

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONFERENCE.

THERE was quite a crowd around the large fireplace, as Esther and Elvira entered the school-room after dinner, at the appointed time for the meeting.

"There's Miss Haley," said Elvira. "She don't git out often; she wa'nt here this mornin', but you alus see her to conference. Old Miss Springer, too, I declare; but there's the Elder."

As he entered, there was a general rush for the seats. After a prayer, Elder Rider read a chapter in the Bible and made a few remarks, after which he said he "hoped to hear from every one present who had named the name of Christ, and that all would remember that whoever 'shall deny' Christ 'before men, him, he will also deny before his father which is in heaven.' He himself hath said it."

He then sat down, saying he "should like to hear from the sisters first."

There was quite a pause.

"Let there be liberty!" said the Elder, and as no one rose, he added, "Quench not the spirit!"

Suddenly a woman rose, and turning her face toward the wall, began to speak.

"That's Miss Haley," whispered Elvira.

Esther listened attentively, but could hear nothing that she said except "Lord," "heart," "soul," "feelings," and the like disconnected words, as Mrs. Haley spoke in a very low tone, quite hurriedly, and shed tears during all the time that she was speaking.

As soon as she sat down, old Mrs. Springer rose. She spoke very loudly, saying: "I hope I haint ashamed of Jesus. I hev been a follower of the Lamb nigh about forty year. Though I know that I hev often followed him afar off. I hev been a soldier of the cross just as long as the children of Israel was in the wilderness, and like them sinful creeturs, I hev often murmured and hankered arter the flesh pots of Egypt, and it is of God's mercy that I haint been cut down, and never see the land of Canaan. But now I do hope to enter the blessed land of promise. I hev hed some precious seasons, when my heart has been filled with the presence of the Lord.

"And oh, my brethren and sisters, why isn't it alus so? Why are we settin' by the cold streams of Babylon when we might so easy git into a more wealthy place. Arise and shine! Let us not have a name to live and be dead! Oh! my friends, let us come humble to the foot of the cross, and confess our sins and ask God to give us a blessin'. Oh! that he would open the windows of heaven and pour down a blessin', so that we might not be able to contain it!"

She took her seat amid many an audible token of approval. A man now arose, and after a deep ahem, commenced: "My friends, I feel as ef—ahem. My

friends, I feel as ef"—here he paused and spit upon the floor. "I feel as ef the Lord was very near to me—ahem. I feel as ef I alus wanted him to be very near to me, and I think, ef I know my own heart, that I feel anxious fur a revival—ahem. I feel as ef I must see some of the outpourings of the Spirit here. I feel as ef we had said 'peace! peace!' when there was no peace; and I feel as ef we had forgotten the God of our salvation, and I hope we shall all feel like goin' for'ard and doin' our duty, and alus do with our might what our hands find to do."

A short pause ensued after he had concluded, upon which Elder Rider observed that he hoped "no time would be wasted."

A tall, spare woman now addressed them, saying "I hope I feel thankful fur another opportunity of meetin' my Christian friends. I think I can say that the conference room is alus a pleasant place to me. I think I can say that the language of Canaan is what I delight to hear. Yes, my dear friends, I think I can say 'Your people are my people, and your God my God.' Oh my friends, I wouldn't go back to the world fur nuthin. I hed ruther 'be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' I feel a union with all the church, and I hope you will all pray for me."

After she had seated herself, a man got up, remarking, "I don't know as I hev got anything to say that will edify any body. I wisht I *could* say that I hed hed any of those precious seasons that some of my Christian friends has spoke on, but I hev not. I feel that I

can say 'Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me.' I don't know as I hev much to say, except that it makes my heart glad to hear from my Christian friends, and I hope that they will pray for me that I may be made partaker of their joys."

Immediately on his seating himself, a short, but stoutly built man succeeded him. He began—"My friends, I hev just come home from Patten, and they are hevin' a revival of God's work among them. Their hearts are filled with the love of God, and the Holy Spirit seems pouring out his blessings in abundant showers. I went to their meetins, and it made my heart leap for joy, to see Christians filled with the love of God and pointin' out to anxious inquirin' sinners the way to Jesus. But oh! it makes me feel sad to find all so dead and cold here. 'Why should the children of a king go mournin' all their days?' Why are we passed over? I am afeard it is because we do not put ourselves in the way of it. Too many on us is took up with the follies and vanities of this world. Too many on us is 'only stumblin' blocks in the way of sinners. Too many on us is like dumb dogs. My brethren and sisters, these things ought not so to be. Oh! that the Lord would draw nigh to 'this vine which he has planted in the wilderness,' that this branch of his Zion might be lifted up. Oh my brethren and sisters, let us be livin' 'epistles, known and read of all men.' Let us humble ourselves, and the Lord will lift us up. Let us so live that men 'may



take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus.'"

Elder Rider rose as Mr. Haley sat down, and said that it was nearly time to close the meeting. He made a few remarks of encouragement to those who seemed depressed, and pointed all to that never-failing fountain set open for sin and uncleanness. His earnest words were received with audible tokens of approval, as had been frequently the case during the remarks of the other speakers, "bless the Lord" and "Amen" being the expressions most in use. After this they sung a hymn, commencing—

"What ship is this you see, that is now sailing by?

Oh, glory, hallelujah!

What ship is this you see, that comes sailing by?

Oh, glory, hallelujah!

'Tis the old ship of Zion, hallelujah!

'Tis the old ship of Zion, hallelujah!"

All joined in this, one or two of the old ladies singing a most indescribable part, called *counter*, which did not seem to have anything in common with the tune. The discord, however, did not seem to disturb any one. On the conclusion of the hymn, the meeting was closed by a prayer offered by the Elder, and the good people scattered slowly, talking with their friends who lived at a distance, and expressing their pleasure in the meeting.

The Sabbath school was now called to order, and Mr. Rider expressed himself well pleased with the progress of the pupils, and with the evident interest which they manifested. As it began to grow dark, there was but a short session, however.

"Elder Rider's a blessed man!" remarked Elvira, as, with Esther, she walked homeward, after the Sabbath school was over.

"I should think he was calculated to do a great deal of good," replied Esther. "But, Elvira," she continued, "how is it that so many responded aloud this afternoon, since this is a Baptist church? I thought only Methodists made use of such expressions as 'Hear, Lord,' and the like."

"Wall," answered Vira, "you see most of the folks here is Baptists, but some on um is Methodists, and a few on um Free-Willers, and Christian Banders; but bein as there is so many more Baptists, they got up the church. Some of the others jined, and some didn't; but they all go to the same meetins, and the Methodists and the rest keeps their own ways."

"The meeting this afternoon was a very interesting one," said Esther, after a pause.

"Wall, yes," replied Vira; "but then they alus say pooty much the same things. There's Haley, now. I alus know jist how he feels, jist as well afore he gits up, as I do when he sets down."

"Ah, Elvira," said Esther, "you should not speak so. I wish you were as truly a Christian as Mr. Haly."

"Wall, as to that," retorted Vira, "I know I haint so good as I had orter be, but I don't want to swop hearts with none on um. I might get a wus one than mine, and that's needless."

"No, Elvira, you need not wish to exchange hearts with any one; but you do need to give yourself to the

Saviour. There is a day coming when you will feel the need of a friend to guide you through the dark valley of the shadow of death, that you may fear no evil. Oh, Elvira," continued Esther, "will you not try to become a Christian?"

Elvira made no reply, but walked along silently. At last she broke out, "Don't think I'm mad with you, Miss Hastings, I haint; but I don't like to be talked to about religion by no body. I never listen to nobody but you, and I do mean to get religion some time or nuther."

Esther was about to reply, but Elvira had left her side, crossed the road, and was talking to one of her friends.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAMP.

THE weeks passed rapidly away with Esther; and though sometimes she wearied of her school duties, and longed for more congenial society, still she did not regret the step which she had taken. She felt keenly the loss of Mrs. Williams, in whom she had found sympathy, and whose cheerful spirit had made her ashamed of her occasional fits of depression. She heard sometimes from Margaret, though the mails were unfrequent, and she could not receive letters so often as she wished.

She had just finished reading an old letter, for the twentieth time, and was now sitting on a low seat, by the fire, indulging in a pleasant reverie. She was just querying how she should spend her day, as it was Saturday, and a holiday, when she was startled by a rough voice—

"Mornin, Miss Hastings, whar's Miss Simpson?"

"Take a seat," said Esther, "and I will see."

The speaker, a man whose huge frame corresponded well with his loud voice, complied, and Esther left the room in search of Mrs. Simpson.

She found the good lady out feeding her pigs, with

a huge kettle of boiled potatoes, and they speedily reëntered the front room.

"How are ye, Miss Simpson?" asked the stranger, as they entered.

"Wall, as usual," she replied, and a pause ensued, while Mrs. Simpson waited to hear what was his errand.

"Wall," said he, at length, while the sputtering of the fire greeted the snow which he scraped from his foot upon the andiron, "Wall, I've come to see if you wouldn't go out to our camp. One uv our men is dreadful sick; he's got the rheumatiz, I guess. He was tuk out of his head last night, and keeps hollerin arter his mother, and we thought p'raps he'd better be brung out here. Ye see, he can't hev no great care out thar; and, p'raps, ef he see wimmen round, he might be easier. We knowed you was considerable of a doctor, and thought, if you could see him, you could tell whether or no he had better be fotched out. I've got a horse-sled here; and ef you'll bundle up warm, and go, I'll take you out in less than no time."

"Wall," replied Mrs. Simpson, "I'll go; and ef you will, Miss Hastings, I should like to hev you go too."

Esther readily consented, and they were soon on their way. "So this is a logging road," thought Esther, as they entered a narrow opening, and she saw a winding road, whose smooth polished surface extended far ahead. The evergreens on each side gave it a cheerful aspect, and the bright sun almost blinded her, as she looked on the snowy pathway. In

a short time they reached the camp, which was a log building, some eight feet in height in front, but sloping down to some three or four feet in the rear. The roof was covered with shingles, which were confined in their places by poles laid across them. The spaces between the logs were made tight by moss. There was another similar building, though somewhat larger, standing near, which was an ox hovel, Esther was informed, a shelter for the cattle, as its name indicated. At a little distance was a temporary shed, used for the storing of hay and provisions. They entered the camp, which their guide said was a double one. A large fire was blazing in the centre of the apartment; the huge logs were placed merely on stones, and it seemed to Esther that there was great danger of its setting fire to the camp. This, however, she was told was not common. A smoke-hole was left open at the top of the camp, and from this was suspended a piece of wire, which supported a kettle over the fire. Shelves were nailed at one end of the apartment, upon which a few dishes, plates, tin dippers, and similar articles, were neatly arranged. The opposite end of the room was occupied with hemlock and cedar boughs, the beds of the lumbermen; a small pole laid at the end of these primitive beds, some four or six feet from the fire, and over this pole a seat, called the deacon-seat, was built, upon which the cook, a stout burly-looking man, requested Esther to seat herself. A few stools, which bore the stamp of home manufacture, composed the rest of the furniture.

Mrs. Simpson, meanwhile, approached the sick man, who was groaning as if suffering great pain.

"It's the acute rheumatiz," said she, "and I think he'd better be got out to our house as soon as ever we can do it. We can nuss him up thar."

The delirious symptoms had apparently left him, and he gladly assented to Mrs. Simpson's proposition.

While they warmed themselves at the huge fire, for they were nearly chilled through, Esther watched, with some curiosity, the movements of the cook. He had already set his table, and now, approaching the fire, began to unearth something, which was completely buried in the ashes. It proved to be a large iron vessel, closely covered, which, she was informed, was a Dutch oven, and whose smoking hot contents (baked beans) really looked quite inviting. They received a cordial invitation to "stop and git a bite," but declined, as Mrs. Simpson was anxious to get her patient into more comfortable quarters. She accordingly ordered the quilts and comforters, which she had brought for that purpose, to be arranged on the sled; and several of his companions, lifting the sick man with gentleness (though even their utmost care could not prevent him from suffering great pain at the removal), placed him on the sled, well wrapped up and protected from the cold. The motion of the sled over the smooth ground was so easy, that it did not seem to disturb him much; he fell into an uneasy sleep, and but little was said by any one.

Suddenly they heard a creaking, groaning sound, and soon saw, emerging from a branch road, the cause

of the noise. A bob-sled, drawn slowly by six or eight oxen, to which a huge pine log was fastened, and which groaned and creaked, as if it had forebodings of its future fate, so poetically described by Whittier—

"Down, the wild March flood shall bear them
To the saw-mill's wheel,
Or where steam, the slave, shall tear them
With his teeth of steel."

The log was partly stripped of its bark, as it had been hewn from that part of it which was drawn along on the snow; it was fastened by chains, whose rattling, with the loud cries of the teamster to his oxen, resounded through the forest.

They had hardly got out of hearing of the team, when a loud report caused Esther to start, exclaiming, in some alarm "What is that?"

"Wall," replied the driver, transferring his quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other, "that's the logs rollin' down the sides of a mounting. They're takin' out timber on a ridge whar they can't haul um down—it's too steep—and so they haul um to the aidge of the hill, and let um drive—makes a thunderin' loud crash, don't it, you? I like to see um go, I tell ye—but they look the pootiest on a dry sluice-way—"

"What is that?" asked Esther.

"Wall, that's whar the timber is in a steep place, too, and we lay logs down, so as not to let the pines roll off, and start um along."

"You make an inclined plane, I suppose," said Esther.

"Oh, no; we don't plane the sluice-way, 'taint made o' boards," returned her companion, "straight logs is what we make it on, and I tell ye, it goes swift; the bark and smoke flies well, and it drives ahead like blazes, and drives head foremost into the snow, at the fut of the hill."

"I should think it would be rather dreary in the woods, in winter," said Esther.

"Wall, it taint—the work is hard, but we like it, and when it comes night, we spin yarns, sing songs, and play ceards—but our boss don't want no ceard-playin' in the camp, this winter, and so we gin it up.—Sunday's rather a long day; but we mend our close, and some on us reads, and some on us goes a gunnin' and some on us goes a visitin' to the nighest camp—we lay abed pooty late, too, and so we manage to wear it off; but I'm allus glad when it comes Monday agin."

"Do *you* ever drive logs down river?" asked Esther, after a pause.

"Lord, yes indeed! and *that's* jist one o' the things that I like fust-rate. 'Taint allus so pooty fun to git the logs out when they git in a jam, but, somehow or anuther, I like it, arter all; *its* rayther exciting—"

"And dangerous, too, isn't it?" interrupted Esther.

"Wall, I s'pose they is danger—yes, I've knowed many a fust-rate feller to git *his* death on the river. Thar was Tom Davis, as jolly a soul as ever I see in a camp. He was in the same *drive* with me last winter, and when we come to drive *down* the logs, they got into a jam at Slugundy Falls. We hed worked there

a day, and it was a pooty sight, I tell you, to see them master great logs piled up every which way, and the water dashin' through like lightnin'—Tom see a log that he thought if he chopped in two, would let the jam start, and he tuk an axe, and went at it. He hadn't struck more'n three blows, when all on a sudden, the jam started. Tom, he started to run, but 'twan't no use; them great logs whirled round like straws, and snapped like splinters, and the water roared so, you could a heerd it miles. Poor Tom was drowned, and when we got him out, he was tore and bruised dreadful bad; his own mother wouldn't a knowed him. We buried the poor feller, and nobody knows whose turn will come next.—Whoahoa!" he called out to his horse, as they stopped at Mrs. Simpson's door.

Mr. Simpson, who was at the other side of the road, sitting on a horse, as it is called, shaving shingles, approached, and with the assistance of one or two of the neighbors, bore the sick man into the house, and placed him in bed.

"I s'pose they hain't work enough to be done already, in this house," said Elvira, as Esther entered the kitchen, "and so Miss Simpson has gone and fetched a sick man fur me to wait upon."

"He ought to be taken care of," said Esther.

"Wall, of cose; I haint a fool; I know *that*, but why on airth didn't some o' the neighbors take him?"

"Mrs. Simpson is so good a nurse, and you can help her, too, so well, I suppose they thought he could be better taken care of here," replied Miss Hastings.

"Wall, I s'pose it can't be helped," returned Elvira, somewhat mollified, "but she might hev jist named it to me."

"She went away in a great hurry," said Esther.

"Wall, it's all over, now," continued Elvira, "and what can't be cured, must be endured."

After this little ebullition was over, Elvira hastened to offer her assistance, and through the long and tedious illness of the sick man, watched over him with untiring patience and care. Esther, too, as often as her school duties would allow, offered her services, and the invalid was slowly recovering.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EVENING WITH THE LUMBERMEN.

IT was terribly cold out of doors; one of those still, freezing nights, that does so much greater execution than the wild and blustering ones; just as a self-willed, though quiet man can effect so much more than an impetuous, but unsteady one.

But the cold did not penetrate into the camp, where it stood surrounded by snow-covered stumps and trees, whose evergreen hue contrasted well with the white surface around them; the clear moon lighted up with a silvery tinge their boughs, laden with feathery flakes, for there had been a violent storm, and the snow had not yet fallen from the branches.

It was not a night which would tempt one out of doors, but within the log-camp all was light and cheerful.

The men, having had their suppers, were gathered round the blazing fire, some sitting on the deacon seat, others on stools, in different parts of the room. A rough, but manly-looking set were they! Dressed in their somewhat picturesque costume of red flannel shirt, and a pair of pantaloons, their vigorous forms unfettered by suspenders, or anything binding, they