

## GOD'S ANVIL.

Pain's furnace heat within me quivers,  
God's breath upon the fire doth blow,  
And all my heart in anguish shivers,  
And trembles at the fiery glow;  
And yet I whisper, "As God will!"  
And in His hottest fire hold still.

He comes, and lays my heart, all heated,  
On the bare anvil, minded so  
Into His own fair shape to beat it,  
With His great hammer, blow on blow;  
And yet I whisper, "As God will!"  
And at His heaviest blows hold still.

He takes my softened heart, and beats it—  
The sparks fly off at every blow;  
He turns it o'er and o'er, and heats it,  
And lets it cool, and makes it glow;  
And yet I whisper, "As God will!"  
And in His mighty hand hold still.

Why should I murmur? For the sorrow  
Thus only longer-lived would be;  
Its end may come, and will, to-morrow,  
When God has done His work in me;  
So I say, trusting, "As God will!"  
And, trusting to the end, hold still.

He kindles, for my profit purely,  
Affliction's glowing, fiery brand;  
And all His heaviest blows are surely  
Inflicted by a Master hand;  
So I say, praying, "As God will!"  
And hope in Him, and suffer still.

—Selected.

## Our Serial.

## MURIEL'S KEY-NOTE.

—BY AGNES GIBBERNE.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## DISMISSAL.

The storm threatening held off for three days. Mr. Maxwell came and went as usual. Also he was ever silent and retiring, showing no inclination to bring on discussions. But there was a touch of leave-taking in his look at times, and he seemed to Muriel to be gathering up a store of recollections. Mr. Rivers' manner to him was brusque in the extreme. That was borne submissively, but matters could not rest there.

Montgomery had never fought a sorer fight than through those three days. For he now realized somewhat of his power over Muriel. He felt that a few free words on his part might be not unlikely to arouse such feelings on hers as would be sweet past expression to him. But he refrained. In honour towards Mr. Rivers, and in love towards Muriel, his words were guarded. No tone or look showed him to her as other than the kind and fatherly tutor. She had thought of him in no other light, and he abstained from giving just that touch which might have changed the whole aspect of affairs. Unselfish, aye, noble in self-conquest, was Montgomery. Not all men in his position would have acted thus.

"I think the trouble is passing off," Muriel said to him hopefully on the third day. It was afternoon, and he had just entered the hall. "Don't look so anxious. Clouds do sometimes blow over, you know."

Mr. Maxwell knew better. He had marked too closely the old gentleman's bearing towards himself.

"You think it is premature that the offer of a tutorship abroad has reached me," he said with a sad smile.

"Abroad! O that would never do." His face did not show assent to this.

"You will decline it, of course," she said earnestly.

"The answer need not be sent for a few days. We shall soon see."

"O but in any case—you could not go abroad. It is too far from us all."

He stood quietly looking into vacancy. It was hard to meet her frank unconsciously-affectionate look. Thorough Roger Ascham he had been to her, but she was more than Lady Jane to him.

"However, I was not thinking about that when I came in," he said. "I am sorry to bring you bad news, Muriel. John is ill."

"John! I knew it."

"He has something of low fever. Don't be over-anxious. It may prove to be nothing. The attack has evidently been coming on for some time past."

"Poor Rose!" Muriel's eyes were full.

"It will be all well. Everything will be well."

"He will die!" she said huskily.

"It will be the judgment on—"

"Hush! Don't finish saying that. You and I have not to pronounce judgment. Better to pray for both."

"It might be so. What would grandpapa feel if John died? O John!" and she went restlessly to the end of the hall and back. "O John! I don't know how to bear it! He has been better than brother to me, Mr. Maxwell."

"I know it."

"And now—not to be with him—"

"A way for that may open. Mr. Rivers may soften."

"I'll go to tell him myself. Have you no more particulars to give me?"

"Nothing much. The illness seems to be rather severe in kind, but danger not a present thing. He may rally soon. We must hope the best. Shall I speak to Mr. Rivers for you?"

"O no—don't you do anything."

She went impetuously to the study. It was one of those occasions when she had better have delayed for a few minutes of prayer and thought. Unguarded words were to be dreaded. With the one idea in her mind she hastened away, knocked at the door, and entered.

"What is the matter?" demanded Mr. Rivers, in his sharp style.

Muriel came and stood at the table, flushed and excited. Mr. Rivers sat back in his deep arm-chair, having a book propped against his knee, and a fire blazing beside him. He pulled his spectacles lower on his nose, and looked keenly over them at his granddaughter.

"Well?"

"Grandpapa, John is ill."

"John who?"

"Our John."

"I have nothing to do with John Rivers," was the cold reply.

"He is very ill," repeated Muriel. "It is low fever, and he may soon be in danger. The letters must have been about that."

"Possibly. You may go," said Mr. Rivers, and his eyes returned to his book.

"Grandpapa, may I see John?"

"No."

"I must, if he becomes worse."

"You will do as you are told. Leave the room."

"If John were dying, would you not see him?" she asked.

Mr. Rivers gazed steadily at his book. Whether he read a line of it is another question.

"He will long for a kind word from you. It was bad enough when he was well, but now I don't know how he will bear to have you keeping away."

Grandpapa, it may help to kill him," she said feverishly. "Think what it would be if he died, and you had not seen him. If he gets worse I must go."

"You will go simply where I allow you to go."

"But you will let me write to him and to Rose? O it is so wrong—so very very wrong," she said passionately, as the face before her grew harder.

"And John has done nothing which can be blamed. It is so wrong."

"In your opinion. Enough of this! Who told you anything about it?"

"The news came in a roundabout way."

"Claverton gossip. Rubbish. Who repeated it to you? Tell me at once. I choose to know."

Delay would have made matters worse. "Mr. Maxwell mentioned it—" she began.

"Send Mr. Maxwell here, and don't come back yourself."

Muriel tried to resist—tried to defend Mr. Maxwell. She was cut short, and ordered away.

Waiting anxiously in the hall to hear results, she found Arthur presently by her side, and told him all that had happened. Half an hour passed, and the murmur of voices—one low, one raised—rarely ceased. Then the door opened, and Mr. Rivers strode out.

"What are you both doing here?" he demanded. "Go to the drawing-room immediately."

They had to obey. No more was seen of Montgomery Maxwell that day.

Mr. Rivers was unwell next morning, and did not appear to breakfast. Agitating scenes shook the old man more than they had once done. His will was strong as ever, but the body grew weaker, and infirmities were gaining hold upon him.

He had Mrs. Bertram into his room for a few minutes, and she came to breakfast with a cloud on her fair face.

"I could not have believed you to be so foolish, Muriel," she said.

"As what?" Muriel asked.

"As to what you have done. I do not know precisely what you said last night, but you have certainly displeased your grandfather very seriously."

Muriel thought it did not take much to do that.

"Mr. Maxwell is not coming to the house again."

Arthur turned pale, and Muriel exclaimed.

"So your grandfather says. He has dismissed him. Mr. Maxwell has acted very foolishly. He might have known it was not for his interest to talk about religion in this house."

Muriel had no doubt about his realization of that fact.

"Surely grandpapa has not sent him away off-hand!" said Arthur in a constrained tone.

"He will not come to the house again. Your grandfather told me that distinctly—several times."

"Just because of those few words the other evening? Mother, this is disgraceful!"

"Mr. Maxwell talked in the same style yesterday too. For my part I think him very interfering and very wrong," said Mrs. Bertram. "He might just as well have allowed things to go on smoothly. What could he possibly gain by making a stir?"

"Nothing for himself," said Muriel, while Arthur sat, looking stunned.

"Nor for any one else. No good is ever done by this sort of thing. I thought Mr. Maxwell had more sense. It is very inconvenient—just when Arthur was getting on so well. We shall have to find a new tutor, but it is a disadvantage—only a few months before he goes to college. I wish people would act sensibly."

Arthur left his breakfast half-eaten and vanished, fairly overcome. Muriel said as little as possible till breakfast was over, then rushed up to her own room, threw on her walking things, and hastened out of the house.

Intercourse was not yet forbidden. That would doubtless come next. She was free still, though not without a qualm of doubt. Would her grandfather allow this, if he knew it? Muriel would not stop to weigh that question. She soon reached the Maxwells' door.

The servant admitted her directly, though breakfast was not quite at an end. Muriel found mother and son seated at the table. And, behold—Arthur had forestalled her.

"What, Muriel too?" said Mr. Maxwell.

"It isn't forbidden," said Muriel, with a sorrowful smile, bending over the old lady. And some tears dropped from the sightless eyes of the one, and the dark eyes of the other. For Mrs. Maxwell had been a kind old friend to her, of long standing.

"It is hard to bear," said Muriel.

"No—not hard," Montgomery answered. "Children, I don't know what to say to you both. How would Mr. Rivers approve of this?"

"It doesn't matter," said Arthur hardily. "I will come and see you."

"No. Not against orders. No doing of evil that good may come. But the order has not been given yet. Not yet," repeated Montgomery thoughtfully. "I thought he meant that yesterday, but he may even have relented. It is not likely. Well, sit down, both of you. Our last time together, perhaps."

Muriel looked at him in surprise. She had not expected this cheerfulness.

"Sometimes one is borne through trial better than one expects," he said.

"The dark time may come after. But the same Hand bears one through that also."

"If it were only not my doing!" said Muriel.

"It is not. I was in the wrong, and needed a reproof. The lesson must have come to me for my good, in one way or another. God used you to open my eyes. He could have used any other means as well, with the same result. But would you wish not to have been used? What you did and said yesterday was nothing. Mr. Rivers questioned me as to what he called my 'methodical cant,' and my answers settled the business."

"Could you not have soothed him anyhow?" asked Arthur.

"Yes, my dear boy. By staining my lips with equivocation. By soiling my Christian banner."

"And you answered him plainly?" said Muriel.

"I told him I had acted wrongly, and must henceforth more openly confess my Saviour's Name."

"He would not stand that."

"No. Well, we have had pleasant years of work and friendship together," said Montgomery gravely.

"We may have others by-and-by—or we may not. We must meet in heaven."

"How can I, without you to guide me?" Arthur asked, in choked tones. Poor boy! the blow was a sore one to him. His eyes were red with scarcely-restrained tears.

"The Prince of Israel will be thy guide. Only trust Him."

Mr. Maxwell looked thoughtfully out of the window for some seconds.

"Children, it is our Father's will. I am willing. Are you not?"

Muriel lifted her eyes to his, and said steadfastly, "Yes."

"That is all well. Never say 'No' to the Lord's dealings. He has taught me that lesson of late."

"But you will not go abroad?" pleaded Arthur.

"I think so. There are reasons which render it desirable. My mother agrees with me."

"But what will Mrs. Maxwell do?"

"She will say 'Yes,' like the voice she heard just now," the old lady quietly answered. "It is sorrowful work, Muriel, but I see the need."

"Why? I don't understand. Why not have another tutorship in England?"

"I have a mind for two or three years abroad. My dear mother will stay with her sisters during my absence. Afterwards I hope to settle down again in England with her."

"In Claverton?" brother and sister exclaimed.

"Probably not. No need to look forward."

And they spent the morning together, for he could not resolve to send them away. The farewell at last was a tearful affair. Yet Muriel felt peaceful.

## CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

"Men will sham any complaint nowadays to avoid their work," said our worthy skipper, as he sat at the head of the breakfast table on our first day out. "I had a fellow once who pretended to have lamed himself when we were about half-way out to Calcutta; and he did it so well that nobody ever suspected him a bit, till one night there was a false alarm of fire, and the way that lame man flew up the ladder would have astonished an acrobat."

"Well," said I, "you remember that story of the Irishman who went about Dublin with 'Pity the poor blind' on a board round his neck, and made quite a good trade of it, till at last one of the people who used to give to him met him in a by-street, stepping along like a prize pedestrian."

"You old humbug!" cried he, 'you see as well as I do.'

"Sure, thin," says Paddy, looking down at the 'blind' board that he carried, 'they've hung the wrong board on me to-day by mistake. It's deaf and dumb I am.'

"Well, I once saw something almost as good as that myself," said my right-hand neighbor, Professor T—

"when I was on a visit to my friend Dr. L—, in the east of France. 'There was a great conception going on just then for the Crimean war, and L— had to test the recruits as they came in, to see whether they were fit for service.'

"Now among these fellows there was one fine sturdy Avengnat, just the stuff for a soldier, if he hadn't unfortunately been stone-deaf. So he said, at least, and it certainly appeared to be true, for all the tests that they applied to him couldn't make him give any sign of hearing a bit. I fully believed his case to be genuine; but I could see by the twinkle in Dr. L—'s eyes that he didn't."

"That'll do, my man," said L—to him at last, in a low voice. 'You're too deaf to be of any use to us. You can go.'

"Instantly the recruit, forgetting himself in his glee at having got off so easily, sprang toward the door like a cat."

"Not so fast, my fine fellow," shouted the recruiting officer; 'if you can hear that, you're not too deaf for the army. You're a mighty cunning rogue, but this time we've caught you in your own trap.'—*Harper's Magazine.*

SURRENDERS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

Let us think, then, for a moment of the surrenders of the Christian life, even although we hardly like to think of them, for the richness, the blessing, the privilege of Christian living is so great that it hardly seems that there can be anything that can in comparison be called a surrender; and yet I think we must distinctly see that there are things that at the very outset a Christian must determine to give up. Many Christians would be unwilling to use the word surrenders for these, when so much privilege is given in exchange; but I think we may continue to use the word when we have thus explained it. What, then, are the things that we must renounce if we are to declare ourselves Christians? Certainly nothing that should not be given up by all who are trying to live righteous and manly lives, even if they do not call themselves Christians. I long to make you see clearly that the Christian life is the natural, the normal, the perfectly human life. I am accustomed in speaking of these surrenders to divide them into three classes, and I will so speak of them. First, as a Christian I will do nothing that is essentially wrong; secondly, I will do nothing that, although right in itself, will be wrong for me, because it will keep me from drawing closer to God; and, lastly, I will do nothing that could put a bar in the way of any of his other children whom I long to help, and will not hinder.—*Rev. Phillips Brooks, D. D.*

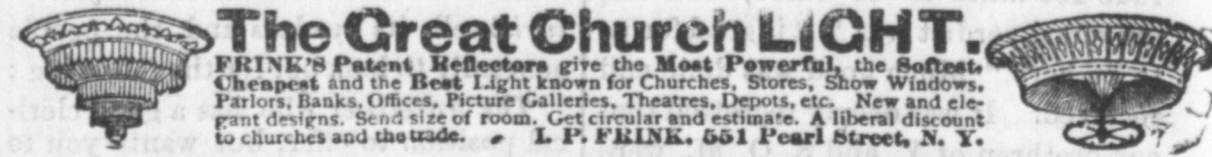
RANDOM READINGS.

Take you heed. To be near the life-boat is different from being in it.—*J. H. Evans.*

To love and to do the holy will is the ultimate way, not only to know the truth, but to lead others to know it too.—*M. Tineau.*

I did but look to Christ and I received eternal life. I looked to Jesus, and he looked on me; and we were one forever.—*Spurgeon.*

Men shun contact with religion as long as they can do without it, and feel awkward or ashamed at seeming to court it when it is the only help left that is available to them.—*Calcutta Witness.*



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