

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 35-8

VOL. XXXVIII.

MONCTON, N. B., AUG. 31st, 1940

No. 53

THE PIECE THAT WAS LOST

It was a mid-summer morning. The grass was waiting for the scythe, but after breakfast Silas Rogers took down the old Bible which had been his mother's daily companion for eighty years, and they sat reverently down to worship. The reading was that tender lesson of the wandering sheep and the lost piece of silver, and ended with the heavenly rejoicing "over one sinner that repenteth"; and then, after an earnest though homely prayer, they were ready for work. Abner, the hired man, and Reuben, the boy, as they started out of the house, almost stumbled over a woman sitting in the doorway, absorbed in thought. Silas looked at her, but did not stay to question her.

When they were gone she rose abruptly and said, "Will you give me some breakfast?" Mrs. Rogers looked at her. She was a tall and not uncomely woman of about thirty, but with something undefinably evil about her face. The hard mouth, the bold, defiant eyes, repelled her, yet it seemed as if any instant they might break into scornful tears.

"Who are you?" asked the good wife, coming nearer with a pan of bread in her hand. Again the face darkened and lightened, grew hard and yielding, with the hidden declaration, "I am the piece that was lost!"

Martha Rogers had not a particle of poetry in her nature, but she had the most profound reverence for the Scripture; therefore the words both puzzled and shocked her. But she was not the woman to refuse bread to the hungry, so she placed food upon the table and motioned to the chair, saying, "Sit up and eat."

All the time the woman was eating—and she did not hasten—her eyes followed the mistress and Hetty, the bright, young daughter, until Martha Rogers grew nervous and sent Hetty upstairs.

"Will you give me work to do?" the woman demanded rather than asked.

"Who are you?" asked Mrs. Rogers again, simply to gain time.

"I thought you knew. I am Moll Pritchett; they have turned me out of my house"—and her eyes grew lurid.

"What can you do?" asked Mrs. Rogers.

"Anything that a woman can do or a man either. I can work in the field with the best of them; I have done it many a time; but I should like to do what—to be like other women."

"Are you a good woman?"

The question came straight and strong, without any faltering. She had heard of this Moll Pritchett, a woman who lived alone in an old tumble-down hut.

The woman looked at her curiously—at first with a mocking smile, then with a sullen expression.

"Is it likely?" she said fiercely. "A good woman! How should I be a good woman! I tell you I am the piece that was lost, and nobody ever looked for me. If I was a good woman, do you suppose I should be where I be—only twenty-eight years old, well and hearty, and every

door in the world shut in my face? I tell you the man who wrote that story didn't know women—they don't hunt for that piece that's lost; they just let it go. There's enough of 'em that don't get lost."

Poor Martha Rogers was sorely perplexed, all the more that her way had lain so smooth and plain before her that she might have walked in it blindfolded. If this is a lost piece of silver it was not she who had lost it; but what if it were her hand that had dropped it, and left it to lie in the dust? And what if He bade her to seek it, and find it for Him? Should she dare refuse? On this very day, when she needed so surely the help which she had looked for in vain, had not this woman been sent to her very door, and was it not a plain leading of Providence? It is a blessed thing for us that we are driven to act first and theorize afterward, even though the afterthought sometimes brings repentance. The bread was ready for the oven, and the wood box empty.

"You may fetch in some wood," said Martha Rogers, and the woman promptly obeyed, filled the box with one load of her sinewy arms, and then stood humbly waiting. Hetty came into the kitchen and began to clear up the table, but her mother said, "Go upstairs and fetch a big apron and one of our sweeping caps; and then you may go at your sewing, and see if you can finish up your dress."

Away went Hetty, her light heart bounding with the unexpected release; and the mother turned again to the woman, furnished her with a coarse towel, and sent her to the wash house for a thorough purification. Half an hour afterwards, with her hair hidden in the muslin cap, her whole figure enveloped in the clean calico apron, a comely woman was slyly engaged in household tasks, doing her work with such rapidity and skill that the critical housewife drew a sigh of relief.

"There's a handful of towels and coarse clothes left for the ironing. You might put the irons on, Mary, and smooth 'em out."

She turned a startled face upon her, and then went quickly for the clothes, but something—was it a tear—rolled down the swarthy cheeks, mingling with the bright drops she sprinkled over them. When had she ever heard anything but Moll? Not since away among New Hampshire hills a pale woman had laid her hands upon the tangled curls of her little daughter, and prayed that someone would watch over these wayward feet, lest they should go astray. It made Moll shudder to think of it. What did she know about joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth?

* * * * *

Silas Rogers listened to the day's story, as he sat mending a bit of harness with clumsy fingers, and among his other thoughts he grasped the idea that his wife had secured a valuable helper.

"It seems a risk to run," said Martha anxiously, "and I don't know but it's presumptuous; there's Hetty, and there's Reuben—"

"And there's the Lord," said Silas.

"Yes," said Martha, with a little start, "and I

can't quite get rid of y— she said about 'the piece that was lost,' though I'm sure the woman who lost it ought to hunt for it."

"She never does; folks always losing things for somebody else to find."

"But if you lose your piece, looking after other folks—"

"Well, there's risks, as you say, but I'd rather take a risk for the Lord than agin Him."

Martha Rogers took the risk for the Lord, and He abundantly justified and rewarded her faith; for the piece that was lost becomes my piece to the heart that finds it again in the Master's hand; and looking at the story of the wanderer in her own breast, it was only to the angel that she said, "Rejoice with me."

Years afterwards Mary herself said before the committee of the church, "I am a woman over whom there is a great joy in heaven."—Selected.

CRIPPLING ONE'S INFLUENCE

By Rev. E. E. Shelhamer

Some things may not in themselves be sinful yet may tend to hurt one's standing. Even preachers often wonder why they are not in demand. But if they looked around a little and took advice well things might be different. Let us mention a few "flies" which may have gotten into the precious "ointment":

1. Egotism.
2. Untidiness.
3. Undue familiarities.
4. Personalities from the pulpit.
5. Neglect in meeting financial obligations.
6. Unholiness and lack of family government.
7. Being hard to please in money matters.

Brother, correct these, and as sure as you live, there will be an improvement all around.

A WOMAN CHANGES HER MIND

I am glad this morning that I can make a bed,
Smooth the pillows and sheets just so;
What was it I said
Only a few short weeks ago

About the joy of lying on beds
Instead of making 'em,
And resting on pillows
Instead of shaking 'em?

Seems I had quite a bit to say
Along that line.
Then there came a day
When it wasn't so fine,

And I grew tired of lying there.

Thinking the days and nights clean through
I breathed a short but fervent prayer,
"Lord, make me able my work to do."

—Azaleta Bolger Wells, in
"The Better Home."

If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing.—Franklin.

Mrs. Hartshorn Mullen,
Jan. 30