon me a Miss A. Sturge, a woman of 30, a Unitarian, who said she "would take a great interest in the Students". She had been at Newnham & hated it, she had been at Lady Margaret & said it was "perfect", till she suddenly left in a whirlwind of rage over refusing obedience to some law of the College. How could I let such an one loose among my flock? Yet there stood the empty rooms, & the Council wished it. Seldom have I been in more utter despair. Would no one stand by me? Nannie & Ralph both knew her personally & thought I ought to try her, & my soul cried out in a sting of pain. At last I said to myself, "It is unkind, it is unfair, but was not Christ treated unkindly & unfairly? Would you not like to share with Him?" With many tears I bowed & said, "Yes". Then suddenly the weight was lifted, for Miss Sturge did something, - I forget what, - which shewed she was eccentric, high upon lunacy, & she had to be "under care" for a while. Once more I breathed freely.

The darlins gathered again at once. On Oct 7th I write, - "The Council Meeting, & I seem to be looked on with suspicion by almost all. I feel as though I could read their mean unworthy thoughts, but I fear I may be getting morbid on the subject. I dived into Westminster Abbey with a heavy heart. Their aims & mine seem to be quite different." Oct 9th I add, "Miss (Mrs) Bayly's letter dictated by the Council is worse still. They are dissatisfied with me, & I suppose I must resign. Think of my high hopes & visions ending thus! - but after many unkindnesses, here is a direct infringement of contract, & that means that the balance has tipped over, the crisis has come, & I must resign in March next. I will give plenty of time on both sides & meanwhile will put up with anything they say or enact, but this must be. They will, I know, make many attempts at conciliation, but I cannot listen unless they are the outcome of more sympathy with my aims. For the present, not a word, - nothing but patience, patience."

This is very sad, but I bore it in silence, & meanwhile in my very own private department, some good things occurred. "I had a talk with A Abornethy, & I scarcely know how it began, but I was very frank. I pointed out to her that her first year with us had been very selfish, & showed her that a different thing was the true Christian spirit from the fastidious "I like" & "I don't like," words that were constantly on her lips. She admitted everything, saying gravely, "I am worse than you know. I am selfish through & through." At first, with Scottish casuistry, she tried to put her unbelief & hardness on God's foreknowledge, but her honest & true spirit was too much for her, & she dropped all these arguments, & said suddenly, "You see I don't want to. I know it all beautifully in my head, & not one bit in my heart. I give Cicely splendid advice & she thinks me ever so good, & I seem to care for a few minutes at a time, but it is n't real. I don't care enough to make it influence the least fraction of my conduct." - I go on to say that Nancy shall not repent of this her confusion to me, but that I will always care for her, & tell how I feel the relief of dreary J. Gifford having departed, & how I think my gloomy, lowering Marie Pechinet is really coming out into the light.

Again a little later I had a scene with Ralph Gray. Her old father has been brought to London, & now she had decided that in Jan. she must become a non-resident lecturer, living in a flat with him & Sarah, & looking after both of them. I could not say nay, but I knew I should miss her. She came to my room after the Bible Class, & kneeling down before my fire said, "I'm glad I'm going. It

is getting to be the most intolerable hypocrisies living here." I asked her if I was hard, dogmatic & narrow-minded in any way, & she answered slowly & steadily, "No, nothing. You are right & I am wrong. You are so right that I am without excuse. I see it all clearly. I want to work with people who believe as you do, & yet I can't, I can't, we are too far apart." There was a long silence & then I said, "You have been a difficult audience, Ralph." She turned full upon me & said briskly, "Do you mean at the Bible-lessons? Now look here. You have seen my father & you can imagine how I have been brought up, yet I honestly say I never knew any one the least like you for making the Bible interesting. It is a new book to me, only I personally have no share. I like to work for you, & I would like to work for Mrs Booth. She must want somebody to scrub down her stairs, & I would like to do it for her." This surely was about the noblest heart I had ever dealt with."

At this time I was much taken up with Edwin Arnold's, "Indian Song of Songs", & thought the scheme shewed the position better than did our own. It is the Man here, who represents the human soul, his appointed bride is the Love of God, but he is weak, & is led away again & again by her rival, passionate human Love. Some of it is very fine, & went to my heart as true. Hear the Bride's lament,--

"In vain, in vain!

Earth will of earth. I mourn more than I blame.

If he had known, he would not --

In vain, in vain!

The temptress was too near, & Heaven too far;

I can but weep because he sits & dies

Garlands of fire-flowers for her loosened hair

And in its silken shadow veils his eyes,

And buries his fond face. Yet I forgive,

By Jumnâ's wave.

Vainly! all vain!

Make thou the most of that whereto thou art given,

Reign her thy Paradise, thy Love of loves

Say that her eyes are stars, her face is heaven,--

It shall be vain,--

Nor wilt thou so believe thine own blind wooing,

Nor slake thine heart's thirst even at the cup

Which at the last she brims for thee,
Because still vain

As love that feeds on shadows; vain as thou art
To look so deep into those phantom eyes
For that which is not there.

And vain, yes, vain

For me too is it, having so much striven,
To see this slight snare take thee, & thy soul,
Which should have climbed to mine & shared my heaven,
Spent on a lower loveliness, whose whole
Passion of claim wore but a parody
Of that kept here for thee.

All vain, all vain!

He gives all that they ask to those soft eyes
While mine which are his angels, mine which gleam
With light which might have led him to the skies, -
Which almost led him, - are eclipsed with tears,
Wailing my fruitless prayers."

In spite of the brave words of my Sonnet, "Yes, Thou art more than love,
my choice is made," the conviction remained with me that the one great
temptation & weakness of my soul was expressed in these noble words. But
alas! this was proved true through long & bitter years. "The temptress was
too near & Heaven too far." The contrast between the little fire of sticks close
beside me, & the deeply clouded Sun, was too great & I chose the lesser, & yet
never wholly, so that my heart was torn in two. I have hardly the courage
to write down the history of the next twelve years of my life, - but that we
will leave for the present, & take things step by step as they come.

Sir Robert Fowler was still Lord Mayor, & kind Miss Fowler did all she
could for us. Twice I went to a Reception at the Mansion House, bringing some
6 or 7 Students each time, & saw her arrayed in the City diamonds, & each
time I had a nice sympathetic talk after it, & slept there, & each time woke
& looked out on the Royal Exchange & the Bank, & heard the thronging footsteps
& had a curious feeling as if I stood at the very centre of the economic & civic
life of the world. In this direction one could go no further.

College affairs went on well within the walls. Dear K. Tristram won the Gilchrist Scholarship over the whole University. Well did she deserve it, & there was much rejoicing. We also invented "Polyglot Snatch" which was considered highly amusing, & my Logic lectures were greatly liked. The Gorton Committee had things to sell (from old Miss Gamble's legacy), & I bought the two handsome carved chairs that stand in the hall to this day. Then we had a Debate on the proposition, "That the good effect of cheap Literature is fully counterbalanced by the evil." The speaking on both sides was discerning & good, & Miss Howler who was present was ecstatic in her praise saying many times over that she "had no idea we were so clever!" My Staff were doing capitally, & one morning I would help Ralph Gray to make a clay model of a Greek Theatre, & another morning order some bullock's eyes from the butcher, & go up to the Laboratory to see J. Willoughby skilfully lay them open & shew the working of the various parts. There was a day at Gorton, for as the representative of the Students I was bound, & there was a very interesting day when George kindly took some of us to Tilbury Docks. The bird's eye view from the roof of the Hotel was a sight to be remembered, for 1,500 navvies were at work on the mud immediately below us, cutting out the New E. & W. India Docks, which was to be one of the largest, & quite the most complete dock in the world. We saw the "steam-navvy" digging away; it cut the solid blue London clay into little blocks which the real navvies picked up with their forks with wonderful speed & accuracy, & then a little steam tram carried us over profound depths of slime & mud out to the huge gates that are to control the entrance.

The Richardsons seem to have been in London for a while. Three men at once wanted to marry the pretty one, Gertrude, & she chose Leighton Harris. [As I write, Nov. 1926, he has just died.] Also Jean came hovering about the College, & once or twice George met her; but nothing came of it. Again, there came an invitation for me to see the Eumenides acted at Cambridge, & I accepted it with delight. Then came a letter from "W. M. of Ridley", very gently & respectfully lamenting the fact that last year I had come up to see the Electra, & asking me if it were consistent with my highest aims. Disappointed as I was, I determined to follow his advice, for this a precedent for things to come, & it is better to be too strict than too lax. Nannie & Ralph went & greatly enjoyed it, but two days later D. Moul's opinion seemed to

be confirmed, for Hannie received a letter from a girl she knows well, grieving in very strong terms over "the bad example" set by one "of her position + influence". With characteristic honesty Hannie answered it, & then read me both letters as we sat over her fire. Excellent ethically, the standard was not exactly that of Christ our Lord; it was not "the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak," but more like "sorry man for himself." The whole discussion left a very lonely feeling with me, as I saw how my dearest, strongest, best, shrank from standing just where I stand, & took their own course.

All this while public events touched me far more nearly than they usually did. Evidently I tormented myself greatly about the election for the London School Board, for which I had a vote. I went to big & somewhat stormy meetings, with Mr. Mundella in the chair, & some very fine speaking on all sides. I heard Conservative Church people, & I heard the popular Radical party, & I write down that the disposal of my vote made me "ache with fear" lest I were going wrong. I heard a poor cobbler man say openly that he "was sick-an-tired of the 'ole thing," & if he, a father, did not care, why should we? This most un-Christianlike was checked by a magnificent speech from Donald Fraser, who showed the England of the future lying plastic in our hands, & yet, yet, - with the clapping & hooting & hissing, & unreasonable noises, a scorn of my kind came over me such as I have never in my life felt before, & thankful indeed I was that my vocation lay wholly outside the region of politics. On 4th Nov. came the Election, of a very much mixed & opposed Board, & they were in for 3 years. I cannot here go over all the tangles I have recorded, & how I was tormented about, & how there seems to have been a General Election as well, & that I was thankful women had no vote.

More deeply was I struck with the brave adventure of W. T. Stead. He wrote an article in the ^{Pall Mall} Westminster Gazette called "The Maiden Tribute," shewing how girls could be actually bought for wicked purposes. To prove his assertions were true, he bought one himself & took her to his home. His enemies got wind of this, the article aroused a fury, he was impeached, & for this mock crime was sent to prison. On 15th Nov. I write, "After this long discussion the verdict has now been given, - Stead, Garrett & Jaques, Guilty," & all are now in prison. Thousands of these most disgusting of all crimes go free & unpunished, so that there is a real system or trade to serve the lust of men, & the one man who has bravely plunged into the black mire to rescue the victims is punished by

the law of the land. Poor Rebecca Garrett who was his agent, said, "I have done many, many bad things in my life, some dreadful things, & I have done only one good thing, & for that, for the very first time, I must go to prison." Stead is a hero, & I think a little prayer is going up from thousands of us that God will be consciously near him on this his first Sunday in prison." Later I write, - "This martyrdom has done us good. England is proved true at heart after all, yes, amid masses of corruption, the main spirit of the nation is pure & sound & clear, as a crystal. Every good work is setting out this winter with renewed vigour. There is hope, hope, hope for our country!"

Inside the College, all went on briskly & went well. Good hard work, & all sorts of festivities at the close of Term. On Dec. 18th we dispersed, & on the 20th I went home. Dora & her 3 destroying angels were all with us; Gaylie, looking very stout "doing lessons" & knitting, Buddie in a scarlet frock playing on the piano delicately with one finger, & Frankie with the handsomest features of the family, 10 months old & thumping vigorously on the triangle. Presents, cards, letters beyond counting, & parties for girls, for boys, parties for the aged, - every sort of party arranged by my indefatigable sisters. One day Henry came in, having walked 36 miles in pouring rain, & there was hot bath & bed while his clothes dried, & through all he was bright & cheerful, & to me an unfailing treat.

In such a year as I have described one would not think there was room for the "horror of great darkness," but there was. Spaces of "the present dark, the future fear," came over me. Everything disappointed. Harriet's strength, which was like a young eagle's, sometimes seemed misdirected; Ralph's nobleness got drowned in despair till she was glad she was leaving us; a sad scene with Margaret showed a cleft between us which her pure, passionate, faithful love failed to bridge over; Dora Greenbell, my beloved teacher, had died in a mist of drugs & brandy; Eliza Thoulborn whose letters I was publishing, told lies for months together; & Pearsal Smith who had done so much for us, gave up his religion, said it was an illusion & became worldly & indifferent. What could I say? "Put not your trust in princes nor in any child of man" had been instilled into me all my life, yet never before did I see that it really must not be done, that the supports snap one by one under the weight of life, & I felt helpless. Love is my enemy, & the only safety is to say, - "Straight as a flame, as growing wheat is straight, -
Yes, Thou art more than love, my choice is here!"

1886.

ΙΔΟΥ Η ΔΟΥΛΗ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ.

"They thirsted not when He led them through the deserts." "Come ye near unto me."