

HE CARETH FOR US.

If I could only surely know,
That all these things that tire me so
Were noticed by the Lord,
The pang that cuts me like a knife,
The noise, the weariness, the strife,
What peace it would afford.

I wonder if he really shares
In all my little human cares,
This mighty King of kings,
If he who guides through boundless space
Each blazing planet in its place,
Can have the descending grace
To mind these petty things,
It seems to me if sure of this
Blent with each ill, would come such bliss
That I might covet pain—

Dear Lord, my heart hath not a doubt,
That Thou dost compass me about
With sympathy divine,
Thy love for me once crucified,
Is not the love to leave my side,
But waiteth ever to divide
Each smallest care of mine.

—Selected.

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

(Author of "Mrs. Solomon Smith Locking On.")

CHAPTER XVII.—Continued.

By this time every boy in the class wanted to know about Peter. Reuben had been placed in one of those trying classes where not a boy studied his lesson; and of course he hadn't. He never dreamed of such a thing; so they were all ignorant together, but all eager to hear. Then began the story of the night ride on the lake, with hard rowing and contrary wind, and one walking on the water, of whom the sailors were afraid at first, and to whom Peter tried to go and almost failed. It was a new story to Reuben; in fact, almost all Bible stories were new to him. He was very much interested; forgot that he was a stranger, and asked questions with such eagerness that the teacher found it a pleasure to teach.

But out of all this came something strange. When the last hymn was sung, and the prayer was offered, and the scholars were crowding out, this new teacher laid a small gloved hand on Reuben's shoulder, and said in a voice that he never forgot: "I'm glad to see that you are a Christian, my boy."

That was Reuben startled indeed. The blood rushed over his face away to his forehead, and he turned and gazed on her with astonished eyes.

"Ma'am?" he said at last, not knowing what he ought to say.

"I am glad that you love the Lord Jesus and look to him for help, and have found him able and ready to help you."

"Oh, but," he said in great confusion, "that is a mistake. I don't know much about him, and I don't belong to him at all."

"Is it so?"
And Reuben felt his cheeks grow hotter over the sound of disappointed surprise in her voice.

"I'm so sorry. I thought since you knew where to go in trouble, you surely must be one who followed him. Don't you think you ought to be a Christian, my boy?"

"I don't know what a Christian is," he looked full in her face and spoke the words gravely enough. He knew almost nothing about these things, and had wondered over them a good deal, especially since he had known Miss Hunter.

"A Christian is one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, and tries to do as he says."

"I don't know much about what he says, and as to loving him, why, I never thought of it before."

Reuben was always honest, so now he spoke his exact thoughts.

"One thing he says is that everybody ought to make up their minds to obey his directions all the time."

"That mightn't be easy to do."

"No, sometimes it isn't; in fact, it can't be done at all, without his help, but he is always ready with that. And the beauty of it is, the only safe way, and the only happy way, is the one that he points out."

"Then I shouldn't think it would be hard to mind him."

"Not after we once decide the thing. Will you decide it now, Reuben?"

Reuben was startled. What a plain question this was! And the lady looked right at him with bright earnest eyes and waited for his answer.

"I don't know," he said at last, looking down.

"Are not you a boy who always tries hard to do just as he says he will?"

"Yes'm." He didn't hesitate a minute over this answer. He felt so sure of his promises.

In fact, he prided himself on doing just that.

"I thought so. I wish you would promise to do this thing."

"But I can't, you see; maybe it is a promise that I couldn't keep; and I don't want to make any such."

"No; but you can certainly keep this if you choose. Won't you be willing to take my word for that?"

No, Reuben wouldn't. He did not say so, but he looked down, and looked troubled, and seemed not at all ready to answer, and the lady waited.

"Well," she said at last, "will you promise this: That you will think about it all the rest of this day; that as much as you can you will keep from all other thoughts, and just give your mind to this?"

"To what?"

"To decidin' g whether you will take Jesus Christ for your master, and obey him in every little and great thing all the rest of your life."

"Yes'm," he said, after another minute of hesitation. "I will promise to think about it."

Then she reached forth her hand and took his little brown one in it for a moment, and smiled and said: "Thank you. I can't help thinking you are a true boy, with good common sense, and I'm not afraid of the way you will decide, if you only think."

CHAPTER XVIII.

REUBEN TAKES TWO PRISONERS.

Then Reuben walked home with Grace Barrows. She chattered like a magpie, but Reuben was quiet.

"What makes you so still?" she asked him at last.

Because he had something to think about, he told her.

"What is it! Oh, I know! you are thinking about going home to-morrow, and getting the folks, and coming back, and riding on the cars, and moving every thing. You have a lot of things to think about."

"No," said Reuben, with a grave face. "It would be easy enough to think of all that; but I mustn't do it to-day; you see I promised I'd attend to something else."

"Promised whom? What must you attend to?"

But Reuben did not choose to answer any of these questions; instead, he began to inquire about her class in Sabbath-school; what sort of a teacher they had, what they talked about, and how much she had learned.

"Oh, we didn't talk about anything much," said Grace. "Only a little about Peter, and some about Jesus. Miss Pason didn't tell us anything to remember; at least, I don't remember it, if she did. You had the best teacher in the school, Reuben. Everybody says Miss Parker is the best teacher in our school."

"I believe it," said Reuben sturdily; then he was quiet again. He did not seem to himself to get on with his thinking. How was he ever to do it if this chattering little girl stayed by his side.

When they reached home it was not much better. Mr. Barrows laid aside the newspaper he was reading, and began to talk to Reuben, advising him as to what train to take and planning for him how soon he could get back.

All the while Reuben sat with a grave, thoughtful face, wondering how he was to keep his promise. He tried to think just what he had promised; to keep as much possible from thinking about anything else but the question whether he would belong to Christ or not.

"But I don't know how to belong to him," he told himself; and then remembered in the next second that it made no difference; he must decide whether he would belong; after that he could find out how to do it.

"Anything gone wrong with you?" Mr. Barrows asked at last, with a kind smile, seeing Reuben so quiet.

"No, sir," said Reuben. Then Gracie came to the rescue.

"He has something to think about, papa; something he promised to decide."

"Indeed, what is that?"

"I don't know, papa; it is a secret, I think; but Reuben promised to do it."

"Promised whom?"

"The teacher I had to-day," said Reuben, seeing that Grace was not going to answer for him.

"Yes; and papa, it must be a good promise, for Miss Parker was his teacher."

"I dare say it was," said Mr. Barrows, looking curious. "Do you need any help about it?"

"No," said Reuben slowly, looking very thoughtful; he had nearly said yes; then he remembered that it was something to decide. How could anybody help him to decide a question like that? After it was settled, he might need a great deal of help, but not before.

You would be surprised, perhaps, to know how that promise troubled Reuben all the rest of the day; he could not get away from it, and he could not seem to settle the question. He wished for Beth; things always seemed easier and plainer when he talked them over with Beth. But then he remembered that she knew nothing about this matter.

Then he looked over at Gracie; she was a little girl to be sure, but a very sensible one; he wondered whether she had ever made such a promise as this, and settled the question. She was reading her Sabbath-school book; he didn't like to disturb her.

Presently she looked up and spoke:

"I don't believe I like this book; it is for grown-up-people."

"How do you know?"

"Why, it is all about folks being Christians; telling them how, and why they ought to be, and all that."

Reuben was astonished; how strange that Gracie's book should be about the very thing of which he had promised to think.

"Does it say there that folks needn't tend to such things until they grow up?"

"Why, no," said Gracie slowly and thoughtfully. "No, it doesn't; it says that little bits of children ought to be Christians; but I don't see how they can."

"Why not?"

"Because they can't be sober all the time, and think about dying and going to heaven."

"Does it say there that when folks are Christians they must be sober all the time, and think about dying and going to heaven?"

"No," said Gracie; and this time she laughed. "But then grown-up folks who are good do, I suppose."

"I don't," said Reuben positively. "I know some good folks who think about their work, and about making nice times for other people, and they look pleasant, and laugh and talk." He thought of Miss Hunter. "What is being a Christian, Gracie?" This, after waiting for her a little and getting no answer.

"Why, it is being good."

He shook his head.

"No, it isn't; it is just loving Christ and trying to mind him."

"Well, don't you have to be good before you can do that?"

"Do you have to be good before you can love your father and mother?"

"Oh, no!" she said, laughing again. "But that is different. Why, Reuben, Christian people are good people."

"Yes, I suppose they grow good; they would have to, of course, if they tried to mind Jesus; but they don't have to be good before they can love him, according to all that I ever heard of."

"No," said Gracie, "of course not; I didn't mean that. People can't be good, of course, until they get new hearts; and they won't get them without asking Jesus, and they wouldn't ask him if they didn't love him a little, I suppose."

Reuben turned towards her eagerly; he knew very little about this matter. He was not sure that anything had been said to him about a new heart; maybe that was something to attend to before he could decide.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked to her.

"By what?"

"By getting a new heart."

"Why, I mean just that. Jesus can give folks new hearts, and he does, of course before they are Christians."

"How can he? Hearts are inside of us, How can God take them out while we are alive and give us new ones?"

"Why, Reuben Stone! don't you know what I mean? Of course our hearts are not taken out of us! But Jesus puts new thoughts in them; makes them over in some way, so we can like to do things that before we didn't like to. I don't know how he does it, but I know that is what a new heart means, and you've got to have one before you can be a Christian."

"And you get it for the asking?"

"Yes," said Gracie confidentially—he had been so taught—"you get it for the asking; and then you are a great deal happier than you ever were before; and you like to pray, and read the Bible, and go to church, and all that; and you aren't afraid to die."

"Have you got one?"

"Why, no?" and this time she blushed a little as well as laughed. "What a queer boy you are! I told you I thought it was for grown-up folks. How can little girls think about such things?"

"But little girls might have to die. The other day when Samson was running away with you, he was going straight toward the lake, and it wasn't frozen over then, and he might have tumbled you in and drowned you."

"Don't," said Gracie. "It makes me shiver all over;" and she hid her face in her hands.

Pretty soon she ran away to her mother and told her that Reuben Stone was the queerest boy to talk she had ever heard of in her life.

Then Reuben, left alone, went on with his thinking. Grace had certainly given him several reasons why he ought to decide this question. He thought she was a queer little girl to know so many reasons why it would be nice to be a Christian, and know just how to become one, and yet would rather wait until she was grown up.

"I don't believe I would," he said to himself. "I'd like to begin now. It's hard work, I suppose. All new things are hard to do, and some old ones; but it would be nice to feel that you wasn't afraid of anything. Then there's lots of places where a fellow needs help; and He helped me once. I know a few things. I know I'll have to read the Bible; I don't like that very well, but I should if Gracie knows what she is talking about, and I got that new heart."

Before him on the table lay a little bit of a blue-covered book not more than two inches wide, and hardly three inches long. Reuben stretched out his hand to it, then drew it back. Hadn't he promised to think of nothing but this question all this day? Still, it might be something that would help him. He would just glance at it. *Heavenly Manna* was the name of it. Reuben didn't know the meaning of "manna," but the word "heavenly" seemed to fit the subject, so he looked inside, and found it to be a little book of prayers and promises, dated to suit the days of the year. Of course the most natural thing in the world was for him to turn to the date of the day, and look at the verses. He could hardly believe his eyes. How very strange! These were the verses:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

"A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

"There's the prayer, and there's the answer," said Reuben thoughtfully. "The thing is now for me to do it."

But for some reason that he did not himself understand, he did not do it. He knew something about Satan, but he did not, after all, know what an enemy he was, nor how frightened he was about this afternoon's work; nor how anxious he was to keep the boy from deciding the important question once for all. If he could only get him to thinking of something else! Reuben wondered a good many times in the course of that day, what could be the matter with his mind. It was so determined to think of everything but the question. He came back to it again, and again, because his promise called him; but it did not hold him steadily to the work. And so it happened that when the day was gone, and Reuben was ready to lie down in his bed, he said to himself with a sigh:

"Well, I've done my best, anyhow. I never knew it was so awful hard to keep thinking of the same thing. Nothing has come of it, either. I don't decide. Why

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