

deeply into the hearts of his hearers. There was an intense hush, as if in truth the Spirit had moved him to speak, and every sentence was armed with a sacred authority. Asenath Mitchell looked at him, over the low partition which divided her and her sisters from the men's side, absorbed in his rapt earnestness and truth. She forgot that other hearers were present; he spoke to her alone. A strange spell seemed to seize upon her faculties and chain them at his feet; had he beckoned to her, she would have arisen and walked to his side.

Friend Carter warmed and deepened as he went on. "I feel moved to-day," he said,—"moved, I know not why, but I hope for some wise purpose,—to relate to you an instance of Divine and human kindness which has come directly to my own knowledge. A young man of delicate constitution, whose lungs were thought to be seriously affected, was sent to the house of a Friend in the country, in order to try the effect of air and exercise."

Asenath almost ceased to breathe, in the intensity with which she gazed and listened—Clasping her hands tightly in her lap to prevent them from trembling, and steadying herself against the back of the seat, she heard the story of her love for Richard Hilton told by the lips of a stranger!—not merely of his dismissal from the house, but of that meeting in the street, at which only she and her father was present! Nay, more, she heard her own words repeated, she heard Richard's passionate outburst of remorse described in language that brought his living face before her! She grasped for breath,—his face *was* before her! The features, sharpened by despairing grief, which her memory recalled, had almost anticipated the harder lines which fifteen years had made, and which now, with a terrible shock and choking leap of the heart, she recognized. Her senses faded, and she would have fallen from her seat but for the support of the partition against which she leaned.

Fortunately, the women near her were too much occupied with the narrative to notice her condition. Many of them wept silently, with their hankerchiefs pressed over their mouths.

The first shock like faintness passed away, and she clung to the speaker's voice, as if its sound alone could give her strength to sit still and listen further.

"Deserted by his friends, unable to stay his feet on the evil path," he continued, "the young man left his home and went to a city in another State.

But here it was easier to find associates in evil than tender hearts that might help him back to good. He was tired of life, and the hope of a speedier death hardened him in his courses.

But, my friends, Death never comes to those who wickedly seek him. The Lord withhold destruction from the hands that are made out-trotted to grasp it, and forces his pity and forgiveness on the unwilling soul. Finding that it was the principal of life which grew stronger within him, the young man at last mediated an awful crime. The

thought of self destruction haunted him day and night. He lingered around the wharves, gazing into the deep waters, and was restrained from the deed only by the memory of the last loving voice he had heard.

One gloomy evening, when even this memory had faded, and he awaited the approaching darkness to make his designs secure, a hand was laid on his arm. A man in the simple garb of the Friends stood before him, and a face which reflected the kindness of the Divine Father looked upon him.

"My child," said he, "I am drawn to thee by the great trouble of thy mind. Shall I tell thee what it is thee meditates? The young man shook his head. "I will be silent, then, but I will save thee. I know the human heart, and its trials and weaknesses, and it may be put into my mouth to give thee strength." He took the young man's hand, as if he had been a little child, and led him to his home. He heard the sad story from, beginning to end; and the young man wept upon his breast, to hear no word of reproach, but only the largest and tenderest pity bestowed upon him. They knelt down side by side, at midnight; and the Friend's right hand was upon his head while they prayed.

"The young man was rescued from his evil ways, to acknowledge still further the boundless mercy of Providence. The dissipation wherein he had recklessly sought death was, for him, a marvelous restoration to life.—His lungs had become sound and free from the tendency to disease. The measure of his forgiveness was almost more than he could bear. He bore his cross thenceforward with a joyful resignation, and was mercifully drawn nearer and nearer to the Truth, until, in the fulness of his convictions, he entered into the brotherhood of the Friends.

"I have been powerfully moved to tell you this story," Friend Carter concluded, "from a feeling that it may be needed, here, at this time, to influence some heart trembling in the balance. Who is there among you, my friends, that may not snatch a brand from the burning? Oh, believe that pity and charity are the most effectual weapons given into the hands of us imperfect mortals and leave the awful attribute of wrath in the hands of the Lord!"

He sat down, and dead silence ensued. Tears of emotion stood in the eyes of the hearers, men as well as women, and tears of gratitude and thanksgiving gushed warily from those of Asenath. An ineffable peace and joy descended upon her heart.

When the meeting broke up, Friend Mitchell, who had not recognized Richard Hilton, but had heard the story with feelings which he endeavored in vain to control, approached the preacher.

"The Lord spoke to me this day, through thy lips," said he; "will thee come to one side, and hear me a minute?"

"Eli Mitchner!" exclaimed Friend Carter, "Eli! I knew not thee was here! Doesn't thee know me?"

The old man stared in astonishment. "It seems like a face I ought to know," he said, "but I can't place thee."

They withdrew to the shade of one of the oaks. Friend Carter turned again, much moved, and, grasping the old man's hands in his own, exclaimed:—

"Friend Mitchell, I was called upon to-day to speak of myself. I am—or, rather, I was—the Richard Hilton thee knew."

Friend Mitchell's face flushed with mingled emotions of shame and joy, and his grasp on the preacher's hands tightened.

"But thee calls thyself Carter?" he finally said.

"Soon after I was saved," was the reply, "an aunt on the mother's side died, and left her property to me, on condition that I should take her name. I was tired of my own then, and to give it up seemed only like losing my former self; but I should like to have it back again now."

"Wonderful are the ways of the Lord, and past finding out!" said the old man. "Come home with me, Richard,—come for my sake, for there is a concern on my mind until all is clear between us. Or, say, will thee walk home with Asenath, while I go with Moses?"

"Asenath?"

"Yes. There she goes, thro' the gate. Thee can easily overtake her. I'm coming, Moses!"—and he hurried away to his son's carriage, which was approaching.

Asenath felt that it would be impossible for her to meet Richard Hilton there. She knew not why his name had been changed; he had not betrayed his identity with the young man of his story; he evidently did not wish it to be known, and an unexpected meeting with her might surprise him into an involuntary revelation of the fact. It was enough for her that a saviour had arisen, and her lost Adam was redeemed,—that a holier light than the autumn sun now rested, and would forever rest, on the one landscape of her youth. Her eyes shone with the pure brightness of girlhood, a soft warmth colored her cheek and smoothed away the coming lines of her brow, and her step was light and elastic as in the old time.

Eager to escape from the crowd, she crossed the highway, dusty with its string of returning carriages, and entered the secluded lane. The breeze had died away, the air was full of insect-sounds, and the warm light of the sinking sun fell upon the woods and meadows. Nature seemed penetrated with a sympathy with her own inner peace.

But the crown of the benignant day was yet to come. A quick footstep followed her, and ere long a voice, near at hand, called her by name.

She stopped, turned, and for a moment they stood silent, face to face.

"I knew thee, Richard?" at last she said, in a trembling voice; "may the Lord bless thee!"

Tears were in the eyes of both.

"He has blessed me," Richard answered in a reverent tone; "and this is his last and sweetest mercy. Asenath, let me hear that thee forgives me."

"I have forgiven thee long ago, Richard—forgiven, but not forgotten."

The hush of sunset was on the forest, as they walked onward, side by side, exchanging their mutual histories. Not a leaf

stirred in the crowns of the tall trees, and the dusk, creeping along between their stems, brought with it a richer wood-land odor. Their voices were low and subdued, as if an angel of God were hovering in the shadows and listening, or God Himself looked down upon them from the violet sky.

At last Richard stopped.

"Asenath," said he, "does thee remember that spot on the creek, where the red-berkails grew?"

"I remember it," she answered, a girlish blush rising to her face.

"If I were to say to thee now

what I said to thee there, what would be thy answer?"

Her words came brokenly.

"I would say to thee, Richard,—I can trust thee,—I do love thee!"

"Look at me Asenath."

Her eyes, beaming with a clearer light than even then when she first confessed, were lifted to his. She placed her hands gently upon his shoulders, and bent her head upon his breast. He tenderly lifted it again, and, for the first time, her virgin lips knew the kiss of man.

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