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The Coming of Caroline.

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CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Rossman rose from her chair and passed the room nervously, the fold of her black gown trailing behind her. Her step had lost its languid air. Little Caroline sat on the green cricket, and, with a low, restful sigh, again held her hands out toward the glow, chuckling comfortably to herself as her fingertips grew warm and rosy.

"What is to be done with this free and easy little ridget—this waff from nowhere?" Mrs. Rossman queried to herself. Her mind grew hazy with thoughts of policemen, station houses, detective bureaus and orphan asylums.

"I declare I *won't* be imposed upon in this way!" she said with a sparkle in her eye. "I'll go right out and put the case in the hands of the proper authorities!"

She glanced out of the window. The sun-rays shining in now were pale and wan; the afternoon was near its close; the air was gray with shadows; snowflakes were circling down, and there was a great bank of clouds rising in the northwest; a mighty snow-storm was weaving white garments for the coming Christmas day. It was colder, too, for frost-fens were growing on the window panes and the wind was beginning to howl around the chimney.

"Well," and Mrs. Rossman's tone was faltering, "I can't have the neighbors say that I was so cruel as to turn a mere child out at night and in a storm like this!"

Her face wore a rueful smile as she turned to Caroline, who met it with a calm, trustful countenance and the words, "Have you been thinking what to do with me, ma'am? Has God told you? The Captain used to say when you're bothered, to just ask Him! She said I shouldn't be worried, and that there was a verse in the Bible about "if thy father and thy mother forsake thee?" then the Lord would care for me."

Mrs. Rossman's face hardened suddenly. Was this child playing a part? Had she been trained to "speak her piece"? Was she a shrewd, little impostor, a tiny wolf in lambkin's clothing?

The woman looked keenly and critically at her guest.

Ah, no! There seemed nothing of duplicity, nothing calculating, about the little figure sitting there so patiently, with small hands patti-g together softly in genial warmth. The ruddy gleam from the fire touched the dark curls with chestnut tints and made the wan cheeks glow rose-red; it brought out the shabbiness of the clothing, the sharp outlines of the small figure which ought to have been rounded in stead with childish plumpness. No, this little Caroline was too tiny—too innocent looking—to be a conscious factor in any premeditated fraud. She was one who had been sinned against, doubtless, but she was not a sinner, save in the sense that we all are.

Yet an uncomfortable feeling of sudden responsibility stole over Mrs. Rossman. She resented it, shrugging her shoulders impatiently. Why should there be this interruption—this invasion on her own quiet life, her seclusion, her rightful time of mourning? But she would shuffle off the burden. Public charity had provided homes for just such waifs. So she would—

But just then there came a louder shriek of the wind, and its invisible fingers dashed crystals of snow against the window-pane; the street outside was all a-whirl with its powdery, white atoms. It was storming—it was late! She turned in sudden resolution, and going to the little figure sitting now in a somewhat dejected attitude on the green cricket, she put her arms around the child's body and drew it close to her.

"You shall stay here with me for tonight—at least. It is dark and cold, and"—she paused abruptly, a great wave of emotion sweeping over her at the touch of a little form clasped again in her long empty arms?

Caroline looked up with eyes like stars, then laid her head wearily on the lady's shoulder and heaved a blissful sigh.

"I'm glad God told you to let me stay here in this very, very nice place!"

A nice place indeed! Mrs. Rossman glanced ruefully around the room. Not many years before she had been accustomed to much finer appointments than those of her present humble home, and she had rebelled many times because she had been deprived of them. Now she felt somewhat abashed at her discontent. After all, here were the actual necessities—shelter, warmth, light, food, clothing. Why, how strange! the coming of this little child had really seemed to glorify the humble belongings. Something new and beautiful had come—a sweet echo, as it were, of the little child, her own daughter whom God had taken!

With a lighter heart than she had known for months Mrs. Rossman busied herself with the evening's tasks, adding fuel to the fire, lighting the lamp, spreading the table for supper, yes! bringing out reverently, a little reluctantly maybe, a certain dear little high-chair, a blue-edged plate and mug, a small knife, fork and spoon. But how Caroline enjoyed them! How heartily she ate, after a little pause, when she folded her small hands and bowed her head reverently, explaining, "Mag never did, but the Captain told me to!"

Mrs. Rossman was not accustomed to asking a blessing; her meals had been taken in silence, often seasoned with the salt of tears and much bitterness of heart.

An hour later Caroline, bathed and robed in a small white nightgown, lay sleeping cosily in the bed in the alcove. Outside, through the parted curtains, gleamed the clear wintry night. The storm had died away; the long street lay in silent whiteness; overhead, in the dark purple sky the Christmas stars shone down right royally. For away in the town the bells were chiming, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!"

Some of that Christmas joy crept into the lonely watcher's heart. Mrs. Rossman felt that other feelings were struggling there too, but ever growing stronger and more conquering was the peace and goodwill that the coming of Caroline had awakened.

(To be Continued.)

Cease to live in the atmosphere of your sin, by which I mean that you must see to it that your mind is occupied by thoughts as far removed as possible from those in which temptation can take root. It is a great mistake to loiter around a sin to which one's nature is prone. Your moral strength will depend upon your spiritual tone.

The Sunday School.

SEPTEMBER 14.

Living and Obeying God.

Deut. 30: 11-20

GOLDEN TEXT—For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments.—1 John 5: 3.

INTRODUCTION.—Our lesson is the closing paragraph of what seems to be a separate address (chap. 29, 30) of Moses when concluding his discourses to Israel. It betrays throughout his deep and tender solicitude for the people over whom he had watched for many years and from whom he knew he would soon be separated. He therefore strives to use fully his opportunity of impressing on them the truths most needed to their practical guidance. That they may be known by all, he takes pains to write them, and commands that they be read publicly at the feast of tabernacles, when all, even the children, should be made acquainted with them (31: 9-13), and the book of the law was placed in the ark to be kept for reference (31: 26).

NOTES.

I. Character of the Commandment. Ver. 11-14. For connects his earnest appeal with the preceding verses of the chapter, in which prosperity and blessing are shown to be conditioned on obedience. This commandment. Not the whole series of laws contained in the book, but that on which he had just been insisting (ver. 6, 10) and which he again emphasizes (ver. 16-20), the central, basal command, without which all outward obedience is valueless. I command. Not as the author, but as the channel of transmission. It is God's own, a precept that Moses, with all the learning of Egypt, would never have discovered. No religion, outside of the Bible, enjoins the duty of loving the deity; it presents in none other is the deity presented in a light to awaken love. Not hidden from (R. V., "too hard for") thee. Not mysterious, like the heathen oracles, nor practically impossible to obey. It does require, for its application, earnest thought and study, and for its execution, resolute purpose and self-denial. Not in heaven. Needing, therefore, some celestial being to explain and enforce it. "A sign from heaven" (Matt. 16: 1) is still sought by those who wish to shirk duty, as though we must have some marvelous manifestation to (R. V.) "make us to hear" and do it. Beyond the sea. The quarter from which, at that time, more than ordinary wisdom was supposed to be gained. Nigh unto thee. Brought in simplest and most familiar forms. In thy mouth. So that it may be the subject of daily conversation in the family (6: 7; 11: 19), and it will be so if we are really interested in it. Talking about it tends also to impress it. In thy heart. It answers to man's deepest spiritual wants, it appeals to his inmost being (6: 6; 11: 18) whence proceed all the movements of life (Prov. 4: 23). Paul uses this passage (Rom. 10: 4-10) to emphasize how near salvation is brought by the gospel. We need only faith in Christ as revealed in the gospel, and open confession, to be saved. Thou mayest do it. It is not only possible, but practicable, as is testified by countless instances.

II. Supreme Interest Presented. Ver. 15-20. Have set before thee. To have made with his own lips this explicit statement of principles of true religion, whatever the attention paid to them, was a great satisfaction (Jer. 26: 14, 15; Ezk 33: 33; Acts 20: 26, 27). Life and good, and death and evil. Alternatives far-reaching and intelligible enough, especially after what had been already said at length; every kind of good for me on one hand and every form of evil on the other. Command . . . to love the Lord. To every other consideration adding that of duty. Nothing could more impressively show his great anxiety for their true welfare. Walk in his ways. This is necessary, to show the reality of love. Live and multiply; and . . . bless. The connection between righteousness and the material prosperity of a people has been too often shown to admit of serious question. Heart turn away. In this is the beginning of all departure (Heb. 3: 12) after other gods, which became the great sin of Israel, the reason why they did not prolong their days in the land given them (Jer. 22: 8, 9; 44: 20-23). Heaven and earth. The most conspicuous and ever-present objects in nature bear witness against a sinner. Choose