

WANTED.

Wanted—in places of folly and sin. Courage, these wayward souls to win, Voices, to tell them of Jesus' love, Faith, that points to the rest above.

Our Serial.

MURIEL'S KEY-NOTE.

BY AGNES GIBBERNE.

CHAPTER XV.

IN A SARI.

"I say, Sybel, don't those girls mean to give you your due honors?" asked Chesney, coming down to breakfast with his wife.

"My honors, dear?"

"They seem to lose sight of present relationships."

"Oh Chesney, I could not stand their calling me anything but 'Sybel.' Muriel has always been my sister—only two years younger than I am. I begged them never to think of such a thing."

"Nearness of age may be all the better reason for taking care of your dignities; but do as you like, my dear."

"John does not call you uncle."

"No; I suppose this is a parallel case."

Breakfast at first ran on smoothly-oiled wheels. Baby came in for another visit; and Mr. Rivers seemed greatly delighted to have an infant grandchild once more upon his knees. She was a pretty little plump snowflake, with observant big eyes, and plenty of sense for her eleven months. Mr. Rivers poked her about, and tickled her under the chin, and was in high glee at evoking peals of baby laughter.

But baby being gone, and breakfast being nearly over, Chesney looked up from egg and toast to remark,

"I am going to see John this morning. Any one care to come with me?"

Nobody spoke, and he looked at his wife.

"Sybel, you must not undertake the fatigue so soon?"

"Not to-day. I told Rose I would not be long in going."

"Muriel, you used to be a good walker."

"Muriel shall not go," said Mr. Rivers roughly.

"Will you come, father?"

Mr. Rivers pulled his moustache with a wrathful air. Words were unequal to the occasion, and he used none.

"Then I must go alone. I expect to be back for luncheon, but don't wait if I should be delayed."

Which he was, apparently, for the day went by and Chesney continued an absentee. Now and then Mr. Rivers came out of his study to inquire—"Chesney back yet?" and each time the after-bang of his study door waxed louder.

Sybel was taken possession of by Mrs. Bertram all the morning, and Muriel found, or fancied she found, herself de trop in the drawing-room, not as regarded Sybel, but her mother. She stole away to the nursery—extemporized from an old play-room—and sat down to play with baby and chat with the ayah. The latter's odd broken English amused her greatly.

In the drawing-room she was not seen again. After an hour or two, Sybel and Mrs. Bertram came on a visit to the nursery, and stood at the door in amazement—Sybel smiling and Mrs. Bertram aghast.

For the little ayah was laughing from ear to ear, and baby crooned sympathetic delight; while Muriel stood arrayed in a clean white sari, with red borders, its fold clothing her to the feet, wound and twisted and flung over her head and shoulders, with the true Eastern ease and elaborate negligence. Her own dress lay upon the ground hard by.

"O Muriel, Muriel, what a handsome native you would make!" said Sybel merrily.

"Missie too-muchee-pretty. No like English Mem Sahib," said the ayah and some rapid words in Hindostanee followed.

"Ayah thinks you are worthy to be a Brahmin's daughter," said Sybel. "You must take the compliment as meant—but really you are almost dark enough for a native. And I notice now that you have never quite lost that

peculiar way of using your hands, which Indian children so often catch from their ayahs. O yes—and the little upward toss instead of downward nod of the head for 'yes.' Most children lose those little ways so soon, but you have managed to keep them. Ah, baby, baby—cousin Muriel makes a grand ayah, doesn't she?"

"Mamma, don't you feel well?" exclaimed Muriel, suddenly in her laughter noticing Mrs. Bertram's livid colouring.

Sybel threw the window wider open, and Mrs. Bertram sat down by it. "Thank you, it is no matter—nothing at all," she said; but when Muriel came near, she turned from her with a manner that bespoke almost loathing. Muriel stepped back as from a dagger, and Sybel flushed painfully for her.

"Are you better now, Mary?" she asked gravely.

Instead of answering, Mrs. Bertram burst into a violent fit of crying. It was something unwonted. The two exchanged glances, and then the clue to the whole flashed into Sybel's mind, with the recollection of a certain past conversation. But she could not enlighten Muriel. She could only feel very much vexed with herself for having made matters worse than they needed to have been.

"Would you not like to come to your own room?" asked Sybel, pitying Muriel, who stood rigidly apart with a look of pain.

"Thank you—your arm, please—and tell Muriel to take off that horrid sari. Nobody must see her in it."

Mrs. Bertram went slowly out of the room. Muriel's fun was at an end. Sadly enough she unwound the long muslin folds, and resumed her own dress. She was hidden in her room till luncheon. By that time Mrs. Bertram's equanimity was restored, but her manner to Muriel showed marked coldness.

For the first half of the afternoon Sybel was claimed for a drive. After that, coming in tired out, she lay down on her bed, and secured Muriel as her only companion.

"Just what I have been longing for all day," Muriel said, sighing, as she laid her face down on the pillow beside her friend's. "O Sybel!"

"O Muriel!" was the gentle echo. "What could that deep breath have meant?"

"It is not pleasant to be hated."

"Hush!"

"Particularly by one's mother."

"Hush, dear! You will be sorry by-and-by."

"Yes, but it is such a relief to speak out now. How should you feel in my place?"

"I can fancy how unhappy I should feel. But, indeed, dear Muriel, it is not hate. You don't understand."

"Do you?"

Sybel hesitated. "Understand what?"

"Whatever lies at the root of mamma's dislike to me. Did you not see this afternoon how she shuddered when I came near her—as if I had been a toad?"

"Yes, I am sorry she saw you in that dress."

"Why?"

"Only because of certain associations that she has with it."

"And you know them—and I do not."

Sybel touched her cheek affectionately. "Muriel, I am wife to her brother. I must necessarily come in for family secrets, which I can't repeat. You understand that."

"Yes, and do not mind it—only I don't like anything which seems to put you at a distance from me."

"Nothing can do that. We are sisters always," Sybel said with playful fondness.

"Sybel, I do wonder at you."

"Why?"

"Don't you think you are changed?"

"Since when?"

"Old days. It isn't like you to be so bright—when you have such reason to be otherwise. You used to be far more up and down than even I. Mr. Maxwell called me his 'little barometer,' but you were always his 'small sensitive-plant.'"

Sybel lay with her hands clasped lightly, and her eyes looking across to the open window, where might be caught a distant view of the blue sky kissing purple hills.

"Up and down in what way?" she asked.

"Why Sybel—just as I am. One day everything looks sunshiny, and I care for nothing; and another day a wet blanket seems wrapped round one's very being. You know."

"Yes—I know. I don't think we should yield to such moods."

"But one can't help the feelings."

"One can help giving way to the feelings."

"But don't you get depressed days?"

"Often—just as children get their 'cross days.' Very much the same thing, too. I never feel it right to give way to the feeling, and act as wet

blanket to others. I don't say I never do it, Muriel," she added humbly.

"John is so fond of teaching that Christians should be always rejoicing. And this was given me by a poor crippled girl. I must take you to see her. Look—I always keep it in my Pocket-Testament. But then how impossible it seems to rejoice always. One can't rejoice when there is nothing to rejoice about."

"I can't imagine such a state of things."

"Not ever?"

"Never."

"Not even—"

"Not even when my darlings were taken."

Tears gathered and dropped slowly, but presently Sybel went on—

"Not even then. I had my Saviour's love still."

"But—at such a time!"

"I never knew His love was so strong till then. And after a while I could rejoice that they were safely housed—no more sin or pain for them—my little precious ones!"

"Don't darling," for she was weeping bitterly.

"It isn't meant not to be sorrow," said Sybel brokenly. "His tears, you know—that is my comfort. I may grieve because He did. But I shall have them again—and heaven seems nearer than earth sometimes, when I think of them there."

"If you could rejoice then, I should think you would find it easy to rejoice always."

"Ah, that is different. People often find it harder to throw off the burden of little daily worries than of great sorrow. The martyrs could sing in the flames, but depend upon it they didn't always sing, when home-folks were troublesome, or unkind words were said, or money affairs went wrong. I find it hard to sing sometimes when life doesn't seem worth the living for. Dear Chesney has always been so patient. But now, Muriel, I am not going to talk any more about myself. Tell me about yourself."

Muriel, once started, found so much to say that the dressing-bell rang before she had, at Sybel said, "finished the first head of her discourse."

"But Muriel, Muriel, John is right," she said softly. "You are living too low down in an earth atmosphere. Up above, the air is clearer. You want more of the 'joy of the Lord' in your life."

"I know I do, but how am I to get it?"

Sybel gave her a kiss.

"Don't think I am telling you to copy my poor playing. We both have to learn the heavenly harmony and the master-touch from Christ."

"Shall I ever?" Muriel said sadly, as she went away.

Chesney appeared in time for dinner, hungry, hearty, and bright. He apologized for his long absence. "I could not resist," he said, looking straight at his father. "John was delighted to have me, and, in fact, they would not let me go sooner. Sybel and I are to take tea there on Friday. What a bonny little mother Rose makes! Connie is a sweet child—quite cling to me when I talked of you, Muriel. John has a pulled look—very good spirits, but I should not fancy him quite strong. This unfortunate division is a distress to him."

"When you have said as much as you particularly wish, I shall be obliged to you to drop the subject," said Mr. Rivers.

"By all means, father,"—in a most good-humored tone, Chesney having decided on his course of action.

"What a good fellow John is!—so thorough and hard-working and self-denying. My life looks quite small beside his. We had a long walk together through the old lanes, and tried to fancy ourselves boys together once more."

But Chesney's face shaded, and a sigh escaped him. Perhaps the attempt had proved a failure.

A CASE OF CONSCIENCE.

BY HON NEAL DOW.

A friend of mine, yet young, who had been in business in a small way, thought he would go to New Orleans, live there, and try his fortune. He put all his property into a certain kind of merchandise which he knew the market of New Orleans would readily take, embarked on board a brig and sent her off, while he resolved to go by land.

In those days there were no railways. From Philadelphia he took stage over the mountains to Pittsburgh. On Saturday night there was talk among some of the passengers on the question of Sunday travel. My friend said he would not travel on that day—he would stop over at the hotel where the passengers had supper. He had never travelled before, and some old stagers represented to him the possible if not probable consequences of his resolution.

On the Monday the stage might have no place vacant and he must necessarily wait another day, and perhaps another and another before he could continue his journey. In that case, on arrival at Pittsburgh he might find the steamer gone, and another delay would result from it. My friend considered the matter carefully. His orders to the shipmaster were to await him at New Orleans so many days; if he should fail to arrive he was to warehouse the cargo, a costly affair in New Orleans. He had hoped to sell it from the vessel.

My friend said: I will stop over. I will not travel on the Sabbath. The stage with his pleasant companions went on without him. He remained in the poor country inn, with no books, no company, no church. On the Monday the stage was full and he could not proceed; on Tuesday the same; on the Wednesday he found a seat, and on his arrival at Pittsburgh there was no steamer, and would be none for two weeks. He took passage on a flat-boat for Cincinnati, where he arrived after a tedious passage, and was obliged to wait there three days for a steamer to New Orleans. All looked very dark to him.

If he had kept on without stopping over he would have found a steamer at Pittsburgh all ready to start, by which he could go without change to New Orleans. On arrival at his destination he found his cargo in a warehouse, as he had feared, and besides he missed an admirable opportunity to sell the whole of it, from the vessel, to a merchant in undoubted credit, who impounded the captain to sell and thus save storage. All looked very dark to my friend. A worldly man would think Sabbath-keeping would not pay.

In two days after his arrival, the merchant failed who had endeavored to buy his cargo. The sale would have been "on time," and the entire cargo would have been lost. In the meantime my friend's merchandise greatly advanced in the market, was very quickly sold at a large profit and for cash, the transaction being the foundation of a handsome fortune, which he employed always wisely and well, not for himself and family only, but most liberally in every good work.

In keeping God's commands there is in truth great rewards in many ways.

WAITING.

To most waiting is harder than working. Patience is a difficult virtue, and in this busy, over-strained age, it is becoming somewhat scarce. Oftentimes it is the best service that can be rendered. "For they also serve who only stand and wait." Away from the glare of the world, in the privacy of home, waiting, not in idleness, nor in disappointed pride, but in faithful performance of the small duties, by which hour by hour the soul's devotion to God is proved, its strength is nourished, and if a call comes to higher work, it is not found wanting. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much."

THE DUSTY ROOM.

A young girl was sweeping a room one day, when she went to the window-blind and drew it down. "It makes the room so dusty," she said, "to have the sunshine always coming in."

The atoms of dust which shone golden in the sunbeams were unseen in the dimmer light. The untaught girl imagined it was the sunlight which made the dust.

Now many people imagine themselves very good people. One poor old man, who lived all his life without a thought of love to God, said he was willing to die. He didn't owe any man a shilling.

If the Spirit of God should shine brightly into such a heart, how would it look? It would show him sins enough to crush him. This light of the Spirit is like the sunshine in the dusty room. It reveals what was before hidden. When we begin to feel unhappy about our sins let us never try to put away the feeling. Do not let us put down the curtain and fancy there is no dust. It is the Holy Spirit's voice in our hearts. He is showing us ourselves, and better still, He will show us the true way to happiness.—Presbyterian.

RANDOM READINGS.

God holds the person of one talent just as responsible for its proper use as he does the man who has ten.

Economy wisely directed is not only not stingy or mean, but the thing that makes benevolence and generous giving possible.

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