

LITERATURE, &c.

From the London People's Journal.
ESTHER LEE'S HOLIDAY.

A TALE OF THE 23TH OF JUNE.

By Georgiana C. Munro.

On reaching Mrs Morley's room, Esther paused, while her little companion ran in—'Mother, mother, here's good Miss Lee,' cried the delighted child.

'Who?' inquired a low sad voice. 'What have you sold the things?' added Mrs Morley, as Susan, overjoyed, placed a leaf in her hands.

'No, no, mother, I sold nothing! Miss Lee gave me all!' said Susan, eagerly.

'Miss Lee?' repeated the mother. 'What, Esther Lee?' she continued, as the latter came forward. 'How surprised, how ashamed I am!' and a deep painful blush crimsoned her wasted cheek.

'Ashamed, no, no, no! why should you be?' said Esther, clasping her hands in the warmest friendship. 'Are we not here to help one another? Think only of those dear ones around you,' added the amiable girl, bending down to kiss a pretty child who hung back in terrified silence at the sight of a stranger, yet kept her large eyes fixed with distressing earnestness on the food her sister had brought in. Another moment, and she was devouring the bread given to her with an eagerness which Esther could not bear to witness.

'And poor baby,' she said, turning to Mrs Morley.

'He is very, very ill,' said the mother, mournfully. 'I greatly fear that I shall lose him.'

And Esther heart echoed that fear as she stood beside the humble couch, where a child of two years old lay tossing restlessly, his cheeks burning and lips parched with violent fever.

'Don't you think a little lemonade might allay his bitter thirst better?' she inquired, as Mrs Morley put a cup of water to the little sufferer's lips.

'It might,' said Mrs Morley, 'but—'

She could say no more; but Esther knew the rest.

'I will get a little for him, if you will take some breakfast,' she said kindly. 'Surely, Susan can get some boiling water from some one in the house, and then we will have it ready in a minute.' And in a minute the tea was made, and in a few more Esther was out and back, and busily compounding the lemonade, while pressing the sorrowing mother to take the breakfast, which, wearied and exhausted though she was, conflicting emotions of gratitude forbade her touching.

It were long to repeat the gloomy tale to which Esther hearkened. When they last had met—a year before—Mrs Morley had been some months a widow; since then, misfortunes, one after another, had befallen her; she had changed her abode, and Esther had lost sight of her, and as distress thickened round her, friends diminished, making her shrink from claiming the friendship of any, until at last she had sunk to the state of poverty in which she was now discovered.

But the severest trial of all was to see her youngest born stricken, it seemed by the hand of death, and languishing under sufferings she had no power to alleviate by any of those little luxuries which become needful in the hour of sickness. A benevolent doctor, whose practice was too extensive to allow of his wasting much time in conversation, visited her child; but Mrs Morley's lingering pride forbade her thrusting her real circumstances upon his notice, or like others of his profession, he might have taken care that his little patient possessed every comfort. Having been called out early in that direction, the doctor's carriage stopped at the door by nine o'clock. Esther read in his grave manner that the case was indeed very serious; the mother dared ask no questions; but the young girl followed him out of the room, and inquired if there was any hope?

'But little,' was the reply. 'He may live, but the chances are against him. Before twelve hours are past, however, I think it will be decided.'

A chill came over Esther at these words—she had not thought of death being so near. As she stood motionless, looking after the doctor's carriage, and trying to recover herself before her return to the mother's presence, Betsy Henderson passed in a beautiful new shawl and pink silk bonnet. How exceedingly pretty she looked! Esther had half forgotten the abbey and its expected visitors, but all came back to her with that sight. It was nearly time that she, too, should be dressed and ready to start for the majestic old ruins, to meet the gay party of merry-makers, and, above all, Harry Thornhill.

But could she desert the sorrowing and widowed mother in her hour of trial and distress? Could she, knowing what was to be looked for, leave Mrs Morley friendless and almost alone to meet the fearful crisis which was at hand? The reply came quickly from her heart—she could not. She could enjoy no happiness, hunted as she would be, by the thought of her friends solitary watch beside her dying child; and every pleasure would be destroyed by the feeling that she had neglected a sacred duty to obtain it. For to comfort and aid the sick, the sorrowing and the helpless, is one of those great duties which He who came on earth to reclaim and save us, has taught by example as well as by precept.

Besides, the greater part of the money she had so carefully hoarded up for the holiday, was spent, and the remainder might be ere night required by the Morley's necessities. She would for their sake it had been much more, but no temptation could have induced her to spend one penny of it selfishly. No, she could not go to the Abbey. The long dreamed-of holiday must be to her only a dream; let who might laugh, and sing, and dance, she would remain with those to whom her presence seemed an especial blessing sent from heaven.

Not that the sacrifice of her long cherished hopes was either a light or a painless one. There were so few opportunities of meeting Harry Thornhill; and it was only the other day she had been told that he said Betsy Henderson was very handsome. And uncommonly handsome she was that morning certainly, in all her gay dress. Never before had Esther thought her brilliant eyes and sunny smile so fascinating—perhaps Harry would think so too. Such thoughts came often to her mind, causing a pang such as she had never felt till then. Yet there she lingered still in the abode of poverty and sickness, comforting, tending, suggesting everything she could think of to afford ease to the suffering child, whose complaining murmurs became each hour more heart-rending and incessant. And never once did her purpose waver, or a regret intrude for the course which she had chosen. But that day the true nature and extent of her feelings were for the first time revealed to Esther, and she beheld how rashly she had perilled her happiness by allowing so deep an attachment to grow up in her heart for one who, though he had seemed to admire her, had never, by spoken word or general demeanor, given her cause to regard him as a wooer—it was left for after days to teach her how very far he was from entertaining such a thought.

Hour after hour passed by, and to Esther it appeared that the child was growing worse, and, though she still spoke at times of hope, she could not strive to lure the mother into the belief that all was certain to go well. At length evening began to close in, sultry and suffocating. The door and window were opened wide, but not a breath of air seemed moving, and the atmosphere felt close and oppressive as though a thunder storm was at hand. A shudder passed over Esther as she watched the sunlight retreating to the roofs of the houses warning her how rapidly the crisis drew nigh. And now the tread of horses and the rattling of wheels, which had for a long time been wanting, told at once that the crowds of pleasure seekers were beginning to return, and that for the poor horses there had been no holiday that day. But Esther noted sadly that the child appeared unconscious of the sounds, which had greatly annoyed him in the morning.

Day had yielded to the summer twilight, and still the mother sat weeping by her child, who now heeded not her voice or loving words as she addressed him. Then—as often before—Esther began to speak to her of the mercy and goodness of God, how He oftentimes takes pity on our sorrow, and can help us in our hour of greatest need; and how, if it so pleased him, he could still raise up that weak and defenceless one, and make him a support and blessing to her future years. And then, feeling the responsibility cast upon her by the doctor's information, she dared not endeavor to revive too fully the lamp of hope which was almost out in the mother's heart, but went on to remind her sorrowing companion how little competent we are to judge what may be best for us; and the widow's tears were almost stayed while listening to Esther's simple and consoling words, as the usually silent and timid girl told so truly of the high and unerring wisdom, which, often against our will, guides us past dangers, and guards us from sorrows—which in our blindness we cannot see—and how, if it should be the Almighty's will to remove that beloved child from earth, it might be in the tenderest mercy that he was taken. For who can tell what sorrows or hardships, what trials or temptations, might await him if he lived? Who could tell from what pain or misery that early death might save him? Who could tell if he might not even have turned from the path to that Heaven which would now open its portals to receive him.

'God's will be done,' said Mrs Morley, bowing her head; 'may he grant me resignation, whatever happens.' But the anguish of her grief was past, and she felt a calmness to which for days she had been a stranger.

Unnoticed by either of the anxious watchers, two young men had entered the house a short time before, and while one of them ran up to its best apartment, the other remained in the passage. It was while Esther, unsuspecting other auditor—poured forth her high and consoling arguments to the despairing mother's ear. In a few moments the dweller in the house hurried down the stairs.

'I have changed my mind,' said his friend.

'I am not going to the play to-night.'

'Nonsense, you don't mean it? You'll change your mind in a minute.'

'No I shall not,' was the quiet reply. 'I am fully determined not to go.'

'Well, I can't stop to argue the point with you. But I'm off, however, and I daresay you'll soon be after me.' So saying the speaker darted away in all the added splendor of an evening waistcoat and freshly brushed coat.

But his friend evinced no inclination to follow him, or indeed to leave the house, though he was not among its usual inmates. He stood leaning against the wall, feeling himself guilty of no treachery in listening to the low sweet tones which, amid the general stillness in the dwelling, came clearly to his ear from out that

inconvenient little back room—for any one who passed in passing might have heard them as he did. With what surprise and deep interest he hearkened to the evidence of heart, soul, feeling, and high intelligence, which breathed in every sentence. Could it be Esther Lee that spoke? or was it some other to whom belonged a voice as soft and musical?

After Mrs Morley's words of resignation, there was silence for a little while. Then Esther said very softly,

'He is sleeping.'

'He is dead,' uttered the mother, in a suppressed tone, whose painful expression thrilled to the listener's heart.

No—he sleeps! said Esther. 'God grant it may restore him to you.'

A murmured prayer from Mrs Morley followed, and all again was silent. But in a few minutes a carriage stopped, and the loiterer near the street door stood aside to let the doctor pass.

'Much better in every way,' was the doctor's remark, 'Mrs Morley, a very dangerous crisis appears to be past, and I have far better hopes of your child than I have had for several days. My good girl,' he added kindly to Esther, 'you may go home to night with a safe conscience; I think Mrs Morley will be quite able to take care of her little patient.'

How delighted was Esther by this strongest of all proofs that the extreme danger was considered over. Soon after the doctor's departure she prepared to return home; and as she bade farewell to Mrs Morley, there was a little whispered contention; and though the young man strove to turn a deaf ear to it, he could not help guessing what it was about, and that it ended as it did, with the residue of the generous girl's little treasure passing into the widow's hands. As gravely, though cheerfully Esther approached the front door, a well-known voice said,

'Will you allow me to see you home, Miss Lee?'

Esther started. She could scarcely summon power to accept audibly the proffered escort; but Harry Thornhill considered the recent scene sufficient cause for her emotion. They walked on some yards without speaking, then Thornhill said—

'I was very much surprised at not meeting you at the abbey, especially as I was told you had spoken with great certainty of going. But now I find that you have been far better employed than any of us.'

A flash of light from a confectioner's window showed distinctly the blush which these words called to Esther's cheek. Never had Thornhill thought she looked so beautiful, though she assuredly was much more plainly dressed than any girl he had spoken to that day.

'I dare say you were all very happy,' observed Esther, after a little while.

'Yes, very—or at least very merry. But happiness is more generally to be found in doing better things than amusing oneself. Do you not think so?'

'When I awoke this morning,' said Esther timidly, 'I felt as if I could be very happy at the abbey; but when I met Susan Morley, and saw her mother, it took away all wish to go. And now I feel much happier than I could have been had I been there.'

'I am sure you do,' replied Thornhill earnestly, 'I heard some one pity you for not being with us; but had they known all, they might have envied you.'

And now—for too soon—Esther was at her home. 'Do you often go out for a walk on Sunday afternoons?' enquired her companion.

'Yes, generally, when the weather is fine, for I have seldom time on other days.'

'Neither have I,' said Thornhill, who was a highly esteemed assistant in a large drapery business. 'Will you let me call for you next Sunday?'

To this Esther readily agreed, and reached her home in a flutter of agitation little suspected by its cause. There lay all her holiday finery still unworn. No matter—she did not now care about Thornhill's seeing her in it. And it was just well she should not. For on Sunday Harry called, and they had a long delightful walk together, but though the new dress, and the bonnet, the visite, the gloves, and the handkerchief all were on, he never once observed one of them. He saw only the fair sweet face, in which he could now read both intellect and feeling, and thought only of the noble and generous heart which beat within that graceful form.

On their return they called at Mrs Morley's; and it was a pleasure to meet her smile of welcome, and behold the cheerful faces of Susan and Lotty. The child, though pale and weak was daily recovering; and the mother told them, with a gratitude that weighed down the barriers of reserve and sensitiveness, that some kind friend, she guessed not whom, had prevented for a time all chance of her feeling the sting of poverty so bitterly as she had done. Esther felt in no doubt whence that generous assistance had proceeded.

We know not how it was, but Esther and Thornhill did not find so short a way to her home as on the evening of the holiday. Perhaps they missed the road. However it was, the long twilight was growing very dim when they arrived; but by that time, Esther was the betrothed of Harry Thornhill. What a happy wedding that was on which the August sun smiled so brightly in her native village, with her two young sisters for her bridesmaids, and her affectionate father to bestow her hand on one well calculated to make her happy. During the first week of their marriage, they spent a long day of gladness at the abbey; and within the shade of ivy clad walls it was that Esther first heard the true history of Harry's love;

how it long had hovered round her, vainly seeking some nobler quality than beauty on which to rest and take up its abode forever—awaiting instinctively some emanation from the soul within, which to him was indiscernable.

Since then, Father's pretty milliner's shop has more than once been closed on the 23rd June, and she and Thornhill always spend their day of freedom in a gay and lively manner; yet she often says, with a smile of joy and gratitude, that on none of those sunny moments can her memory dwell with half the pleasure as on the sad and dreary watch in which were passed the hours of that long and eagerly expected holiday.

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THE PUNJAB.

The Penjab, or Funjab, as it is called in those days, was once a wealthy and powerful kingdom. The following extract taken from a work published in the reign of Charles II., may serve to give some valuable information concerning it:—

The name of this kingdom is derived from the Persian word 'Paunch Ob,' which signifies Five Waters, and supposed to descend upon this country from the five principal rivers which swell the Indus; but then we must extend its limits much farther than now they are usually placed, not above one or two, at the most, of these having any manner of communication with Penjab, as it is now restrained to the kingdom of Lahor, so called from the metropolis thereof. And it is probable enough, that that part of Indostan, called Penjab was of old of a much larger extent, as may be conjectured from what I have intimated before in the Division of this Empire.

But taking it more directly for the kingdom of Lahor, it is bounded on the north with Cassimire, on the east with Jemba, on the south Jenpar and Jesselmere, and on the west with the countries of Multan and Buckor. It is seated almost in the middle of this great empire, and is one of the most pleasant parts thereof. The air is pleasant and healthy, and for the most part very clean, except just in the time of the rains. The fields are beautified with meadows and fresh pastorage for the flocks, which are defended from the injury of the sun by delightful shades of trees, always green and flourishing.

Lahor, the metropolis of the country was once the staple of the Indigo trade: and what was more than that, the constant residence of the great Mogul and his court, whence it vastly rich, and more splendid than any of the cities of the Indies. The buildings are now old and ruinous, through the long absence of the court, yet even in this decayed state they show more beauty and magnificence than either Agra or Delhi. The streets are regular, and well paved with stone, and were formerly many of them washed with the Ravee; but that river being subject oft to change its course, is now diverted near a mile from the city. The houses are all of wood but built very high, which is not usual in those parts. The reason they made use of so much wood is not because they have no stone, but because the other is more plentiful, and easier wrought; though here and there you may see a heathen pagoda, or a mosque of excellent free stone. The city and suburb are said to contain near sixty miles in compass. The streets being some of them reckoned fifteen miles long. And which makes the above still greater, all this was not the work of above one hundred years; for before the conquest of the Moguls, during the Potans time, it was but a small village; but Hamayon, the son of Babur, choosing it for his residence it began to increase, and attained to this greatness in the reign of his grandson, who enclosed the town with a strong brick wall of thirty six miles compass. The castle or palace is magnificent and stately, the courts being large, the buildings high and uniform. They are for the most part carved work, with doors and windows of excellent carved work, and the places where the king usually sat when he showed himself to the people, are adorned with a thousand different fancies, in pictures and carvings, very beautiful and pleasing. There are also, almost to every apartment, very large and pleasant gardens all along by the side of the river, adorned with tanks, arbours, fruits, flowery walks, &c., and extremely neat and curious, in one of which, which is a four square garden, richly walled about, stands a very stately monument about a mile from the city. It was built by Eck'bar, the great Mogul. One of his most beloved wives, named Immacule Kelle, which is said in their language to signify Pomegranate Kernel, the mother of Dansha, was suspected to have been guilty of incest with Sha Selim, the Emperor's son by another wife; whereupon the Emperor caused her to be immured, and to starve to death in this place, where afterwards to testify that extraordinary kindness he had for her, he caused this sumptuous tomb to be erected over her, adorning the inside with gold, and beautifying the walls with the most costly and magnificent workmanship, enclosing it in this pleasant garden, with walls and gates which, as also the monument itself, have many large fair rooms over them, sufficient to receive a person of considerable quality and all his family.

Northward from Lahor, on the way towards Cabul, stands a fair, well built city, Emehabad. And yet further on the same road, Loure Rotas, a handsome city and well fortified, having a strong castle, built on the top of a mountain to defend it: it was formerly being up upon as a piece of great importance, being situated on the frontiers of the Potan kingdom.

More directly north lies Guzerat, (Google