

Literature.

BACK TO A PRISONER'S CELL.

A TRUE STORY.

Some ten years ago, said the village preacher, there came to one of the thrifty, growing towns of Kansas a young man full of enterprise and energy. He soon ingratiated himself into the hearts and business enterprises of the little city. He grew popular and he was trusted. Older men asked his advice in financial matters. Many placed their money in his hands as confidently as they would have deposited it in a bank. A sister followed him from their Eastern home, and he tried to make a home for her husband in his business. But, somehow, the people did not take kindly to the new partner. They were not accustomed to so much extravagance and display. At first they feared for their friend and then they began to fear him.

There was springing up between trusting and trusted that subtle estrangement which can only be felt at first, but divided so surely and widely at last; that suspicion which has no word to express it at first, but finds words for itself soon. It was only a little less heartiness in the grasp of the hand, less cheeriness in the ring of the voice, more stately politeness and less of careless good fellowship, but the young man felt it keenly.

Creditors had begun to speak to him of mortgages that fell due and of other investments they contemplated, when one day his brother-in-law made a "deal" which called for some thousands of ready cash or—bankruptcy.

"You'll have to back me, Will," he said, as he told of his venture.

Will Clayton was silent for some moments before he asked, "What with?"

"Haven't you some in bank?"

"Two hundred or so. I paid Widow Wells last week."

"Couldn't you borrow on your interest in the mill?"

"I gave that up some time ago. Could not carry so much."

"Maybe you can't afford to lose that way. I've got Lou and the children to look out for. But I've got to have \$3,000 by Thursday and your credit is better than mine. I've no land I can mortgage."

"Neither have I," was Will's answer to this hint. "I sent Wilson a deed to the Wilson place, yesterday. He wrote for a settlement, and that's the way I answered him." Then he added, "Howard, I'm going to be married next month, and I want to straighten out my business first, so I know where I stand."

Then came a long talk about their business entanglements. When they rose to leave the office, Howard was saying:

"We must clear the chasm at a jump. It's a sure thing. We'll make enough to pay everything. The bank will take that security, and Wilson is a thousand miles away. Everything will be settled before any one knows anything about it."

And the next day Will Clayton borrowed \$3,000 and gave a mortgage on the Wilson farm.

That night, sitting beside Katie Miller in the little parlor, his head between his hands, he told her everything, and the penalty should it be discovered. There was no penitence in the story, for he was not conscious of a desire to wrong any one. But there was coming over him a terrible dread from which he could not escape.

"You will never marry me, now, Katie," he moaned, and then came a great sob. And she, seeing as only a loving woman does see, how the crime had been done to save his friend from disgrace and failure, did what many another loving, trusting, shortsighted woman has done. She took his hands down from before his face and said, "We will be married next Sunday evening after church." Then playfully, "We finished my dress today." Then more gravely, "They will trust you when they see I do—and papa."

And he did not refuse the sacrifice. And the sword of Damocles—did it threaten the two any more that they two were wedded? Is trouble any harder to a loving wife than to a loving maiden?

How quickly events hurry by when a crisis is at hand! The close of another week found officers waiting to take Will Clayton to jail.

"Good-bye, Katie. Thirty and ten will be forty, maybe forty-five. It is old to begin again. They will take everything. Go back home and be Katie Miller."

She answered firmly, "Will, I cannot; my name is Katie Cayton."

Will Clayton had disappeared. The villagers wondered a few days later that the jailer had slept so soundly and that the jail's one inmate had escaped so daringly.

Just before coming to this city, a meeting of considerable interest was held in Phenix, Ariz. Among the number of cowboys and miners spending the winter in the place, who were attracted to our tent by the street meetings, was one to whom we were strangely attracted from the first. We found that he had lately come from the mines and was sleeping in his covered wagon, partly cooking his own meals and partly boarding with a brother-in-law who was living in a temporary style in Phenix. He had all the

rough, rockless ways of the class with which he mingled, yet there was about him something which seemed to indicate him a novice among them.

After all, I was not so much surprised at that. They say that every man in Arizona has a history, and it is not uncommon for a cowboy to betray his acquaintance with the classics. But there was a restless indecision in this man that did not accord with the bravado about him.

We watched him through the different services, said the village preacher, and as we preached of love and mercy and forgiveness to sinners, we saw hardness melt into despair, and despair into grief, and grief into penitence. Then one night he came to the altar of prayer, and when peace came into his face, the whole expression and manner of the man was changed. This was early in the week, and during the week he spoke frequently of saving grace and a great joy and hope of usefulness.

On Friday, our superintendent, the Rev. Mr. E., spoke to him of organizing a church on the following Sunday, and added, "We should be glad to have you give your name to the church."

"My name!" Unconsciously he braced himself as for a wave shock; conscience is like the tide.

During the three years of roving life he had become so accustomed to the name he had assumed that it seemed as though it were his own. He had tried to banish his own name with its associations as he would an evil dream, and as far as possible had created for himself a new identity. So accustomed had he become to deception that he had well-nigh deceived himself. It was Bill Simmons and not Will Clayton who had repented; Bill Simmons who had determined to lead a lawful, upright life. But at the words, "your name," Will Clayton and his conscience had been aroused once more; and what had been peace to the miner of the gold ledges, became a sword thrust to a fleeing criminal.

He hurried to the only place in all the world that he could call his own, the old covered wagon with his horses tethered near; and as he went he kept asking over and over, "What's in a name? What's in a name?"

As he crept into his wagon and closed its curtains around him, he thought of a prison cell and shuddered. What course should he take? What did it matter what name he went by if he harmed no one and tried to do right? To do right, yes, but how could he while he was wrong? How much better was it if the eddies and bends of a river swept toward the morning of its main course was toward the right? How can a man be true when his very name is an untruth?

To tell his name—he knew what that meant, and his wild, homeless life was sweet compared to the thought of a prisoner's life. Any place in all the world was sweet so it but gave him liberty, so it but delivered him from a convict's infamy, that blight upon a man's life that like a tombstone is never lifted. Even death is better than that—and he drew out the revolver that had been ready so long.

"I am coward enough for that," he told himself, and then came that cry as old as the Patriarch of Distress, "Oh, why was I born?"

A tempest of horror seemed to toss his soul. But clearer and brighter shone the star of right. He saw it and knew it was a felon's cell? If he should reveal his name and go back to meet his sentence, would it not bring disgrace upon these ministers who had so befriended him? How could he bear to hear it all again? Why need Katie hear it all again? Katie divorced though he knew she was, married again for aught he knew, why should he tear open the sore in Katie's heart?

And the more he tried to decide the further he was from decision. It seemed easier to place the responsibility upon some one else, so he went to one of the ministers and told him all. The only answer was, "No one on earth can determine for you. The Lord will help you to do right."

The world was like a benediction. The struggle was soon over, life was to him henceforth more terrible than death, but he had courage to face it.

On Sunday morning he joined the church under his true name, and then confessed publicly his identity, his crime, and the mental struggle through which he had passed.

"I sold my team, yesterday," he added. "The money will pay my way back to the cell in Kansas. 'Tis hard, boys," he shuddered, "but it is right; 'tis the only way to start right."

That was a strange scene that morning in the tent, and stranger still the next morning, when we bade him "God speed" to a felon's cell.

He was well on his way when a petition for his pardon was circulated, and many were the names attached; those of merchants, ministers, and miners, policemen, saloon keepers, and cowboys being curiously mingled. It was a spontaneous expression of the admiration of all classes for the moral courage of a man who could go free and yet voluntarily gave himself up to the authorities for the sake of the right.

"I had one letter from him several weeks ago," said the village preacher, written in the very cell of the jail from

which he had escaped."

"I received another letter from him a few days ago." And our reverend friend proceeded to read to us the letter which told how, when the day for trial came, public opinion had been so disarmed by his return that no one appeared against him, and he was again a free man; how surprised and gratified he was at the petition in Phenix; how he and Katie had been married again a few days before, and were now living on a free claim, to obtain which had been her object in seeking a divorce. And through it all was a tone of praise and thanksgiving, and a great surprise that right could seem to lead to danger and suffering, while it yet led to so great peace and joy.

Scriptural Reading.

Jesus saith unto them, come and dine, John 21, part 12.

We would naturally wonder that the disciples, whom Jesus called from their respective and different occupations in life to be with Him, what they witnessed of His healing all manner of diseases, giving light to the blind, the deaf to hear, making cripples to walk, yea, and raised the dead to life, and His unlimited power over the wind and the waves, the wonderful words from His own mouth in regard to His suffering death and resurrection, that they did not understand or believe. He would rise again from the dead, nevertheless, He died on the cross, and was buried in the tomb or sepulchre a great stone being rolled against the door, sealed, and a watch to guard the grave, not that His murderers or any one believed that He would rise again, but His enemies feared His disciples would steal His body away, but unexpectedly all concerned the Great Father, in Heaven, sent down two angels that frightened the watch away, broke the seal and moved the stone from the door, and He arose triumphant o'er death and the grave, and He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to His disciples, as they were assembled for fear of the Jews, and although the doors were shut, Jesus appeared in their midst and said, Peace be unto you, and He showed them His hands and His side, then showed He Himself to the disciples.

At the Sea of Tiberias, as Peter and others of His disciples, went fishing and all night caught nothing, in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore but they knew not that it was Jesus, and He saith unto them, children have ye any meat, and they answered no. He told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, which they did and were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. John said it is the Lord, but they were assisted by the other boats and succeeded in drawing the net to the land full of fishes, and although their catch was abundant, yet the net was not broken, and they saw a fire of coals on the shore and fish laid thereon and bread. Jesus saith unto them come and dine. They gladly complied with the kind invitation, knowing then that it was the Lord. This is the third time that Jesus appeared to His disciples after that He had risen from the dead. Who can imagine or realize Jesus, the Son of God in Heaven, coming down into our world to sacrifice His life upon the cross, then raise to life again, to prepare a dinner for His disciples, in the open air. His bloodless and tender feet treading the stony beach. His pale thin hands, the marks of the irons that held Him fast to the wood visible to their view, waiting, not upon lords or nobles, governors or presidents, princes or kings, but for a few poor hungry fishermen. He had no bill of fare, He had none of the dainties or beverages that we enjoy, the dinner was simply bread and fish, the most nutriment for the mental and physical body. When they had dined Jesus tested Peter's love for Him. He repeatedly asked him if he loved Him more than these, referring not only to the fish, nets, boats or any surroundings, but more than anything of an earthly nature. Peter told Him He knew all things, and knew that he loved Him, then follow me, feed my sheep and my lambs. We hear no more cock crowing now an evidence of Peter's weakness in denying his Lord, for he loves Him sincerely. And after giving him and the other of His disciples their charge, He was received up out of their sight, though He left Himself not without a witness for He sent the Holy Spirit down, the third person in the Trinity, to accompany His Holy Word, which He not only gave His apostles to preach, but down to the present day He has His representatives blowing the Gospel Trumpet that all throughout the hungry world may hear the invitation, come and dine, not on temporal food for the body, as Jesus provided for the hungry fisherman, bread and fish, on the shore of Tiberias. But the Great God of the universe has provided a Great Feast for our souls, in the broken body and shed blood of His only Begotten Son, our Saviour, Redeemer and Justifier, but only the hungry soul will accept the invitation and be blest. For he says except ye eat My flesh and drink My blood ye have not life in you. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. I am the Bread of Life. He that eateth the bread that I shall give, shall never hunger. Now Peter included a great number of fishes by obeying the command of his Master, which tends to illustrate the many millions of precious souls that have been secured in the gospel net. At the Pentecost catch there were inclosed three thousand souls in one day and the

net not being broken indicates the fact that there are yet a great multitude in the sea of sin exposed to the gaping jaws of the souls destroyer, and spiritually starving for the want of the Bread of Life, to such, Jesus by His Spirit, His Word, and His Servants, are extending the invitation, Come and dine. Fellow sinner, if you could or would realize the immense cost of this Spiritual repast, you would acknowledge your need and gladly comply with the kind invitation, and eat the bread that Jesus gives, and never hunger. He says: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled. And in the parable, Come for all things are now ready, again, Come unto Me all ye that are heavy laden and wearied on account of your sins, and I will give you rest or food for your souls. Again, come let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, in commission, in omission, disobedience and transgression, My love, mercy and grace will not permit any to starve, whilst I have Bread, and to spare, and though they be red like crimson in unworthiness and guilt, they shall be cleansed and made white through the washing of regeneration. Then hear my welcome voice, come and dine on the rich provision that the Great King and Father has provided in the death, resurrection and ascension of His Beloved Son for His hungry guests. Then why spend your money or your life for that which cannot satisfy your soul. But let your soul delight itself in the assurance of your sins forgiven, whilst here below, then gone home to feast on the joys of redeeming grace and dying love.

Then the apostle says, see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh, inviteth and entreateth, to come and dine, whilst the dinner is waiting or the day of salvation is past. We hear the King saying, to those who refused to accept the invitation, because of their self independence, they shall not taste of My dinner or My supper. We see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem Oh, Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how oft would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Now your house or your soul is left destitute, because ye would not come and dine.

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Fwddy was on his first sea voyage. For two or three days he had lain in his berth, moaning wretchedly and wondering why he couldn't die. "Where are we, dear boy?" he asked feebly as Cholly came into the stateroom. "We are passing the Bermuda islands," answered Cholly. "That's where the onions come from," groaned Fwddy, with another paroxysm, "Tell the captain to hurry by, for the love of Heaven!"

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Mrs. DeShoddy-Rich, to new household: "Now, Robert, when you take up the Lord Bishop's hot water, in the morning, be sure you knock, and say distinctly, 'Boy with the hot water, My Lord.'" "Yes'm." Exit Robert, repeating as a text, "Boy with the hot water," etc. Next morning, rat, rat, rat! at the visitor's door. Bishop: "Who's there?" Robert distinctly: The Lord with the hot water, my boy!" Robert left his place that morning without his breakfast.

Tiresome Caller—How do you get rid of bores? Eminent Statesman—My valet generally knows them and reminds me of some engagement. (Tap at the door) Well, Harris, what is it?

Valet (thrusting his head in)—I beg your pardon, sir, but I think you have an engagement to dine with General Hugo in about half an hour.

Hannu—I like to see a man stick by his friends. Now, for instance, if a man told you I was an ass, you wouldn't join right in with him, would you?"

Dilly—No, sir; I'd rebuke him. I'd tell him that the truth should not be spoken on all occasions."

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