

## JOY

The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; *because joy is withered away from the sons of men*. So said the prophet Joel ages ago. Yet how many think of this in periods of what we are pleased to call depression? If what Joel said to be true, there is every reason for the depression to continue, for surely as one walks along the streets, one sees little joy expressed. Suppose those who read these lines commence to manifest joy instead of the opposite. You will be surprised at the result, not only in others, but in yourself and in your affairs.

Some ten or fifteen years ago there was a woman in Queens Village, Long Island, who was supposed to be dying with Bright's disease. The doctor had left, promising to come back when called — meaning to give the death certificate as required by law. The entire family had given up all hope, and at this point a Christian Science practitioner was called into the case.

He arrived about eight o'clock in the evening, was met by one of the daughters of the woman, who told him the foregoing, and was then led upstairs to the bedroom. The gloom could have been cut with a knife. There were many persons in the room, including two medical nurses. There were sons-in-law and sons, daughters-in-law and daughters, some weeping, all worried and distraught. There they stood or sat about the bedside, waiting for dissolution.

The woman herself was a woeful sight. The practitioner had had a wide experience in his mission of healing, and knew that when a woman is suffering from some slight indisposition, yet sufficient to call the healer to her bedside, that this is shown forth by her appearance. She will perhaps be sitting up, with her hair and face made to look as attractive as possible; she will be gowned in some tastefully colored boudoir clothing, and the very setting of the bedclothes will be evidence of her slight indisposition. But if she be like this woman, desperately ill, suffering intensely, she shows it forth in everything about her, for she had come to the place where she doesn't care how she looks.

This woman, in the first place, could not lie down and had not slept naturally for a long time, so there she sat propped up by several pillows, her head hanging over on one side, the picture of utter despair. Her pink kimono trimmed with a bit of blue hung loosely about her, exposing the upper part of her body, the bedclothes were heaped somewhat hopelessly over her, her cap hung over one ear, and her hair was straggling over her shoulders in an unkempt fashion, while to cap the climax, there on the night table at her side lay a switch of hair — a thing no woman would permit if she were measurably apprehensive of what was going on.

At once the practitioner perceived that the case was a desperate one, and said to himself that there was certainly nothing that he himself could do, but that God must do it all.

When he came in, his name was announced to the sick mother; but she had taken

not the slightest notice of it or of him. He sat by the bedside, facing slightly toward her feet, and looked around. But what a heavy atmosphere of gloom and despair! The Kingdom of God seemed far, far away.

Just then from the hall in the rear came the sound of children playing and laughing. The grandchildren were, of course, too small to be aware of the presence of the dark angel of death hovering about, so they played their little games quite regardless of anything unusual. With what seemed to be almost the last breath left in the sick woman's body, she cried out, "Oh, take those children away. I can't stand the noise. Take them away." Immediately several of the mothers and fathers rose to carry out the woman's expressed wish, but as they did so the practitioner said, "Hold on a moment. It says in the Bible that in the Kingdom of God the children shall be laughing and playing in the streets, and this is the only sign I can see anywhere of the Kingdom of Heaven, so let them stay and play."

At this the gloom vanished, and the whole roomful of people, save only the mother, began to smile, and they all filed out, leaving the practitioner alone with the woman.

Taking his cue from the last remark, he commenced to tell her of the Kingdom of Heaven, to talk of life and the things of the Kingdom of God; but at first he might have been talking to a stone image for all the recognition shown. Then as he watched her out of the corner of his eye, he saw her peering at him under her partly opened eyelids. He went right on talking about the Kingdom, however, as though he had not seen her doing so. As she watched him, apparently to see if he was aware of what she was doing, she quietly moved her hand from her side and reached out for that switch of hair, and quickly slipped it under the pillow. The practitioner smiled and said to himself, "She's getting better." However, he went right on talking quietly to her of the Kingdom as though he was entirely unobserving.

At this point she opened her eyes and saw her unclothed body, and quickly adjusted the clothes about her, tidied her kimono, and sat up a little straighter in bed. Then she straightened her pink cap and with her fingers began to poke the strands of hair under her cap. All of which was unobservingly observed by the practitioner as he sat beside her. Then after a little more time — perhaps half an hour — she slipped herself off those pillows at her back, curled herself up, and went to sleep. Then the practitioner went home.

Well, that's about all there is to the story. He went to see her perhaps for a week, and she entirely recovered. She is alive and well today, a good many years afterward. The good doctor never had to deliver that death certificate. The great point of the whole thing is not that the woman is alive and well, but that joy which indicates the very presence of God, indicates also the very presence of Life, health, peace, and whatever else constitutes God or the Kingdom of God. Just as H<sub>2</sub>O constitutes water. If you have water, you may count on two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen; and if you have the presence of God, you may depend on the presence of all the constituents of God, and so the presence of Life.