

thrilling with the tender pathos of the tale, carried the words to our hearts, while a glance, a gesture, a movement of the body gave us the vision of it all as he was seeing it.

Then, in simplest of words, he told us what the story meant, holding us the while with eyes, and voice, and gesture. He compelled us to scorn the gay, heartless selfishness of the young fool setting forth so jauntily from the broken home; he moved our pity and our sympathy for the young profligate, who, broken and deserted, had still pluck enough to determine to work his way back, and who, in utter desperation, at last gave it up; and then he showed us the home-coming—the ragged, heart-sick tramp, with hesitating steps, stumbling along the dusty road, and then the rush of the old father, his garments fluttering, and his voice heard in broken cries. I see and hear it all now, whenever the words are read.

He announced the hymn, 'Just as I am,' read the first verse, and then went on: 'There you are, men, every man of you, somewhere on the road. Some of you are too lazy'—here Graeme nudged me—'and some of you haven't got enough yet of the far country to come back. May there be a chance for you when you want to come! Men, you all want to go back home, and when you go you'll want to put on your soft clothes, and you won't go till you can go in good style; but where did the prodigal get his good clothes?' Quick came the answer in Baptiste's shrill voice—

'From de old fadder!'

No one was surprised, and the minister went on—

'Yes! and that's where we must get the good, clean heart, the good, clean, brave heart, from our Father. Don't wait, but, just as you are, come. Sing.'

They sang, not loud, as they would 'Stand Up,' or even 'The Sweet By and By,' but in voices subdued, holding down the power in them.

After the singing, Craig stood a moment gazing down at the men, and then said quietly—

'Any man want to come? You all might come. We all must come.' Then, sweeping his arm over the audience, and turning half round as if to move off, he cried, in a voice that thrilled to the heart's core—

'Oh! come on! Let's go back!'

The effect was overpowering. It seemed to me that the whole company half rose to their feet. Of the prayer that immediately followed, I only caught the opening sentence, 'Father, we are coming back,' for my attention was suddenly absorbed by Abe, the stage-driver, who was sitting next me. I could hear him swearing approval and admiration, saying to himself—

'Ain't he a clinker! I'll be gee-whizzly-goldusted if he ain't a malleable-iron-double-back-action self-adjusting corn-cracker.' And the prayer continued to be punctuated with like admiring and even more sulphurous expletives. It was an incongruous medley. The earnest, reverent prayer, and the earnest, admiring profanity, rendered chaotic one's ideas of religious propriety. The feelings in both were akin; the method of expression somewhat widely diverse.

After prayer, Craig's tone changed utterly. In a quiet, matter-of-fact, businesslike way he stated his plan of organization, and called for all who wished to join to remain after the benediction. Some fifty men were

left, among them Nelson, Sandy, Lachlan Campbell, Baptiste, Shaw, Nixon, Geordie, and Billy Breen, who tried to get out, but was held fast by Geordie.

Graeme was passing out, but I signed him to remain, saying that I wished 'to see the thing out.' Abe sat still beside me, swearing disgustedly at the fellows 'who were going back on the preacher.' Craig appeared amazed at the number of men remaining, and seemed to fear that something was wrong. He put before them the terms of discipleship, as the Master put them to the eager scribe, and he did not make them easy. He pictured the kind of work to be done, and the kind of men needed for the doing of it. Abe grew uneasy as the minister went on to describe the completeness of the surrender, the intensity of the loyalty demanded.

'That knocks me out, I reckon,' he muttered, in a disappointed tone; 'I ain't up to that grade.' And as Craig described the heroism called for, the magnificence of the fight, the worth of it, and the outcome of it all, Abe ground out: 'I'll be blanked if I wouldn't like to take a hand, but I guess I'm not in it.' Craig finished by saying—

'I want to put this quite fairly. It is not any league of mine; you're not joining my company, it is no easy business, and it is for your whole life. What do you say? Do I put it fairly? What do you say, Nelson?'

Nelson rose slowly, and with difficulty began—

'I may be all wrong, but you made it easier for me, Mr. Craig. You said He would see me through, or I should never have risked it. Perhaps I am wrong,' and the old man looked troubled. Craig sprang up.

'No! no! Thank God, no! He will see every man through who will trust his life to Him. Every man, no matter how tough he is, no matter how broken.'

Then Nelson straightened himself up and said—

'Well, sir! I believe a lot of the men would go in for this if they were dead sure they would get through.'

'Get through!' said Craig; 'never a fear of it. It is a hard fight, a long fight, a glorious fight,' throwing up his head, 'but every man who squarely trusts Him, and takes Him as Lord and Master, comes out victor!'

'Ben!' said Baptiste. 'Das me. You tink He's take me in dat fight, M'sieu Craig, heh?' His eyes were blazing.

'You mean it?' asked Craig almost sternly.

'Yes! by gar!' said the little Frenchman eagerly.

'Hear what He says, then'; and Craig, turning over the leaves of his Testament, read solemnly the words, 'Swear not at all.'

'Non! For sure! Den I stop him,' replied Baptiste earnestly, and Craig wrote his name down.

Poor Abe looked amazed and distressed, rose slowly, and saying, 'That jars my whiskey jug,' passed out. There was a slight movement near the organ, and glancing up I saw Mrs. Mavor put her face hastily in her hands. The men's faces were anxious and troubled, and Nelson said in a voice that broke—

'Tell them what you told me, sir.' But Craig was troubled too, and replied, 'You tell them, Nelson!' and Nelson told the men the story of how he began just five weeks ago. The old man's voice steadied

as he went on, and he grew eager as he told how he had been helped, and how the world was all different, and his heart seemed new. He spoke of his Friend as if He were some one that could be seen out at camp, that he knew well, and met every day.

But as he tried to say how deeply he regretted that he had not known all this year's before, the old, hard face began to quiver and the steady voice wavered. Then he pulled himself together, and said—

'I begin to feel sure He'll pull me through—me! the hardest man in the mountains! So don't you fear, boys. He's all right.'

Then the men gave in their names, one by one. When it came to Geordie's turn, he gave his name—

'George Crawford, frae the pairish o' Kilsyth, Scotland, an' ye'll juist pit doon the lad's name, Maister Craig; he's a wee bit fashed w' the discourse, but he has the root o' the matter in him, I doot.' And so Billy Breen's name went down.

When the meeting was over, thirty-eight names stood upon the communion roll of the Black Rock Presbyterian Church; and it will ever be one of the regrets of my life that neither Graeme's name nor my own appeared on that roll. And two days after when the cup went round on that first Communion Sabbath, from Nelson to Sandy, and from Sandy to Baptiste, and so on down the line to Billy Breen and Mrs. Mavor, and then to Abe, the driver, whom she had by her own mystic power lifted into hope and faith, I felt all the shame and pain of a traitor; and I believe in my heart that the fire of that pain and shame burned something of the selfish cowardice out of me, and that it is burning still.

The last words of the minister, in the short address after the table had been served, were low, and sweet, and tender, but they were words of high courage; and before he had spoken them all, the men were listening with shining eyes, and when they rose to sing the closing hymn they stood straight and stiff like soldiers on parade.

And I wished more than ever I were one of them.

(To be continued.)

The Dearest One.

(By Margaret E. Sangster, in 'Standard.')

Oh! which of all my dearest dears is most my very own?

Which do I pray for oftenest when bending at the throne?

'Tis not the one whose earthly cup is brimmed with earthly grace.

Nor yet the one whose winsome heart looks from the bonniest face:

The dearest dear of all mine own is one in greatest need.

The one whose burden heaviest weighs, whose path is rough indeed.

For him I claim the help of heaven, for him I cling about

The cross of the All-pitiful till flesh, and strength give out:

And still it is the neediest for whom I plead and pray,

What time I bring my dearest dear to Christ at fall of day.

If, all imperfect as I am, thus love doth reign in me.

How better far, and truer far, must Christ the shepherd be,

Whose greater love hath largesse for the weakest of his own—

Who, by the hunger and the thirst, the faintness and the moan,

Doth measure still the bounty that, out-flowing day by day,

Uplifts and helps the weary one who faltereth in the way.

Dear Love, sweet Love, thy dearest dear, 'tis he who most hath need,

Whose want and weakness are his prayer, and without word can plead.