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ONE OF THE NORTH MEN

KATHARINE MELICK.
(For The Courier.)

VIII

The "Grasshopper year" saw the scattering of the North man's band. The least one had been laid away in that soft little ruffled frock whose frippery would have been denied to any living child of the clan of Matthiason. The tenderness of that gift was yet in Eliza's voice when she told her oldest boy good-bye.

"You'll see my diploma, yet, mother, and then I'll sign all my letters to you, John Matthiason, M. A."

But for long, those rare letters only thanked the mother for the thick knitted socks she sent to temper the Canadian snows to the feet of the boy who swung an axe in the fir forests all day, and studied by a pine-knot judiciously disposed in the camp fire at night.

The twins "boarded round" and taught past the places in the book where they had left off studying mental arithmetic and higher geography. Plump Zillah very soon went away with a Canadian trader to Sault Ste. Marie, on Lake Superior, and Adah, cowering in a fireless room at night, and drawing her slim feet up to her body for warmth between the icy sheets, felt more desolate than ever in her woeful life before. She did not cry with loneliness for the twin sister and the brother far away in the old northern home. From the first birth-cry there had been borne upon her the unavailingness of tears.

"They thought I would die," she said to herself, looking back upon her score of years. "So they didn't take care of me. I was meant to take care of them." And she knit her slender fingers together, thinking of her mother's loneliness, and her wistful look since John went away. "But I wish I could send Edward to school. Why does father preach against college?"

Ask some ancestral Whitefield whose daguerreotype you have unearthed from the leaf-mould of your family tree, why the 'inspired pot-boy' railed upon the wisdom of schools. Perhaps the authority that sits between those old eyes will tell you why the Reverend James Matthiason felt the very presence of a university man a challenge to his blood, why he regretted John's going to college more than John's going from home; why he had finally forbidden little Edward to think any more about a seminary.

Then the old man had stalked away to his "protracted meeting"—now in its seventh week—and seeing a theological frock-coat in the audience, changed his text. It had been a warning to repentance. It became a "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees." Against the vieble incarnation of the "modern criticism" that would touch with irreverent finger so much as a leaf of Jonah's withered gourd the thunders of Sinai spoke.

For into the kingdom of vieble contrition, of groans and prayers and prostrations, the intrusion of an unmoved face was a greater affront than the interruption of a scofer. There was no "ease in Zion" for Father Matthiason, and the well-intentioned visitor who had come to proffer his help, escaped with the first out-rush from the narrow school house door. Then the old commander, left alone in his kingdom, wrestled in prayer with two young "seekers" who, having diverted the first part of the sermon by signals from the farthest corners in shadow of the reflectors, had been transfixed by a look from the "preacher."

But it was a changed kingdom,—that of the last long "protracted meeting." Emigrants from Denmark and Norway and Sweden had pushed into the prairie country, and one by one "old settlers"

had sold the groves they had planted, and left empty spaces in the lamp-lit rows that faced Father Matthiason. Little spires, here and there, on Lutheran chapels drew their Sabbath concourse of white-haired worshippers. There was not even a saloon at the cross-roads to fight.

It was while the old man listened for the "call" to push once more towards the sunset, that Edward went away. Two brothers had already followed John's example, though a railroad camp fifty miles away had served their turn for roving. While with outward bravado and inward qualms "Tricky Jim" and Charlie worked and swore, and, discarding suspenders, turned a corner of their cow boy hat brims under, to emphasize complete defection from orthodoxy, Edward, with another persistency, sat by his mother's fire and drew wonderful maps. Some of those elaborately lined coast waves you may see yet in the little box where Eliza kept them until the day of her death. "Edward Matthiason" they were signed and most painstakingly with scroll letters, carefully shaded. Edward was in the act of beginning the E below Chesapeake bay on the map of Maryland, when a step sounded in the snow.

He stopped, with darkening eyes. But it was Adah's tired face that looked in, with a smile, and the boy laid his map carefully on the corner of the cradle where three-year-old Mary slept. "I'll get some wood, mother," he said, and hurried out.

"Is he—the same?" Adah asked.—"Yes, it was with Saunders I came. And I must go back tomorrow. Tell me, is Edward brooding over it?"

"I think so," Eliza said wearily. "If he was a little more like John, or even like James and Charlie, I'd tell him to go and 'fend for himself'."

"I sometimes wonder," said Adah slowly, with her numb fingers in her heavy strands of hair, "whether we hadn't better send Edward, anyway—" and then both women started at the sound of a step, which was only Edward's, in the snow.

But the four younger children, entering with a rush from the hilarious labor of filling tubs and boiler with snow for washing day, fell upon Adah and put an end to discussion. All their little wet mittens were dry, by the stove, before Adah and her mother came back to the question that troubled them most.

"If I wasn't so sure he could do it, mother, it wouldn't matter. I think father will see it, some day. He can't now, when it does look as if the learning folks has don't hvlp 'em a mite to live like Christians."

"Your father feels hard, after he's worked so long, to see no more results, here. And I hate to cross him, now."

But Adah knew that the fortress had struck its colors, and she began to plan for Edward the course she had longed for, until the morning star glittered frostily over her vision of the fair-haired boy in grave doctor's gown.

When she had gone, tucked and wadded into Saunders' "bob-sled," her mother walked steadily from room to room, listening to the grim monitor which for a quarter of a century, she followed unwaveringly, since it had summoned her from the open grave of Janet Matthiason.

Only once had Eliza questioned her duty of wifely allegiance. She recalled the naming of Adah and Zillah, now, in her own defense. There were the little bonnets, too, which she had made the twins, of linen she had spun and lace she had crocheted. She remembered how she had quietly laid them away when they were finished, seeing the touch of worldliness which would offend the eyes of James Matthiason. And she looked at her own ungainly

and most unworldly head covering of uncompromising black.

Into a life bare of beauty a vision of grace had come, and it possessed her. Edward, an artist, perhaps; Edward listening while white-haired scholars talked with him, as another fair young child listened in the temple of old.

"If he wasn't so different," she told herself. "If he was like Jim or Charlie. But father don't be here enough to know the lads. And Adah is so sure it is right." Then Eliza dropped two tears on Adah's bed, as she firmly swallowed the rest, and took her resolution. Edward should be sent to school, despite his father's will.

Y. M. C. A.

Active work has begun at the city Y. M. C. A. The classes in the gymnasium have been thoroughly reorganized and meet regularly according to the schedule which provides for three sessions a week for each class. The physical examinations have been almost completed by Mr. Coats, the physical director. The enthusiasm is shown by the crowded classes. The visitors' gallery of the gymnasium is always open during class hours, and visitors are welcome to come and inspect the work of this department.

A night school will open on October 14. This is the new department and is yet in the experimental stage; but the favor which the proposition meets among the members and young men of the city encourages the belief that it will be a permanent feature of the work. It aims to give workmen and any others who wish it a practical training at their most convenient hours, at very low rates. Class rooms are being prepared in the building which will make it convenient for those who wish to take both the physical and educational classes the same night. The association in both these departments—physical and educational—aims to offer advantages which will harmonize with and be a benefit to the practical, every-day life of the young men of Lincoln.

The religious work is also in a thriving condition. The men's meeting on Sunday, September 29, was attended by about 120 men. The interest is increasing. The Bible classes will be organized for work in the near future. Mr. F. B. Smith has been engaged to hold meetings in interest of religious work in November. The young men of Lincoln have reason to look forward to great things from Mr. Smith.

The association is offering more to Lincoln young men than in former years. All are invited to inspect every feature of the work. The growth during the past twelve months has been phenomenal, increasing from fifty four one year ago to nearly 500 at the present time. Reading rooms, gymnasium, bath rooms and barber shop are crowded. In view of all the facts, the Y. M. C. A. of Lincoln looks forward to a most prosperous and profitable year.

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