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THE BEST AND MOST WIDELY CIRCULATED CHURCH PAPER

whispered. Her tears choked further utterance for many minutes. "If Thou art He who should come to us, Thou knowest! Thou knowest I must go to Rachel!" and she arose.

Bent with weariness, now realized, with the slow, dragging step of one who knows not the future, save that it will be harder to bear than the present; troubled, wondering, doubting, Hagar prepared for her return.

"He will understand," she faltered, ever trying to convince her own heart. "He will understand when I tell Him!" But when might she tell Him!

She had no means to procure a cart, or even an ass for her journey. She must return her burden as she had brought it—in her arms. She dressed him, and wrapped a shawl around him, as though he were still as he had been. She whispered terms of love to him. He should live on that journey, she determined. She could not carry him otherwise. He was just a very wee baby, and must be well wrapped up; but he was her baby.

So she began the weary trip.

There was no joyous expectancy. There was no eager waiting for the first sign of dawn to make an early start on the day's allotment of travel. Rather was there a sickening dread in her heart, that grew in intensity with each step; a dread of appearing before the mother; a cowardice of heart and soul that rebelled at each step bringing her nearer her destination.

And she would tighten her arms around her charge, and kiss the covering softly.

"We're both tired," she would whisper, as she changed the weight from one shoulder to the other. And she stepped resolutely on.

Ever oftener and oftener did she find need of little self-deceptions that gave courage and strength, as she neared the hut where the mother waited.

"You will love the blossoms of yonder tree," she whispered. "They will be white and feathery, and their fragrance will cure your heartache, if you have one."

And, kissing her burden, she would point out to it the camels in the clouds, or tell a tale of the first star that God had sent to set a chair for the moon.

Yet the distance was too soon covered. The little gray-white building came into view, and grew ever nearer. Finally, Hagar stood on the very doorstep. She knocked with such a timid hand it scarce was audible to her own ears. Her heart pounded, and she pressed the baby close to it, to still the sound.

The door opened. Hagar saw Rachel's kind eyes looking into hers. With a little cry of pain, the girl held out her burden, and sank wearily forward. The need for bearing up was gone.

A sense of complete rest enwrapped her. An amazing joy possessed her. There was no sound. The past was forgotten—the future had no reality. The present was wondrously perfect! She had no desire to open her eyes. She lay quietly, afraid to move, lest the peace should fail.

Then, in the stillness, she heard voices. She opened her eyes. The walls of the cottage seemed transparent, for she could see out into the open, and the world was a riot of spring. The air was fragrant with it, and it seemed almost vocal in its essence of beauty!

There was a baby-voice. It brought back the memory of her baby, and she sighed, while quick tears seemed to come to her eyes. But there, suddenly, smiling into her very soul, was the baby! The baby, well and strong, with roguish eyes! Hagar drew in her breath, frightened. Had it all been a dream, then! What had really happened; what was reality, and what the dream, then? Where was she? Had she never left home, after all—and was the Messiah, too, a dream? No—a thousand times no! Rather all the experiences twice over than that the Vision should fail her!

The voices came nearer. In the stillness they were very clear. She recognized the mother's voice—Rachel's voice:

"She resteth quietly; she knoweth naught yet."

And another voice, a voice of thrilling beauty and power, replied:

"Through the valley and the shadow she hath proven faithful—faithful in little and faithful in much. She hath followed the pathway to Jerusalem, through darkness and fear, seeking no reward; stopping only to feed and clothe Me in My hunger and need; to comfort and succour Me; and she hath not lost the way!"

Hagar, listening, longed to go to Him. She slipped quietly out into the place where He was, and, guided by His voice, found Him. She knew Him from the visions.

"Master!" she said, eagerly. "Thou hast known? Thou hast come to me? And Thou wilt take me to Jerusalem with Thee?"

The Master looked down at the kneeling girl with understanding love.

"I have waited for thee," He said, and smiled.

"Thou hast suffered with Me, and thou hast been at My death—and thy faith hath not failed! Now, therefore, have I called thee, that thou should'st be partaker of My Resurrection, and I have brought thee to the New Jerusalem, whither I have called thee."

Hagar bowed low, and, as she arose again, Rachel threw over her shoulders a shimmering robe.

"I have woven it of thy love," she whispered softly.

And the baby, too, lifted up his tiny hands, full of flowers. The mother smiled.

"He gathered them for thee," she explained, "as they sprung up where thy feet made each impression as thou didst carry him!"

The Master held out His hand.

"Come!" He said. "A place hath been prepared for thee, and, as thy heart hath been fixed on Jerusalem while thou hast spent thy days in service of love, thou hast builded well, and I have crowned thy efforts. Come!"

And Hagar followed, out into the Brighter Sunshine.—From New York Churchman.

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