

THE EVENING NEWS.

Wednesday, June 7, 1871.

A CAMP MEETING TOLD.

[CONTINUED.]

The brown, fearless boy and the fair girl had grown up together as playmates till that dark day when, for his badness, the mother said, "Kane, you are sent away to uncle Elkanah's at Swift Water for a year, which year has lengthened into five. It was three now since he came back—tall, bronzed, strange, yet familiar—and during those three womanhood had crept unawares over the little maid who had shared his baby sport. Playmate no longer, Lucy was very shy, but in her secret heart she was proud of him, proud of the strength that could have the heavy timber up which her brother Nathan avoided, of the skin that could tame the wildest colt. She was sure she would always be good because, "The four days' dwelling in a grove with him was a delight so great that it almost frightened her."

So the day came. All Monday the committee were at work arranging the tents in the form of a hollow square, beneath the shelter of the trees. A bright little stream curved around two sides of the encampment. In the center stood a covered platform, to which was affixed a derrick painted pea green, whose top supported a sharp-pointed iron bell. Banks of rough benches confronted this stand, in the midst of which and directly under the platform, was a small benched inclosure for the use of the "anxious," who were expected to resort thither at the close of every service, to listen to the prayers and appeals of the brethren. Nor was the carnal man forgotten. Besides the eating saloon, open to all, each tent bore a long table, duly spread three times a day with the simplest provisions. These seats represented each a village, and sheltered by night and by day a whole neighborhood. The name of the place—"Fennigewassee," "Sawee," "Lacon"—was inscribed upon the front, accompanied by some floral device or text of Scripture. Upon the Ammonite tent was the inappropriate recommendation to "Watch and Pray," around which, by way of antidote, a wreath of bay leaves was garlanded. Its appointments, and boasted, besides a small bookcase of religious reading, a round table with a red cover, which supported a huge nosegay of flowers, and gave the whole a "lusty effect" as Mrs. Robbins, equalled by none of the others—of which effect all Ammonites were justly proud. And so the camp meeting began fairly.

All day Tuesday people were pouring in. Each one-axled wagon brought three and a baby; each two-axled, five and two babies. By night hundreds were assembled. The moon was brilliantly full, and the singing and prayer meeting which inaugurated the assembly so spirited and satisfactory that Brother Little, who had been marked to Brother Smith that he'd been to forty camps in his time, but in his opinion this was going to be the greatest yet.

"How funny!" whispered Happy Robbins, as they watched the bustle inside the tent. See, Lucy, the beds this side are for us, and that side for the men folks. Don't look queer?" "But who sleeps on the table?" laughed Lucy, as a row of rustling mattresses were lifted up.

"Don't you know? Why, the elders and deacons, of course. That's to keep people in order and stop any skylarking and frolicking among us young ones. Say, Lucy, which bed will you have? Here, take this one next to mine!"

"Lucy!" called her mother, and she whispered, "here's your place next to me. I don't want you down there with those girls, for you'll talk and chatter all night, and not be fit for anything in the morning. Just slip off your frock there, behind that curtain, and put on your double-gown, and I'll fix you."

So, like Christabelle, "her gentle limbs she did undress," so far as gown and hoops went; and pretty soon in her neat gray wrapper, she was lying comfortably tucked up in the bed her prudent mother had provided with pillow and quilt. Sweet melody filled the air from the hay-covered floor. The straggling moon-rays, the flapping curtains, the chewing and clamping of the smokers' pipes, all was odd and novel. She could not sleep. By-and-by the men came in, spread their quilts and blankets, and snubbed into repose. Good Elder Adams, one of the elders, lay nearest to Lucy's couch. His righteous slumbers quickly became audible, and peeping round to look at him, Lucy saw a pair of eyes intensely staring upon her. A strange thrill came over her brain as she met them. Only the width of the narrow table and the elder's boots separated her from Kane! She blushed uncomfortably and dropped her eyelids. Not a word was said, but, for long after, fairy lights and visions seemed to dance before her and trouble her repose.

At dawn the camp awoke. Small chance was there for sleep. Thin blue smoke began to pour from early fires. Horses whinnied for their corn. Impatient hands waited to pack away the beds and the hay-covered floor. By eight o'clock breakfast was eaten and dishes washed and white-haired Elder Adams took his place, Bible in hand, at the head of the long table, in the place of honor just without the door. The simplest of the beautiful peace of the new-born day seemed reflected on his face. One golden beam shone down and lay upon her, for she had been kneeling given to poetry, but somehow a line came into his head as he looked.

"Oh! my love is like the morning. He read it somewhere. He thought it was true—about Lucy. At 10 o'clock the clanging bell announced general services, and the crowd assembled. Truth to tell, it was not a picturesque scene. The American of the rural districts is rarely a handsome animal. He is lean. He is brown. He loses his teeth early. Hard work and soda soon transform the juvenility of youth into the graying of old age. He is a good fellow, but his countenance is stern; but personal beauty is in exception. Hearty as he is, however, we may be proud of our multitude. For decorum, for good humor, for general respect to strangers, for a sense of propriety which almost ranks as dignity, it would be hard to find their parallel in any other country. At this Ordinance meeting, the spirit of the occasion, and quick their thumbs contentedly throughout the service without a cry. Thirteen ministers occupied the platform. With able generalship the lower lights were first brought forward, leaving the ground for the third day, when the excitement was expected to minimize. The service was quiet, calm, the wild and beautiful songs of the Methodist hymnal interspersed with the rustling of the trees above, and the morning sped quickly away.

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