

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Coming of Caroline.

BY MARY E. Q. BRURH.

CHAPTER X.

ON that day the missionary meeting was honored with the presence of the minister's mother. It happened to be the time of her semi-annual visit to her son; she usually came every summer and winter, her advent always causing a pleasant little flutter among the church members. For a very charming old lady was Mrs. Leonard!

Not so old in looks, perhaps, though her fine silken puffs of hair were as white as thistledown—yet her eyes were bright and merry and her complexion had the delicate, pearly tint one sometimes sees in elderly people and which is always so charming. She was a tiny, sprightly body, erect in bearing and stately in manner, though having the affability and sweet graciousness so characteristic of her son. She took an active interest in the affairs of St. John's and her presence at the missionary meeting was expected and welcomed. She sat, as usual, in the centre of a circle of the grand dames of the congregation, though by her tact and grace and friendly recognition of all, she kept herself in touch with the more humble members. She knew everybody, and her memory for names was a marvel. Consequently, when Mrs. Rossman entered the room, and, with modest yet self-possessed air, made her way towards her hostess, the president, Mrs. Leonard's bright eyes at once perceived her.

"That is a newcomer, is it not?" she said in a low tone to Mrs. Grigsby, who sat beside her.

Now Mrs. Grigsby was a large, portly lady, slow in manner and speech. The passementerie on her satin sleeves glittered and jingled impressively as she raised her eye-glass up to her face and said deliberately:

"Oh, that slender lady in gray? It is Mrs. Rossman; not exactly a newcomer; she's lived here some time, I believe, but in seclusion, being in mourning, you know. It is only since there has been such an awakening in our church that we have become acquainted with her. We consider her a valuable acquisition, and, why you must have heard of her, my dear Mrs. Leonard! She is a particular friend of your son, our dear pastor," and here a mild chuckle gurgled down the speaker's fat throat.

"Oh, yes, I have heard Maurice speak of her and always in terms of the highest commendation," was the calm response. "She is a person whose acquaintance I anticipate much pleasure in making. I must own that I was struck by her appearance. She so much resembles an old-time friend of mine—a dear, dear schoolmate of long ago. I wonder—"

"Hush! hush!" came in a low murmur from the circle of ladies. "Hush, the President is about to open the meeting!"

"And Mrs. Rossman is the first on the program," Mrs. Grigsby added in a whisper.

Other eyes besides Mrs. Leonard's lingered on Mrs. Rossman when she began to read, but the idle and curious glances were soon changed to earnest, thoughtful attention. For the reader had something more than a mere pleasing personality; she was one who was absorbed by her subject and who imparted some of her enthusiasm to her hearers; and, as the sweet, strong voice read on, there seemed a hidden force back of the simple words—a fire that struck through and touched those who listened. The beauty, the

pathos, the glory of the life, were told in simple language, yet with a voice whose every cadence charmed and thrilled. Surely, Mrs. Rossman had no need to complain of lack of attention, for when she ended, she might have seen that she had won the triumph of tears.

But the minister's mother, as she pressed forward with others to speak appreciative words, still wore on her face a puzzled expression.

"My dear," she exclaimed, as she took Mrs. Rossman's hand, "pardon an old woman's curiosity! I want to ask you whether you ever heard of Agatha Graham?"

A tact, beautiful expression suddenly overspread the younger woman's face.

"Agatha Graham!" she repeated, almost reverently. "Why that was my mother's maiden name."

Mrs. Leonard's little, wrinkled, white hands patted together softly—triumphantly.

"Ah! the mystery is solved! I fear I have been staring at you rudely ever since you entered the room, but you so strongly resembled my dear, dear schoolmate. Did you ever hear your mother speak of Laura Hollbrook?"

"Oh, many times," was the animated rejoinder.

"I was Laura—she was Agatha—we were two happy girls! But years and circumstances have caused us to drift apart. But I have always cherished a beautiful memory of her."

"Nor did she forget you," said Mrs. Rossman eagerly.

"Now I have a double interest in you," continued the elder lady. "I wanted to meet you because Maurice, my son, has told me what a help you have been to him. Ah, if you only knew how grateful a mother's heart is towards those who cheer and aid the one whose labors are of such interest to her. I have been proud to be Maurice's confidante; I have rejoiced over his successes and been anxious with him when he has been perplexed. Consequently, when you became his appreciative friend, one of the most faithful of members—why, he wrote and told me about it—yes, told me all about you, as well as the coming of Caroline—the dear, quaint child as he calls her."

Mrs. Rossman looked down—she was not remarkably tall, but this woman with the peach-bloom face and snowy curls was so tiny—down into the gentle eyes and winsome face, and felt her own heart stirred by the mother-love there.

"The coming of Caroline!" she repeated softly. "So he—Mr. Leonard—has told you about that. Ah, that coming meant a great deal for me! It unlocked icy barriers, brought summer sunshine into my soul and has renewed my life."

"And who shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me!" quoted the sweet, quavering voice.

"Yes," reverently—and then, in a tone of happy pride, as the crowd pressed closer around them—you must come and see my little Caroline—for I have learned to call her mine."

"Yes, I hope to see her soon," came the hearty rejoinder. "Perhaps"—slowly, with a frank, yet keen glance of inquiry—"perhaps, this evening, if you will not be too tired after your exertions here, my son and I will waive ceremony and walk over to call on you. I think I may tell you confidentially that Maurice had the audacity to suggest it," with a gay, little laugh.

A soft flush overspread Mrs. Rossman's cheeks, but she looked up frankly.

"Both little Caroline and myself will be pleased," she said cordially.

But alas! and alas!

When, later in the afternoon, Mrs. Rossman wended her way up to Stubbs' Extension and came in sight of the little, gray cottage, she fell to wondering why no dancing little white figure came to meet her. A little feeling of misgiving came over her, but she banished it, saying with a smile, "I have been in such a giddy whirl of excitement this afternoon that it tells on my nerves. Of course Caroline hasn't returned from the Grand affair at the Dent's. The hours were from three to six, but it is hard to drag children from their play. My little straggler will come along pretty soon, or if she doesn't as soon as I have rested a bit, I will walk over and get her. Perhaps that is what the darling is waiting for."

To be Continued.

The Sunday School.

DECEMBER 28.

Review.

GOLDEN TEXT. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Ps. 90:1.

1. Joshua Encouraged.

Men die but God's plans move forward to their successful accomplishment. Moses passes away, but Joshua stands ready to take his place and leads the people of Israel into the Promised Land. Moreover I receive this word of divine encouragement: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee."

2. Crossing the Jordan.

When the Israelites left Egypt, a miracle opened a path through the Red Sea for them. Now that they are about to enter Canaan, an act of divine power opens the way for them through the Jordan River.

3. The Fall of Jericho.

The siege of Jericho was perhaps the most remarkable siege the world has ever seen. To its unbelieving inhabitants the proceedings of the Israelites must have furnished material for extreme derision. Their exact compliance, however, with the divine commands met with the desired result, for "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down."

4. Joshua and Caleb.

The land of Canaan is being divided and brave old Caleb comes up to Joshua in Gilgal to receive his portion. True to his indomitable nature, he asks for his inheritance the mountainous region around Hebron, in which there were still the fierce Anakim, and receives it for his inheritance.

5. Cities of Refuge.

The establishment of the six cities of refuge marked an upward step in the progress of the Israelites. It was in the interest of justice that these cities were set apart to afford shelter to the innocent person who had unwittingly caused the death of a fellow creature. The great spiritual lesson is the fact that Christ is our City of Refuge.

Joshua's Parting Advice.

A farewell message is always impressive, and the parting words of a man like Joshua awaken a special interest, when we remember that he spoke as an inspired oracle of God. Joshua's last message well befitted the man, for it was a stirring exhortation to serve the Lord, reinforced by the declaration, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

7. The Time of the Judges.

The time of the Judges affords a vivid illustration of the tendency of humanity to retrograde, while it shows also the loving kindness of the Lord, who, though the Israelites went so far astray, yet raised up for them judges who delivered them repeatedly from their enemies.

8. World's Temperance Lesson.

It is a vivid picture which the prophet Isaiah gives of the drunkards of Ephraim whose glorious beauty, he tells us, is a fading flower. Drunkenness is still a crying evil at the present day, and all the power of Christianity is needed to stem the tide of intemperance.

9. Gideon and the Three Hundred.

God accomplishes his purposes in this world in ways and by means that we little think of. Gideon and his three hundred men were more than a match for the Midianite host, because they followed implicitly the divine instructions.

10. Ruth and Naomi.

In strong and beautiful relief this narrative of domestic love stands out against the dark background of the time of the judges. Unselfish, self-sacrificing love and the divine care for the widow and the orphan, are the teachings we may gather from this touching episode.