

The Fireside.

THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY.

BY MRS. SUSAN M. GRIFFITH.

There was a revival in progress in the old stone church at Rockport. Not a revival either, but meetings held in order that such a result might be obtained.

Dr. Shepherd, the pastor of the church had labored faithfully with his assistant, the consecrated Dr. Gordon, for the two weeks past; but so far the result had been a blank—nothing positive had been accomplished; not a soul had been saved.

A strange sort of apathy seemed to rest upon the congregation; the hearts of the people seemed under a spell; the ministers felt discouraged, and Dr. Gordon was at loss to know where to lay the blame.

"I think you would better let me go," he said, one evening, after another fruitless meeting. "I am crushed under the sense of rejected effort. I feel that I am doing nothing. There is something in the way, and unless the stumbling block can be found out and removed, the blessing will not come. I know God is willing and waiting to pour us out one, but for some reason the people are in no condition to receive it."

"I begin to think I know where to place the trouble," said Dr. Shepherd, with a grieved sigh. "There are grave rumors afloat regarding certain of our young men, and I have noticed something very singular connected with their presence when they enter the meetings. There is a cold wave sweeps over the whole congregation. I am afraid, like Achan, they are hiding something in the camp."

"I have noticed that, too," said Dr. Gordon thoughtfully. "You refer especially to young Mansfield and Carter. They are young men of strong influence, I should say."

"They are; and have been the glory and beauty of the church in many respects," said Dr. Shepherd earnestly. "Until a few months ago they were with me in every good work and they go through the form yet, but the spirit is evidently gone. There is something seriously wrong, and if you will consent to remain yet a little I will try to find out by a personal interview what the trouble is. I only hope these rumors may be without a foundation."

The next day, as Dr. Stuart Mansfield was starting out to visit his patients, he was accosted by the kindly voice of his pastor.

"Stuart, may I ride with you today? I have a little matter to talk with you about, which cannot be very well delayed."

"Certainly, Doctor, I shall be delighted to have your company, I do not see half enough of you these days. Get right in with me."

The gentlemanly tone was genial and frank, and the pastor felt sick at heart over his disagreeable duty as he took his seat in the buggy. But he knew that faithfulness to his Saviour required that he, as physician for the soul, should probe deeply the festering wound; and with a prayer that he might be enabled to speak the truth in love, and with effective results, he said:

"My dear boy, I have a very unpleasant duty to perform today. You and Carter and the other boys are very dear to me. I might almost say you have been brought up in my church, for you are my spiritual offspring, converted under my own ministry. You have been such a help to us as a church; you have been an inspiration to me, and an uplift in every department of church work. But I deeply regret to say there has been a difference the last six months. There must be a reason for it Stuart. You still maintain the form of godliness, but the power is gone. Lately certain statements have come to my ears which I do not want to believe. Things which I find extremely hard to believe of you, Stuart—things I should not want to believe of any Christian young man. It is said that you are supporting with your money, name and presence certain institutions in this city that are not only dishonest and dishonorable, but the tendency of which is to corrupt the young. I want to know, Stuart, if this is true. Are you trying to serve God with a guilty secret in your heart? Remember, you carry Christ's honor in your hands. In staining your reputation you injure Jesus in the eyes of the world, because you are his representative. Dr. Gordon and I both realize there is something in the way of the meetings. The Spirit has no liberty. Some one is hiding a sin that must be put away before the blessing can descend. Is it you, Stuart? Are these rumors true? The dear Lord knows I will not forsake you even if they are. Only repent and return and obtain the pardon God alone can give, and I, your old pastor, will stand by you through it all." And the good old minister laid a tender, loving hand upon the doctor's stalwart shoulders.

The shoulder shook under his hand, and Dr. Stuart Mansfield's eyes, which had been fixed upon the floor of the buggy after the first few opening sentences, filled with burning tears, and an agonized sob, that threatened to tear his heart in two, burst from his lips. "God forgive me, Dr. Shepherd," said he, "it is all true, and more than you have heard. I have been living the two-faced life of a hypocrite for more than a year. I am at the head of the whole miserable business. It was I that drew the others in. We, none of us, have any right to be numbered with you any longer."

"But are you willing to forsake this thing, Stuart, and as far as in you lies set things right?" asked the good old pastor. Remember God says, 'Return unto me and I will return unto you,' and 'Though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as white as snow.' Then followed a long, earnest, heart-to-heart talk, such as Stuart Mansfield had never held with any man before.

There was a meeting that night in the old Rockport church—a very solemn meeting, for from the first hearts seemed to be melting, and the Spirit seemed to be brooding over the great congregation, waiting to pour them out a blessing so great it would be hard to find room for it. As they were

singing "I Am Coming to the Cross," down the aisle headed by Dr. Mansfield, came four young men, all of them brilliant fellows, the very flower of the community and church, and the very ones about whom the rumors had been afloat. The chilling effect which had attended their presence heretofore, had fled, and in its place, as their firm, manly tread sounded down the aisle, it seemed as if they brought something beautiful in their wake. As soon as the hymn ceased, Mansfield was on his feet, trembling, pale, but with the soul of a conqueror looking out of his eyes, and triumphant.

"I have been fighting with Satan all day about coming here tonight and doing what I must do, viz.: make confession." Then followed a broken, heartfelt, laying bare of the sinful living of the past year—of the dishonorable and secret means he and his associates had used to "make haste to be rich;" of the support given to the institutions which were a blot to the city, and of the struggle to keep up appearances in regard to their religious life, when in reality, they were daily becoming broken, withered and fruitless branches of the Great Vine. But he said he knew the world had had its eye upon them, and because he felt that he had offended against the world as well as the church, he wished to make this public acknowledgment.

The effort upon the congregation was electrical. A mighty wave of feeling swept over it, charged with sympathy and heavenly charity, and some one started in a soft, low voice, that was distinctly heard all through the audience, although it was not much above a whisper, and in which all joined:

"If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

It was the dawning of a new day to Dr. Stuart Mansfield. He had wrestled through the night of temptation and had come off a Prince with God. The effect of his humble confession in behalf of himself and his companions rolled away the stone at the grave's mouth, and there was such an awakening among the dead in sin as had never before been known in Rockport. The two ministers climbed the heights and gazed with throbbing hearts into the Promised Land, while over in the east there dawned an Eternal Day.—*Chris. Observer.*

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GLAD TO HEAR IT.

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