

A DAY AMONG THE QUAKERS.

A LONG a portion of Lake Erie's southern shore, where an enchanting variety of cedar groves, rocky bluffs, a shell-dotted beach, and houses rich in architectural beauty offer a long succession of enjoyment to both the heart and eyes of a tourist, there rises above all else a land light-house, founded upon a rock and built of purest granite. Near by, it looks a tower of strength; afar off, it seems like a huge white finger pointing upward; yet, near or far, it stands out from amidst all surroundings with a distinctness, or an individuality, that makes it a nucleus around which all other associations of the shore scenery gather. The following, in bold relief, from the adventures of a few weeks' summer wandering, is a single episode, *whose details I give with careful truthfulness*:

The time was July, 1868; the day, a Sabbath; and the place, an out-of-the-way settlement in Central Ohio.

Grace Newton, whom Ruth Clifford and I were visiting, had told us of a little colony of Quakers, not very far off—anti-progressive ones—who held on tenaciously to the faith of their fathers, and had no companionship with the villagers who worshiped once a month in the Methodist chapel, “down the road;” and when she proposed to have Dick harnessed in the spring wagon, and drive us to Oakhill Meeting-house, four miles distant, we offered no opposition. The wagon had no top. The sun's rays were almost scorching. A portable seat, in the middle of the wagon, accommodated Ruth and me, under shelter of an umbrella, while Grace, in her character of Jehu, occupied a low-backed chair in front.

That ride was guiltless of any monotony. Bouncing, jolting, half shaken to pieces, now down in a rut, then heaved over a stump, now plashing through a stream which ran across the road, then rolling through a foot in depth of soft clay, down a steep hill, with a cry from Grace, “Hold my chair, girls, or I'll slide out!” Thence up one, with another call, “Push me front, girls, or I'll slide back!” And every few minutes, as the low-hanging tree boughs brushed against us, dodging our heads to escape the fate of Absalom, we might well be thankful when the last long graveled hill was ascended, and the low, weather-beaten, board meeting-house stood before us. Its surroundings reminded me of a Southern camp-meeting; for every tree near by sheltered a carriage of some kind, while a corral of horses switched off flies in a long shed, built for their accommodation.

“How long has meeting set, boys?” asked Grace of two little urchins, who were slyly creeping around a rock with their Sunday hats full of dead-ripe blackberries.

“Jes half 'n hour,” said one.

“Then we will disturb the preacher,” said Ruth.

“Blissful ignorance!” exclaimed Grace. “It

is easy to see you were never in a Quaker meeting. Follow me, doing just as I do.”

The interior of the building was separated in half by a partition containing numerous holes a foot square, which divided the sexes. The pews were elevated like those in a theatre, the very young people being packed near the ceiling, and the elders occupying those nearest the floor. It may seem strange that Ruth and I had never seen Quakers at worship; but this was really our first opportunity; nor had we any but the crudest idea of their formula. Nothing human could have looked more sanctimonious than the brethren and sisters, each with folded hands and downcast eyes, as they sat in a silence so profound I grew nervous with hearing my own heart beat.

“For what are they waiting, Grace? I can not endure this another quarter of an hour,” I said.

“Oh, do be still!” she replied, in the faintest of whispers. “They are waiting on the Spirit; it will soon move some one, I hope.”

Waiting on the Spirit! Why, its presence was visible to me wherever I looked through the opened door. A voice from out the ripening grain seemed crying, “Lo! 'tis here.” The birds that soared toward the sun half warbled, “There, up there.” The soft wind caught the sweet refrain, and murmured, “Every where.” Only man was silent.

The church took its name from a gigantic oak which stood just in front of the door, stretching out its “hundred arms so strong” so near at some points that the leaves lay against the whitewashed boards. Its trunk was hollow, and an old ram, panting from the excessive heat, had thrust his head and shoulders in it for relief in the cool darkness. I studied the hind-quarters of this venerable mutton until I had counted every knot upon its woolly back; then, by way of diversion, again sought the faces of the elderly sisterhood. Than some few, nothing in the ripe maturity of modest womanhood was lovelier. With downcast eyes, hands folded quietly in their laps, and scarcely any perceptible heavings of the motherly bosoms beneath their spotlessly white neckerchiefs, they looked, each one, an impersonation of that peace which “passeth understanding;” but statues were scarcely quieter. Presently I espied a middle-aged man, whose broad brim covered his eyebrows, move his hands once or twice, as though washing them in an invisible basin; then he crossed and uncrossed his feet, sighed heavily three times with inspiration deep enough to fill the lungs of a blacksmith's bellows, finally rose, opened his mouth, and spoke. Written words can not describe his nasal intonations, nor the peculiar inflections of his unpleasant voice. His theme was the uselessness of mere learning as a means of spiritual advancement—and his abuse of the rules of rhetoric and grammar the strongest argument in proof of the sincerity of his belief. How he sweated as his excitement increased! How he sawed the air with

his long arms, and see-sawed from heel-tip to toe! "Yes, my brethren—ah—and you, my sisters—ah—labor not for the meat which perishes—ah—take no scrip in your hand—ah—nor money in your purse—ah (ironically speaking—ah)—and then may be, like St. Paul—ah—you'll be gifted with an un—n—n—n—atural eloquence."

Such was the peroration of his half hour's discourse, when he resumed his seat under a silence which would have been most flattering to the orator of any but a Quaker meeting. Whose voice would be the next to arouse the attention of that waiting and undemonstrative audience? The query was answered by the old ram, who, walking straight up to the front-door, put his head in it, made a brief but deliberate survey of the congregation, and then, uttering a loud, prolonged baa-a, returned to the shelter of the oak. Oh, the laughs that were choked back, and the rosy lips that were bitten into a deeper carmine the few next minutes! But the elder who had spoken suddenly ended the restraint by shaking hands with the neighbor next him, which was the signal for the universal hand-shaking that closes every meeting. It may have been an outside show—I know not; but the show, as such, was the most suggestive of that Christian fellowship which should unite those who cherish the same faith I ever saw.

"How is thee, Grace Norton?"

The voice was that of the elder who had spoken in the meeting.

"I am well. This is my friend Ruth Clifford, Nathaniel Grubb, of whose coming I told thee. How is Aunt Betsey?"

"She took cold last Lord's-day when it rained on us. If this was not another Lord's-day, I would like to tell thee what she says about that honey thee is wanting to buy. Thee can have six pounds of it at forty cents a pound, and that is dead cheap."

"Ah, Friend Grubb!" I thought, "'ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law.'" I turned to watch the approach of a fair old lady in drab silk bonnet and spectacles, who was nearing us with a face radiant in kindness. Ruth, who also saw her, with her usual impulsiveness, sprang forward and grasped her extended hand.

"Are you not Aunt Phœbe Haddam?" she said. "You must excuse my boldness, but my friend Grace Norton has written to me so often of your kindness to her, when she was sick and a stranger, I felt I would know you if I ever saw your face."

"Thee is right. That is my name; but thee overrates a simple act of duty, my child."

They were acquainted already, which resulted in an invitation to us three to come home and dine with her, adding, "I know father will be glad to converse with thee."

Grace and Ruth eagerly accepted it, allowing me, at my request, to return to Snowden

with a Quaker family and be entertained by little Gay, the daughter of Grace.

What Ruth saw and heard, and what I missed in not sharing her eventful visit, I will tell as it was told to me. Grace and she followed in the spring wagon close behind the barouche which contained Aunt Phœbe, her daughter Rebecca, and son Simon, who was driving. The distance was two miles, through a long strip of woodland and most delicious shade.

"These Haddams are the most interesting Quakers I know," said Grace; "but the folks around here think Uncle Samuel, the husband, a little queer, and not quite sound of mind. He rarely goes from home now, having a disease in his eyes which makes him almost blind—but you must not allow me to prejudice you against him, for his character is irreproachable. Indeed, I know very little of him but from hearsay."

This explanation, kindly as it was given, dampened Ruth's ardor, and made her rather shrink from the visit now so near. They entered a lane, and soon reined up before a small white cottage, whose yard was encircled by a thick hedge of Osage orange. Not another house was any where visible. The spot could scarcely have been more isolated had it been in the centre of the Great Sahara, but there the resemblance ended, for whatever of beauty there is in undulating hills covered with verdure, patches of woods, running water, and browsing kine, were there in profusion.

"Don't wait here in the sun, Ruth; just follow the path to the house," said Aunt Phœbe.

Grace stopped to help Simon tie up "old Dick," and Ruth walked on up an avenue of blooming hollyhocks to where a door stood wide open. How white was the sanded sill, and how neat the home-made rug which lay just at the entrance! Seeing no one, she stepped in, when suddenly from an arm-chair there arose a tall, slender old man, who confronted her. His appearance was remarkable. His dress was of fine white linen, without spot or color, except that of the narrow black ribbon knotted under his broad, unstarched shirt-collar. His thin hair was white and fine as spun glass, and his face—the skin of which was fair as a girl's—of most benignant and intellectual expression. His eyes alone were not visible, being protected by large green goggles. Ruth stood an instant motionless. Such a vision of majestic old age, in such a place, she had never dreamed of seeing.

"Thy footsteps are those of a stranger. Enter. Thou art welcome," was his salutation.

Ruth advanced, laying her hand in his large, soft palm, with a few simple words of greeting.

"Thy hand is that of a gentlewoman, and thy voice is low and pleasant. Who art thou?" said he.

"My name is Ruth Clifford. I have come from the capital of Pennsylvania to visit my friend Grace Norton. I accompanied her to

meeting this morning, and was invited home to dinner by Aunt Phœbe Haddam."

"Thou hast come, then, from the great world of which I know so little. God—ever blessed be His holy name—has seen fit to take away my sight; but I have witnessed the coming of the Lord, and mine eyes have seen the salvation of His people, so I am content," and clasping his hands, his lips moved as if in prayer.

Ruth's emotions were those of awe, reverence, and admiration commingled. She recalled Grace's language, that Uncle Samuel—for of course this was he—was "a little queer," and wondered whether he might not only be that, to some minds, incomprehensible thing—a religious enthusiast. His articulation was very distinct, every word having a purity of finish which would have been marked in the diction of a professed elocutionist. How much more astonishing, then, from the lips of this unassuming, humble Quaker farmer, who had doubtless never been beyond the limits of his native State.

Before he again spoke, his old wife, with her daughter and Grace, came in.

"Now, dear, thee must feel at home," said Aunt Phœbe, taking Ruth's hat. "We are plain people; but thee and Grace are truly welcome. Has thee felt lonely this morning, father?" she asked, pushing aside a stray lock of his silvery hair with which a breeze was toying. "Did thy poor eyes pain thee much?"

His smile was perfect, as he replied:

"Oh no, mother; I forgot my eyes. *His* words came to me very clear: 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.' I thank thee for bringing the young woman home. I will enjoy her speech."

"I am the one to feel grateful, Sir. May I call you Uncle Samuel?"

"Yes, if it pleaseth thee."

"Well, Uncle Samuel, I have traveled over several thousand miles since I left home, but never before got into a place like this. Every thing charms me, and I am glad of the privilege to just sit still and hear you talk."

"Hush, hush! Thou must not flatter!" Yet the old man's tones expressed pleasure withal, for Ruth's were full of earnestness.

Aunt Phœbe's kind heart was gratified.

"I see thee can entertain each other," she said, "so I will get the dinner."

Rebekah and Grace went to assist her, and Ruth and the old man were left alone.

He broke the silence first, saying:

"Hast thou seen General Grant, and dost thou think him a good man? I have longed to hear his voice, and daily pray to God that he will strengthen his hands, and make him worthy of the great work to which he is called."

Ruth said she knew him only through his works, but felt that he, perhaps more than any living American, would perfect the grand schemes left unfinished by the death of Lincoln.

At that name the old man's face lighted up with a beauty almost angelic. Turning toward Ruth, who sat near his chair, and laying his hand lightly on hers, he said, eagerly:

"Hast thou seen Mr. Lincoln?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Ruth. "Once, when living, I stood so near him that every line of his face was as visible to me as yours now. It was the last time he ever addressed an audience as Abraham Lincoln, the citizen; for a few days afterward he was inaugurated President of these United States. Once again I stood very near him; but it was to look upon his confined form lying in state in our Capitol. Did *you* ever see him?"

"Ah! yes, yes; and a sadder face than his was *then* I never looked upon."

Ruth's face was luminant with curiosity.

"Why, Uncle Samuel! Where was he? What were the circumstances? Do tell me!"

"Perhaps thou wilt not sympathize with me. I rarely speak of these things save among my own people. In what light dost thou view the colored race?"

Now the freeing of the slaves and the education of the freedmen had long been among Ruth's hobbies; so when called upon to "rehearse the articles of her belief," she did it so promptly and forcibly that no one could doubt her philanthropy nor ardent desire for justice to that long-suffering and terribly wronged people.

Uncle Samuel was now in his element. Cut off by old age, blindness, and his isolated home from the busy world, only echoes of the mighty questions which were agitating the greatest minds of our country had reached him; and to have unexpectedly a companion, young, full of ardor and enthusiasm, dropping down, as it were, upon his very hearth-stone, was a pleasure such as rarely occurred in his quiet life.

"Now tell me, Uncle Samuel. When and where did *you* meet Mr. Lincoln?"

"I scarcely ever speak of it now, my child," he said, folding his thin hands, his face becoming sweetly grave and his words falling very slowly.

"My quiet life has known few storms. I have loved God as my first, best, and dearest friend, and he has ever dealt most tenderly with me. I always abhorred slavery. During the first years of the great rebellion, when I read and heard what was the condition of the poor enslaved negroes, I tried to think it was a cunning device of bad men to create greater enmity between the North and South; but when I read Mr. Lincoln's speeches I thought so good a man as I believed him to be could not lie, and then I resolved to go and see for myself. At one of our First-day meetings I spoke my intention to the brethren, but although feeling as I did upon the subject, they said it was rash for me to expose my life, for I could do

no good by such means. Nevertheless I went, traveling on horseback through most of the Southern States. My life was often in great danger, but there was an invisible arm ever between me and the actual foe, and after some weeks I returned, saying the half had not been told me of the sufferings of those poor, *poor*, despised, yet God-trusting and God-fearing, people."

Here his voice expressed a fullness of pity which could come from no source but the depths of a loving and large heart.

"That summer (it was in '62) I plowed and reaped and gathered in my little harvest as usual. Day by day I prayed at home and in the field that God would show his delivering power as he had to the children of Israel; but nothing seemed to come in answer.

"Now and then, during the beginning of the war, news reached us of a battle having been fought by our men, and a victory gained, but still the poor colored people were not let go. Then one night I had a singular dream, and I said, 'Yea, Lord! thy servant heareth.' I soon made ready and said to mother:

"'Wilt thou go with me to Washington to see the President?'

"'Where thou goest, I will go,' she answered.

"My good friends called me insane. Some said this trip was even more foolish than the last; that I knew no one in Washington, and would never gain access to the great President.

"The good Lord knew I did not mean to be fool-hardy, but I had that on my mind which I was to tell him, and I had faith to believe that He who feeds the sparrows would watch over me.

"Art thou tired, child?"

"No, no, Sir. Please go on."

"We left here on a pleasant September morning—the first time that mother had been from home thirty miles in fifty years, and now hundreds lay before us. Before we went out of the door we prayed that God would guide our wanderings, or, if He saw best, direct us back again. Every one looked at and spoke to us kindly on our journey from near Cincinnati to Harrisburg, and, when we got out there to change cars and rest a while, we felt that so far the Lord had prospered us. It was remarkable that a man who was at the *dépôt* (and a pleasant manner he had, too) said:

"'Friend, do you stop here?'

"I answered, 'Yes. We are weary, and will rest to-night.'

"'Come home with me, then,' he said. 'My wife was born a Quaker, and will be glad to entertain you.'

"We went. His home was beautiful. The Lord had abundantly blessed him, and that night I was calm and happy. We got to Washington the next evening. It was early candle-light, and there was so much confusion mother clung to my arm, exclaiming:

"'Oh, Samuel, we ought not to have come here. It is like Babel.'

"'Have faith, mother,' I said. 'The Lord will send help if we are doing right;' and we walked away from the cars.

"Under a gas-post a man was standing, reading a small letter. I stepped before him and said:

"'Good friend, wilt thou tell us where to find President Lincoln?'

"He looked us all over before he spoke. We were neat and clean. Soon his face got bright and smiling, and he asked us a few plain questions. I told him we were Friends from Ohio, who had come all these miles to say a few words to Mr. Lincoln.

"He bade us come with him, and, taking us to a great house called Willard's Hotel, put us in a little room away off from the noise.

"'Stay here,' said he, 'and I will see when the President can admit you.'

"He staid a long time. Meanwhile a young man brought us a nice supper, which was very kind and thoughtful in him, and when the gentleman came back he handed me a slip of paper which read: 'Admit the bearer to the chamber of the President at nine o'clock to-morrow morning.'

"My heart was so full of gratitude I could not speak my thankfulness. That night was as peaceful as those in our little home in the meadow.

"The next morning the kind gentleman came and conducted us to the house in which the President was. Every body whom we met seemed to know our new friend, and touched their hats to him. I was glad so many people seemed to like him. At the door he left us, promising to return in an hour. The room in which we were now shown was full of persons, all waiting to see Mr. Lincoln. Mother said, 'Ah, Samuel! we will not get near him to-day. See these anxious faces who came before us.'

"'As God wills,' said I.

"It was a sad place we were in. There were soldiers' wives and mothers sitting about, and not a soul from which joy and pleasure did not seem to have fled. Some were even weeping, and I thought what a fearfully solemn thing it was to hold much power. They found in some way that I would soon see the President; then how they begged me to intercede for them with him! One poor mother whose only boy was dying with home-sickness—" here Uncle Samuel's voice got husky with the sad memory, and tears fell from his sightless eyes upon his withered hands.

Ruth reverently brushed them off, and in a few minutes he proceeded:

"When the summons came for us to enter (it was in advance of the rest) my knees smote together, and for an instant I tottered. 'Keep heart, Samuel,' said mother, and we went forward. I fear thou wilt think me vain if I tell what followed."

"No fear, Sir. Please proceed."

"It seemed so wonderful; for a minute I could not realize that such humble people as

we were should be there in the actual presence of the greatest man in the world. Then he received us so kindly. I can not express his manner. He shook hands with us, and placed his chair between us. Oh, how I honored the good man! But I said:

"Mr. Lincoln, wilt thou pardon me that I do not remove my hat?" He smiled, and his face all lit up as he replied:

"Certainly; I understand about it."

"The dear, dear man," and again Uncle Samuel stopped, as though to revel in the memory of that interview.

"What then, Sir?" Ruth was impatient.

The answer came with a solemnity indescribable.

"Of that half-hour's conversation it does not become me to speak; I will think of it through eternity. At last we had to go. He took a hand of each of us in his, and said, looking straight in our eyes, 'Father, mother, I thank you for this visit; God bless you!'"

"Was there ever greater condescension than that? At the last moment I asked him if he would object to just writing a line, certifying that we had fulfilled our mission, so we could show it in council. He sat down at his table—Wilt thou open the upper drawer of that old secretary and hand me a little tin box therein?"

Ruth obeyed, placing in his now trembling fingers a small square box, bright as silver. Taking from it a folded paper he bade Ruth read. The words were *literally* as follows:

"I take pleasure in asserting that I have had a pleasant and profitable intercourse with Friend Samuel Haddam and his wife, Phœbe Haddam. May the Lord comfort them as they have comforted me.

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"September 20, 1862."

"Oh, Uncle Samuel!" exclaimed Ruth. "I can scarcely realize it, that I should, away out here in this *almost* backwoods, read words traced by our beloved Mr. Lincoln's own hands. How very singular!"

"Not more than the whole event was to us, dear child, from first to last. The following Monday, the preliminary Proclamation of Emancipation was issued. Thank God! Thank God!"

It is impossible to depict the devout fervor of the old patriarch's thanksgiving.

"We found our friend," he continued, "waiting for us. When we showed him the testimonial, he nodded his head in affirmation, and said,

"It is well."

"We soon left Washington, for our work was done, and I was satisfied *now* to go home again. Our good friend escorted us to the omnibus which took us to the cars, having treated us throughout with a hospitality I can never forget. May God care for him as he did for us."

"Did you learn his name, Sir?"

"He is high in the estimation of men, and his name is Salmon P. Chase."

The dinner in that peaceful Quaker house was like all else about it—real and informal. Simon proved himself worthy of his noble parentage, and Rebecca, who was engaged in teaching a Freedman's school, some miles from home, was as companionable as earnest in her philanthropic work. Uncle Samuel was happy. He had revived once more *the event* of his life, and electric currents of an awakened vitality were flashing through his sluggish veins. He sought to amuse Ruth, by having Simon open a cupboard and place in her hands, one by one, curious fossils, shells, minerals, and other articles of *vertu*, the gleanings of his leisure hours. His knowledge of geology was astonishing, and in each mineral he read a record of God's unerring wisdom.

But evening was approaching, and old Dick having been reharnessed, the parting from so much that was endearing had to come. Ruth felt it was no mere hand-shake of courtesy which grasped her so firmly, when Aunt Phœbe, in her motherly way, thanked her for the pleasure their visit had afforded them. The last "good-by" was for Uncle Samuel. As Ruth approached the venerable saint he arose.

"My child! I thank thee for thy sympathy, which will ever be to me a sweet memory. We will not meet again here; I am very near home, and only wait my Father's summons. Live near to Christ. There alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Then laying his hand upon her head, he added: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee; The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious to thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace forever. Amen." And stooping, he kissed her forehead.

"I can not possibly describe to you the grand simplicity of that pure old man," added Ruth, when her recital was ended. "I have quoted our conversation, word for word; but could no more give you his pathetic tones than I could arrange in bars and notes the song of a lark. God alone knows to what extent Mr. Lincoln was influenced by that half-hour's conversation to the performance of that great deed which set a nation free; but I can not help feeling I have read a page in that wonderful man's history which would have been sealed to me but for my unexpected meeting with that precious old Quaker."