

STARS FOR SYLVIA

by

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SORROW COMES TO MARGUERITE

THE FACT that Ellen was saved made Sylvia joyously happy for several days; then the way Marguerite treated her took the edge off her happiness. Unless Marguerite's duties as class president demanded that she speak to Sylvia, she ignored her.

It was not only that Sylvia was sensitive and felt sad when anyone disliked her, but also she was afraid that she had made a mistake in her witnessing and perhaps had even offended Marguerite.

She decided to ask Miss Harper if she had done wrong.

Sunday afternoon, dressed in a new square-necked white dress and wearing tiny red bows in her shimmering hair, she went to Miss Harper's home.

After a few moments of general conversation, Sylvia sadly admitted, "I'm troubled about Marguerite. I'm afraid I've said too much to her about religion. Tell me, Miss Harper, is it impossible to win a girl to the Lord who believes in Christian Science?"

"Of course not, my dear. Naturally, because their minds are closed, they aren't as easy to win as others. Usually they won't even discuss religion."

"Why not?"

"Because they are so self-satisfied and content with their religion. Christian Science practically promises its followers the world with a fence around it. It says there is no sin, and that is very soothing to a person's pride. Also, it promises its followers perfect health and prosperity."

"But," Sylvia said, "the Lord blesses us, also."

"He truly does, but we have to thank Him for His blessings, which implies a spirit of humility; while the Christian Scientists take everything they can get as if it were coming to them. Wait, let me show you what they believe."

She crossed to her long bookcase and took out a blue leather book with a gold cross and crown on the cover.

She returned to the divan, sat beside Sylvia and passed her the book.

“This is a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, as printed in 1915. There has been more than one edition of Science and Health, and though Mrs. Eddy was supposed to have been inspired, the church officials object to a person using some of the older editions.”

“Hm!” Sylvia studied the attractive book, then opened it and exclaimed, “Look, the very first chapter is on prayer.”

“That’s the title of the chapter, but if you read it you would see that it tells a person not to pray. For instance, on page five it says, ‘Prayer is not to be used as a confessional to conceal sin’; while in the Bible it says, **‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’**”

“And what do they teach about the Lord?” Sylvia asked.

“The second chapter in Science and Health is ‘Atonement and Eucharist.’ On page 25, it clearly states that ‘The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon the accursed tree than when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about His Father’s business.’”

Sylvia shuddered. “How dreadful! Why, we know that **‘without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins’** (Hebrews 9:22.) Are there any special verses to use for a Christian Scientist?”

“No, dear. They must come the same way anyone else comes to Christ. They must come to the end of themselves, realize that Christian Science cannot do what it claims, and believe in Christ as personal Saviour.”

“I see.” She stood up, gave her dress a straightening pat and promised earnestly, “I shall never stop praying for Marguerite.”

“Prayer, coupled with Christian love will win her.”

With hope in her heart, Sylvia went home and continued praying. Then, on Tuesday, the news went around the school that Mrs. Lyons had died very suddenly. Sylvia sensed that this was her opportunity to show Christian love to Marguerite, so the day after the funeral she went to Marguerite’s home.

Marguerite opened the door. Pity instantly filled Sylvia’s heart. Marguerite did not look her usual, poised self. Her eyes were puffy from crying, and her blonde hair was mussed. Even the scar on her forehead showed. It was as if she didn’t care any longer how she looked.

Sylvia caught Marguerite’s cold hands in her warm ones and murmured, “I came to tell you how sorry I am, and Nancy, too, and all of us. If we can do anything to help you, we want to do it.”

“There’s nothing anyone can do,” Marguerite almost wailed; then a sudden expression of hope crossed her face. She pulled Sylvia inside and closed the door behind her.

“I didn’t use to like you because you were always so sure about your religion; but now I want to know something. Do you know where my mother is?”

Sylvia knew that if that had been her mother who died, she would know she was with Jesus so she answered, "I think so."

Marguerite dropped into a chair and Sylvia sat in a nearby one. Marguerite's face was sad as she explained, "Yesterday, we had the services for mother and the Christian Science reader was so vague. She said that the false conception that had been my mother's material body had ceased to be; that she had become a part of the Infinite, of Divine Mind. Sylvia, I don't want my mother to be part of Infinite Mind. I—"

Sylvia put her arm around the troubled girl and held her close. She had never met Mrs. Lyons and she didn't know what the sick woman believed about Jesus. It was possible that the sick woman had never fully understood the awful things that Christian Science taught about Jesus. Perhaps, in her heart, she believed in Jesus as Saviour. Sylvia didn't know, but she knew this was no time to express a doubt to Marguerite; so she said, "If she believed in Jesus, the Bible tells us that death is **'to depart and to be with Christ.'**"

A look as if a heavy burden had been lifted came over Marguerite's face and she asked, "Do you think my mother is still a person?"

"Of course she is." Of that Sylvia was sure.

"I hope so. I hope so. Sylvia, do you know what I'm going to do?"

"No, what?" Sylvia asked, hoping against hope.

"I'm going to church with you Sunday. I thought I was being smart by being a Christian Scientist; but when death comes, Science offers no comfort."

"All the girls will be happy to see you. We've been praying that you would," Sylvia excitedly encouraged. "Nancy and I will come by for you."

True to her word, Sylvia came by for Marguerite Sunday morning. She and Nancy were almost afraid she might change her mind. But she not only went to Sunday school but she stayed after class to talk to Miss Harper.

"Sylvia told me that you can tell me where my mother is," Marguerite began. "I must know."

When I was a little girl and was so sick, she became a Christian Scientist and they don't talk about death. They claim it is unreality. But now that my mother's dead, it's horribly real."

"If she was a Christian, I can promise that death is **'to depart and to be with Christ.'**"

"That's what Sylvia said and it is comforting. But if the Bible says that, why didn't the practitioner tell me that?"

"I don't know," Miss Harper answered kindly. "I have talked to many prominent, established Christian Scientists and they seem all mixed up."

“In one breath they deny the reality of matter, and in the next breath they concede that matter does appear real. I contend that it is either real or it isn’t.”

“Still, it’s advanced thought,” Marguerite defended.

“Oh, no,” Sylvia protested and she looked anxiously to Miss Harper for an answer. She was afraid that if Marguerite turned back now, she would never come this far again.

“They try to give that impression, and their teaching is fairly recent in its appearance in the United States. But those same teachings of Christian Science are to be found in many of the eastern religions. For instance, Nirvana, a creed of Buddhism, teaches that at death the soul becomes a part of the Infinite.”

“Then the teachings of Christian Science aren’t new?”

“No, my dear, they are not. Man has tried every possible religious substitute for the cross of Christ in every generation. You see, man is proud. He would rather believe anything than admit he has sinned. But that does not lessen the reality of sin any more than the Christian Science denial of death has done away with death. Even their leader, Mary Baker Eddy, died.”

“I’ve tried to ignore my sins, but I guess I have done some things wrong.”

Sylvia happily squeezed her hand. She knew that when a girl admitted she had sinned, she was half won to the Lord.

“I’ve been unfair to Sarah and unkind to the other girls. And now my mother is gone, I don’t know which way to turn.”

“Turn to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life,” Miss Harper urged.

“**And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,**” Sylvia quoted, knowing the power of Scripture to persuade a seeking soul to come to Jesus.

“I will.”

And once more Sylvia had the supreme joy of kneeling with a girl as she bowed her head and accepted Christ as Saviour.

~ end of chapter 16 ~

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