

The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. E. McLEOD,

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

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(From the Christian Treasury.)

The Cottagers of Glencarran;

OR,

THE LITTLE SEED: HOW IT TOOK ROOT AND FLOURISHED.

(Continued.)

Chapter IV.

THE ORANGE BALL.

There was unusual excitement in Glencarran and the neighbourhood, for the Orangemen were about to give a ball. This ball was given once a year, and was quite a gay affair; it occupied the thoughts of the young people a good deal; indeed, there was nothing else talked of among them for at least a month before it took place. One of those who took the greatest interest in it was Jamie. The day before the ball he spent a long time in decorating the room where they were to dance, and was backwards and forwards between it and his own house many times before he had finished his task. He found time to look in upon Joe and Mary for a little in the evening.

Joe, said he, when he had given them an account of what he had been doing; 'I hope you will be wiser as the morrow night?'

'No, Jamie, I don't think I will.'

'Not coming, Joe? Why, you never missed before.'

'True enough, Jamie, I never did.'

'You were always the life of the whole of us, Joe; there'll be very little fun going if you're not there. Speak to him, Mary; bid him go.'

'No, Jamie, I canna bid him go, for I know his reasons are good.'

Jamie looked annoyed and perplexed: 'Are you tired with it as ever last year?'

'It's not that either, Jamie; for I was in as much conceit with it as ever last year.'

'Well, then, said Jamie impatiently, 'why won't you go this time? What's your reason?'

'Ah, that's what they're all saying. I've had twenty of them in here the day following me to go to the ball. I'm not bidding you stay away, mind; but I can't go myself. Now, Mary, you'll have to help me to explain to him what I mean. To begin, Jamie, you know I'm not just the same man as I was some years ago.'

'No; they're all saying you're grown more serious and Christian-like now you were.'

'I am thinking more seriously than I did this time last year, Jamie. I'm far, far from what I ought to be, I know; but I do find a change in myself. I am trying to follow Christ; and it takes me to be very careful what I do.'

'You know yourself, Jamie, put in Mary, 'that it would be a wonder of him to go to this ball; it wasna harm a year ago, before he made a profession of religion, but it wasna do now. You know when people become earnest about religion, they generally give up the like of these amusements; and if Joe was to go on w' them, he'd be bringing discredit on the cause of Christ. There's plenty would say he wasna in earnest. Don't you understand all that, Jamie?'

'No, Mary, not a word of it,' replied he, rather angrily; 'I'm sure there's nae harm in the ball, and Joe's no sae much better than other people; he needna think that everybody will be remarking, what he is doing. I've no time to stand listening such folly, and off he went.'

'Mary, dear, said Joe, 'I'm sorry he's vexed; but I canna content him in the way he wants me. I must be consistent now that I am trying to teach others; that was the word Mr. Johnson said. It's no matter how innocent the ball may be, I know I'll be better by my sin friends.'

'Ay, Joe! How often I've heard dear Miss Clara say, that it would be better to deny one's self a thousand harmless pleasures than run the risk of making a stumbling-block in the way of one's soul.' 'She'd say, "no one will ever regret having made a sacrifice for Christ's sake."'

Jamie's indignation with Joe and Mary did not last very long, for the next evening, when he was dressed, he looked in to make one more attack upon Joe.

'Well, Joe, will I have to go, my lone?'

'I am afraid you will, Jamie.'

'That's too bad. Mary, will you put me some of your flowers for the room?'

'Surely, and welcome, Jamie; just come out w' me to the garden and choose what you like. There's roses, fuschias, sweetpeas, and mignonette. You may have every flower in the garden if you like.'

'Now, Jamie, is there anything you'd like frae me?' asked Joe, laughing.

'Well, perhaps, you'd lend me your blue silk tie?'

Joe goodnaturedly went to fetch the tie, and Jamie set off with it in great spirits.

He came in the next evening to give a history of his proceedings. 'Now, said he, when he had told of his amusements, 'aren't you sorry you didna go too, Joe?'

'No, Jamie, I'm o' the same mind as I was yesterday.'

It was a very stormy day—a complete contrast to the days that had gone before. When Joe was down on the shore in the afternoon, he knew from the grey sky and fast-driving clouds, as well as from the look of the sea, that there was going to be a storm. He then cast anxious glances far away to where some of the Glencarran fishing-boats were just to be seen, and would have given a great deal to see them safely drawn up on the beach again.

Mr. Johnson, at his study window, was looking out in the same direction. The three boats, which appeared like little dots to Joe, were seen distinctly by him of his glass; and when the daylight began to fail, he was glad to see that the men in them were making what haste they could towards the shore. Showers of spray were falling on the rocks as the great waves dashed in and broke upon them. The sight, though very grand, was not a pleasant one to Mr. Johnson, it reminded him too forcibly of disasters in the past. He sat in his lonely room trying to read, but listening to the voice of the waves, and to the wind moaning and whistling in the old trees of the rocky shore.

As the night advanced, the wind got up; and then the fishermen's wives grew seriously uneasy, for the boats had not returned. It was comparatively calm at seven o'clock, when James MacPherson went in to the Posters, and for some time our little party sat talking idly round the fire.

Jamie was making a boat for Jenny, and she

was watching his operations with intense interest, and telling him that her boat must have a mast and a real sail, when the door was burst open, and Brian Diver's wife came in with her apron at her face, crying as if her heart would break.

'The wind's tearing and raging,' she said, 'and Brian's no home yet. I've been down on the shore this hour, and not a sign of the boats; though, indeed, it's that dark you couldna see them, if they were three yards off. Weans dears! what'll I do! what'll I do!'

'It surely is rising a great storm,' said Joe gravely, as a strong blast at that moment rushed round the house, and sweeping under the door made the candle on the table flare a gutter.

'Who's out w' Brian, Nelly dear?'

'Willy Fleming's in the boat w' him; but Alick Hart and his two boys was in company w' their boat. Jamie, is your father in yet?'

'Oh, surely!' cried Jamie, starting to his feet, 'I wasna in the house since dinner time; but he said this morning he wouldna be long out,' and he hurried next door to see.

He returned immediately, looking startled and uneasy. 'No, then, Nelly, he's never come yet. Come down to the shore, and let us look out for them.'

'Yes, Joe,' said Mary, 'and God go w' you.'

'Don't take on that way, Nelly dear,' said Joe, as he was going out, 'Jamie and me'll look for Brian, and you stay here with Mary till we come back.'

The worth of Mary's character was acknowledged in such an hour as this. She soon had a large party round her fire, for it was to her the poor wives and mothers went for comfort. Mrs. Fleming, Mrs. Hart, and Sally MacPherson joined poor Nelly Diver. Mary assured them that Joe and the other men would do all they could to help; and she asked them to pray to Him who alone could still the tempest. Then she took her Bible and read them a psalm; and Nelly, who, at any other time would have run at sight of the Bible, was very glad to listen.

There was a crowd collected on the shore, consisting of all the men and boys of Glencarran. Mr. Johnson was among them; he had not thought of going to bed. When Joe and Jamie went down, it was too dark to do anything; but in about an hour the clouds broke, and the moon appeared for a minute or two, but long enough to show them two of the boats in the swell not very far from shore. The men were calling to them, but though they could hear the sound of their voices, the roaring waves prevented their distinguishing a word. They saw the boats were making no progress; but that was all they could see. Mr. Johnson advised them to drag his boat down to the edge of the water, and to fetch a coil of rope from the gable. By the time they had done so, the moon appeared again. Then there was a cry that rose above the roar of the elements, and the anxious watchers saw the boats no longer, but thought they could perceive the men struggling in the water. Joe, Francis Fleming, and two brothers named Harkin, pushed the boat into the sea, and tried to row out towards where the fishing-boats had last been seen.

It was a time of terrible suspense to those on shore. For some minutes the rowers could make no progress whatever, though they exerted themselves as for life; but once past the surf they got on better. Three of the men were brought to land in the boat—Brian Diver, and Alick Hart and his son Jack—it was young Joe Hart who was missing. But he was known to be a good swimmer; and the people did not lose heart about him yet. Joe was preparing to row out again to look for him, when he was seen struggling in the surf a short distance from shore; but his efforts were growing fainter and fainter. One of the men dashed in and pulled him out of the reach of the waves. He was then carried to the village, where the other men had already been taken, and put to bed, and hot spirits and every other restorative that could be thought of put in requisition.

You will readily believe that none but the little children slept in Glencarran that night. The houses where the poor fishermen were carried were soon full of the neighbours. In a short time Hart and the boys came to themselves, and seemed likely to do well; but poor old Diver had sustained a sad shock; and when he did speak at last, Nelly could not make out a word he said. It was pitiful to hear Mrs. Fleming asking for her boy, and Sally MacPherson calling for Tom. Alick Hart said, the last time he saw Tom's boat was just before dark, and it was then a good piece away from theirs. Old Fleming and his son Sandy had never left the shore at all; and after seeing the rescued ones likely to do well, Joe and some of the other men went back to join them.

Coldly and sadly dawned the day on Glencarran, where there were some thankful and some despairing hearts. The storm was greatly lulled; but it had left its traces, the fishermen saw, in tangled masses of sea-weed and shells which were tossed about of the shore. They walked backwards and forwards in the grey dawn, looking for that they feared to find. In a few hours they discovered both the missing ones. Tom MacPherson presented a dreadful sight; his face was a good deal out and bruised, as if he had been flung repeatedly against the rocks. Poor Jamie in an agony laid a cloth over his face, as they raised him to carry him home. The anguish in the two houses, when those who had so lately quitted them in life and health were brought in still and cold and laid upon the bed, was very bitter. Nelly, I describe it to our readers!

Alick Hart said, 'Most of us have went for the dead, and those who have not yet done so, cannot be long exempt from this sharpest of earthly pains.'

Brian Diver was so weak and low all that day, that they feared he would hardly recover. His mind seemed to wander sometimes; he was not conscious of his wife's presence, but called out as if he thought he were still in the boat, and were giving directions to his companions. As he was still weaker in the evening, Nelly asked him if she should send for the priest.

'No, dear,' was his answer, 'get Mr. Johnson.'

'Mr. Johnson, Brian! you're out of your right mind.'

'Ay, Nelly, Mr. Johnson; he'll speak about him that said "Follow me."'

Nelly could not believe her ears, and tried hard to divert his thoughts; but a man in the house had heard what he said, and came over to him asking,

'Will I bring in Mr. Johnson, Brian? He's in Tom MacPherson's now, or was a wee minute ago.'

The sick man nodded; and his messenger was gone before Nelly could prevent her. Mr. Johnson soon stood beside the bed. Then Brian appeared to revive. 'Tell me more about the blessed Saviour, sir, that came when they were mending the nets, and fleeced them to follow Him.'

'That I will, my friend. I am right glad that you are thinking of Him.'

'Ay, sir, I have never left off thinking about Him since you day on the shore. You mind you said He was calling us to follow Him too?'

'He died for us poor sinners, Brian, to save us from the pains of hell. Believe that He is your Saviour—that He suffered that bitter death for you; and that belief will make you feel sorrow for your sins, and you will try to obey his commandments; you will wish much to please Him.'

Mr. Johnson then gave him a short account of Adam's disobedience, and of the way God provided for his escape from ruin; and Brian listened as if the story were new to him. He could not read, and had never been in the way of hearing what was good; so the Bible stories which Mr. Johnson had told him on the shore, had taken the greater hold of his imagination.

'You have been mercifully delivered from a great danger, Brian. Jesus is calling you more than ever to follow Him; you must give Him the life He has spared.'

'I hope I will, sir; I hope I'll live a very different life for the time to come. I'd no notion I'd ever see the light of day again. Joseph Hart was praying off and on the whole night, and he bid me pray too. I cried to Him to save me the way Peter did, when the blessed Saviour was walking on the water, and He stretched out his hand and caught him when he was going to sink.'

From that day a vast change was to be seen in Brian. He used to go to the gable in the long evenings, and no one was told what he did there; but he was wont to return, looking very thoughtful. He was often seen in church; and when Nelly ventured to remonstrate with him for going there, he told her that Mr. Johnson's religion was simple and easy, and it suited him.

We must visit Joe and Mary for a few minutes. The excitement, fatigue, and sorrow which they had undergone within the last four-and-twenty hours had told upon them. They were expected next door, and at the Flemings' later in the night; but Joe felt so weary, that he said he would try to get a little sleep first. He stretched himself on the bed, while Mary got some tea ready for him, and he began to give her a history of the sad scenes he had just witnessed. He told her that Jamie was nearly out of his mind, because he and his father had parted in anger. They had had a dispute the morning after the boat went out, and Jamie was told what he did there; but he was wont to return, looking very thoughtful. He was often seen in church; and when Nelly ventured to remonstrate with him for going there, he told her that Mr. Johnson's religion was simple and easy, and it suited him.

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