

RANDOLPH JOURNAL.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF RANDOLPH COUNTY.

New Series,

WINCHESTER, INDIANA, FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 1862.

Vol. I.—No. 5.

THE
RANDOLPH JOURNAL
is published
EVERY FRIDAY MORNING,
at
Dynes and Bonebrake,
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ONE DOLLAR PER YEAR,
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Winchester, Indiana.

From the Atlantic Monthly. FRIEND ELI'S DAUGHTER.

(CONCLUDED.)
V.

Year after year passed by, but not without bringing change to the Mitchnor family. Moses had moved to Chester county soon after his marriage, and had a good farm of his own. At the end of ten years Abigail died; and the old man, who had not only lost his savings by an un-
lucky investment, but was obliged to mortgage his farm, finally determined to sell it and join his son. He was getting too old to manage it properly, impatient under the unaccustomed pressure of debt, and depressed by the loss of the wife to whom, without any outward show of tenderness, he was, in truth, tenderly attached. He missed her more keenly in the places where she lived and moved than in a neighborhood without the memory of her presence. The pang with which he parted from his home was weakened by the greater pang which had preceded it.

It was a harder trial to Asenath. She shrank from the encounter with new faces, and the necessity of creating new associations. There was a quiet satisfaction in the ordered, monotonous round of her life, which might be the same elsewhere, but here alone was the nook which held all the morning sunshine and the halo of the sweet departed summer,—here still grew the familiar wild-flowers which the first Richard Hilton had gathered. This was the Paradise in which the Adam of her heart had dwelt, before his fall. Her resignation and submission entitled her to keep those pure and perfect memories, though she was scarcely conscious of their true charm. She did not dare to express to herself, in words, that one everlasting joy of woman's heart, through all trials and sorrows,—“I have loved, I have been loved.”

On the “First-day” before their departure, she walked down the meadows to the lonely break between the hills. It was the early spring, and the black buds of the ash had just begun to swell. The maples were dusted with crimson bloom, and the downy catkins of the swamp-willow dropped upon the stream and floated past her, as once the autumn leaves. In the edges of the thicket peeped forth the blue, scentless violet, the fairy cups of the anemone, and the pink-veined bells of the miskedeed. The tall blooms through which the lovers walked still slept in the chilly earth; but the sky above her was mild and blue, and the remembrance of the day came back to her with a delicate, pungent sweetness, like the perfume of the trailing arbutus in the air around her. In a sheltered, sunny nook, she found a single erythronium, lured forth in advance of its proper season, and gathered it as a relic of the spot, which she might keep without

blame. As she stooped to pluck it, her own face looked up at her out of a little pool filled by the spring rains. Seen against the reflected sky, it shone with a soft radiance, and the earnest eyes met hers, as if it were her young self, evoked from the past, to bid her farewell. “Farewell!” she whispered, taking leave at once, as she believed, of youth and the memory of love.

During those years she had more than once been sought in marriage, but had steadily, though kindly, refused. Once, when the suitor was a man whose character and position made the union very desirable in Eli Mitchnor's eyes, he ventured to use his paternal influence. Asenath's gentle resistance was overcome by his arbitrary force of will, and her protestations were of no avail.

“Father,” she finally said, in the tone he had once heard and still remembered, “they can take away, but they cannot give.”

He never mentioned the subject again.

Richard Hilton passed out of her knowledge shortly after her meeting with him in Philadelphia. She heard, indeed, that his headlong career of dissipation was not arrested—that his friends had in vain hoped to save him—and, finally, that he had left the city. After that all reports ceased. He was either dead or reclining and leading a better life, somewhere far away.—Dead, she believed,—at least hoped; for in that case might he not now be enjoying the idle rest and peace which she trusted might be her portion. It was better to think of him as a purified spirit, waiting to meet her in a holier communion, than to know that he was still bearing the burden of a soiled and blighted life. In any case, her own future was plain and clear. It was simply a prolongation of the present,—an alteration of seed time and harvest, filled with his duties and cares, until the Master shall bid her lay down her load and follow Him.

Friend Mitchnor bought a small cottage adjacent to his son's farm, in a community which consisted mostly of Friends, and not far from the large old meeting house in which the Quarterly Meetings were held. He at once took his place on the upper seat, among the elders, most of whom he knew already, from having met them, year after year in Philadelphia. The charge of a few acres of ground gave him a sufficient occupation; the money left to him after the sale of his farm was enough to support him comfortably; and a late Indian summer of contentment seemed now to have come to the old man. He was done with the earnest business of life. Moses was gradually taking his place, as father and Friend; and Asenath would be reasonably provided for at his death. As his bodily energies decayed, his imperious temper softened, his mind became more accessible to liberal influences, and he even cultivated a cordial friendship with a

neighboring farmer who was one of the “world's people.” Thus, at seventy-five, he was really younger, because tenderer of heart and more considerate, than he had been at sixty.

Asenath was now a woman of thirty-five, and suitors had ceased to approach her. Much of her beauty still remained, but her face had become thin and wasted, and the inevitable lines were beginning to form around her eyes. Her dress was plainer than ever, and she wore the scoop bonnet of drab silk, in which no woman can seem beautiful, unless she be very old. She was calm and grave in her demeanor, save that her perfect goodness and benevolence shone through and warmed her presence; but, when earnestly interested, she had been known to speak her mind so clearly and forcibly that it was generally surmised among the Friends that she possessed “a gift,” which might, in time, raise her to honor among them. To the children of Moses she was a good genius, and a word from “Aunt Senath” often prevailed when the authority of the parents was disregarded. In them she found a new source of happiness; and when her old home on the Neshanay had been removed a little farther into the past, so that she no longer looked with every morning's sun for some familiar feature of its scenery, her submission brightened into a cheerful content with life.

It was summer, and Quarterly Meeting Day had arrived. There had been rumors of the expected presence of Friends from a distance, but most of the neighbors who were not connected with the sect attended. By the by-road through the woods, it was not more than half a mile from Friend Mitchnor's cottage to the meeting house, and Asenath, leaving her father to be taken by Moses in his carriage, set out on foot. It was a sparkling, breezy day, and the forest was full of life. Squirrels chased each other along the branches of the oaks, and the air was filled with fragrant odors of hickory leaves, sweet fern and spice wood. Picking up a flower here and there, Asenath walked onward, rejoicing alike in shade and sunshine, grateful for all the consoling beauty which the earth offers to a lonely heart. That serene content which she had learned to call happiness had filled her being until the dark canopy was lifted and the waters took back their transparency under a cloudless sky.

Passing around the “women's side” of the meeting house, she mingled with her friends, who were exchanging information concerning the expected visitors.—Micajah Morrill had not arrived, they said, but Ruth Baxter had spent the last night at Friend Way's; and would certainly be there. Besides, there were Friend Chandler, from Nine Pastors, and Friend Carter, from Maryland; they had been seen on the ground. Friend Carter was said to have a wonderful gift.—Mercy

Jackson had heard him once in Baltimore. The Friends there had been a little exercised about him, because they thought he was too much inclined to “the newness,” but it was known that the Spirit had often manifestly led him. Friend Chandler had visited Yearly Meeting once, they believed. He was an old man, and had been a personal friend of Elias Hicks.

At the appointed hour they entered the house. After the subdued rustling which ensued upon taking their seats, there was an interval of silence, shorter than usual, because it was evident that many persons would feel the promptings of the Spirit. Friend Chandler spoke first, and was followed by Ruth Baxter, a frail woman, with a voice of exceeding power. The not unmelodious chant in which she delivered her admonitions rang out, at times, like the peal of a trumpet. Fixing her eyes on vacancy, with her hands on the wooden rail before her, and her body slightly swaying to and fro, her voice soared aloft at the commencement of every sentence, gradually dropping, through a melodious scale of tone, to the close. She resembled an inspired prophetess, an aged Deborah, crying aloud in the valleys of Israel.

The last speaker was Friend Carter, a small man, not more than forty years of age. His face was thin and intense in its expression, his hair grey at the temples, and his dark eye almost too restless for a child of “the stillness and the quietness.” His voice, though not loud, was clear and penetrating, with an earnest, sympathetic quality, which arrested, not the ear alone, but the serious attention of the auditor. His delivery was but slightly marked by the peculiar rhythm of the Quaker preachers; and this fact, perhaps, increased the effect of his words, through the contrast with those who preceded him.

His discourse was an eloquent vindication of the law of kindness, as the highest and purest manifestation of true Christian doctrine. The paternal relation of God to man was the basis of that religion which appealed directly to the heart; so the fraternity of each man with his fellow was its practical application.—God pardons the repentant sinner; we can also pardon, where we are offended; we can pity, where we cannot pardon.

Both the good and the bad principles generate their like in others. Force begets force; anger excites a corresponding anger; but kindness awakens the slumbering emotions even of an evil heart: Love may not always be answered by an equal love, but it has never yet created hatred. The testimony which Friends bear against war, he said, is but a general assertion, which has no value except in so far as they manifest the principle of peace in their daily lives,—in the exercise of pity, of charity, of forbearance, and Christian love.

The words of the speaker sank