

## Choice Literature.

CAROLA.

BY HESDA SIRETTON.

## CHAPTER III.—THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The next Monday all the neighbourhood was astonished at the magnificence of the funeral which went from Matthias Levi's house. The old woman had not been seen for years, and very few of her neighbours knew anything of her, except that Carola had a grandmother, on whose account she neither went into service nor into a factory. The hearse that carried the coffin to the distant cemetery was covered with handsome plumes, and the horses that drew it and the mourning coach that followed had the longest and blackest manes and tails which had ever been seen in that street. There was no one but Carola in the great coach, for Matthias had not deemed it right as a Jew to be present at the funeral of a Christian, and there was no woman among her numerous acquaintances whom the girl cared to ask to go with her. She had slept on the floor of the garret, where the silent and motionless corpse lay, and many questions had thronged to her excited and quickened brain. They were in her mind still, as she followed the coffin down the cemetery paths and watched it lowered into the grave. The chaplain read the burial service decorously but officially, and was turning away, when the loneliness of the weeping girl and her pale and tear-stained face struck him, and he turned back again, after going a few paces, to speak to her.

"Is there no one to go home with you?" he inquired. "No; I'd nobody else but her," she answered, pointing down into the open grave; "and I don't know nothing about where she's gone, or however I'm to find her again when I die. Isn't there anybody as knows?"

"You should go to your parish priest," he replied, "and he will tell you. What parish do you come from?" "I don't know about parishes," she said; "but Matthias 'll know, I dare say."

"I've a book here," said the chaplain, "that will teach you more than any thing else, if you read it very carefully. You can read, I suppose?"

He took out of his pocket a small Testament, with well-worn binding, and leaves that were somewhat thumb-marked. Carola held out her hand eagerly.

"Are you poor?" he asked again, glancing at her handsome dress, and thinking of the plumed hearse which had brought the coffin to the grave.

"Oh, no," she answered promptly; "I've plenty of money. I've no need to cry for that; but I want to know all I can about what has happened to her, for it 'll happen to us all, you know. There was something in her that went out all in a moment, like when a candle is blown out. One moment it's all light, and then it's all darkness. Where does the light go to?"

"I have not time to stay with you," said the chaplain, who had another funeral waiting for him; "but you must go to your parish priest and ask him. And you may take this little book with you. You may keep it," he added; "it cost only five pence."

Carola turned slowly away; but when the chaplain was out of sight she retraced her steps to the open grave. The hearse and the mourning coach had left as soon as they had set down their burdens, and there was no one to speak to her, or to distract her thoughts from the solemn questions which were in her heart. The deep gloom of the little funeral, its sable plumes, and the unrelieved blackness of the hearse she had followed, had depressed her spirits. It was all new to her. There was no cemetery in the crowded part of the city where she lived, and this was the first time she had stood beside an open grave; she had not even seen a place of graves before, and all about her stood the white tombstones of the dead, in thick array. Folks died, and were carried away in coffins, that she had known from her infancy. But death had never touched her strong young life before; it had never come home to her. And now the poor old bed-ridden woman, who had been content to lie still all day, slowly consuming her daily allowance of gin, was gone into that dark and dreadful mystery. Matthias had told her last night, with a face of awe, that he could not say what became of people that were not Jews, and neither her grandmother nor she were Jews. What was the terrible place whither she must go when her own hour came?

It seemed most strange to Carola that the street should look just the same as usual when she returned to it. Her old companions were lounging at their doors and the children were playing on the dusty pavement as if nothing had happened. Only they looked at her with something like an friendliness in their aspect, and not one invited her into any of the spirit-vaults near at hand. The costliness of her mourning struck a kind of awe into their minds, and they felt that a dress so handsome ought not to come into contact with dirty floors. Matthias was at work at his stall, and he only gave a brief glance at her pale face and reddened eyes as she went softly and sadly past him up the spiral staircase. His heart was heavy for her, but what could he say? what comfort could there be in the death of an old drunken Christian like her grandmother?

Carola ascended to the empty garret, which had never been empty before. She threw herself down on the bed, and broke into a passion of tears and sobs. Matthias had taught her early that she must honour the old grandmother, in the place of her father and mother, who were dead; and of late years there had been a kind of pining affection in her heart for this poor, helpless, drink-besotted creature, who was the only person in the world belonging to her, and who was so utterly dependent upon her. How lonesome this garret was without her! Now and then there had been a gleam of love for her, and pride in her, breaking through the stupid lethargy of the old woman's torpid brain; and Carola could not bear to think that never more would she see those bleared eyes light up for a moment or two at the sight of her, or feel the withered hand touch her cheek caressingly. She had seen this rare and kindly light gleaming

through the old grandmother's eyes only a few minutes before the change came, when the glimmering went out suddenly into outer darkness.

The twilight had deepened into night before Carola roused herself, and bethought her of the little book she had brought from the cemetery. She lit the candle, and set the bottle which held it upon the little round table, and drew up her chair beside it. Matthias was still at work, and she could hear the tap of the hammer in the shop, for his door and her window were open. The street was noisy with the usual clamour, and on the river there was still the sound of belated steamers passing by to the city piers. She leaned her head upon her hands, and looked down with smarting eyes upon the little page before her.

Carola's lips moved inaudibly as she whispered each word to herself, "The Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 1. The genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Joseph, 18. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary when she was espoused to Joseph, 19. The angel saith forth the redeeming thoughts of Joseph, and interpreteth the names of Christ."

Carola could read well; but it was hard work to get through the long genealogy; and it conveyed little meaning to her. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob she had heard of; and David, the king, and Solomon, and the carrying away into Babylon; or possibly she might never have gone beyond the first two or three verses. But the name of Jesus Christ was quite new to her; that was a name which Matthias could never have uttered. She knew nothing of Joseph and Mary; but the thought of an angel coming to Joseph in a dream was very pleasant to her. Perhaps an angel might come and tell her what she wanted to know. The second chapter promised to be still more interesting as she again read the heading: "The wise men out of the east are directed to Christ by a star, 11. They worship him, and offer their presents, 14. Joseph fleeth into Egypt with Jesus and his mother, 16. Herod slayeth the children, 20. Himself dieth, 23. Christ is brought back again into Galilee to Nazareth."

The brawling in the street died away into deep stillness, and the tapping of Matthias's hammer ceased; and out on the river the vessels lay at anchor for the night; but still Carola's pale young face and reddened eyes bent over the little book, and her brown fingers went from line to line, and her lips moved with the words she was reading, long after all the sounds were gone. She mis-called many of the words; yet the charm of the story held her as no story had ever yet done. Her bright intelligence pictured all she read. She could see the star shining, and the wise men looking up at it, and following it as it went before them. She saw them entering the house and falling down on their knees before the young child and his mother; they were like Matthias with his Sabbath prayer-robe on, not like the men who were only English, and not Jews. And the children being slain, and Rachel weeping, how plainly she could picture it! John the Baptist was a real man to her, almost as real as Matthias. But, oh! how much there was that she could not understand? Who could this Jesus be, whose birth was foretold to Joseph in a dream, and of whom the angels took such special care? The wise men called Him the King of the Jews; and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son." Matthias had never spoken of Him. And they had brought unto Him all such people as were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them all. No wonder that great multitudes followed Him; she could see closely packed crowds like the crowds on Lord Mayor's day thronging through the streets. And now He is going up on to a high hill, and all the people are gathered thick about Him; and she herself is there in the front, and He opens His lips. What is He going to say?

What He said she could only partly understand, and she still needed some one to explain it to her. But after a while she came to a passage so plain that a child could see much of its meaning. "After this manner therefore pray ye," said Jesus Christ. "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Carola lifted up her bended head as she came to the word Amen. Oh! how far better this prayer was than the few Hebrew words without meaning which she had picked up from Matthias. She rose from her chair and went to the window, where she always stood to pray. The waning moon had risen, and was shedding a pale, sad light upon the water. But she had forgotten her own sadness; her brain was too full of the new and strange things she had been reading. To-morrow she must learn every word of this beautiful prayer which Jesus, the Son of God, had told her to say. The other prayers were good for the Jews, but Matthias himself had been doubtful if they would do her any good. But this prayer was in English, and must be meant for English people. She lifted up here yet to the midnight sky, and said softly, "Our Father, which art in heaven." It was all she could remember; but the tears sprang to her eyes with the warmth with which she said them, though they were no longer sorrowful tears. There was something so sweet and strange to her in those words, that she kept whispering them to herself after she lay down on the bed, until sleep came to her excited yet weary brain.

## CHAPTER IV.—THE BOOK AND ITS CAPTIVE.

The next day Carola pored over her new book, with the ardent intensity of an unoccupied yet intelligent mind. There was no dull familiarity to make the marvellous story slip by unheeded or to be read half-heartedly. She did not throw the incidents into a far-off past of many centuries, through which the book had gathered rust or mould. They were as fresh to her as this day's newspaper. She had not even an idea that Jesus, the Son of God, whose star was seen in the East when He was born, and who had done so many and mighty works, and said so many wise words, was dead. All

the narrative was so life-like to her that she could hardly stay to read more, before starting off in search of this Son of God. The crucifixion came upon her as an utterly unexpected and terrible grief. It stunned and bewildered her. There had been so much triumph and gladness in her heart, as she read of Him working miracles, and being transfigured before Peter, and James, and John, and entering into Jerusalem with the crowds shouting Hosanna! that, like the disciples themselves, she could not believe that He would really suffer His enemies to put Him to death. She read the words as if in a dream; and turned back to the beginning of the chapter with a wretched feeling of mingled dread and unbelief, and looked at the heading of it again. "Christ is delivered bound to Pilate, 3. Judas hangeth himself, 19. Pilate admonished by his wife, 24. Washeth his hands, 26. And looseth Barrabbas, 29. Christ is crowned with thorns, 35. Crucified, 40. Reviled, 50. Dieth and is buried, 66. His sepulchre is sealed and watched."

With an exceedingly bitter cry, which went to the heart of Matthias as he heard it in his room below, Carola threw herself on her knees beside the window, and hid her face in her hands. Oh! how she had loved this Jesus, from the time He was a little baby, with the wise men worshipping Him, all through His life among men, healing them, and teaching them, and talking to them in parables; loving them and blessing little children; and now they had put Him to a cruel death, and all was over! How could such a thing be? The light that was in Him had suddenly gone out, and darkness had come again. And this was the most terrible darkness of all. For in all the men and women she knew there had only been a very common, very scanty light, which could be puffed out like the flame of a little candle in a rough wind. But she had not thought that the light of life in Him could ever be extinguished in death.

The girl was faint and weary with sorrow when she took up the Testament again, after an hour or two of bitter mourning had passed by. She wanted to know what His mother and His disciples did when their Jesus was dead, and laid in a tomb, with a great stone rolled over it. They had seen Him crowned with thorns, and crucified with wicked thieves, and heard the chief priests mocking Him; ah! that was a thousand times worse than dying quietly at home, on His own bed. She turned languidly to the next chapter, and read how Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the sepulchre, just as she would go some day soon to visit the grave where her poor old grandmother lay buried. Then with a beating heart Carola seemed to hear the earthquake, and see the angel of the Lord coming down from heaven, and rolling back the stone from the door of the tomb; and she knew, before reading further, as if something in her own heart told her, that Jesus, the Son of God, lay no longer in that stony sepulchre. The heavy load of sorrow which had weighed her down was suddenly rolled away, as the stone was rolled away by the angel. It was all plain before her, the open, empty grave, and the mighty angel saying, "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Never had Carola gladness like that gladness. She felt the great joy of the women who had gone to the sepulchre, without their fear. Like all unlearned people, she thought in pictures, not in words. Her imagination was not dulled by familiarity with what she read. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was a man dwelling in a London house, walking about London streets, sitting in a boat on the Thames, and standing amidst a crowd of the London poor and sick. When at last she lay down to rest a confusion of strange fancies passed through her wakeful brain; and as she fell asleep a face came to her in her dreams such as she had never looked upon before, full of majesty and tenderness, with eyes that seemed to pierce to her very heart—eyes clearer than the morning star, which she had sometimes looked at wonderingly. A crown of thorns was about the head, but the face was smiling upon her, and all about it was a light—far brighter it shone to her in her dream than the light of the noonday sun. And she said to herself, "It is the Lord!"

For three or four days Carola did not leave the garret; the wonderful book held her captive. Matthias, with mingled anxiety and relief, saw her staying in doors at last; only, in fact, staying too closely in doors. He bought dainty morsels from the street stalls for her, such as he thought the girl would like, and brought them to the foot of the ladder for her to come down and fetch them. She did not appear to be crying much, but she was very quiet. In truth Carola was living in a new world, among quite new friends, and she hardly thought of Matthias, except unconsciously to make the old Jew a type of these men she was reading about. Very soon she found that the wondrous history which she had read first in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, was told again three times, in a different way, and with fresh circumstances in each story. She read them through eagerly, and went on through the Acts of the Apostles; but the Epistles baffled her. They were all words here, and no pictures. So she returned to the Gospels, and read them again and yet again. St. Mark, with its swift and vivid life, and slight realistic touches, pleased her most. It did not seem as if she could ever grow weary of reading the Gospels. But by-and-by it dawned upon her how much there was she did not understand; and as soon as this ignorance made itself felt, it filled her with anxiety and an overwhelming desire to know all she could about her Lord. For He was her Lord. He had not lived and died for the Jews alone, but for everybody who believed on Him. Though He was a Jew, He had come into the world to save the world.

"You ought to go to your parish priest," the chaplain at the cemetery had said to her; he who had given her the book. This she would do at once; and in eager haste she dressed herself in the handsome mourning she had not worn since the day of the funeral. She descended the ladder into the room, where Matthias was ceremoniously washing his hands up to the elbow, before sitting down to the frugal supper. Her face was pale, but her dark eyes shone with suppressed excitement.

"I'm going out to find my parish priest," she said earnestly; "do you know where he lives, Matthias?"

"Priest! priest!" repeated the old man in a bewildered