

## WHEN DAYS ARE DARK.

When days are dark, remember  
The brightness that is passed;  
Call up the glad spring-music  
To mingle with the blast;  
Think of the merry sunshine  
And hosts of scented flowers,  
Let memories of the summer  
Take gloom from off sad hours.

When days are dark, be cheerful;  
Because the leaves must fade;  
Thy hopes need not be cast away  
Nor thy heart be dismayed.  
This is the time for laughter  
And happy household song,  
Hours that are filled with cheerfulness  
Are never sad and long.

When days are dark, be trustful,  
The sun shines after rain,  
And joy goes not so far away  
But it returns again.  
Life is not ruled by sorrow,  
But blessings reign o'er all,  
And we can sing of mercy  
In spite of pain and thrall.

When days are dark, be busy,  
For there is much to do,  
And the ministries are many  
Which kindly hands pursue!  
The need of love is always great,  
For grief is everywhere;  
Oh, lighten thou some burden,  
And lessen thou some care!

When days are dark, be thankful,  
Light is not always best,  
And useful are the shadows  
The silence, and the rest.  
God gives what'er is good to come,  
The day and then the night,  
And those who find their joy in Him  
Live always in the light.

Marianne Farningham, in *Chr's. World*.

## Our Serial.

## MURIEL'S KEY-NOTE.

BY AGNES GIBERNE.

## CHAPTER XVII.

UNDER THE ELM.

Bushy rectory was reached, and Chesney sprang out.

"You are not going in?" his wife said.

"Yes, I am. I have some presents for the children in my pockets. Don't you and Muriel want to see Rose?"

"Sybel can go," said Muriel hurriedly. "I must wait here."

"Nonsense. I'll settle it all," said Chesney.

"I ought not."

"Conscientiousness may run into squeamishness," said Chesney. "Come—both of you."

Muriel's eyes went appealingly to John.

"What do you think? May I? He would be angry, but—"

"I can't bear to put a spoke in the wheel for Rose's sake," said John.

"But I think you are right."

"It was not my doing that uncle Chesney took you up, and brought me here," said Muriel. "And I really don't think I am bound to go so far as to refuse to speak to you, John. But going into your house would be a different matter. O how I should like to see Rose!" and she sighed.

"You goose! why don't you?" said Chesney. Nevertheless she saw an under-current of something like admiration in his face and she did not yield.

"Don't hurry yourself, Sybel," she said. "I do not mind how long I wait. If only Rose had not a cold!"

The carriage was drawn up under shade of an elm, a little way from the garden-gate. Muriel leant back silently, as the others walked away, feeling herself pulled strongly homeward, and wondering if her resolution would hold out. All at once she found John again by her side, standing close to the carriage, with an arm upon the door.

"I want you to tell me honestly how my grandfather is," he said. The old coachman being somewhat deaf, they were virtually *tete-a-tete*.

"He is not ill. He does age, certainly. But what can one expect? He is not far from eighty."

"How does the change appear?"

"I hardly know. He walks less—sleeps more—seems feeble altogether at times. Not when anything excites him. There is no weakening of will."

"No signs of yielding?"

"None that I can see. John, you don't look as you ought."

"I am not very well to-day."

"Has anything been wrong with you lately?"

"Nothing much. I have not my usual strength." Then he asked.

"How with you, Muriel?"

"In what way?"

"Key-note pitched yet?"

"I am not sure. It is discordant playing—often."

"Possibly it sounds better to others than yourself."

"O no."

He smiled a little. Are you giving your hearers plenty of the joy-note?"

"No. I can't strike it at all sometimes. It won't sound," said Muriel.

"Why not?"

"Different reasons. I get down-hearted—depressed—out of sorts. There is always something."

"Always something to keep you from always rejoicing?"

"Yes. John, isn't it natural?"

"Perfectly natural. But the child of God has not to live the natural life. I dare say St. Paul had 'always some-

thing' too, but it did not hinder him from 'always rejoicing'!"

"It does not hinder Sybel," said Muriel very low. "But I can't get to that state of things."

"What is the 'something' now?" he asked.

"I can't bear Sybel's going away. I shall be so lonely again. John, you don't know what it is."

"I can't imagine."

"There is no one to speak to—no one who understands me—except Mr. Maxwell."

John was silent.

"Mamma is colder to me than ever. Lilias and I never have been friends in any sense."

"Not enemies, I hope."

"You understand, I know. Sometimes I think mamma almost hates me."

"Never think so again."

"I can't help it. Does it not seem so?"

"No. Never allow yourself to think that."

"I'll try to obey. But as for rejoicing—"

"Well? As for rejoicing?" he repeated.

"It has not been difficult with Sybel at hand. But now—"

"The command stands the same."

"Everything will seem dull and spiritless."

"Maybe—so far as Sybel, or earthly sympathy in any sense is concerned. But you have to rejoice nevertheless. I don't say you can expect not to be troubled, or depressed, or afflicted, but yet always to rejoice in the Lord who appoints or permits all things."

"There lies the impossibility."

"Difficultly, not impossibility," Muriel thought for a minute.

"John, you don't know what it is to be depressed."

"Don't I?"—rather drily.

"Do you?"

"Why, you settle the question for me."

"I didn't think it was your way."

"You judge from the outside too much."

"Then you do sometimes?"

"Do what?"

"Feel depressed."

"I have had some hard fights against the sensation lately. Don't tell Rose."

"What about?" asked Muriel.

"Has anything been the matter?"

"Now see how unreasonable you are," he said. "You must have your ups and downs, your bright days and your dull days, and only be expected to rejoice 'as much as in you lies,' and nobody is to look for a reasonable explanation of each state. While I, not being supposed to have an inclination that way, must have no sensation of dulness, without being hauled over the coals, if I can't give a precisely adequate cause."

"Then you have had no particular cause?"

"I dare say I have. Headache one day—tired limbs the next—disinclination for work the third—parish worries the fourth—home anxieties the fifth. What of all that? As you say, there is always something. They may or may not be causes adequate."

"John—I think—"

"Nevertheless—always rejoicing," said John.

"John, can you? Always?"

"Not always equally," he said with some gravity. "The burden of life is heavy upon me sometimes, Muriel, as upon others. But the reasons for rejoicing never change."

"You can't always feel them."

"I do not at all times equally realize. I know and believe them to be always the same."

"And you don't lose them completely—lose sight of them altogether—as I do! What is the reason?"

"What affects the rejoicing with you?"

"Why, when things don't go smoothly. Unkindness—loneliness—friends leaving."

"They can't touch the true joy; it lies over the head of such matters."

"I don't see how."

"Fancy yourself standing by the seashore. Look up, and the light shines down to you steadily. Look down in the water, and every ripple breaks the reflection. Your habitual gaze is too low, Muriel."

"But when these troubles come one must feel," said Muriel.

"Feel! My dear child, our Lord and Master was no cold stoic. Did He not feel?"

"But if one is unhappy—"

"You may keep the heavenly rejoicing through even sorrow—through even depression."

Muriel looked incredulous.

"Can't you imagine walking in a drizzling fog, feeling wet and uncomfortable, and yet having a glow of pleasure at your heart, because of a long letter just received from Sybel?"

"Or from you?"

"Well—if you like. Is it impossible that you should be chilled and

pained at some home-unkindness, and yet have a restful feeling of joy alongside, in the certainty of how dear you are to Rose and me?"

Muriel's tears were dropping.

"You see we are complex creatures," he said gently. "But your heart is fully here—fully with Sybel. Is it fully set on Christ?"

"Something may be wrong there."

"When Sybel goes, you will grieve. But why must that touch the rejoicing in Jesus? He is not going. Rejoice in Him still."

"I will," she said in a low voice.

"Perhaps a want of yielding has hindered joy hitherto."

"Yielding what?" she asked.

"Yourself—your way—your will. If you are fighting or even murmuring for your own way, you cannot rejoice in His. There must be willing acceptance before there can be joy."

"I thought I had learnt submission, at all events."

"That is one step. Submission leads to the state of quiet resignation. Happy acceptance leads to rejoicing. What if Sybel does go, and your life is somewhat lonely? It is the will of One, dearer to you than Sybel. Then take it with a smile, and rejoice the more in Him."

"John, I don't think I have the right sort of spirit in me to do that."

"Ask," said John emphatically.

"Ask, and ask again. It is a marvelous thing to hear God's children bemoaning their spiritual wants, when they may have all they need for the asking."

"I see your meaning more now," said Muriel, after a pause. "I have been thinking I must altogether leave off minding trouble and feeling dull, before I could think about rejoicing."

"You need not be dull," said John.

"Don't bury the spirit of rejoicing under a velvet pall."

Chesney's hand came on John's shoulder.

"Rose has dressed and is muffling up in a shawl. She won't be content without seeing Muriel. What is wrong with you, John, to-day?"

"Rose is imprudent. I don't know that it will hurt her, though," for Muriel looked eager delight.

"No fear. She says you have not been yourself lately."

"Rose never questioned my identity before."

"She does now—rather dubious evidently. Ha! here she comes."

And face-ache or no face-ache, to get Rose and Muriel apart under ten minutes was impossible. After that the children came out, and time slipped away unnoticed.

Dinner was over before the carriage reached the Manor.

"Can't be helped," Chesney said complacently. "Get ready both of you. I will see my father in his study."

"Uncle Chesney, he must know all about me," said Muriel.

"Every bit, my honest niece. Don't be afraid."

And he went—to be closeted for some time. When he came to Sybel and Muriel he had a grave face.

"Poor John!" were his first words.

"Was he much vexed?" asked Sybel.

"I begin to doubt whether I ever saw a man in a gale before. Muriel was right not to go into the house. That would have been a tremendous offence."

"Uncle, you told him I was with John—talking."

"Told him all—so far as he would listen. However, don't be alarmed. I sheltered you, and the storm spent itself on my shoulders. Good thing I have pretty broad ones."

"And he is not angry now?" asked Sybel.

"I dare say he will have grown cooler by to-morrow."

They saw no more of Mr. Rivers that night. Chesney, with quiet nonchalance, had talked much of John, and the old man's heart was stirred within him to keen and bitter pain.

## WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS.

There are certain amusements in which the world greatly delights, and which are claimed by many to be harmless. These are cards, dancing, the theatre, etc. This is a wide subject, and it can not be fully discussed in a brief article. But we will get at the heart and root of the matter. Christians ought to avoid sinful worldly amusements, and be fully consecrated to Christ. Many professed Christians claim that these and kindred amusements may be safely indulged in. The question is frequently asked, "Is there any harm in these things?" Persons desirous of joining the church, and yet wishing to indulge in them, hesitate to do so, and think the church is unreasonable to demand such a sacrifice of them as to renounce them.

It might not be the Bible ground to say that cards, etc., are wrong in themselves, and yet all admit that these amusements do open up the way to

that which is positively sinful. We are reminded of an Eastern parable. A camel humbly begged an Arab to let him shelter his head from the storm inside of his tent. The request was granted. Gradually, the camel got his whole body in, and when the Arab complained that there was not room enough in the tent for him and the camel both, that audacious creature told him to get out then. So-called innocent amusements sometimes make a breach in the walls of Zion through which you might drive a coach-and-four.

These little spotted bits of paste-board, and similar things, are innocent enough looking, but danger lurks within them. We have no mention of cards in the Bible. When Christ was dying, the four Roman soldiers who crucified him likely threw some kind of dice to see who should have his seamless coat. That is not a favorable precedent. In the last stages of gambling its effects are dire, and yet cards are frequently the beginning. They are the A in the alphabet of which the Z is gambling on a large scale. Gambling in grain and stocks has brought many a respectable man to ruin. He either flies or else has to wear the stripes. We have known men who once stood high in the community, who are now in prison or else fugitives from justice. Better for them, if, when they were boys, they had not learned to handle the dotted bits of pasteboard. This craze for gambling is even seen in the sale of ordinary groceries. Bohemian oats are sold on the same principle, and the temptation is placed before people to make fabulous sums of money by investing a small sum. Sometimes the biters get bitten, and small sympathy they receive from their fellows.

The charm of the dance is either that gentlemen and ladies dance together, or, if ladies dance with ladies, as on the stage, gentlemen are spectators. The dance would not be attractive to anybody, if gentlemen and ladies were not in the same room together. The dance of the ballet-girls at the theatre is demoralizing both to the performers and the spectators. Such a dance in effect was that of the daughter of Herodias, who, amid the festivities of Herod's birthday, danced in such a way as to delight Herod to such an extent that with an oath he promised her whatever she would ask; though it should cost him half his kingdom. This opportunity the two shameless women, mother and daughter, improved by demanding that immediately, upon that splendid dish, might be placed the gory head of him whom Christ pronounced to be the greatest of men—John the Baptist. Who would have thought that this dancing girl would be so cruel, and that she would dabble her pretty feet in such blood as John's?

The tendency of the theatre is bad. Many of the plays are licentious and demoralizing. The profts are well known. The pictured advertisements spread abroad in our cities are sometimes so shameful, we would rather say shameless, as to make every decent person blush for humanity. Then these theatrical exhibitions are generally at night, lasting until near midnight, and saloons are lurking around. Often these theatres are open on Saturday night, so as almost to touch the holy Sabbath. What an awful preparation is this for the Sabbath! Those attending there would sleep late Sabbath morning, and would have no desire to attend the preaching of the gospel.

Concerning all sinful amusements we may say that consecrated Christians will not desire them. Be consecrated. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." This is still the message to Christians.—*Journal and Messenger*.

## RANDOM READINGS.

It is vanity to desire to live long, and not care to live well.

Slippery places may fling up the heels of great giants, and little temptations may overthrow well-grown Christians.—*Lee*.

Christ comes with a blessing in each hand; forgiveness in one and holiness in the other, and never gives either to any who will not take both.

A Christian's school has no vacations; his campaign has no truces; his service no furloughs. He must battle his way up to the conqueror's crown.—*T. L. Cuyler*.

When one providence lights against you, another will come in to deliver you. The Lord's thoughts toward his people are thoughts of good, and not of evil, and they shall see it to be so.—*Spurgeon*.

Some men, like a hornet, are always found stinging uppermost. They sting their friends to show their independence; their enemies to show their impartiality; and each other to keep themselves in practice.

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