Autobiography

Part III. Life at College.

1875.

The Easter Vacation.
1875.

The Easter Vacation at Home.

Surely never was a spring later than this one, scarcely a primrose
or an anemone, or not a bud open any where, or the wind cold and
improvident.

I remember some tales with dear Father, 
+8+ driving in the jaily cart with
good old Charlotte to hold the meeting at the Sours House, 
+8+ visiting Eliza Hempston & Elmville School, 
+8+ so on. Also I went several times to Collingwood to
talk over Connie's work 
+8+ prospects; for some time she had not looked well,
+8+ Lady Herschel thought her rather seriously run down 
+8+ said she "kept her mostly asleep." The one interesting story recorded among the names of names is that of the Brookways. He had been Game-keeper at the
Goat-Stuarts for eleven years, 
+8+ now was dismissed. The old steward was
now dead, 
+8+ the steward, John Piper, complained to his mistress of "his
preaching ways," because he reproved a reckless young winder keeper for his
constant swearing. "If you're a preacher, be a preacher, but if you're a
game-keeper, be a game-keeper," he would say to Broadway, 
+8+ a short
while ago handed him a dismissal; "For what faults, sir?" he asked, but Piper
only swore at him + answered, "You know, oh, you know it enough! You
have made the rope for your past, 
+8+ now you shall hang in it!" "I just
couldn't have done other than I did," said Broadway telling me the story,
+8+ I'm well content, for it's a fine rope that, 
+8+ the other end is fastened
to Heaven!" This very day (Sat. 27th March) they left the pleasant room
house in White Lane, 
+8+ where he has loaded the furniture on the cart.
she had scrubbed the floors, they knelt down in the bare home together to thank the Lord for all the good things that room had seen, the untold unity and peace, the joy in reading the Bible, the fresh revelations there of the love of God, the anxious souls feeling after the Saviour, some of them going away singing His praises, for all these beautiful things they thanked the Lord together, then went on hopefully into their new life. They soon to quite a poor old cottage in the Ashley lane, there I found them just arrived a few hours before, he hard at work outside in the garden, she with a pair of white-dash standing on her kitchen table trying to better the old smoke-blackened ceiling. Both faces were radiant with joy. She sure toward its setting threw a red light, we three stood together on that humble doorstep, in a minute all their own affairs were forgotten, while telling of the Revival they hoped might be beginning in Astrophurst. George Buld had been converted, they said, and 3 or 4 other young men like him. I had to say Goodbye and run home, dear Mrs. Broadway looked round on her poor ramshackle house and her work all in the most dire confusion, and said with a smile that was almost laughter, "Dear Miss, we are just happy, we are just rich! There isn't a thing lacking. I think to know the love of God is worth all the riches in the world."

Harry seems to have been down for a little Pastor said, and usual I had a long talk with him, which he followed up by a somewhat complex letter about the difficulty of living and bearing a Christian testimony in such a place as Cambridge. It is altogether too long to transcribe, but I will copy the last few sentences, because I remember reading them over later and finding them encouraging. "The point for which I do rather envy you is knowing the interest young persons while they are young, who surely in after life will look to you
as an "old friend," or will it in some cases be an "old enemy"?—any way they will be
interesting. The next few years will bring some extraordinary changes of view, and you will
reap many a useful lesson. Dear Cousin, we are on "the winning side," we really are.
You know the proverb, "Call no man happy till he is dead," well think about the dead
calmly for a few moments. Do not form judgment immediately fall into the right
just groove? Do we not count them happy who have lived with God? It may have
been mixed with blind and short-sighted prejudice, yet we can truly say, "These all
died in faith," be know they are happy, thrice happy. Hold on, hold on! And if it is
difficult, it shall be all the more light to you in the end.

On Sat. 3rd April he seems to have come down again, to have given an addres
the great point was his telling of the great Moody Meeting in the Agricultural
Hall, Selington. Everything was new in those days, his having hymns over me, the
immense crowds, the colloquial style of preaching, all was fresh and interestig.
Sixteen thousand were gathered there he saw them, a large proportion of the attendance,
come from the streets with their rags and strays of pipe-light. Harry had to come too
how's too early to secure a seat, and was much interested in the conversation that went on meantime, for those around him seemed to be good, yet each to have
brought their "bad" relations and friends, who could be induced to listen to no one else.
There were some remarkably happy faces too, and "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" was
given out from the platform, a quiny young railway man behind him, who
had just stepped off from the Great Northern, nodded the equally quiny friend
beside him, and said, laughing with joy, "Now, Tom, just you 'ear this, haven't me
my mate made the van ring with this 'ere hymn as we took the night good-
train to Sheffield? Ooer! Ooer!" And Beautiful is the new life every time.

Harry seems to have been staying with us now, and I think without Fran. I
cannot guess at this distance of the time. He was ten years old, and
boy in many days, but privately bent by many years. He was asked to join
“Auntie Gay’s Boys Club” on the Sunday afternoon, and evidently thought
it would be nice a new experience, but at the last moment was seized
with shyness, and begged almost with tears to be let off. So he sat alone in
the empty drawing-room by the fire, and a talk. Here let me copy:—Sun.
4th. Henry is now a fine strong boy, with a quiet studious element in
him that I greatly appreciate. He is warm-hearted & truthful, but now
then he appears to me to be sensitive to a degree that endangers his own
happiness. He seems to cling especially to me this visit as though there
were an understanding between us that need not be talked about, indeed
I think there is, & I love him dearly. A healthy, careless, generous boy is
apt to be treated with a sort of playful condescension, as if he could care for
nothing but the pony & the dogs, or to hear some tale of adventure, & does not
take account of the tender & solemn thoughts which, at any rate at times,
swell the anxious little heart. Personal experience has taught me. I can
rather like Henry, I imagine, but possibly more cheerful & amusing & more
careless & loved & loving, I was dealt with as though not one anxiety or
care could possibly dim my mind or cloud my conscience, yet every
night from the time I was seven (or perhaps earlier) a shadow fell
upon me as I went up to bed. I remember the nurse looking in at the
door, the Goodnight all round, the leaving the light & the movement
in the dining-room below & George & I climbing upstairs together. The
lamp behind us in the hall cast my shadow on the wall, & I can see
it now, with the little round cropped head, the long needed dress & bare
arms with little puffed-out sleeves between, & the solemn feeling coming
over me that here was a whole other day gone, & I had not once dreamt

about God. People said, "Here is a child who never cries," but now when I would cry bitterly in my little bed, not for any particular sorrow, but for what looked to me so much worse, a general conviction of sinfulness and ignorance and discouragement, and a profound longing for something better. Each day as it came I forgot everything in the routine and excitement of a healthy child's life, and yet every night the feeling came back like a tolling knell, "There, that is another day gone," and a shadow came to dispair come over me." Let me here break off from the book to say it was here that dear faithful old Maggie was such a help. While she put us to bed she would say a little text, or usually the verse of some solemn Scottish hymn she knew, "When this passing world is done, Where has mild gone glowing sun," and so on. She was ready enough for a little fun when first we came up, but as soon as we had said our prayers she used to tell us "the soul was locked up with God for the night," and she would allow no more. She must have come to us just before I was nine (or possibly just after), and I was deeply troubled and increasingly so for years after this. I think the peculiarly forbidding and empty feeling I had was banished by her quiet, holy presence, and she is one of the many who must be thanked in story for what they have done for me. So it was no wonder I sympathized with dear Henry, she, with greater knowledge and more mature mind, was going through the same trials far more keenly. He left his little chair at last on my knees, and I looked into his honest "high-and-quiet eyes" as we used to call them, but rubbed his hot cheek on mine, and so had a really good and sympathetic time together. But let me resume the copying. "There was Henry, he put his arms round my neck, his dear soft eyes filled again and again with tears, as he gradually told me the thoughts and trials that few would suspect under his natural boy life, how dreadfully he forgot all he really most cared for, how though he had "good
examples all round" him, he felt naughty & discouraged, & seemed to look toward
life as though it were full of mystical & untried evils. Yet he added, "I do
pray, Auntie, & God does hear. I know, not because I'm told, but by experience,
that though sometimes He is rather long about it, yet He does hear me." Said,
"Darling, that is the very right beginning. You have been taught a great deal, & now
let it make us happy, very happy, that God is truly touching your heart and
leading you to Himself. People can teach your mind a hundred things, but only
God himself can touch your heart." He hid his face on my shoulder & burst
into tears, "Oh Auntie, I do hope He is," & again he said, when he was a little
recovered, "I want somehow to do more & be more, so dreadfully. I go
on wishing & wishing, & forgetting & forgetting, & I'm not a bit satisfied." As I
held him there on my knee, I felt ready to give up anything & everything
to have such a son of my own, an awakened soul, a plastic character,
unformed but full of the finest capacities, a real living man to train
for the Master's service." I am greatly tempted now to go on with
the story of dear, unspeakable Henry, but I must leave it to be told in its right
place by separate glimpses, until we become firm friends. Enough to say
just now that he & I had walked together, & hunted for the late & scanty primrose,
& made up rhymes, & that once I took him to the Blacksmiths, & the kind man
let him smite the red-hot iron on the anvil, & try, with complete ill-success, to
hammer the end of a round bar square.

The College interests went on all through. First came the joyful news that
both Questionists had passed. R. Aither, Second Class, & E. Velack, Third. Privately
we were told that both of them were very near the bottom of their respective
Classes, so that for our dear friend, both Canny's Wooden Spoon & my little picture
of her receiving the scabbard of victory from the hand of the Tripos, were proved purely
close to the truth. From henceforth "Clun. Trip. Cam." may always follow her name.

The relief was great. She herself was very amusing about it, saying her success gave her a certain friendly contempt for all the men whose names bore down about her own, that it was like two Augustus meeting in the streets of Rome, who could hardly pass without a smile of secret understanding over the deception they were practising on the public at large. Next came the more astonishing news that Miss Davies had resigned, was leaving in the summer; Miss Davies, whose making the College was from top to toe, who was as thoroughly a part of it as the tall chimneys or the strong front door; she was going to leave! True, she had no more guidance of the body she had started, no more influence on our thoughts or aims, then had the chimneys or the front door, but still it was hers, all hers; it seemed impossible or should go on without her. She was an excellent Secretary, prompt, accurate, (officially) very kindly & forebearing with mistakes, & she could do better work, for the College, so the decided, unhampered by the routine of the life there. To act as "the handsome figure-head" was not at all in her line, & a new one was to be searched for & found. She was the steam-engine of the ship, but she was none of its exterior adornments. Whom should we have? Miss Sutherland shot into my mind — would that be bad or good? Oh, I fear bad in some ways, for I knew her influence was almost overpowering. But there, her quavered with the Committee, her bitter speeches about nearly every membro, had put her out of court, & this momentous question was now set to ask for a decision.

The next thing, beginning Sat. 3d April, comes a long diary-like letter from Mr. Kingsland, which I will try to give in a rather shortened form, as its covering some close pages. The main difficulty is that though she had been a Christian very nearly a year, she has not downright confess Christ in her home, that though many
many a time she has implied the change that had passed over her, they will not accept it. Evidently they considered such a change as conversion quite unnecessary in her case, nor have they eyes to see that it has happened. She writes, “Although I am very happy inside, I am more and more convinced that my life at home cannot be a good one if a useful until I give sort of direct Vocation. Actions don’t seem to tell what are needed. Jade has been reading “Princes” that you lent me, on the first opportunity I must tell him that I know the very same inner life. But, dear, it is so difficult! The other day I was reading my Bible and writing in my Greenbook just before dinner, the instant Jack came in, I hurried all my things together and ran away, lest he should catch me! Isn’t that foolish. I am sure I can’t “talk good” even to the poor people, if I don’t say a word at home, because I am afraid. So I ask you to pray hard, that I may have the strength and courage to tell my parents, and then the dear Lord will take care of my life, so that my conduct may less our every thing I have told them. When I look back at this past year, I see a most wonderful sight, oh, I am so thankful that he sent you to Gideon”.

(Shura) It is all right now about Jade, at least in so far that I have told him my whole story as clearly as I know how. He is quite earnest and nice, he thanked me, but he is very reserved, his mind is still hiding somewhere, I can’t tell where. It seems easier to be consistent now that he knows, though it makes me afraid to have his eyes on me, but then there is always our dear Saviour near by to help.”

She goes on to another point which needs a few words of explanation. kim bremden had expressed to me her wonder that “such an unenlightened girl” could have acted so modestly and considerately under the difficult circumstances in which she found herself. “In fact,” she added, “she has behaved beautifully,” she said, in a heartfelt, enquiring tone, “She is very good, isn’t she? Really I believe her principles are more rigid than mine.” This was immense commendation from such
Uisce, t o cheer on my little friend, I told her. Mary at once determined that
as, at the time of parting they were sure to have an interview, she would then
try to tell her the source to which she referred every bit of strength she possessed.
This she prided much about their last days & looked forward to eagerly, but
after all she was one of those she was asleep when Miss Sumsden went her
midnight rounds to say Goodbye. At first she treated this accident as the
intervention of a kind Providence saving her from too difficult a task, t o
indeed did I, but now she goes on thus; "I had occasion to write to Miss
Sumsden about some books, & I wonder whether you will think it wise,
but I couldn't help it, + I told her. I said I could not leave her under
a mistake, & that any improvement she had seen in me this last term
was owing to my having found out that it was to be a Christian. I could
not bear that she should go away for two + not know, t I don't think
it was wise, because I prayed a good deal that if it was right she
might grow stronger, + it did." A few days later (6th Apr.) another long
letter describes the series of Meetings of the Yorkshire Congregational Union
since this year were held at her home in Bradford. For the first time
she seems to see that the distinction between the Church + the World is not
in herself only, or in our little party at Guisley, but is a line that runs
through all the world, a genuine change that will stand accurate tests,
+ her joy rises high. "Speech after speech, yesterday + today, man after
man rising + telling of what great things God had done for them, or
through them for others, oh, it was wonderful! Some told how they re-
quired a Revival with coldness + suspicion at first, but now, the new
life, the happy faces, the repenting of old sins, the changed conduct, they
could see God's hand in it. It is difficult to describe how sweet it is
to feel "There's another of my brothers," or "That quite true—I know
that by my own experience," + to feel I belong to such a body. My only
sorrow is that Papa doesn't seem to see this part at all. Some he ap-
proves + some he disapproves, but the special thing that fills my heart
with joy, he does not see at all. I shall pray + pray + sooner or later
he will, but if only he did now! Personally my cup is running over as
I did not imagine was possible in this life, but I must try to make
this happy time a preparation for the trying time of the future. Last Tom
was difficult, as you know, but I have a foreboding that next Term
will be even more so. I cannot be really afraid, but I want a complete
surrender of all our lives to Christ + then we will be able to use us."

In the midst of all this good news came other joyous letters from the
Baker's telling a very different tale. It appears that I had expressed a strong
desire to hear Moody myself, + was allowed to go up early to town + thence to
Wimbledon for that purpose. This was Friday 9th April. It was there that I
met the charming, graceful Carrie Bulley, + the spouse of Moody + Stanley as the
American Mountebanks, + so terminated our incipient friendship. I seem
to have been alone in London for the first time in my life, + to have managed
very well, booking my things at Waterloo ready for Wimbledon late at night,
calling on Father + the brothers at the Office, + then going on to King's X, + then
establishing myself in the waiting room for the rest of the day, till dear Dora
appeared at 6 o'clock from the Middlesex Hospital + we had coffee, + then later Father
appeared, + we all went together to the Agricultural Hall. I remember the study
of letters I brought with me to the waiting room, + how my Queen book had
got behind, + how I wrote hour after hour till it was levelled up to date. Let
me again take parts of E. Baker's letters. (Ap. 3): "I liked so much what-
you said about the chief temptation being not to come back to the Lord after we have gone away. "Come, let us return unto the Lord." Now you don't know how happy it makes me to find no difficulty in this "returning." This vacation is quite different to anything I have known before. I often go away for two hours together, but I think longer than that, when the check comes, the Lord seems to be patiently waiting for me, as it is so sweet to come back to where he stands. I have not been quite well, & got my quiet half-hour beautifully there in bed in the morning. I have read through Galatians, & it has brought me much new light. Also I have immensely enjoyed "Anna," & the "Covenant of Life and Peace" satisfies me by going down to the very roots of things. I feel persuaded that unbelief is the real cause of our meager life. (Ap. 5:7) "Life has been dreadfully difficult this last two or three days, & I've left off getting one, & fear I am going wrong. I keep trying to "come back," & I know with my intellect that "He will in no wise cast me out," but my heart is dark & sad. In my room I pray to be kept near the Saviour, & dwell in His peace, & then I run downstairs into the life of my family, & in less than ten minutes it is all gone, sorry but gone, & I am far away with an aching void in my soul & a temptation to despair. But you must not think I do despair, dear, for even while I write, I feel the Lord near to let me rest content away from time, & feel sure He wants me to see all the treasures that might be mine. Yesterday was Sunday, & it had some good things in it."--here she describes it all through. "But the great part of my life is quiet times in the week days. They are hard to get, but with an effort I could secure these, so I have no right to complain. It was all right so long as I had breakfast in bed, but now I feel choked & strangled with the ordinary little things of life. I will try more earnestly
this week, indeed I will. Forgive my writing so very much about myself, but I long to get to the bottom of all this repeated & dreamy failure, & it seems to do me good to write. That shall be the end of the letters for the present.

Well, dear Stella came, picked up Dora & me at King's Cross, & we drove to the great meeting. We were too early, because we had tickets, & there was a sound like the roll of thunder, then the multitude was let in at 6.30. There were over 14,000 present—We could see W. Raine, Fr. Hoare, Mr. Shrimpton, others in the audience. Then Moody came in short & thick & powerful, & spoke on "Compassion," it was very good. Sunday sang "Shine more brightly, shine." I have studied notes of the sermon, but can make nothing come alive out of them, so I will omit all but the last sentence or two; "God knew exactly what the world needed when He gave it Christ." It wanted a Saviour, not one at a distance who looked on & says "Poor fellow," but one who is able & willing to take endless trouble, a real loving compassionate friend. Twenty years ago last month I first came to the Saviour, & since then I have given him my entire confidence, told him all things good & bad, & he has never disappointed me, & he will not you either.

The next day, Sat. 9: April, I had a great treat in the shape of a talk with young Mr. Maxwell Wright. Let me copy my Green book. "He is young in the whole manifestation of his spiritual life, joyfully outspoken but gloriously ardent, with a whole-hearted consecration, a sort of life full of energy of personal love to Christ, that speaks of complete satisfaction, the comfort of the whole man." It is no wonder that you dappled with a long look at the sun can scarcely judge aright of earthly objects. Sately his family have lost nearly the whole of their money, & his acquiescence is ready, almost joyful. He knew I was at Gistone, & his first words to me were, "Are you not glad about the Honours men? There's Lord the Senior Wrangle, Booth a Priest in Social Science, Williams a High Wrangle, & others too, all members in some fashion of the D.P.M."
Then he told how Mr. Wilson tried his best to get Booth to leave Mr. Blackwood; "he refused, but he was converted all the same though he didn't go." There was a wild party come up suddenly to Sea-Wilson's rooms, "they heard themselves prayed for + no mistake," an impression too or three of them could not get rid of. The story I liked best was about "Briggs," which he told thus:

"Briggs was an ugly little chap, ugly as you could see, very wild, but good on the river, & he rose to be captain of Sirius-Flying 2nd Boat. When Mr. Blackwood came down in March '74, Sea-Wilson tried to get him to hear him, but no, he wouldn't go. Next day he asked him to breakfast, & put him next to Mr. Blackwood, & there he sat looking like a thundercloud. He just couldn't bear it. When Mr. Blackwood came again in November, again Briggs couldn't be induced to go, yet he knew he was unhappy. A day or two after he came up at night talking + praying, when a little three-cornered note was handed in to Sea-Wilson. It was from Briggs, & ran thus, "Dear Mammy, I'm in bed with a cold. You can come + see me if you like." On sent Sea-Wilson's dressing gown in an instant, 2 down he ran to the ground floor, while we built down to pray harder than ever that he might say the right thing. In a minute he came up again + stood in the doorway, but as he didn't move he ran down again. The truth was Briggs's door was locked, & he felt inclined to give up, but when he found how we were praying for him, he felt he must do something, so he ran down again; this time he went out into the quad, threw up the window & called. Briggs was in bed + very sulky. Sea-Wilson could hear him grunting as if he didn't like it, so he begged him to come out + shut the window which had flown up out of his reach, & then he promised he would go away. Briggs muttered something about that he could come if he liked, so he jumped in at the window, shut it down, & sat on his bed in the dark for a talk. It was as Sea-Wilson's instinct had told him, the poor fellow was under
deep conviction of sin, which deepened while Wilson talked & prayed till he was in misery, but he didn’t find peace that night. Booth & I knelt there by the fire till a little past 2 oc’clock; somehow we couldn’t leave off till Dr. Wilson, our “ambassador for Christ” came back & reported. Well, I was only a visitor there, as you know, & I didn’t hear much more of Briggs for some time, he left off his wild ways, I think, but he wasn’t very satisfactory, & he always looked gloomy, as was nice if you spoke to him. This Easter, just the other day, I went over to see Dr. Wilson, who is now established in a curacy at Bermondsey, & who shall be there, if you please, but Briggs, running & showing, & making friends with the worst & wickedest men he could find, roasting them & getting them safely in to hear Dr. Wilson preach! It was perfectly grand, & he seemed more fixed all day, for he had chosen for himself, cutting about, & really so ashamed I hardly knew him. Talk about his being ugly, such a miracle he had!—sky, he looked ever so nice! reddish hair, clean shine, & if he wasn’t better, he looked jolly & strong & happy. And perhaps the best thing was his Missionary Box, the queerest looking thing was handed to me to open, with “True Coll. Cam. Miss. Box.” printed very big on it. I pulled it all open to pieces into a pack of cards. It was clearly enough put together, & he kept this thing sticking up in his room, he had been a great gambler, you see, & he used to ask fellows to open it, just for a puzzle, & then tell them how he came to use his cards so. A change like that is splendid; it tells so among the wilder set.”

Thoroughly & heartily I liked the story of Briggs, but when Maxwell Wright went on to tell how he was now one of Moody’s assistants in the Enquiry Room, I dropped back, for the process of salvation seemed too easily spoken of, too business-like, rather like the work of a marriage agency would be; all might end happily, but the first approaches of love, the subtle gradations,
the hidden feelings, the reticences, & sudden unlooked for expressions, all would be impossible to experience. She normal way of finding the new life in Christ was lost, so it seemed to me, & whether this substitute was better or worse than nothing I could not quite make out. It must be remembered that the Salvation Army was not then in existence, & that I had never come across any whole-sale dealing with souls, & this drawing back from so noble a work as Moody's is a little more excusable. Anyway my Greenback describes elaborately the way people were urged to stand up during the prayer, if they really wished to be saved, & the way they were afterwards dealt with.

"I do think," said Maxwell Wright with his handsome face aglow, "I do think I must have been converted that first night if I hadn't been converted before. It was so glorious to see the souls one after another standing up all over the big hall, & then I got to the door of the Inquiry Room, I just stood still & looked, I could hardly keep from shouting for joy. Scarcely was I able to concentrate my mind on any individual case just at first, so grand was it to see the great battle between Christ and Satan going on my very eyes. But a battle after all is composed of the efforts of individual marshallmen, & I learned to settle in to my own bit of work without once looking round. It is simply the grandest thing alive."

After this delightful enthusiasm I had a long talk with Harry on the subject. That was on Sun. 11 April, & he, of course, was thoroughly on Moody's side. Indeed I record that I made objections rather to hear how he would answer them. "The work has got to be done somehow. The proper churches & chapels are not doing it. The Mission halls are only doing it in scraps. Here is an agency that can work on a huge scale. It is by no means perfect, but after all the blessing of God conspicuously follows it; the work aimed at
I really accomplished. People like you + me should honor it + support it most heartily." Such was his argument; + I felt it was true, but always with the reservation, "Only it isn't my kind of work." There are pages I need not copy, but the whole discussion ends thus; "After all, is such work so very different to mine? or rather that I long mine should be, for at present it is very small. Both have for material the human heart, not more, not less; both have as ultimate aim the Saviour; both have for tools the same Bible, + prayer, + our words of invitation + explanation. The external differences of the multitude to be helped all at once, or their lower degree of education, bring in slightly different methods of reaching the one and. May God help me to be more like them! May God help me through this next term to say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

The next day, Monday 12th April, I went up to Gorton.