

THE REQUEST OF MARIAN.

BY CONSUELO.

It was a beautiful morning in spring-time. The brilliant sunshine flooded the green world with light. "The unchanging sky of May" was blue and clear, the air warm and fragrant. Flowers bloomed, birds sang; nature fairly rioted in joy. But in the midst of the gladness and in contrast to it, in the cemetery at Mt. Auburn, a group of persons stood about an open grave watching a white casket that was being gently lowered to rest.

Many eyes were tearful, but there was one whose grief seemed too deep for tears. It was Mrs. Somerville, the mother of the young girl whose remains, lying in the flower-laden burial case, were about to be hidden from her eyes forever.

Less than a year before, the bereaved woman had buried her husband. Now, Marian, her only child, was being laid to rest beside him.

Standing with white, drawn face and tightly hands, with sable robes falling around her, she looked like some wraith of sorrow. So thought the pale-faced little Ruth Moore, her husband's orphan niece, who stood near regarding the stricken mother with pitying eyes.

A bird, sitting on the low branch of a fir tree, burst into ecstatic song. How shrill and unmusical it sounded! What a mockery seemed the dazzling sunshine!

"Ashes to ashes—dust to dust!" Mrs. Somerville started and a faint cry broke from her lips as the first cold fell with a muffled sound. As in a dream the lines of an old song, heard in her childhood, echoed drearily through her brain—

"A handful of earth in a coffin laid, A coffin under the dusties, The beautiful heart of a child, The snowy, snowy daisies."

She bent forward for a last look into her child's grave. Marian's blue eyes and bright golden hair were hidden forever. She tried to cry out, but no sound escaped her pallid lips. Her limbs refused to support her. She sank shudderingly upon her knees just as strong arms lifted and bore her away.

Mrs. Somerville's beautiful home, Edgemere, was one of the finest residences in Mt. Auburn. Built of white brick with trimmings of stone, it had an air of substantial elegance, enhanced by the pleasant grounds that sloped gently down to verdant meadows. Majestic trees, tossing their giant branches, cast graceful shadows, and luxuriant shrubs rose hardily here and there on the smooth turf.

The interior, handsomely and artistically furnished, had once been the delight of its mistress. But its charm was gone; the brightness and happiness had gone out of her life.

When she regained consciousness after the sad homecoming she expressed a wish to be alone. Even her faithful Jane, more friend than servant, was dismissed. She wanted to think and to weep, but somehow the tears would not come. She wondered if the fierce resentment in her heart made her eyes so dry and burning. She could not "kiss the chastening rod," nor could she meekly bow her head and say with resignation, "Father, Thy will be done." Instead, she kept asking herself repeatedly: "Why is God so cruel to me? What have I done that He should punish me so?"

"Of what use are my riches?" she asked herself. "I will never bestow upon anyone else what will have been my darling's inheritance."

Suddenly she thought of little Ruth Moore. How proud and self-willed the girl was despite her poverty and dependence! There was no need of her assuming the care of her crippled step-brother, Felix Gray. But all advice on the subject was unheeded. To be sure, none of his own relatives cared to be burdened with the afflicted Felix. But why should Ruth stifle herself up in two dingy rooms and sew as if her life depended on it?

Only a few months before Mrs. Somerville had offered her a home—without Felix, of course—and Ruth had declined the offer. There was no need for any qualms on that score, and yet Ruth's face, white, with big pathetic eyes, and Felix's, pale and pinched, rose before her, mutely appealing. As if in answer to her unspoken thoughts, the door opened and Ruth Moore stood before her. Mrs. Somerville started guiltily, then recovering herself, asked, coldly: "What do you want to-day of all days? I told Jane not to admit anyone."

justice to myself, I will tell you that Marian's reason for refraining from such an unpleasant subject was her dislike to grieve and agitate you. On the occasion I have reference to she said to me: 'Mamma cannot bear to hear me speak of dying. You will tell her for me after I am gone.' Forgive me for disturbing and distressing you. I have fulfilled my promise and now I am going."

Ruth turned to the door. Her heart ached for the desolate woman who had insulted her. Cold and implacable, Mrs. Somerville stood, never opening her lips as her niece passed out of the room and left the house. Then she sank down and covered her face with her hands. She lived over again her daughter's last illness and death. Ruth had been to see her nearly every day. Perhaps the interview she mentioned had taken place. "If I only knew that she spoke the truth," Mrs. Somerville murmured, half regretfully.

After a time she rose and went upstairs into the lovely apartment that had been Marian's. There are evidences everywhere of her daughter's refined taste. Books, exquisite needlework, and dainty bric-a-brac were scattered about. Her favorite flowers bloomed in the sunny south window. A flood of melody came from the silver-throated bird singing in his cage. Mrs. Somerville threw herself down beside the white draped bed in an abandonment of grief. But at last a great calm fell upon her. She fancied she heard a voice calling, and rising to her feet she listened intently.

It was Marian's voice that it sounded faintly away. Softly, Mrs. Somerville descended the stairs, passed through the lower rooms and out of doors.

She went down the rose walk, a path bordered by rose bushes whose tiny buds were just beginning to show their dainty pink coloring among the green leaves. The walk terminated in a grove of elm trees, grand old trees with shade deep and dense where the feathered tribe lived and reared their young unmolested.

There was a pretty rustic house over-run with ivy that had always been a favorite retreat of Marian's. It seemed to her mother that she sat there now with a beautiful smile on her face and looking like a white lily among the green leaves. Mrs. Somerville seated herself and bent forward, expectancy in her face, when she caught sight of a figure coming down the rose walk toward her.

It was an old, leaning upon a cane. Her farrowed face wore a look of suffering and tears fell from her sunken eyes. The mistress of Edgemere was accustomed to the sight of beggars, but something in the countenance of this woman aroused her sympathy and made her forget momentarily her own sorrow.

"Your are in trouble," she said, kindly. "Can I assist you?"

"The strange guest paused before her. 'No human help can reach me. What you replied, 'What would become of me, if I had not God to comfort me?' 'Tell me your trouble.'"

"My trouble," echoed the poor woman. "Yes, I will tell you. I had a daughter once, good and beautiful. How I loved her—even after she left me alone and strayed from the path of virtue. Do you see these gray hairs? Suffering, not age, has bleached them. My life has been one long grief. In vain my hopes, in vain my prayers for her reformation. Now she is dead, and not one tear but mine fell upon her bier. If God had only taken her when she was young and innocent, what a happiness!"

The old woman hobbled away, whispering prayers between her sobs. She had scarcely gone when another woman, carrying a heavy burden, stepped into the ivy-embowered house to rest. Mrs. Somerville noticed that her clothes were threadbare and her hands, although still shapely, were red and calloused. With a deep sigh she seated herself beside her burden, a basket heaped with clean clothes. Then she hid her face in her hands and sobbed.

"Why are you weeping, my good woman?" asked Mrs. Somerville. The woman wiped her eyes on the corner of her faded apron.

"It is such a relief to weep," she said. "Before here, I cannot allow myself even the luxury of tears." "I mean my daughter," she added in answer to the lady's inquiring look. "Your daughter? What of her?" interrogated Mrs. Somerville.

"She lies very ill—dying with an incurable disease. She is poor, very poor, my child who once had the luxuries of life. There are six mouths to feed, six little fatherless ones. Once, many years ago, when my child was young and free from care, she was very ill. Life seemed so bright and full of promise that I could not give her up to God. I besieged heaven with a storm of tears. I called her back from the very brink of the grave, and although the gates of death seemed already open, God gave my child back to me. Now, even in the midst of affliction, when every earthly hope has faded, still do I trust in Him!"

She arose, lifted her heavy basket and walked wearily on her way. A darker shadow than that cast by the waving branches of the elm trees fell across the rose walk. Up and down a richly robed figure paced. It was a lady, clad in silk and trailing laces. Her pale face bore evidence of grief and anxiety. Finally she spoke— "How much worse than death to see my child here of reason! Better, far better, to look upon her lying in her coffin sleeping peacefully her long last sleep."

toward the brow of the hill. There she saw an angel, brighter than the radiant beams of sunlight. But his face was sad, and mild reproof shone in his eyes.

"Behold your guardian spirit," he said, sadly. "You have turned a deaf ear to my good counsel. You have allowed the human nature to triumph over the spiritual. You have refused to reconcile yourself to God's decrees."

Mrs. Somerville sank on her knees and lifted her hands appealingly. "I am sorry," she said, humbly. "Even before you came I realized my ingratitude."

"When God places a heavy cross on one of His creature's shoulders," the angel said. "He gives strength to bear it. To reject with pride the offered support is to feel the weight more heavily. Are you yet willing to carry your cross?"

"More than willing. I am glad," she answered. "You shall be rewarded," the angel said. "Look up with the eyes of faith." A new strength took possession of Mrs. Somerville. She raised her head and saw Marian standing on the hillside. It was a glorified Marian. Her eyes emitted glances of inexpressible love. Her lips were parted in a smile. She came down the hill as if treading on air. When she drew near her mother saw that she was accompanied by two persons whose faces were concealed by her shimmering draperies. She held a hand to each and gently relinquishing them into her mother's outstretched arms, said softly—

"I am glad to see you, my mother. The late June sunshine was shining in the window through the interlacing leaves of honeysuckle and yastaria. Mrs. Somerville opened her eyes and looked into the anxious face of Ruth Moore.

"How do you feel, Aunt Alice?" she asked. "Weak and strange. Have I been ill?"

"Yes, but the worst is over, the doctor says." "How long have I lain here?" asked Mrs. Somerville. "Fearfully four weeks. You fainted in the summer house, out by the rose walk, and there Jane found you lying unconscious."

"Ah, I remember. It was the day that Marian—"

Mrs. Somerville's voice faltered. She covered her face. Ruth gently removed her thin white hands and stooping, kissed her tenderly. "Yes, aunt, and for several days we feared you would follow Marian. God has mercifully spared you."

Mrs. Somerville threw her arms around Ruth's neck. "Yes, my child, He has spared me for repentance and reparation. Tell me, Ruth, who has cared for me all these weeks?"

Ruth blushed painfully and remained silent. "Jane has helped me," she finally faltered. "Forgive me, Aunt Alice, but I could not bear to give you over to the care of a professional nurse. I knew Marian would have wished me to nurse you."

Mrs. Somerville could bear no more. With a faint cry she put out her arms. "Come to me, Ruth. It was Marian's wish. Come and fill her vacant place."

Ruth yielded for a moment to the motherly embrace she had often dreamed of but never felt. Then she said bravely: "I love you, Aunt Alice, but I cannot leave poor little Felix."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Somerville, weak but happy. "Felix shall come with you."

the sanctions of conduct which come to us stamped with divine authority are more efficacious than those which have been of them only human authority. The mere statement of this carries conviction with it.

Empty men's minds of the conception of Christ as God become really and truly man, and you cannot expect that His teachings, which have so powerfully affected all Christian nations, will exercise as strong an influence in the future as they have exercised in the past. A careful study of the trend of modern Protestantism will show that the emptying process to which we have just referred has been steadily going on for many years in the various Protestant churches. A generation ago a Protestant minister in any of the sects except in the Universalist Church could not have openly denied the divinity of Christ and remained a member in good standing.

What a radical change has taken place in this respect is shown by a discourse by the Rev. Dr. Lyman S. Abbott, the well-known editor of The Outlook, delivered last Sunday before the West Side Young Men's Association, New York. The reverend doctor declared that he did not think the Christian Church teaches that "Christ is God, but that it does teach that He is the image of God."

This was in answer to a question by one of the audience as to what Dr. Abbott thought of the divinity of Christ. In amplifying this through the doctor said: "God, according to the Bible, has been continually, eternally manifesting Himself, not as the Buddhists believe, resting in contemplative silence. And His manifestations became greater and greater, until, with the birth of Christ, He achieved the greatest of all, actually conceiving a reflection of Himself in human shape."

"It was not the few drops of blood trickling down the palms and from the side of Jesus that constitutes the sacrifice that atoned for the sins of man: it was thirty-three years' contact with the cowards, liars, weaklings of His daily life, always forgiving, His nature commanded Him, and being paid back with ingratitude and neglect."

Unwinding the wrappings of verbiage in which the statement is inclosed we come to naked Pantheism. All Pantheism, from Spinoza down to our own times, would willingly subscribe to the words we have quoted above. They, too, believe that the spirit behind the veil of matter is ever manifesting itself exactly as Dr. Abbott states. To them also Christ is the highest manifestation of this sort that has yet taken place. They, of course, would tell you, if you asked them, that the power which brought forth Christ is capable of doing a still higher form of humanity than that which the Founder of Christianity represents. Dr. Abbott would be obliged by the stern law of logic to make the same acknowledgment.

Dr. Abbott, then, judged by the standard which prevailed in the Protestant churches a generation ago, cannot be strictly called a Christian. In denying as he does the divinity of Christ he deprives himself of all right to that title. He, however, does not stand alone among Protestant ministers. Dr. Hober Newton, who recently resigned the position of pastor of the Stanford University because he was objected to on account of advocating a sort of an amalgam of religions, calls attention to the fact that Dr. Newton and Dr. Abbott are representatives of "a new theology," which is profoundly influencing the most orthodox Protestant theological seminaries.

We quote from the Sun article: "At that conference (for attending which Dr. Newton was criticised—Ed. F. J.), as we have before explained, Dr. Newton joined with representatives of Unitarianism, heretical Methodism and sects of Buddhism in pointing out and celebrating the essential identity of the religious spirit in each, but he only followed the drift of a religious philosophy which has expounders in many branches of the Christian Church at this time. As we have shown, his position as taken at the Stanford conference is very similar to that of the whole school of theology, the new theology, to which Dr. Lyman Abbott belongs. It is a school which is influencing profoundly the teachings in the most orthodox theological seminaries, though practically it destroys the distinction of the religion of Christianity, and removes the incentive to the missionary enterprises for the propagation of the Christian faith in lands once regarded heathen."

What is the character of the new theology which is acquiring so firm a foothold in the United States may be judged by the extract from Dr. Abbott's discourse we have given above. Young Protestant ministers who come forth from these theological seminaries imbued with the teaching of the new theology will not preach the divinity of Christ, and, failing to do so, they will not be preaching Christianity, however they may label their preaching.

"Unto this last!" Protestantism, which started out with the alleged purpose of promoting the cause of "a pure and undiluted Christianity," is rapidly reaching a point where it is discarding the fundamental principles of Christianity. It has already practically discarded the Bible as an inspired book. With the Bible goes the divinity of Christ. What is left is "the new theology," which, in the course of time, will degenerate inevitably into a species of Pantheism.

The seeds of dissolution which Luther and the other founders of Protestantism planted nearly four hundred years ago have germinated. The flower and fruitage can be seen in the "new theology," of which Dr. Lyman Abbott is a champion.—N. Y. Freeman's Journal.

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Healing, consoling, tender to the unfortunate, even to the evil, love engenders light beneath her feet. She clarifies, she simplifies. She has chosen the humblest part—to bind up wounds, wipe away tears, relieve distress, soothe aching hearts, pardon, make peace; yet it is of love that we have the greatest need. And as we meditate on the best way to render thought fruitful, simple, really comfortable to our destiny, the method sums itself up in these three words: Have confidence and hope; be kind.—Charles Wagner.

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