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The Coming of Caroline.

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CHAPTER IX.

Now it so happened, that when Mrs. Rossman's life began thus to widen out into richness and usefulness, the little stories and verses she wrote began to be touched with the new influence. Lively fancy, fertile imagination, a trained intellect, these are all worth much to the would-be writer; but *heart culture*, ah, that must not be lacking, for that in the long run often reaches out to the pleasant turn in the road called Success. Success meant, among other things, more comforts at the little quaker-gray cottage on Stubbs' Extension. It meant no stint, no lack of food or fuel, it meant books, pictures, flowers, with an occasional bit of dainty china, an easy chair, a bright rug, to say nothing of suitable clothing for Mrs. Rossman and her little charge.

"You're getting to look as young as the Captain, mammy, dear," said Caroline, one afternoon as she brought in a bunch of pansies from the garden, great purple velvet ones, others of creamy satin, violet-veined; and, climbing on a chair, she began to fasten them daintily in the white lace lying in soft folds around Mrs. Rossman's neck and across her breast. And, truly, the lady was a picture of winsome womanhood; slight and graceful in her simple, well-fitting gown of gray, her cheeks wore the delicate rose tints and rounded curves of returning health and vigor; her soft, abundant hair was tastefully arranged; her eyes were bright with excitement—and excitement occasioned by the fact that on this particular afternoon she was to appear in public—to read a paper at the monthly meeting of the Ladies' Missionary Society of St. John's. Her subject was only a simple, yet graphically told, biography, that of a woman worker in a far-away missionary field. But as she read, studied and wrote about the heroine, Mrs. Rossman's heart grew full to overflowing with thoughts of her subject, and not a few remorseful pangs stung her at memory of her own indifference to the cause, while this woman whose career historians so vividly portrayed had been faithfully enduring hardships, sickness, exile, dangers.

At first, when Mrs. Rossman had been asked to take part in the programme made out by the leader of the missionary society, she had been loath to accept; she thought she had good and valid reasons for refusing. She was not much acquainted with the members of the society; she was new to Christian work; she felt a distrust of her own powers, perhaps a slight timidity natural to one who had so long dwelt in seclusion. But as she read the biography to herself, she became imbued with the intense spiritual life shining out from the printed page; she forgot all thoughts of self in contemplating the magnificent example of this consecrated, queenly life. Why, it was an inspiration to read about it, and an honor to bring it out to the notice of others! So that now, instead of dreading the hour that was to bring her face to face with her audience, she was eager for it to arrive that she might tell of the beautiful mission of one who lived, loved and suffered for others. This perhaps, was why her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were flushed, and she was so radiant with enthusiasm.

Little Caroline, too, was radiant, and she, also, wore her best, a pretty white dress, soft and fluffy with ruffles and rosey with pink-tinted ribbons. For Caroline was going to a party—

a "real party." It was to be held at "Woodlawn," Judge Dent's fine place. It was little Julia Dent's birthday, and, as Caroline said ecstatically, "It's the first party I ever went to, mammy dear!" And it's turned out such a lovely afternoon! It's going to be full of good times for both you and me, isn't it? We've got our nice, pretty clothes on! You're going to meet your lady friends, and, maybe, have ice cream and cake, and I'm going to Julia's, and, oh, there's no telling the lots of nice things she'll have. I'll have to wait until I get back. We will never, never forget this afternoon, will we, mammy, dear?"

"Alas! Caroline's words were only too true! Neither she nor Mrs. Rossman ever forgot that afternoon!

An hour later, just as Mrs. Rossman was standing before her audience winning them at once by her beauty, grace and earnestness, thrilling them by her impassioned tones, as she partly read, partly told the wondrous story of a consecrated woman's life, another woman, as far removed in soul as sunlight is from the darkness of midnight—this woman, base, degraded, cruel, merciless, was lurking behind the fence bordering the road leading from Stubbs' Extension, the Dent's stately homestead. A tall, bold, black-eyed creature she was, with false red on her sallow cheeks, and the intensity of a cruel purpose overspreading her countenance.

She had come by an early train had made her way rapidly along the road to Stubbs' Extension, ever casting quick glances right and left, and when she had come within sight of the gray cottage, had turned from the street and then from the highway into a vacant lot, where was a small grove of trees with a tangled mass of undergrowth. Here, like a snake, she had lurked until long past the noon hour, her sharp, black eyes peering through the boughs and ever fixed on the gray cottage. How the eyes gleamed when a little, white figure danced out on the verandah, the silken curls touched by sunbeams glancing through the overhanging woodbine leaves!

"It's Caroline, as sure as can be!" muttered the woman. "But, my land! How the little jigger's growed! Well, if the woman has treated her so well, she must like her enough to be ready to give something to git her back if I take her!" with a complacent nod of her head that sent the black locks tossing like a rough mane.

Then she lay down again among the hedges and the ferns; flowers pressed close around her, their sweet, pretty faces in such strange contrast to the coarse, bloated one of this creature, who was called a woman, but who seemed to have none of the lovely attributes of her sex. Stolidly she lay there, blind to the beauty of the wondrous summer sky with its sapphire blue and soft pearl and gold-edged clouds; blind to the perfection of bud, leaf and blossom crushed by her soiled, tattered garments; blind to the meaning of nature's teaching, seeing only before her a black, baleful plan. And thus she waited, ever alert, ever on the watch for the little, white figure dancing in and out of the gray cottage.

By and by, Mrs. Rossman also came out on the verandah. She stooped and kissed the little girl and her clear tones floated out to where the concealed watcher lay.

"It is time for us to go darling. Goodbye! I hope you will have, oh, such a nice time! If it wasn't so late I'd walk down there with you, but then, you know, the road to Woodlawn very well."

"Of course, mammy!" in a tone of importance. "I've been up to Julia's dozens of times. Good-bye, mammy! kiss me again! Oh, you *do* look the beautifullest!"—the sentence ended in a rapturous squeeze.

Over the evil watcher's face crept a sneer. "Humph! I guess my little lady'll miss her kisses!" she muttered.

Meanwhile, Caroline, a radiant vision in white and rose, started down the road with feet that seemed to dance rather than walk. She had gone barely half way of her little journey and had reached the only lonely part of the road, the grove of trees and the tangled berry pasture, when a shadow much longer than her own little one, fell upon the path. Then came a sudden pang of fear wrenching her little heart. She turned—all the rose bloom left her innocent face. "Mag! O, Mag! Is it you?"

The Sunday School.

DECEMBER 14.

The Boy Samuel.

1 Samuel 3: 6-14.

GOLDEN TEXT. Speak Lord; for thy servant heareth. 1 Samuel 3: 9.

We have come now, in our study of the history of Israel, to the closing period of the theocracy. Samuel was the last of the judges, and we are to study the record of boyhood, continuing the story of his subsequent life, six months hence, when we shall again take up Old Testament lessons.

THE DIVINE ANSWER TO A WOMAN'S PRAYER.

The birth of Samuel was in direct answer to the prayer of his mother Hannah, who was a devout woman, and, like all Israelite women, eagerly desirous of having offspring. So anxious indeed was Hannah for the accomplishment of this desire that she vowed if only she might be given a son to devote him to the service of the Lord. The Lord was not deaf to her petition, and in due time Hannah had the joy of carrying out her vow. The son whom she bore she named "Samuel," which means "ask of God," and as soon as he was weaned she took him to the tabernacle at Shiloh, and gave him into the charge of the high priest Eli, that he might minister unto the Lord.

THE CHILDHOOD OF SAMUEL.

The account which we have of the childhood of Samuel is beautiful in its simplicity. We read that Samuel "ministered unto the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little robe and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up to offer the yearly sacrifice.

The child Samuel was under the direct charge of Eli, the high priest, and he grew up in the same devout faith which had characterized his mother Hannah.

THE HIGH PRIEST ELI.

Eli was a man of pious character and devout spirit. He lacked, however, the strength of mind which was needed in the position which he occupied, and miserably failed to restrain his own sons from acts of the grossest impiety and immorality. Yet in estimating his life, we must not forget that the boy Samuel grew up under his direct influence and became in after life one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament dispensation.

THE FAITHLESS SONS OF A PIOUS FATHER.

The record of Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, is shamesome in the extreme. They were sons of Belial, says the sacred narrative, and their crimes were those of abominable greed and lust. While Eli is not to be blamed for their sinfulness, for many a good father has had bad sons, yet he is distinctly censured in the Scriptures for failing to restrain his sons from their acts of impiety in connection with the worship of the Lord. These men were faithless priests as well as faithless sons, and Eli in his capacity of high priest should have ended their career as priests, instead of allowing them to continue in their outrageous course.

THE VOICE OF GOD CALLING TO SAMUEL.

The verses assigned for our study in this lesson narrate the familiar and beautiful story of how the Lord spoke unto Samuel by night as he lay in the temple. He was then a boy twelve years of age, we are told by Josephus; just the age, some one has remarked, when our Lord went up to the temple at Jerusalem and instructed the doctors of the law.

The message which Samuel received from the Lord was one of woe, for it pronounced upon the house of Eli a sad and awful doom in punishment of the sins of Hophni and Phinehas, and subsequent history verified each one of the dread predictions which Samuel heard that night.

PRESENT DAY APPLICATION.

The voice of God called to Samuel in a special