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Original Tale.

FOR THE DELAWARE REGISTER.

BLYTHE CONWAY:

OR, THE MISERABLE EFFECTS OF AVARICE.

Many years have passed, and multitudes have gone down to the grave, since there lived in the lower part of the State of Delaware, a few miles from the Bay that washes its eastern coast, a venerable minister of the gospel, of the Methodist connexion, named Henry Worthington. His natural talents were of no common order, his education had been liberal, and he possessed a heart overflowing with benevolence. He was a native of England, in which country he had experienced calamities that would have broken down his spirit, had it not been for that faith which beholds in every dispensation of Providence, the hand of a Father too wise to do wrong, and too good to deal unkindly. The partner of his bosom and his only child, an intelligent and pious daughter who had just entered her eighteenth year, and was soon to have been united in matrimony to one every way worthy of such a precious gift, were struck dead by lightning before his eyes; affording a painful evidence that "not always on the guilty head descends the fated flash." Circumstances that could not be foreseen or provided against, had stripped him of the greater portion of what little worldly property he possessed, and after much meditation and prayer, he concluded to bid adieu to his native place, where every object around him was calculated to fill his mind with bitter recollections. Shortly after his arrival in America he settled in Delaware, at the spot before mentioned, where, by his humility, his holy life and conversation, his labors of love and untiring zeal and faithfulness in the service of his Divine Master, he gained the good will and esteem of all the inhabitants of the neighborhood except a few who did not wish to stop short in their ungodly career, and could not bear the admonitions and reproofs of this faithful servant of Heaven. Of this small number was a middle aged man named BLYTHE CONWAY, noted only for his avaricious disposition, and his oppression of the poor. His dwelling was about four miles from Mr. Worthington's. His wife died before the latter settled amongst them, and his family consisted of himself, his daughter Matilda, grown to womanhood, and several negroes. He was universally disliked, and few visited his house except on business. He never attended the preaching of the gospel, and it was with great difficulty his daughter could prevail on him to permit her to frequent the house of prayer. Matilda had always been of a serious disposition, and her virtues had endeared her to all her acquaintances. Her father, though not absolutely cruel to her, was far from treating her with that kindness which her exemplary attention to him entitled her to receive, and her unabated affection for him, under such circumstances, excited the admiration of their neighbors. She had attended the ministry of Mr. Worthington but a few months till she made a solemn public dedication of herself to God, and united herself to the little flock which had been collected by the labors of that good man. This step met with the most violent opposition from her father, who, from that time forbid the clergyman from entering his house.

Before proceeding further I must inform my readers that Conway, with all his wealth, was an unhappy man, and sorely tormented by an accusing conscience. He did not, like many, attempt to drown the voice of that faithful monitor within, by a resort to the intoxicating goblet. But, to conceal his wretchedness from the public eye, he spent much of his time in solitude, and frequently, at night, without regard to the state of the weather, would he wander through the neighboring country, and often not return till near morning. He

and his daughter had just finished their evening meal on a very sultry day in summer, when he informed her that he intended to walk out. Matilda directed his attention to the gloomy clouds that lowered in the west, and gave token that a more than usually terrific thunder storm was approaching, and kindly, but in vain, remonstrated with him on the danger of exposing himself on such an awful night as was about to overtake them. He had been gone but a little time ere the storm broke forth with tremendous fury, threatening every thing within its reach with destruction. The heavens appeared to be on fire, and the thunder grew louder and more alarming at each successive peal. Hour after hour passed away, and the storm still raged, nor did it abate until after day-break. Conway had not returned, and Matilda, who had passed the night under the most fearful apprehensions of his fate, was preparing to go in search of him, when a knocking was heard at the door, on opening which one of the neighbors appeared, who imparted, in language calculated least to alarm her, the intelligence that her father had, during the night, missed his way and fallen into a pit, by which he was so much injured that he was not able to reach home without assistance, and that he would soon be brought to the house by men who had been sent for that purpose. Every possible preparation was made to receive him, and in a short time he was beneath his own roof, where all the surgical help that could be procured, was administered to him. His lovely daughter, like a ministering angel, watched by his bedside, and endeavored to anticipate his wishes. She saw him gradually sinking into the grave, and ventured to talk of those subjects to which she deemed it important that his attention should be turned. She spoke of the love of God manifested in the gift of his Son, of the promises made in the gospel to the penitent sinner, of the holiness of God, and the necessity of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. But she perceived that such conversation was extremely disagreeable to her father, and did not for several weeks allude to these topics, when she once more spoke of them, and in addition, entreated him to become reconciled to Mr. Worthington. Her pious efforts were, however, unavailing, and all she could obtain was his consent that she might daily read to him a portion of the Scriptures.

Conway had until this time cherished a hope that he would recover, but he was now convinced that his end drew nigh, and that in a little time he would be an inhabitant of eternity; and it was to this conviction that Matilda was indebted for whatever success attended her endeavors to awaken her father's mind to serious concerns. Hitherto, when she had talked of religion and the present enjoyments and glorious prospects of those who embraced it, he had scoffed at these things as only worthy the attention of old women and fools, and weak-minded men. But now he began to be sensible of his danger and of his need of something to support him in his affliction. His daughter continued to point him to the refuge provided in the gospel, but he as constantly affirmed that there might be hope for every wretch on earth but him; that he had cut himself entirely off from every reason to expect that mercy would be extended to him. After the lapse of a few weeks Matilda with delight heard him request her to send for Mr. Worthington, "for," said he, "I wish to ask his pardon for my unkindness towards him, and, though I have no hope of Heaven's forgiveness, yet, if the prayers of mortal may be heard in my behalf, they will be those of that holy man." His desire was complied with, and when the messenger arrived at the house of the good pastor he was so engaged in contemplation as not at first to perceive his entrance. It was a beautiful calm evening in October. The sun had just gone down and his departing rays were illuminating the heavens with that magnificent variety of brilliant colors which gives an unrivalled splendor to a North American autumnal sunset. Mr. Worthington, who was an enthusiastic admirer of nature, was gazing intently on the glory of the scene, and thinking how low to such a going down of the sun, was the death of the righteous, when Conway's request was made known to him. Disciplined in the school of affliction, he was ever ready to weep with those who wept, and immediately obeyed the summons. On entering the chamber of the sick man, the

latter remarked, "O sir, this visit is undeserved, but not unexpected, for I am not ignorant of your readiness to be useful to your fellow creatures, even though they have treated you as I have done," and was proceeding to apologize for his former conduct, when Mr. Worthington entreated him to say no more on the subject, and kindly assured him that he freely forgave him, "and," observed he, "it will indeed afford me heartfelt pleasure if I should be made the instrument of administering consolation to you in your distress, and of inducing you to adopt those means whereby you may obtain the forgiveness of your God." "Talk no more to me of the forgiveness of God," said the sick man, "until you hear of the crimes to be forgiven, and then if you think prayers for me can reach the skies, offer them up." "I was the only child," said he, "of pious parents, both of whom died soon after I attained my twenty-first year. They gave me a good education, and left me a fortune sufficiently large to enable me to procure every comfort in life that a reasonable man could desire. But notwithstanding that same Being who sprinkled the firmament with innumerable worlds, had with equal profusion scattered blessings in my path, I was not satisfied with my portion, and for all his favors I returned naught but the basest ingratitude. Avarice took possession of my soul, and such was the power that she exercised over me, that I determined to augment my treasures even at the risk of my salvation. I became unfeeling and oppressive to the poor; unpitiful to the distressed; and turned a deaf ear to the cries of the miserable and unfortunate. I beheld unmoved, the tears of the widow and the orphan. They plead in vain to me, and when my daughter has afforded them what little relief it was in her power to bestow, I was offended and blamed her for her charity. In reviewing my life, I have wondered at the matchless clemency of that God who rolls the thunder through the skies and plays with the forked lightning, in not striking me dead whilst I have been wringing the last farthing from some poor debtor. Although I have not imbrued my hands in the blood of a fellow mortal, I have been worse than a murderer. I have, by my cruelty, sent a worthy but unfortunate man, broken-hearted to an untimely grave. He possessed more than a competency, and it was not by any neglect or imprudence on his part that his circumstances became embarrassed. I heard of his difficulties, and offered to assist him. The terms on which I proposed my aid were such as might be expected from the most greedy extortioner, and nothing but his urgent necessities could have induced him to accept them. Thus I laid the foundation for his ruin. When the time for payment arrived, he was not able to meet his engagement, and to obtain a temporary relief he was compelled to comply with my still greater exaction. Time after time was he obliged to resort to me, under similar circumstances, until all his property had to be sold to satisfy my demands, and he was reduced to beggary. You must agree with me, sir, that I have small claims to Heaven's pity, when I tell you that I beheld with the most inhuman unconcern, that man, with his locks whitened more by grief than age, and almost bereft of reason, soliciting the charity of an unfeeling world. His misfortunes soon brought him, as I have before said, to the grave; and his wife, who had been tenderly brought up, and had been accustomed to ease and plenty, died soon after, in a poor house, a confirmed maniac. They left two boys, too young to be sensible of their parents' wrongs. These children were apprenticed by the guardians of the poor, and will shortly be of age. I have provided amply for them in my will, as the only means by which I can make any reparation for the injustice I have done to them and their parents. I have also endeavored to make restitution for the injuries I have done to others."

The weakness of Conway frequently obliged him to stop in the course of his narrative, and he was now so much exhausted that he soon fell asleep. Mr. Worthington and another of the neighbors remained with him till morning, when, after supplicating for mercy on his behalf, they took their departure, the unhappy man still declaring that he was afraid to hope for forgiveness. He was now declining rapidly. Matilda resumed her place by his bedside, and read and prayed with him.