

INTRA MUROS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760571344

Intra muros by Rebecca Ruter Springer

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

REBECCA RUTER SPRINGER

INTRA MUROS

INTRA MUROS.

By *REBECCA RUTER SPRINGER*,

Author of "Beechwood," "Self," "Songs by the Sea," "Leon," etc.

David C. Cook Publishing Company, Elgin, Ill., and 36 Washington Street, Chicago.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The pages of this little volume contain any sketch, written to while away an idle hour; but are the true, though greatly condensed, record of an experience during days when life hung in the balance between Time and Eternity, with the scales dipping decidedly toward the Eternity side.

I am painfully aware of the fact that I can never paint for others the scenes as they appeared to me dur-

ing those wonderful days. If I can only dimly show the close linking of the two lives — the mortal with the divine — as they then appeared to me, I may be able to partly tear the veil from the death we so dread, and show it to be only an open door into a new and beautiful phase of the life we now live.

If any of the scenes depicted should seem irreverent in view of our religious

training here, I can only say, "I give it as it came to me." In those strange, happy hours the close blending of the two lives, so wrapped about with the Father's watchful care and tender love; the re-

union of friends, with the dear earth-ties unchanged; the satisfied desires, the glad surprises and the divine joys, all intensified and illumined by

the reverence and love and adoration that all hearts gave to the blessed Trinity, appeared to me the most perfect revelation of that "blessed life" of which here we so fondly dream. With the hope that it may comfort and uplift some who read, even as it then did, and as its memory ever will do, for me, I submit this imperfect sketch of a most perfect vision.

R. R. S.

Copyright, 1888, by David C. Cook Publishing Company.



FS
3537
F7
IS

"Shall we stop at that poor line, the grave, which all our Christianity is always trying to wipe out and make nothing of, and which we always insist on widening into a great gulf? Shall we not stretch our thought beyond, and feel the life-blood of this holy church, this living body of Christ, pulsing out into the saints who are living there, and coming back throbbing with tidings of their glorious and sympathetic life?"

— Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.

INTRA MUROS.

CHAPTER I.

When the holy angels meet us,
As we go to join their band,
Shall we know the friends that greet us,
In the glorious spirit-land?
Shall we see the same eyes shining
On us, as in days of yore?
Shall we feel their dear arms twining
Fondly 'round us as before?
Shall we know each other there?

—[Rev. R. Lowry.



WAS many hundred miles away from home and friends, and had been very ill for many weeks. I was entirely among strangers, and my only attendant, though of a kindly disposition, knew nothing whatever of the duties of the sick room; hence I had none of the many delicate attentions that keep up an invalid's failing strength. I had taken no nourishment of any kind for nearly three weeks, scarcely even water, and was greatly reduced in both flesh and strength, and consciousness seemed at times to wholly desert me. I had an unutterable longing for the presence of my dear distant ones; for the gentle touch of beloved hands, and whispered words of love and courage; but they never came—they could not. Responsible duties, that

I felt must not be neglected, kept these dear ones much of the time in distant scenes, and I would not recall them.

I lay in a large, comfortable room, on the second floor of a house in Kentville. The bed stood in a recess at one end of the apartment, and from this recess a large stained-glass window opened upon a veranda fronting on the street. During much of my illness I lay with my face to this window, and my back to the room; and I remember thinking how easy it would be to pass through the window to the veranda, if one so desired. When the longing for the loved distant faces and voices became more than I could bear, I prayed that the dear Christ would help me to realize his blessed presence; and that since the beloved ones of earth could not minister to me, I might feel the influence of the other dear ones who are "all ministering spirits." Especially did I ask to be sustained should I indeed be called to pass through the dark waters alone. It was no idle prayer, and the response came swiftly, speedily. All anxieties and cares slipped away from me, as a worn-out garment, and peace, Christ's peace, enfolded me. I was willing to wait God's time for the coming of those so dear to me, and said to myself, more than once, "If not here, it will be there; there is no fear of disappointment there." In those won-

derful days of agonized suffering, and great peace, I felt that I had truly found, as never before, the refuge of "the Everlasting Arms." They lifted me; they upbore me; they enfolded me; and I rested in them, as a tired child upon its mother's bosom. One morning, dark and cold and stormy, after a day and night of intense suffering, I seemed to be standing on the floor by the bed, in front of the stained-glass window. Some one was standing by me, and, when I looked up, I saw it was my husband's favorite brother, who "crossed the flood" many years ago.

"My dear brother Frank!" I cried out joyously, "how good of you to come!"

"It was a great joy to me that I could do so, dear little sister," he said gently. "Shall we go now?" and he drew me toward the window.

I turned my head and looked back into the room that somehow I felt I was about to leave forever. It was in its usual good order: a cheery, pretty room. The attendant sat by the stove at the farther end, comfortably reading a newspaper; and on the bed, turned toward the window, lay a white, still form, with the shadow of a smile on the poor, worn face. My brother drew me gently, and I yielded, passing with him through the window, out on to the veranda, and from thence, in some unaccountable way, down to the street. There I paused and said earnestly:

"I cannot leave Will and our dear boy."

"They are not here, dear, but hundreds of miles away," he answered.

"Yes, I know, but they will be here. Oh, Frank, they will need me — let me stay!" I pleaded.

"Would it not be better if I brought you back a little later — after they come?" he said, with a kind smile.

"Would you surely do so?" I asked.

"Most certainly, if you desire it. You are worn out with the long suffering, and a little rest will give you new strength."

I felt that he was right, said so in a few words, and we started slowly up the street. He had drawn my hand within his arm, and endeavored to interest me, as we walked. But my heart clung to the dear ones whom I felt I was not to see again on earth, and several times I stopped and looked wistfully back the way we had come. He was very patient and gentle with me, waiting always till I was ready to proceed again; but at last my hesitation became so great that he said pleasantly:

"You are so weak I think I had better carry you;" and without waiting for a reply, he stooped and lifted me in his arms, as though I had been a little child; and, like a child, I yielded, resting my head upon his shoulder, and laying my arm about his neck. I felt so safe, so content, to be thus in his care. It seemed so sweet, after the long, lonely struggle,

to have some one assume the responsibility of caring thus tenderly for me.

He walked on with firm, swift steps, and I think I must have slept; for the next I knew, I was sitting in a sheltered nook, made by flowering shrubs, upon the softest and most beautiful turf of grass, thickly studded with fra-

grant flowers, many of them the flowers I had known and loved on earth. I remember noticing heliotrope, violets, lilies of the valley and mignonette, with many others of like nature wholly unfamiliar to

me. But even in that first moment I observed how perfect in its way was every plant and flower. For instance, the heliotrope, which with us often runs into long, ragged sprays, there grew upon short, smooth stems, and each leaf was perfect and smooth and glossy, instead of being rough and coarse-looking; and the flowers peeped up from the deep grass, so like velvet, with sweet, happy faces, as though inviting the admiration one could not withhold.

And what a scene was that on which I looked as I rested upon this soft, fra-

grant cushion, secluded and yet not hidden! Away, away—far beyond the limit of my vision, I well knew,—stretched this wonderful sward of perfect grass and flowers; and out of it grew equally wonderful trees, whose drooping branches were laden with exquisite blossoms and fruits of many kinds. I found myself

thinking of St. John's vision in the Isle of Patmos, and "the tree of life" that grew in the midst of the garden, bearing "twelve manner of fruits, and whose leaves were for the healing of the nations."

Beneath the trees, in many happy groups, were little children, laughing and playing, running hither and thither in their joy, and catching in their tiny hands the bright-winged birds that flitted in and out among them, as though sharing in their sports, as they doubtless were. All through the grounds, older people were walking, sometimes in groups, sometimes by twos, sometimes alone, but all with an air of peacefulness and happiness that made itself felt by even me, a stranger. All were in spotless white, though many wore about them or carried in their hands clusters of beautiful



flowers. As I looked upon their happy faces and their spotless robes, again I thought, "These are they who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Look where I would, I saw, half hidden by the trees, elegant and beautiful houses of strangely attractive architecture, that I felt must be the homes of the happy inhabitants of this enchanted place. I caught glimpses of sparkling fountains in many directions, and close to my retreat flowed a river, with placid breath and water clear as crystal. The walks that ran in many directions through the grounds appeared to me to be, and I afterward found were, of pearl, spotless and pure, bordered on either side by narrow streams of pellucid water, running over stones of gold. The one thought that fastened itself upon me as I looked, breathless and speechless, upon this scene, was "Purity, purity!" No shadow of dust; no taint of decay on fruit or flower; everything perfect, everything pure. The grass and flowers looked as though fresh-washed by summer showers, and not a single blade was any color but the brightest green. The air was soft and balmy, though invigorating; and instead of sunlight there was a golden and rosy glory everywhere; something like the afterglow of a Southern sunset in mid-summer.

As I drew in my breath with a short, quick gasp of delight, I heard my brother,

who was standing beside me, say softly, "Well?" and, looking up, I discovered that he was watching me with keen enjoyment. I had, in my great surprise and delight, wholly forgotten his presence. Recalled to myself by his question, I faltered:

"Oh, Frank, that I—" when such an overpowering sense of God's goodness and my own unworthiness swept over me that I dropped my face into my hands, and burst into uncontrollable and very human weeping.

"Ah!" said my brother, in a tone of self-reproach, "I am inconsiderate." And lifting me gently to my feet, he said, "Come, I want to show you the river."

When we reached the brink of the river, but a few steps distant, I found that the lovely sward ran even to the water's edge, and in some places I saw the flowers blooming placidly down in the depths, among the many-colored pebbles with which the entire bed of the river was lined.

"I want you to see these beautiful stones," said my brother, stepping into the water and urging me to do the same.

I drew back timidly, saying, "I fear it is cold."

"Not in the least," he said, with a reassuring smile. "Come."

"Just as I am?" I said, glancing down at my lovely robe, which, to my great joy, I found was similar to those of the dwellers in that happy place.

"Just as you are," with another reassuring smile.

Thus encouraged, I, too, stepped into the "gently flowing river," and to my great surprise found the water, in both temperature and density, almost identical with the air. Deeper and deeper grew the stream as we passed on, until I felt the soft, sweet ripples playing about my throat. As I stopped, my brother said, "A little farther still."

"It will go over my head," I expostulated.

"Well, and what then?"

"I cannot breathe under the water — I will suffocate."

An amused twinkle came into his eyes, though he said soberly enough, "We do not do those things here."

I realized the absurdity of my position, and with a happy laugh said, "All right; come on," and plunged headlong into the bright water, which soon bubbled and rippled several feet above my head. To my surprise and delight, I found I could not only breathe, but laugh and talk, see and hear, as naturally under the water as above it. I sat down in the midst of the many-colored pebbles, and filled my hands

with them, as a child would have done. My brother lay down upon them, as he would have done on the green sward, and laughed and talked joyously with me.

"Do this," he said, rubbing his hands over his face, and running his fingers through his dark hair.

I did as he told me, and the sensation was delightful. I threw back my loose sleeves and rubbed

my arms, then my throat, and again thrust my fingers through my long, loose hair, thinking at the time what a tangle it would be in when I left the water. Then the thought came, as we at last arose to re-

turn, "What are we to do for towels?" for the earth-

thoughts still clung to me; and I wondered, too, if the lovely robe was not entirely spoiled. But behold, as we neared the shore and my head once more emerged from the water, the moment the air struck my face and hair I realized that I would need no towel or brush. My flesh, my hair, and even my beautiful garments, were soft and dry as before the water touched them. The material out of which my robe was fashioned was unlike anything that I had ever seen. It was soft and light and shone with a faint

