

## AT THE GATE.

"For behold the kingdom of God is within you."  
Thy kingdom here!  
Lord, can it be?  
Searching and seeking everywhere.  
For many a year,  
"Thy kingdom come" has been my prayer,  
Was that dear kingdom all the while so near?

Blinded and dull  
With selfish sin,  
Have I been sitting at the gates  
Called Beautiful,  
Where thy fair angel stands and waits  
With hand upon the lock to let me in?

Was I the wall  
Which barred the way,  
Darkening the glory of thy grace,  
Hiding the ray  
Which, shining out from thy very face,  
Had shown to others men the perfect day?

Was I the bar  
Which shut me out  
From the full joyance which they taste  
Whose spirits are  
Within thy paradise embraced—  
Thy blessed paradise, which seems so far?

Let me not sit  
Another hour,  
Idly awaiting what is mine to win,  
Blinded in wit,  
Lord Jesus, rend these walls of self and sin.  
Beat down the gate, that I may enter in.  
—The English Pulpit.

## Our Serial.

## MURIEL'S KEY-NOTE.

BY AGNES GIBBENE.

## CHAPTER X. VI.

## THE LAST OF SOMEBODY.

Days passed by, mounting into weeks, and faces about the house had grown brighter, and Rose could smile again, and the children's pitiful looks had vanished.

For John lived still, and the worst was over. Danger might be fairly counted at an end. John had been to death's door—had stood on the brink of the dark river—but he neither entered nor crossed. He was coming back to every-day life.

The coming back was a slow business. Improvement could scarcely be noted from day to day. Muriel sometimes thought that the suffering of this tardy convalescence was almost worse to watch than the actual illness had been. John's own bright thankfulness of spirit was sorely put to the test. His energetic temperament could better have borne any trial than that of such protracted feebleness. Yet he did bear it well.

John knew nothing all this time of his grandfather's presence in the house. Every manner of excitement was forbidden him. Indeed, if he had once heard who was lying in a certain up-stairs room, strong indeed must have been the power that could have kept him away. But two or three threatened relapses made his nurses cautious.

Sometimes, though not often, he asked after his grandfather, and wished to know if the old indifference continued. Had he pushed his inquiries farther, evasion would have been difficult; but it was not so. Having been to death's door, and received no sign, he counted the matter for the present well-nigh hopeless. There was a settled sadness in his manner when he alluded to it.

Chesney had been joined by Sybel, and they remained at the Rectory. The house would have been over-full, but some of the younger children had been sent to the Manor, under charge of their nurse. Mrs. Bertram made no objection. Her only care was for Lilius. And Lilius faded quietly still. Nothing could be done to check the progress of the disease. Mrs. Bertram never left her—not even to see her father.

For a time it had been thought that the old man could not rally. Yet he too now was showing signs of a more than passing improvement, and fear of immediate death was gone.

One day an unexpected visitor appeared at the Rectory. Muriel was called to the drawing-room, and found Montgomery Maxwell standing dreamily before the window. A wintry view lay outside. There had been a slight fall of snow, and birds were picking up crumbs, carefully strewn over the lawn.

"Ah, those are Connie's pets," said Muriel, shaking hands with him. "How dark the evergreens look in comparison with the snow. But, Mr. Maxwell, we all thought you had left England."

"No—indeed, no—not yet. I am going in two days," said the tutor nervously. "I could not venture to see you before I left Claverton—though I knew you were here. But now—knowing how things stand—"

"Why not venture?"  
"You were all in such trouble. O yes, and it was forbidden. Perhaps Mr. Rivers might not feel the same now. Besides—I had a longing to say good-bye to John."

"You would be his first visitor. But I almost think we might take you in."

"He is better—himself again."  
"Anything but himself. He is better, certainly."

"Only not up to seeing me. I understand."

"Yes—if you will be very careful. He does not know about grandpa's illness, so don't allude to that, or to his being in this house. John will enjoy a sight of you."

"Thank you—thank you. I am returning by the next train, so I shall not hinder anybody long."

"It will be no hindrance. Can't you stay all day? Rose will wish it, I know."

"Thank you, no—better not—better not," said Mr. Maxwell gently, as if repeating a lesson. "Far better not. And, indeed, I have an engagement. I made it on purpose," added the tutor with happy transparency.

Muriel could not help smiling. "And it can't be unmade, I suppose. Come and see John, Mr. Maxwell. He is in his dressing-room, I believe."

There he was found, lying on the sofa, ready to welcome anybody. His altered looks greatly shocked the tutor, who for some seconds could not get beyond broken mutters of, "Dear me!—poor fellow—poor fellow—so ill—quite changed—poor fellow, I couldn't have believed it!"

"Ah! you should have seen me awhile ago," said John. "Positively I made the tour of my bedroom this morning. One learns to plume oneself on small things. That is as great an event now as a twenty miles' walk would have been last year."

"Mr. Maxwell is going abroad directly," Muriel observed, for he seemed to have little to say. He sat in a passive attitude, leaning slightly forward, with an abstracted gaze which wandered to and fro between brother and sister. Rose came in for but a small share of his attention.

"These changes have been a trial for you," said John.

"Yes. It is all for the best."

"No doubt of that. Some day you will plainly see it so."

"I see it now—oh yes, I see it now."

"In what way?" Muriel asked impulsively, but she had no answer.

"How do you like your present pupil?" inquired John.

"A gentlemanly young fellow. We shall get on well together. In fact, I find we possess a curious similarity of tastes," added Mr. Maxwell, growing suddenly lively. "He has a love for natural science, greatly discouraged by his family. I hope to make use of it, without hindering more important studies. He is already interested in botany."

"You will be writing a botanical essay on the Swiss flora, when you come back."

"Ah—I do look forward with pleasure, I confess, to the mountains. What specimens we may find! I hope to gather a good collection."

And Montgomery discoursed about families and tribes of the vegetable kingdom with strange forgetfulness of time and circumstance. To check him was not easy. Muriel began to regret her precipitation in bringing him upstairs. Rose tried to lead the talk in another direction, but the tutor heard nothing. John's hand stole furtively to his head.

"Mr. Maxwell, I only gave you leave for a few minutes' call," Muriel interposed at the first break.

"Yes—I am going. I must catch my train. One instance more, I must mention—John will be so interested—"

"I can't quite follow it all, thank you," said John. "When did you see my grandfather last?"

Montgomery paused, and looked back in silence.

"Not since your little affair, I suppose."

"I—no—I—"

"You have not been to the Manor?"

"Not till to-day. I wished to see Lilius."

"And my grandfather?"

"I have not supposed it possible. Otherwise I should like—before leaving—"

The cat was as nearly as possible out of the bag. Muriel allowed her little work-box to fall with a crash—opportunistically, and certainly not by accident.

"Why, Muriel!" Rose said in surprise, not having read the cause quickly, while Mr. Maxwell stooped to pick up some of the things, and was looking after a runaway thimble.

"Never mind," said Muriel, blushing slightly. "Don't trouble yourself, Mr. Maxwell. I must take you away now, for John can't stand any more."

John was looking at her curiously, as if perplexed.

"I am wondering if some of you would write to me—some day," said Mr. Maxwell, standing up. "I shall want to hear how you are—and poor Lilius, and—"

Muriel felt desperate, and Rose promptly interrupted—"O yes, I will be sure to write. Let me have your address, and you shall hear all about everybody."

"Thank you. I should be much

obliged. I shall be so anxious to hear about Mr. Rivers."

"Why?" John asked naturally.

"He has not looked well for months past," said Rose, moving towards the door. "All accounts agree as to that. Come, Mr. Maxwell, please. I can't allow John another word with you, or we shall have him ill again."

It was a hurried good-bye, for Rose insisted on no delay. Muriel remained behind, and Montgomery grasped her hand gently, with a wistful look. She was too anxious about John to notice it. No more passed. He went out of the room and out of the house, having not revealed his secret to Muriel by word or glance. She knew nothing of his victory, or of what she was to him. He left her free and heart-whole for her daily duties.

With her thoughts set upon John, she was only thankful to see the door close behind him. John had a half-hour of faintness more severe than for many days past, but on rallying from it he asked of Muriel—

"What was the matter with you a little while ago?"

"When?"

"When you dropped your box. I fancied the fall not quite natural."

"I thought it went down very neatly."

"What was your reason?"

"Must you have a reason?"

"Yes."

"I had a particular wish to interrupt Mr. Maxwell in his talk. There!" she said, smiling.

"I am afraid my grandfather is looking more ill than any of you will tell me."

"Suppose he were—what then?"

"I ought to know."

"What good would that do? Look how fit you are of it, John. You are feeling quite ill now, with only this slight over-fatigue. If we were to discuss every particular of grandpa's looks for your amusement, you would just stand still altogether."

"Amusement?"

"Interest then. Your first duty now is to get well."

"A duty rather hard to perform," John said wearily.

"Yes—and the more you worry your head with other folks' ailments the harder you make it. Grandpa was very much tried about you, of course, and—has not been well. But I can tell you one thing to a certainty, and that is that he is better now than a month ago. After that you ought to be satisfied."

"I am not dissatisfied."

"Ah, but now about 'rejoicing?' she asked, mainly to divert his thoughts, yet in earnest.

"Have I been very grumbling?"

"No, indeed. But I think I have seen a little struggle at times."

"About the hardest battle I ever fought in my life," said John. "But 'my soul shall rejoice' still."

"Off and on. I see the old reasons for joy unchanged—and heaven's brightness does not fade. Eyesight may be a little dim at times."

Then he asked—

"Did you ever hunt out the 'fors' and 'because' on this subject?"

"I don't understand."

"I will greatly rejoice... for He hath clothed me." "Let all those that trust their trust in Thee rejoice, because Thou defendest them." "In Thy Name shall they rejoice... for the Lord is our defence." Plenty such. You may find a grand array of reasons for heart-rejoicing."

"John, not another word," said Muriel.

And he lay quietly, smiling to himself. Muriel thought how different it would have been if John had not recovered, and in her heart she thanked God afresh. She was learning more of the spirit of praise.

But something else drew near, long-threatened, though little realized. No particular change showed in Lilius from day to day, yet change took place. Muriel was backwards and forwards a good deal between the two houses. It did not seem that she could be spared from the Rectory.

A message came one day, however, through Chesney. "Could Muriel sleep at home for a day or two?"

"Can you do without me here?" Muriel asked.

"We must. I think you should go."

"But you don't say Lilius is worse, uncle?"

"No," Chesney answered slowly. "Not worse—in any marked way. She seemed brighter than I often find her. But she wishes to see a little more of you. I do not think you could refuse."

He had an imagination of possible self-reproaches later. So the way was made easy, and Muriel went.

Nowhere can a man go that temptation cannot find him. Temptation possesses a free pass on all the railroads, a free berth on all the boats, a free entrance to school-rooms, and business offices, and play-grounds—and even to the churches.—S.S. Times.

## BURDETTE'S ADVICE TO THE YOUNG MEN.

So you have got yourself into trouble, my son? Gone a little wrong, have you? Yes, well, that means, you know, that you have gone clear wrong, because there is only one kind of wrong; there is no mugwumpery in morals, my boy. And you've had such a hard time getting back that it made you a little bitter and cynical, and you think all the world is rather hard and selfish and pitiless, and especially severe on you? Well, I wouldn't feel that way at all, if I were you. I don't think I ever did feel that way, and I know more about it than you do. I've been further down the Jericho road than you. Went down there to let my beard grow. Great town for toots, from away back. It's a bad country. Never heard of but one good woman in Jericho, and she didn't move in good society.

But, my son, it isn't society's fault that you got into trouble. You knew what the Jericho road was before you went down that way. You knew there was a curse on the town. You were safe enough in Jerusalem; why didn't you stay there? Don't feel bitter towards all the world because you fell among thieves and got cleaned out. It is a kind, good-natured forgiving old world, if you give it a chance to be forgiving. True, it doesn't always look that way to a fellow in trouble, because then the fellow is apt to look at the wrong people.

You found on the Jericho road, say, six or eight thieves—that is, half a dozen professionals and the two amateurs who passed by on the other side—and only one Good Samaritan, and naturally it seems to you that the heaven of good is utterly lost in that great mass of rascality and hypocrisy; but, bless you, my son, in the great honest living world, in the world that is trying to do right, and trying to lead men to better things than Jericho excursions, in the only world that really lives and cares for just such fellows as you, in the real world of men and women who deal with the young man all the more gently when his smarting wounds are deepest, the one Good Samaritan outweighs a regiment of these villains who beat you, and robbed you, and passed you by on the road to Jericho. Never mind the priest and the Levite, my son. They were going down to Jericho, too, you remember; that's the kind of priests they were.

And one closing word, my son. Unless you are smarter and stronger than the thieves down Jericho way—and I guess maybe you are not, very few men are—why, you keep off that road. You stay in Jerusalem and you'll have more money and less headache.

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE LOST?

"What must I do to be lost?" "Neglect so great salvation." It is not necessary to do anything. We are lost already. Jesus offers to save us; but if we reject His offer we remain as we were. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape is impossible, if we neglect the only means of safety. If a deadly serpent bites you, and you refuse the only remedy, you die. If you are drowning, and will not seize the life-buoy thrown to you, you sink. Neglect is ruin. Jesus alone can save the soul! Neither is there salvation in any other. O, sinner! your damnation is sure if you neglect Jesus. If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God? Dost thou think God will not execute His threatening, that thou canst escape His piercing eye, or that the rocks will cover thee? Vain hopes! There is no escape but to come to Jesus, and simple neglect is certain perdition!

"Because I called, but ye refused!—then shall they call, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me, but shall not find Me?" O, sinner! escape this awful threatening! Jesus now stands with open arms. He entreats you to be saved! Come with all your sins and sorrows—come just as you are—come at once! He will in no wise cast you out!—Newman Hall.

## RANDOM READINGS.

He that is born but once, dies twice. He that is born twice, shall never die.—Henry Varley.

The Christian will find his parentheses for prayer even in the busiest hours of life.—Cecil.

It is as necessary to create a spiritual hunger in men, as to provide spiritual bread to supply their wants.

Christ's prayer for the unity of all Christians ought to echo in our lives, and draw us closer to all who love the Lord Jesus of whatever name.

Polish is easily added if the foundations are strong; but if no amount of gilding will be of use if your timber is not sound.—L. M. Alcott.

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