

COMFORTED.

Oh, how my head ached, and how dark the world looked to me that Tuesday morning! My servant girl had left, and my husband had gone in search of a competent woman to do the washing. He returned very soon, highly elated.

"I've found such a nice old colored auntie! I'm sure she'll cheer you up, Mary, whether she washes well or not."

"But the washing is the main thing, Harry, and how I do dread a strange woman coming in!" I complained. "She'll want so much waiting on, and slop my tidy kitchen all over."

"Oh, I guess not, dear! Her room looked very neat, so far as I could see from the open door."

I dropped the subject, for there is no use in trying to make a man understand a house-keeper's feelings about such things. I was not usually so despondent, but we were strangers in a strange land. I missed the dear familiar faces and voices of my Eastern home. I was home-sick, and I had the malaria. I was growing fretful, too—I, who had been noted for my sunny temper. No wonder that my husband looked at me in grieved astonishment, and little Carl patted my face in pitying wonder, saying, "Poor mamma, her feel drefful bad!"

And so things in general were looking very gloomy to me that wash-day morning. Breakfast was over, and Harry was just going out of the door as the washer-woman came. I heard him speak to her, and her cheery reply, "Ho, ho, yes, it's a bressed fine mornin', 'deed 'tis, cherks a body right up."

I had looked out just once to see if it were a good day for drying clothes, but had no thought of blessedness or of being "cherked up" thereby. She came in, a little lame black woman, with bright eyes and wrinkled face. I could not help greeting her with an answering smile, in spite of the reflection, "How can she do a heavy washing?"

Carl watched her in wide-eyed wonder, as she took off her hood and shawl, and hung them in the entry on a nail that she spied herself. Then she spoke to him:

"An' how do yer do, little sonny? Ain't a feared ob a colored auntie, I hopes, ho, ho, ho!"

He echoed her laugh slightly, and then I knew they were to be friends.

"Now, honey," she said to me, "I kin see yer ain't feelin' right smart, an' if yo'll jes' gib me a minnit to get de bearin' ob t'ings, I won't make yer no trouble; kase I can't a-bear ter be waited on. I spects de tubs an' t'ings is in de sullen?"

"Yes, Mrs. Green"—

"Law, mis', won't yer jes' call me Aunt Ruby, like odder folks do? 'Pears like I feel more to hum."

"Certainly, if you like," I answered.

While I was washing the dishes, she sorted the clothes, occasionally exclaiming over a bit of embroidery or lace, "Now I mus' be mighty keerful of dat ar!" until I was tempted to bring forward some articles which I had kept back, fearing to trust them in untried hands.

"Now, deary, I don't mean no disrespect, on'y I jes' has dat ar way ob talkin', yo know"

"Oh, I don't mind it, Aunt Ruby; go on."

"Well, es I was gwine ter say, yer kindly strangers in dese hyar parts, I reckon!"

"Yes, we've only lived here a few months, and oh, Aunt Ruby, I'm so home-sick!"

"Pore chile! I knows jes' how dat ar feels, kase I come hyar from ole Kaintuck, an' I t'ought how I should die, shore'nuff; but, law I gotten ober it arter a wh'le! I jes' settled down an' sung it out."

"Sung it out? That's a novel way."

"Yes: ho, ho, ho! I se a drofful singer, an' wus gwine ter speak ter yo 'bout dat; ye see it helps mo 'long wid my washin's wonderful, an' I was gwine ter inquire of it would 'sturb ye."

"If singing or anything else can make washing easy, I don't blame you for doing it, Aunt Ruby. I don't see how you wash at all, lame as you are."

"Laws, chile, I se use to dat! I se been lame more'n ten year. I shouldn't know how ter walk straight now of I could, ho, ho, ho!"

I had finished the dishes, and said wearily, "I must go and lie on the lounge a little while, Aunt Ruby; my head aches so badly. Carl, will you come?"

"Oh, he ain't in my way a speek—de bressed lam'!" said Aunt Ruby.

Seeing that both were satisfied, I left them, leaving the door ajar so I could hear her cheery voice. After a few affectionate words to the baby, the rubbing and singing commenced.

Dere's a lan' dat ar' fairer dan day,  
An' a by faith I kin see it afar;  
An' a de Saviour waits ober de way  
Ter prepare us a dwellin' place dar.

"Yer don't t'ink no great ob ole auntie's singin', does yer, lam'? ho, ho, ho!"

"Sin' some more adain'," answered Carl.

We shall sing on dat beaurtiful shoah,  
Do melodorous songs ob the blest;  
An' our spirits shall sorrow no moath;  
Nor a sigh fer de bleessin' ob rest,  
In de sweet, by an' by, a-by an' by,  
We shall sing on dat beaurtiful shoah.

I heard a knock as the chorus was completed, but Aunt Ruby hastened to open the door. She received the things from the grocer's boy, and then the rubbing and singing went on:—

When I kin read my tittle cl'ar  
To mansions in-a de skies,  
I'll bid farewell to ebery fear,  
An' a wipe my weepin' eyes,  
Oh, glo-a-ry, glo-a-ry in-a my soul!

"I jes' better stop, lam', kase mobbe yer ma'll want ter go ter sleep, an' suz-a-me! dar's dat door open a lettle crack too; dat ar's too bad!"

She came softly to shut it, but I objected.

"Don't, Aunt Ruby. I don't want to sleep, and I do want to hear you sing. It does me good."

"Ho, ho, ho, honey! I ain't no fine singer, I knows dat; but it's a sight o' comfort to be a-hummin' es I works; but I didn't want ter 'sturb ye a mife."

"You don't. Can you sing 'Steal Away to Jesus'?"

"Don't s'pect I kin. Most I knows is de good-enough ole hymns I was brung up on."

"Well, go on and sing them. I was brought up on them, too; they seem like the dear old home."

Let-a cares like a wild deluge come,  
Let-a storms ob sorrow fall,  
So I but safely reach-a my hum,  
My God, my heaven, my all!

Carl came softly in, and laid his head down on my pillow, whispering, "Don't she sin' lubly, mamma!"

I drew him to me, saying, "Yes, darling. Listen!"

All hail de powah ob Jesus' name  
Let angels prostrate fall,  
Bring-a forth de royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of all.

Silence, and the closing of the door, announced that the singer had gone to hang out some clothes. I rose, finding my head much better, and little Carl was fast asleep. I began preparations for dinner, and half unconsciously took up the last verse of the hymn:—

Oh, that with ronder sacred throng,  
We at his feet may fall;  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all!

My eyes filled with happy tears as faith asserted itself. Although dear ones walk far apart in this world, it will be all right if from East and West we find the way to the eternal home.

"Aunt Ruby, are you always happy?" I asked a little later.

"Well, mosly, honey! I has turrible aches in my lameness when de wedder's damp, an' den it's kindly hard pullin'; but, law, I take holt an' sing it out. Dat's my med'cine, an' it's a mighty good one, ho, ho, ho! Did you eber try it, child?"

"I used to carol a little around the house when I felt happy, but lately I've been too heavy-hearted and weary to sing or enjoy anything."

"Laws, deary! dem's jes' de times yer needs it; w'en a body has trubble, it lifts 'em right up. I knows, kase I se tried it. I se had a lot ob 'fictionous, an' de wust ob all was w'en my ole man Dan'l died. He wus a good man, dat he wus, honey! en ef I couldn't sing 'bout de place where he's gone to, I dunno what I'd do. It makes it all seem real like, an' es of he's jes' awaitin' fer me ter come; does so?"

I went into the pantry to mix some biscuits, wondering what dear old hymn would be her next selection. I might have known, for her loving thoughts were with "Dan'l."

Dere is a lan' ob pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign;  
In-fin to day excluds de night,  
An' pleasures banish pain,  
Dear eberlastin' springs abides,  
An' never wither in flowers;  
Death like a narrows sea divides  
Dat-a heavenly lan' frum ours.

"Ye see, honey, dat's a sight ob comfort ter me, dat ar hymn, kase Dan'l wus a

powahful han' ter lub flowers, an' jes' ter t'ink dat he has 'em all de year 'roun', an' here dey's so fleetin'! Ye see, chile, it's a sight o' comfort ter know jus' how t'ings is wid 'em w'en dey's clean gone from hyar; an' if it wusn't for de verses an' de two las' chapters in de Bible dat tells all 'bout it, I dunno what I should do. I spects I'd be a pore mis'sable creetur."

"It must be dreary living alone, Aunt Ruby!"

"Yessum; but I has a sight o' comforts, an' I kin read a little in Dan'l's ole Bible, and dat's sech company! He was a gran' reader, an' I use ter lis'en, till I kindly knows how de verses goes 'fore I see 'em. An' den I se got lots o' friends, an' I se able ter do, an' help my own self, an' I se got a mossel o' savings put by, an' so eberyting works togadder fer good. Now, 'bout dese yere flannels; I se berry keerful ob dem, an' hes a certain way ter wash 'em, my-sef'—

"Do just as you think fit, auntie! You know more about them than I do, and everything else worth knowing, I fancy."

"Laws-a-massy! Hear dat now; ho, ho, ho! Why, I se a poor iggorant woman; allers had to work, an' 'scuse any larnin'."

"Well, you know how to make the best of this world, and make sure of the next, and that is the wisest kind of knowledge, after all."

Carl woke up and asked, "Is e nice brack lady done 'way?"

Harry came in, rejoiced to see his wife with the wrinkles gone from her brow, and a smile on her lips.

"Why, has the headache all gone, dear?"

"Yes, Harry, and a great deal of the wretched heartache with it. Our new washerwoman is a bressed comforter!"—*Congregationalist.*

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Question Corner.—No. 8.

PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS.

- 27. What kings of Israel were contemporary with Aza king of Judah?
- 28. (a) What curse was pronounced upon the man who should rebuild Jericho. (b) and when and upon whom was that curse fulfilled?
- 29. How many times did Christ speak while on the cross, and what were his words each time?
- 30. In what book of the Bible is the word "God" not found?

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