

SHOULD HE BE PERMITTED TO PREACH?

CHAP. III. SUBJECTION TO WRONG, CONTINUED

"Would you not like to go and see Minnette Joy in a few days, Richard," said his sister Mary to him the week following his arrival at home. "Poor Minnette! the burden of that helpless family is killing her. She looks wasted almost to a skeleton, she is so thin. And her fresh glad laugh is changed to the saddest smile you ever saw. All the neighbors are talking of it. She didn't look half as sad when her mother died. She doesn't visit any one—only comes to church. She has not been here for months. You know she always thought a great deal of you when you were at school together. Perhaps if you would go once and see her, it would do her good. You know you always liked her—and she is sweeter now than ever. Somehow her very sadness is beautiful. Won't you like to go?"

Richard Landon did not know how to answer. Mary did not perceive his embarrassment and proceeded.

"I can send her word any day by the boys who go by here almost every morning. It would not do to go in upon her unexpectedly—she has her hands too full for that. What day, will suit you, Richard?"

He hesitated—hung his head—which his sister attributed to modesty; played with a stray tendril of the honeysuckle, while the blood rushed violently through his veins.

"Shall I tell her?" he said to himself. "No, no; I shall brave it all in silence, and let things take their way. A confession will do no good, and may involve me in trouble."

"Let's go Thursday, Richard—that will be a leisure day with us." "Not this week, sister. There are several things I wish to do towards finishing up my studies."

Richard saw that he must manage in order to prevent disclosure.

When Minnette Joy read that dreadful letter which sealed her fate, she was stung to the soul. It was a blow so sudden and sharp that it paralyzed her whole being. The days were darkened—the nights made mournful—the music of her heart stilled. She sat low amid the ruins, lonely and desolate, and there was no one to comfort her. Oh, it was sad thus to hush that ringing laugh, and to pluck the roses from those fresh young cheeks—to steal the love-light from those tender, womanly eyes, and for them give only paleness and tear.

Minnette did not fully realize that Saturday evening as she stood there in the garden beside the white rose bush, and read through her fast falling tears the death doom of all her sweetly cherished hopes, how fearful was the fate that letter sealed to her. She was so stunned she could not comprehend the ocean-tide of sorrow that would sweep through and through her soul, until there should be left no vestige of joy or hope. The black pall did not settle suddenly down upon her—else had not the day risen on her weeping eyes. But the light was obscured and she groped bewildered. The arrow that was to drink up her heart's blood had pierced her soul, and like the wounded hart she sought respite and found none.

"What shall I do, Sarah," she said, as she bent her head on her sister's shoulder, while the two wept together. "Richard has forsaken me. I feel I cannot live." Sarah could only press her to her bosom, and in broken words beseech her not to cry. "Maybe he'll come back again, sister, Richard can't be so cruel. Oh, he can't—I'm sure he can't. Maybe you did not understand him. You know it was so dark when you read the letter. Wait till we go to our room. I'm sure it's not like you think it is." And Minnette suffered herself to be drawn for the moment away from the crushing weight that pressed upon her soul. And the two, bound together by a new and holy tie—that of loving sympathy in suffering—went back hand in hand to their evening duties.

How the soul stretches out supplicating hands when the billows of anguish surge through it. "Have pity upon me; have pity upon me, oh, ye my friends," was the plaintive cry of Job. And so with us all. We must have the living heart to lean upon. Thus the Lord hath ordered it. And though poor Sarah was but a feeble adviser, she was a tender, loving friend. And Minnette's heart, bleeding at every pore, was glad to take in the healing balm of her true full sympathy.

The house was hushed to peace. The two motherless girls gathered side by side about the little table, on which rested the lamp, to read and interpret those fearful lines which had brought a deep, dark rest-

ing shadow on their glad prairie home. The mother's tender eyes looked lovingly down upon them from above, the mantled piece on which rested several little precious mementos of her love, and as they read and clasped each others hands more tightly in their horror at the cruel words, they felt her spirit hovered over them and shared their deep, dark grief.

"There, sister," said Minnette, throwing her arms again about her sister's neck, while sobs, deep and broken, choked her utterance; "you see now, sister, what Richard means."

"Yes, sister, it is so. These words are too plain to be misunderstood. He has acted, oh, so wrong. And he going to be a preacher, too. I don't believe God will bless him. Oh, it is very sinful, sister, to treat you so. I am sure, as our dear pastor told us last Sunday, that this fearful sin will find him out."

"But, oh, this can be no relief to me, Sarah!"

"No, Minnette. But God will give you relief. We have no one to go to but Him. We must look to Him, sister, I will ask Him to help you."

And the two sisters knelt in their tears and poured out their desires before Him, whose ear is ever open to the cry of his feeblest little ones.

They did not philosophize about prayer. They believed and prayed. They applied the best prayer test—that of prayer itself—and they were conscious that the Father heard and would answer as He saw best, and they were reasonably comforted.

To Minnette the days passed dark and dreamy. She was bending as a crushed flower beneath the driving storm. Sometimes she felt she must sink—the burden was too heavy. But when she looked upon the helpless ones and knew their eyes were turned to her, she nerved her heart and pressed on through sadness and through tears.

Minnette wondered why she could not submit without so much suffering. Why the struggle was so fierce; the anguish was so severe. Why she could not say with sweet resignation, "thy will be done."

Minnette had not learned that faith comes from discipline. The child is not born walking—comes into the world not in the full exercise of its faculties mental or physical. And thus it is with the child of God. He grows up "into a perfect man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." "No hastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Minnette did not murmur against this dispensation of her Heavenly Father. She wondered why it was so. She desired to look into it—to understand it. Could she have looked into Richard Landon's heart and seen the ambition and selfishness therein enthroned—could she have realized how much deep, dark, unspeakable sorrow these unholy characteristics must need cause her as his wife, she would have sung high and lasting praises to the loving hand that held her back from this unspeakable misery.

"Shall I go to church to-day, Sarah," asked Minnette of her sister, the first Sunday after Richard's return home. I feel that I cannot meet him. And yet I know it must be done at some time. He will certainly attend—and should I stay away it will cause remark."

"It would go, sister," replied the sympathizing Sarah, who had entered into her sister's sorrow with such deep tenderness as to take it for her own, and who manifested so much good judgment that Minnette had come to rely on her as she would have done on one older.

I was a straggle, but Minnette prepared to accompany the family. She took her accustomed seat near the pulpit. The Landons sat just across the middle aisle from the Joys. She kept her face resolutely toward the pulpit. But, oh, how every footstep in the aisle sent the blood whirling through her veins. She must appear calm. How great the effort. She held dear Sarah's hand, and sometimes the unconscious pressure was so great, poor Sarah was almost forced to cry out; but she must help to bear Minnette's burden. The law of love was in her heart. Minnette was faint from excessive agitation; and yet Deacon Landon's seat was unoccupied. She began to hope they would not come. And yet strange contradiction—inexplicable curiosity—she longed once more to see him whom she still loved, despite his treachery and cruelty. At length the Deacon's step was heard. Minnette and Sarah knew it well. They pressed each others hands and leaned against each other. The family passed in. Sarah dared to look.

"He is not there, sister." Minnette breathed heavily. Great relief and great disappointment. But the relief was greater than the disappointment; and under the calm, sweet voice of the pastor, and the influence of the heavenly truths, full of consolation which he uttered, she grew quiet and then peaceful.

One struggle was over. Minnette's soul was stronger, but yet she was not complete victor.

The week passed. It was an epoch of varied experience to Minnette. Doubt, fear, disappointment, sadness, yea, gloom, rolled their billows in swift succession through her soul, so that at times she was scarcely able to perform her round of daily duties. Sometimes when at the table pouring out the coffee, her bosom would heave and the tears start to her eyes, and it required a desperate effort to maintain herself. Sometimes, when the day's duties were done, they sat together in the sweet, calm twilight in holy family conversation, some allusion would open the flood gates of her sorrow, and the rushing torrent would force its way, and she be compelled to find refuge in her own room.

The father knew it all, but he forbore to say anything. He strangely imagined that if she were left to herself she would more readily forget. Does a woman ever forget the blighting of her first deep love? Never. She may love again, ardently tenderly, yea, with more depth and strength—but the shadow of that first eclipse of her being's sun never passes away,—it remains imperishable as being itself.

The second Sunday came. "Another trial day," said Minnette to Sarah as they were preparing for church. "He surely will be there to-day."

"Yes, I suppose, so, sister. But now you can stand it better than you could have done last Sunday."

"It may be," replied Minnette, ever ready to catch hope from Sarah's strong true words. She did feel a little stronger, or at least she imagined herself so, and perhaps there was a shade's gain mentally—but, oh, the body, battered and beaten by the constant surging of the swift, rushing billows of emotion, was as a reed shaken by the wind.

Again Minnette and Sarah sat side by side in fearful expectancy. Adaptation of body, mind, and soul to circumstances is one of the most blessed laws our dear Father has stamped on our being. So that, to-day, while the trial was a great one, it was not quite so great as on the Sunday before.

Deacon Landon's step was heard. Minnette's quick ear detected it without difficulty from that of the mother and girls.

"Look, Sarah," she said nervously—"I feel he is there."

Sarah turned her eye to the seat. Richard sat at the end next to them.

"Yes, he is there! sister." Minnette heard but little of the sermon that day. It required strength of life. She did not look toward Richard, and yet every moment was filled with an earnest desire to do so.

To endeavor to paint Minnette's feelings through the two hours of the service would be futile. There are heart-experiences which no language can portray, and the very attempt seems a mockery.

Minnette and Sarah were standing in the yard, waiting for the carriage to be brought. Richard, led by Mary, came up and spoke to them. Minnette had to lean on Sarah to prevent falling. She grew white as the wreath on her hat, and her lips refused to do her bidding. She could not speak for several minutes. At length she rallied, and like one pursued, driven to the last foothold, she raised her eyes and looked him calmly, steadily in the face. His eyes were cold as stone—his words hollow and conventional—his manner rigid as marble. The truth flashed through Minnette's being. Richard Landon was selfish. Richard Landon was heartless. It was a dreadful shock, but like the amputation of a limb it will save life. Minnette bore up well through the day, as busy and cheerful about the household demands as usual. She pressed on, and none knew that each step was at the expense of a quivering frame already stretched to its utmost tension. When morning came Minnette could not arise from her bed.

"I must go to Kentucky to visit Uncle James," said Richard, on Sunday evening, after taking a stroll through the woodland. "It is necessary for my well being. It was a startling announcement to the family; but they yielded without a demurrer. Richard was now a college student, the pride of the family, and all tacitly felt he must gratify himself. And in a week, all things having been made ready, he set out.

(To be continued.)

Smiles.

Little Laura was tired and sleepy on New Year's night when she prepared for bed, and forgot to say her—"Now I lay me," and in apology to her mother for the neglect, said, as she tugged away at her little stockings: "I couldn't go to heaven to-night, mamma, anyway in the world, 'cos I'm too tired!"

To make a fine eye-water—stick an onion to it.—*Glasgow Times.*

Some children take naturally to a practical view of things. A little girl in Brookline was saying her prayers the other evening, closing up with, "God bless papa and mamma, little sister and everybody, and keep us from harm this night. Amen." The little sister, a bright-eyed puss of five years, quietly remarked, "I you'd said 'everybody' to begin with you needn't have made such a long prayer."

That was a clever Aberdeen boy, who, when he was given half a-crown to dig up his aunt's garden, hid a sixpence in it, and told all the boys in the neighbourhood. The next day the ground was pulverised two feet deep.

Thackeray's nose, through an early accident, was misshapen, being broad at the bridge and stubby at the end. He was near-sighted; his hair, at forty, was gray, but massy and abundant; his keen and kindly eyes twinkled, some times through and sometimes over his spectacles. A friend said of his face that its predominant expression was courage—a readiness to face the world on its own terms. Unlike Dickens, he took no regular walking exercise, and being regardless of the laws of health suffered in consequence. In reply to one who asked him if he had ever received the best medical advice his reply was: "What is the use of advice if you don't follow it? They tell me not to drink, and I do drink. They tell me not to smoke, and I do smoke. They tell me not to eat, and I do eat. In short, I do every thing that I am desired not to do; and, therefore, what am I to expect?"

Little Boy's Declamation.

"Be sure you are right, and then go ahead." As soon as you're sleepy, run straight off to bed. Before you speak crossly, or act very naughty, Go look in the glass long enough to count forty. Don't swear, chew, or steal, and be kind to the poor, And wipe your feet clean when you enter the door.

Appleton's American Cyclopædia.

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