

RECEIVED.

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.—Ps. cxv. 7.

Lie low, O heart, at Jesus' feet,
For there all bitter things are sweet,
Then thou canst know the heart of God,
Canst use the staff, and kiss the rod.

Lie low, O heart, at Jesus' feet,
Then thou canst every tempest meet,
Canst hear His whispered "Peace, be still,"
And love as well as learn His will.

Lie still, O heart, upon His breast,
And prove the peace of utter rest;
Then unbelief will find no place,
And fear die out before His face.

Lie still, O heart, upon His breast,
For He can work if thou wilt rest;
The journey is too great for thee,
Unless the Lord thy shelter be.

Our Serial.

MURIEL'S KEY-NOTE.

BY AGNES GIBERNE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CADDY COTTAGE.

Whatever might have been Muriel's feelings, it was with a bright face that she entered Copenhagen Villa on the following afternoon. She acted upon a settled principle, when paying visits of loving help or cheer to her Master's suffering ones—and there were others in Claverton besides Sophy, not a few, who hailed her footsteps—a settled rule, never to let her own private troubles give her a gloomy look. Muriel knew the worth of a smile to those tried ones. The pity was that she did not follow the same wise rule in her daily home-life.

Sophy lay on her couch as usual, with only her mother in the room. Clarissa and their guest had gone out for a walk, sorely against the will of the owner, but she found Cramer Ray beyond her management. He had his own law, but was in no mind to meet Muriel Rivers, with Clissie's eyes taking note of the encounter. To all her hints of a desire that he should be at home when Miss Bertram called, he opposed a gentlemanly determination that Sophy's hour with Muriel should not be invaded.

"How are you to-day, Sophy?" Muriel asked tenderly, leaning over the couch with her sweetest look.

"Pretty well. Just as usual," Sophy answered. "Only always better for seeing you."

"That would be quick work indeed, the very moment after I have come," Muriel answered playfully, taking a seat by her side. "I am punctual to-day, Sophy. Just three o'clock, so we have a nice time before us. What shall we do? Read or talk?"

"Talk to me a little first. I love your voice both ways. Tell me how you are yourself, dear Miss Bertram."

"I—oh, I am almost always well," said Muriel. "We had some sad news yesterday, about the loss of some dear little cousins in India from cholera."

Sophy and Mrs. Rokeby were full of sympathy, but Muriel would not dwell upon that subject. She knew how much the poor crippled girl depended on such hours as this for cheerfulness, and talked lightly of various matters. More serious things after a while came to the surface, but Muriel was at pains still to preserve a bright manner.

The habitual tone of mind of the gentle little widow, Mrs. Rokeby, was certainly not cheerful. Life had ever showed through sad-coloured spectacles, as seen by her eyes, no less before than during her widowhood, and her religion caught a reflection of the same tint.

It was a favourite plan for Muriel to bring with her a small blank-book, wherein were written extracts from prose and verse, to which she was ever adding. She had a thought of her invalid friends rather than of herself in making choice of extracts, so it came to pass that they breathed almost without exception a spirit of trust, peace, and thankfulness. Mrs. Rokeby also possessed an extract-book, from which she sometimes treated Muriel by way of variety. Muriel did not greatly encourage this. Mrs. Rokeby had a particular love for verses describing the present world as "a vale of weeping," "a valley of Bochim," "a desolate wilderness," "a bleak and howling desert." Muriel thought Sophy had enough of this foggy atmosphere on other days, and wanted to pull her up to something better.

In fact, it may be doubted whether Muriel were not actually helping Sophy Rokeby to a higher ledge of Christian joy than that on which she herself had taken stand.

"O I am forgetting," Sophy said suddenly, when she had lain for some time in her usual half-reclining position, eagerly drinking in every word—"I am quite forgetting. You won't mind this being such a poor little thing, Miss Bertram, but I did want to give you a present of my own making. If it were only worth more!"

She pulled a little marker or illuminated card from under her pillow, folded

in white paper, small and daintily finished. Though unable to do more than sit up partially, and unable to work long at anything, she had a great taste for colours and facility in design. The central part was taken up by three words in massive gold—

"Soyez toujours joyeux."

Round these ran partly a graceful wreath of forget-me-nots, the two ends being almost joined by a tiny bunch of daisy-buds, half-open and pink-tipped. There were two other texts, printed in small black letters upon gold scrolls. Above was—"The joy of the Lord is your strength;" and below—"Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto."

"Dear Sophy, that is kind. How very pretty. I shall keep it in my Bible, and prize it for your sake." The flowers look almost as if one might take them up, and what sweet words you have chosen!"

"I seemed to fancy the French ones more than the English, 'Always rejoicing'—though it is the same thing. Miss Bertram, I chose that text because it is so like you. Mamma and I both think so. 'Toujours joyeux'—'always joyous'—just what you are. I never saw it in anybody else."

"I am afraid you know very little of me if you think so," Muriel said rather gravely.

"Ah, but it is an easy thing to see. One can't well be mistaken. Miss Bertram, what does make the difference between you and others?"

"There is no such difference as you think."

"No, you won't allow it—you will not think well of yourself. But other people must see what you are. Please don't go on denying it, but just tell me how it is that you are always happy, and so many real Christians are not so. Mamma and I have determined to ask you."

Muriel's mind was in a mixed state, having on the one side certain conscience-thrusts, and on the other a disposition to wonder whether, after all, it might not be humility on her part which made her rate herself so low. Was she not pretty uniformly cheerful?

"Hardly fair, Sophy," she said, smiling. "You will not let me deny what you say, and you insist on my explaining what I do not allow. But suppose we take the idea more in a general way. Every Christian ought to have as his motto—'Toujours joyeux.'"

"That is not common," said Mrs. Rokeby.

"But the 'ought' stands unchanged. It ought to be universal amongst all who love the Saviour."

Mrs. Rokeby shook her head. "Such a world of sorrow," she said. "Quite impossible."

"I know there is sorrow, but there is joy to balance it," said Muriel earnestly—just as earnestly as if she had never argued on Mrs. Rokeby's side of the question at all, and quite forgetting at the moment that she had ever done so.

"They must be Christians with a great deal of assurance, who can feel anything of joy," sighed Mrs. Rokeby. "Not poor, halting, doubting creatures, hardly knowing whether they may hope to be saved at all at the last."

"Isn't that a distrust on their part of the promise, 'My sheep shall never perish'?"

"How are they to be sure that they are His sheep?"

"They can't be sure unless they have come to Him. But they can't come without knowing it, and if they have come, it is dishonouring Him to doubt. 'He will in no wise cast out.' That word can't be broken."

"No—but, my dear Miss Bertram, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

"Yes, indeed—there can't be any greater danger than self-confidence. But that is very different from having a firm trust in Christ."

Mrs. Rokeby sighed. Hers was a hopeless dolorous kind of religion. She dimly believed, and faintly hoped, but rejoiced in no happy confidence. Her view of the spiritual life was almost as if she thought she had to struggle up to heaven, by means of her own faith, with no desire on the part of her Saviour to land her there. She had a vague impression that He was always turning from her in displeasure. Conscious of her failures, she stumbled along with downcast eyes, mourning over them, and never seeing the outstretched Hand of love, waiting to bear her up. She hoped He might keep his promises, and bring her safe to heaven at last, if she clung to Him, but she did not feel certain. The world was very insidious, and her heart very deceitful, and Satan very strong. It seemed to be quite a mooted point with her whether Christ or Satan was to prove the "stronger than he" in her spiritual life.

A very up-and-down spiritual life

hers was too, only with more of the down than the up, by a considerable amount. Every time she slipped, she went through the same dismal experience. She always prescribed for herself a season of repentance, almost to be called penance; during which she held aloof from her Saviour's smile, doubted altogether her own acceptance through His blood, and believed she must not look for pardon till she had accomplished a due amount of sorrowing. Then she was comforted, until another stumble came, when the whole had to be acted out again. And her conscience being tender, and slips and stumbles being many, she passed the greater portion of her time "in penitence"—self-banished from peace.

"I do not seem to know where this text comes from," said Muriel, taking up the card.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." That is from the eighth of Nehemiah. Wouldn't it be a beautiful motto for one to live up to? O did you mean the last text? That is from the twelfth of Deuteronomy. And there is another in the twenty-eighth."

Muriel took up the little Bible, found the last-named place, and read aloud the verse, guided to it by a pencil mark:

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies."

Muriel paused very thoughtfully. Had she so rejoiced?

"One does not always realize it as a positive duty," she said. "It seems so often rather a privilege—a 'may,' but not a 'must.'"

"It was 'must' with them, was it not? 'Thou shalt rejoice in all.' I have been going over that so in my mind. I on my couch—mamma over her house-keeping—servants over dusting and brushing—trades-people over business—you, over helping and visiting those in trouble—all of us at all times to rejoice. What a world of rejoicing it might be—to rejoice even in sorrow!"

"Yes, but it is a particular kind of rejoicing," said Muriel, feeling herself rather in the position of learner than teacher, though Sophy was perfectly unconscious of this.

"Before the Lord; not merely in the doing, apart from Him. Doesn't that mean just bringing Him into everything—doing all in the name of Jesus?"

"And looking up for His smile, finding delight in His pleasure," said Muriel.

"That would be the joy of all joys, would it not? O Miss Bertram, you have so helped me to-day," said Sophy, half-tearfully. "You know so much more of it all than I do. You have tried it already. I have always thought it was enough to be just patient. I did not know I had actually to lie still here and rejoice."

"Does it sound strange to you, Sophy, that to me it seems almost easier work to lie still and rejoice, than to go about in the thick of work and temptations, and then to keep up the 'always rejoicing'?"

Sophy looked up slowly. "Ah," she said, "only try it for one month! Not that I wish that for you. But the temptations come, and I can't run away from them; and every little thing is work to me."

"That was rather a complaining remark of mine," said Muriel, smiling. "But I know better really, Sophy, and I would give a great deal if you could be up and about."

"It looks as if rejoicing would be no difficulty at all then," Sophy said rather soberly.

The hour slipped away quickly, and in the interest of conversation neither Sophy nor her mother thought of mentioning Cramer Ray's name. In truth, his very existence was forgotten by them. Mrs. Rokeby sat and listened with interest, but sorrowfully. It seemed to her that this command to the Israelites had nothing to do with herself. How could she rejoice, poor failing creature, leaving undone what ought to be done, and doing what ought not to be done? Clearly, whatever other people might feel, her duty was to go on in bitterness all her days. This was a satisfactory decision for one whose natural inclinations led her to act in such wise.

Muriel having said good-bye, Clarissa came back alone. "I could not get Mr. Ray in," she said. "He brought me to the gate, and went off like a shot. What an odd man he is! He seemed bent on not arriving till just after Miss Bertram had gone, as I told him she never stayed after four, and yet he evidently didn't want to be back later than this. Is he afraid of her, I wonder?"

Be as polite to father, mother, and as thoughtful for their comfort, as to others; for they are more important to you than any other.

PSALM XXXVII. 3.

She stood by the window looking out upon a meadow, snow-white. The wind blew and rattled. The storm was at its height. There was no sign of footsteps or track of wheels to show that human beings had passed their door that morning.

The young minister looked up from his writing.

"Is breakfast ready, my dear?" There was no answer in word, but a sound which was very like a sob.

He went to the window and playfully turned the face of his girl-wife toward him. Not the bright, laughing face that usually greeted him. The tears were falling thick and fast.

"There isn't a morsel of anything to eat in the house?"

"Or no money?"

"Not a penny."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I did, last night at the supper-table. Don't you remember? I said you might as well finish the crust; it was all there was."

"I do, now; yes."

Then he took her in his arms as he had used to do before the care of a church and hard study absorbed his time.

Their salary, on the minutes, was \$400. That included house-rent, the provisions, and wood, which were given, and the annual donation. In actual money their receipts averaged \$18 a month.

The last collection day had been stormy, and the treasurer had put into the pastor's hand for the month just \$4. Provisions might come in, but, economize as best they could, the outlook was unpromising. Now the worst that they had feared had come.

The clergyman who preceded them, foreseeing such trouble, would have arranged for a fair, or festival, or cake sale, or something, and obtained some money. But their pastor was young, and enthusiastic, and conscientious. He would not go in debt. He did not believe in making his Father's house a place of merchandise, and spending the time which ought to be devoted to his work in earning the money which should be the voluntary offering of his people. And they? They were good people, and never dreamed for a moment that their pastor often sat down to his table without meat, or butter, or milk, or tea, or coffee. Their table was always laden with good things, yet they spent very little money, and it did not occur to them that their pastor's cellar was not stocked with potatoes and turnips and beets and onions, and carrots and parsnips, and squash and pumpkins. That he had no pork-barrel. That he was without lambs to butcher and chickens to kill. That in his garret were no hams, nor sausage, nor cranberries, nor apples, nor nuts. That if he was without money he had nothing. Else they never would have let him suffer for the want of it, for they loved him.

When his wife's tears were dried, and he heard her merry laugh once more, he preached her a little sermon on faith, and then they both knelt and told their Father all about it.

Just after the clock struck eleven the jingle of sleigh-bells, and a sharp Whoa! told that Farmer Burns was at the gate. He came in, presently, loaded.

"Whew!" he said, shaking the snow from his feet. "We hain't had any such storm as this in the last twenty years. Wife said I was a fool to come out in it, and I reckon I was, but we butchered day before yesterday, and I thought you might like a spare rib, and I hadn't a thing to do. And wife, when she found I was bound to come, said I might as well fetch along part of her batch of biscuit and a pot of butter, and this ere pumpkin pie. And I thought since I was comin' I'd put in a bushel of apples and a barrel of potatoes."

He wondered a little, the old farmer, at the warmth of their thanks. He little suspected, as he drove homeward, that he had been sent in answer to a prayer put up from lips which had not that day tasted food. The next morning's mail brought a letter in the handwriting of an old friend. It contained a five-dollar gold piece, and these words:

"Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land and verily thou shalt be fed."

A few days afterward there came a gift of \$20 from the Ministers' Aid Association. Their sore need brought them nearer to the Giver of all good. They could not regret it. If this simple recital shall stir any people to know whether their minister is ever cold or hungry, it will not have been written in vain.—Chris. Ade.

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