

THE LEPROSY OF MIRIAM

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649201457

The leprosy of Miriam by Ursula N. Gestefeld

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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URSULA N. GESTEFELD

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BY

URSULA N. GESTEFELD.



NEW YORK.

THE GESTEFELD LIBRARY & PUBLISHING CO.

1894.

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DEDICATION.

To my friend K. S. P., whose never-ceasing helpfulness in the world of her environment counts her as one who "hath done what she could," and makes her an inspiration for those who are doing what she would.

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FOREWORD.

IN the Jewish history of the Old Testament is found a people which has come out from an environment made hateful by generations of bondage, and has set its face toward a promised land of freedom.

This journey of the Children of Israel illustrates the progress of the human soul, which is to outgrow the bondage of the flesh and reach the freedom of the spirit. It is typical of the individual and universal development recognized to-day as the continuity of evolution, which, crossing the line of demarcation between shapes and souls, is to some time bring the highest species of the genus Man.

In this journey the people, though they have "triumphed gloriously," are halted for a season through what befalls Miriam. For having "spoken against" Moses, she is stricken with leprosy and shut out from the camp, "and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again."

The progress of the human race is limited by the development and position of its women. Naturally the perceptive and intuitive half of Man, woman's prerogative and possibilities have been obscured by the masculine intellect. Stimulated partly by the inherent vitality of her own nature and by the force of masculine

example, she has taken the forward strides which have produced the typical nineteenth century product—the intellectually developed woman, self-reliant, positive, forceful.

She is strongly *en evidence* to-day, a factor in the body politic to be reckoned with, not ignored. She is no religionist, because she sees the mistake of being a mere emotionalist. She is becoming—has become agnostic. Failing to recognize that part of our dual nature which is the true leader to higher things, and because of her intellectual ambition—"speaking against Moses"—she has been smitten with the leprosy of scientific (?) materialism. And thus she is "as one dead" because not alive to her own higher nature and true office.

Truly, the people may not journey further till she is received in again. Past glories were good, present glories are better, the best are yet to come. Foreshadowings are with us. The sixth sense which marks a higher species is beginning to appear. It is feminine, and it pertains to the "divine womanly which ever leads us on." The intellectual womanly, blind to the divine, halts us in the wilderness.

URSULA N. GESTEFELD.

CHAPTER I.

A HUMMING rustling crowd filled the fashionable church of Benton. It was within a few minutes of the time appointed for the marriage ceremony.

Friends of the bride weighed and measured friends of the bridegroom. Friends of the bridegroom surveyed and criticized the friends of the bride. Permeating the general expectation was a parry-and-thrust atmosphere perfumed with the aroma which always clings around a wedding.

In one of the pews far enough from the altar to mark its occupants as related to the contracting parties socially rather than by blood, was seated a man who surveyed the scene with well-bred indifference and an occasional raising of the eyebrows as remarks intended for the speakers' neighbors reached his ear from different directions.

"She was just dying for him, you know, long before—"

"Her family were much opposed to the match, and—"

"He seems to almost worship her, but—"

"I've seen most of her trousseau and it does not compare with—"

"She's one of the sweetest girls I know, and I do hope—"