

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1902.

# The Case of Michael Hope

"Thank you, Mr. Derrick," said Michael Hope quietly; "but you do anything. I knew how it would be when I prayed at the foundation-stone laying that he might have the peace of God that was between them. And I asked the Lord to sanctify him. Of course it was like telling him down right that he was a sinner. And a rich man doesn't care to hear it said that he is anything money can't buy; but it seemed as if the Master put those words on my lips, and I wasn't going to deny Him for the sake of a man on John Barstow's smooth tongue. They all expected me to give a talk, because we had such a wealthy man coming to lay the stone on the bazaar; but I couldn't do it, Mr. Derrick! I've known him all his life. I cut out boats for him when he was a tiny lad; his father and I went to school together. He'll always be like a lad to me, though he's nearly fifty; and I can't see him looking at his heart, after years, and believe as if all were going well with him. He's borne with me when I've spoken about the unhealthy condition the men work under and the need of new machinery; but he's been longing to get rid of me for years, and he would have done it if he could have found another foreman as good as I. I never liked to feel that I was praying for him, as I did morning and night. But that prayer in public was the climax; I seemed to know as I spoke that he'd dismiss the first chance he got—and today he gave me a month's warning. It wouldn't have happened if Mr. Rowland had been here; but row he's left his many subscription lists lately he'll be getting a handle to a door that opens nothing."

"What reason did he give?" said Charles Derrick. He was the young minister, and a great favorite with Michael Hope, the veteran Methodist, who, by virtue of his long connection with the chapel, and the reverence in which most members of the society held him, had been asked to utter a word of prayer at the foundation-stone laying, and had proceeded to pray for John Barstow, "as if," said a scandalized member of the congregation, "he had been a fellow-sinner."

"He hadn't any, Mr. Derrick," replied Michael peacefully. "He couldn't really say I was unfit for the post, when I've served there forty years and no complaint made. So he said the work was too heavy for me, and I must have laid by a bit, and I must get something lighter. It seemed quite smooth on the top, Mr. Derrick, almost as if he were doing me kindness. I looked at him, but I hardly spoke; I saw he'd made up his mind. And he knows well enough he never laid by a penny since my wife and child died. Folks have urged me to do it, against a rainy day, but it was always some one's rainy day, and I didn't have a chance."

"The passed, then went on in a sad voice."

"The right down sorry about it, Mr. Derrick. It was to his father I turned for help when I was left alone in the world, and it seemed for a while as if I couldn't bear my life, but he was such a bright, generous lad, and here he is, and I can do nothing to help him. But there's one thing, the Lord can help him, though I can't."

"Michael noticed that Michael was looking upon his dismissal merely as a blow to John Barstow's character. "What will you do—I mean for yourself?" he said.

"I returned Michael. "Oh, I shall be all right, Mr. Derrick. I'm generally, and whatever comes it won't be long. I'll look out for some work, as he said; but if that fails through, I've come to the age when what I've done at times to others out of it—that I should be a defrauding no one by going to the workhouse."

"He won't let you do that," said Michael hotly. Michael smiled.

"I'd like it well," he said calmly. "I'm able to work there, as well as outside, and I'd have no anxiety about the rent. And I know the place. I've conducted many a prayer-meeting on the Sunday for them casuals, and they'd be glad to see me there. It might fret me at first to feel that I couldn't get out; but when my time came, I could go just as easy from the workhouse as from my own cottage. It would be far pleasanter to me than working on friends who could maybe spare it. And I'd be far, far happier than Jack Barstow in his place, that it always seems to me, would look as cheerless as a night if it wasn't for Miss Ruth and

her bright face. Ah, she hasn't taken after him, Mr. Derrick! She's taken after her dead mother. And there's many poor in Milbury who forgive him for her sake."

He had quickened his pace as he spoke, to suit Derrick's, who had unconsciously begun to walk a good deal faster.

"You have met her often, Mr. Derrick?" he said; but he did not look at his companion as he asked the question.

"I have," replied Derrick, vividly recalling, as he spoke, his first meeting with Ruth Barstow. He had given a great deal of her from the poor of Milbury before he saw her, and she had heard much of him. A common passion for humanity breaks the ice, like a mutual friend, and when the two met at last, by the couch of a sick child, one is inclined to think that the mischief was half done already. Ruth was playing snap with little Maggie West, and Charles Derrick stayed to have a game, which Maggie won. She told Michael Hope, who came to see her in the evening (for all children loved Michael), that Mr. Derrick and Miss Barstow played "snap" very badly; but she could not understand Michael's evident amusement at their failure; and her mother, whom she pressed for a solution of the mystery, only answered, with a broad smile, that still tongues made wise heads. In short, the poor of Milbury had seen the issue of the matter, and had made innumerable conjectures, chiefly gloomy ones, as to Mr. Barstow's probable behavior, before Charles Derrick had so much as asked himself if there was any chance for him. But Mr. Barstow took to Charles. The wealthy manufacturer himself was of coarser fiber, but he recognized that the young man was, as he said, a gentleman, and he respected gentlemen. He envied Charles the tranquil sincerity of his manner, which seemed to be unconscious of the station of those he addressed, only of their common humanity; he envied him, the lovable and sympathetic nature which made him friends everywhere, among rich or poor. It is probable, however, that he never even thought of him as a possible claimant for Ruth's hand—the idea would have seemed too ridiculous. And he did not realize how, apart from Derrick's occasional visits to the Hall, the young people were continually meeting each other in what they called "the district."

"There's no good in your appealing to him again, is there?" said Charles Derrick heavily, after a long pause, during which his brain had conjured up many images of Ruth Barstow.

"Not a bit, sir! He knows how I feel, well enough. He knows there's no anger in my heart against him, and I'm afraid that only makes him the harder. It's a queer thing, is the love of money, Mr. Derrick; it seems to make a man dead to everything but the jingle of his money bags! But yet there's no knowing. Sometimes, just before a thaw, the frost seems to have got the strongest grip, and its like that often, I fancy, with human beings. And there's many waiting for him, and striving for him in earth and heaven," concluded Michael, who, as Derrick had frequently observed, never seemed to draw a clear distinction between this world and the next.

"I must leave you now," said Derrick suddenly. "I've something to do. I needn't tell you to have faith, Michael. I wish I had half as much."

"I don't know that," replied Michael. "I'm thinking if I had a bigger faith in God, Mr. Derrick, I'd feel as trustful for John Barstow as I do for myself! You'll be looking in soon? Good-bye."

The hands of the two men met in a firm grip, and they parted. Michael went to his home; Derrick, not to his rooms, as he had intended, but straight toward Mr. Barstow's residence. His mind was made up. Whatever came of it, even if the step entailed complete alienation from Ruth, he would plead Michael's cause with his employer.

To do him justice, he never remembered till a couple of hours later that his orthodox course would have been to consult his colleagues; and either secure their approval or give up his scheme. His mind was divided between John Barstow, Michael, and Ruth, and all notions of expediency had faded from it completely.

But as he neared the gate his heart grew very heavy. If he learned nothing else in the course of the walk, he learned that he loved Ruth Barstow. The thought of her, in a curious way, seemed both to hold him back and spur him on. His hand was shaking as he rang the bell, at the mere thought of giving up the familiar, friendly intercourse that had become

rest of that day.

She also sat down with him when, late in the evening, he began to write a new sermon, for at first he found himself rather frequently consulting her. But as he went on the text took hold of him and he forgot even Ruth. That sermon required a good deal of labor, and it was not ready for next Sunday. Derrick preached it the Sunday after next, at Jude Street Chapel. The text was: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." And the sermon was one which none of those who listened to it ever forgot.

Yet it was not a revival sermon in the popular sense. It dealt with no dogmas, but with the burning principles that lie at the root of all dogmas and all creeds. It was a singularly simple sermon, yet Dr. Roberts, who had read many English and German metaphysicians, and whom a number of people called an infidel—though the poor loved him well—found no fault with it on the score of logic. He was rarely seen in church or chapel; but he had taken a fancy to Derrick, whose pastoral visits, he found, had a bracing influence on his poor patients.

As for certain members of the congregation who were always on the lookout for doctrinal lapses, they went home with a puzzled conviction that religion, after all, might be something better than they had ever dreamed, and that whatever his views were about plenary inspiration and certain other subjects, Mr. Derrick was "a good man." He spoke from the depth of an intense spiritual faith that carried all before it.

"That was a sermon," said Michael, speaking out of the fullness of his heart to Brother Waterhouse.

"Yes," said Brother Waterhouse, almost the only one among Derrick's hearers who had not been borne away from dogma, on this occasion, by the spirit molding dogma. "But do you think it was altogether sound? I'd have liked some of the doctrines a little clearer myself, and he was so long speaking about the daily life, and the teachings of the Lord, that we didn't get enough of Calvary."

"Brother Waterhouse," said Michael solemnly, "if there had been a few like our minister to stand by Him, Christ would never have come to Calvary."

And he turned away before his opponent could summon all his energies to an answer that should not only be conclusive, but doctrinal. Brother Waterhouse was a good man; but he lived in a perpetual terror of unorthodoxy, which perplexed Michael, who did not share it. To be sure he had learned his catechism as a boy; but the older he grew the more his faith overflowed all the cups prepared by theologians, and the more these words, "God is love," seemed to merge and dimly account for all other texts.

"You can't get behind that," he would say firmly, when charged by Brother Waterhouse with heresies of whose very names he was ignorant. "You may keep all your Arminians and your Universalists, brother, if you'll leave me that text."

John Barstow was not at the service; but Ruth was there, and she listened with flashing eyes as the man she loved spoke out his whole heart. The sermon did not offend the congregation, as Derrick had half expected it would; rather, it seemed to touch, even in the idle and selfish and luxurious, hidden springs of justice and compassion, of which they themselves were hardly conscious. A wave of spiritual life passed over Milbury, which many dated from that night—showing itself, among the poor by a strange uplifting of spirit, among the rich by an increased desire to labor or to help. It was a charge not easy to define, but unmistakable and practical.

"Michael," said Mrs. Petch, the green-grocer, in a nervous manner, "you'd think that sermon had naught to do with me, for it was about rich folk and them that had no crosses. And with my man lame, and Johnny ailing, I've trouble enough. But all the while I was thinking I must mark the last apples I got in damaged, for they're frost-bitten, though it don't show."

Brother Waterhouse, somewhat reluctantly, doubled his quarterly subscription, and the junior circuit steward and his wife, who never talked much about what they did or did not do, quietly gave up the new carpet they meant to get for the drawing-room, and sent the money to the children's home. As for Ruth, she already gave away or lent all that it was possible for her to lend or give, without incurring her father's serious anger; but she spent herself more freely than ever.

So did Michael, if that could be. As his last day drew near, a positive gloom fell over the whole factory. There was not a man who, at one time or another, had not had cause to love and reverence him for some cheering word or kindly act. If it

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cept the love that was in Christ." And that was all.

Charles Derrick and Ruth Barstow were married two years last spring. People tell them that they work too hard; but they reap much love, and their life is worth while.

John Barstow has never yet been knighted. Probably he never will be, for he is not as rich as he was, and his life, though active, is quiet and unassuming. But he is far better loved by his workpeople, and all who know him well, than any other employer of labor for many leagues around—Methodist Magazine.

"When I began business," said the plutocrat, wearily, "I made a vow that whenever I had earned an even million I would quit."

"Why, you've done that, many times over, long ago," said the other man, "yet you are still accumulating."

"That's the curse of it. Whenever I think I've made the even million I find on figuring it up it's either a little more or a little less, and I've got to renew the struggle."

And he sighed heavily.—Chicago Tribune.

Mrs. Martere—I must say, Jane that I am not altogether pleased with your cooking.

The Cook—It isn't to be expected you should be at first, ma'am; but you'll get educated up to it in time.—Boston Transcript.

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