

fitting that the women who are concerning themselves with the broader field of thought should accord the recognition and acknowledge their debt in the manner proposed.

Gleaned from the Pioneers

A Humble Life Story

A RECENT item in the newspapers announcing the critical, probably fatal illness of Mrs. Elizabeth McClay, centenarian, of Indianapolis, brings to the mind of the writer certain pleasing recollections of a very obscure and humble, but, as he thinks, a quite remarkable person. Some years ago Mrs. McClay made her home with a relative of the third generation on a farm within sight of the roofs of Irvington, and here the Rambler (as we will designate ourself), found her, was interested to the point of fascination, and returned more than once, to sit a spare hour with her in her homely but tidy room overlooking the country spaces; to hear her low, placid talk and to solve, if maybe, the secret of her attraction.

Mrs. McClay seemed wholly un-at-home amid the people and scenes of to-day, as though her lapping over into an alien period was a chronological misfit. The Rambler apprehended this from many things half said and things not said at all. If his guessing was true, earth had seemed denuded and unnatural to her ever since the great forests had melted away, and the inhabitants thereof had undergone strange transformations that separated them from her. So her function now was to live fondly in the past and most expectantly in the future, and to wait with the mute patience of nature while the slow seasons ran their rounds. Meanwhile, the feeble hands, that had long since earned rest, rarely knew an idle moment. Service was as much a part of her being as was breathing. The newspaper item referred to stated that she had that year made twenty-five quilts that others might be warm. Doubtless this was so.

Mrs. McClay wore, indoor and out, an old-fashioned sun-bonnet with paste-board stays, and under this a little linen cap. From the depths of that bonnet, framed by the cap's white frill looked out a wrinkled face so calm and peaceful that one wondered if its owner ever could have known bitterness and sorrow. To show so little sign of weariness and wreckage at the end of a long century of existence surely must have argued a pleasant journey. As to this, let her simple little story testify. It is here given as nearly verbatim as the Rambler could reproduce it at the time. Let it be added that the quaint pioneer dialect with its barbarisms, which is here modified somewhat, did not, somehow, seem uncouth in her, nor discrepant with her gentle voice and personality.

"If my daddy and mammy came traveling past here to-day,' I'd drop everything, old as I am, and follow them," avowed the aged reminiscent. "Oh, how I did love my daddy and mammy!—who could be nearer to me than they was? where they went I went; their God was my God. I remember plain as yesterday when my daddy went off to fight the British and Injuns in 1814. The morning he went there was his shot pouch and powder horn and gun all ready for him, and he said to us: 'Now, when I go I don't want any of you to say a word to me.' So when he was all ready and had put on his pouch and horn he kissed us children and then went to mammy, who was sitting by the fireside looking in the coals, and laid his hand on her shoulder and kissed her, but never said a word, and she never said a word. After that he took up his gun and went straight out, but my little baby brother crawled on the floor after him, crying for daddy to take him up, and I looked out of the window after him, and called out 'good bye, daddy!' but he never looked back once. Six months later he came back again, and oh! but we was a joyful lot. That was way down in Tennessee.

"When I was a woman grown and married with children of my own, my man and daddy took a notion they'd try Injianny. So we all came, with just one wagon to carry our things and the children, while the rest of us walked, me tot-

ing my baby. We didn't seem to do well here, and by'n by daddy wanted to go back, and we went with him. Then we seemed to do worse than ever there, and daddy said he'd try Injianny again, and we come. Injianny didn't 'pear to be much better than Tennessee, after all, and back we tromped. Then after while it seem like there was no chance at all in Tennessee, and daddy took a notion again. I was getting despret tired of the travel, but daddy coaxed me and mammy coaxed me, and this time they promisel they would stay, and seeing they were bent on it, I agreed. So five times I walked back and forth between Tennessee and Injianny, kase I would have followed my daddy and mammy to the ends of the earth.

"My man sickened in Injeanny and took to his last bed, and kase we were so pore it looked like I would have a despret time raising the children. In them days, when pore folks couldn't care for their own flesh and blood they would bind 'em out to strangers till the children were of age. My man had been a bound boy, and he called me to his bedside, and, said he, 'promise me that no child of mine shall ever be bound out;' and I said, 'so long as I can lift a hand to work for them they shall not be bound out; and daddy and mammy promised, and that seemed to take a great load off his mind.

"After he was gone I kept my promise to him. I worked out by day, indoor and out; I spun and I wove. I pulled flax and piled brush; all kind of work that's done by woman or man I done, and I kept my children together. Two of the little ones died, but the rest of 'em and daddy and mammy I kept together. Then my daddy, that I loved so, went, and it was harder for me, but still I worked and kept them together till all were old enough to take care of themselves. Next my Janey, who was married, was smitten by the hand of the Lord, and on her death bed she mourned and grieved bekase of her babies. 'Oh, my precious little ones! what will become of them?' she cried out once, when the end was drawing nigh. 'Never mind, darling, said I, 'mammy will take care of your little ones—she has took care of you and she will take care of them, and that give her comfort before she passed

away. And me and my old mammy took charge of the little ones, but it wan't long before the good Lord gathered them one by one, and oh! I rejoiced, bekase then I knowed my darling Janey had them again. Then my mammy died, and so all them that was nearest to me left me, and as they went I was glad, kase I knowed their troubles were all over, and I had only to wait. If I could bring them all back to me with a word I wouldn't speak it, kase they're happier where they are and I can go to them."

This was old Mrs. McClay's brief and simple story, very simply told—a story too humble, doubtless, to find many listeners. To the Rambler it seemed far worthier of interest than many a one that unravels itself more imposingly, for in the heroism and endurance, the patience and calm, rock-like faith of it, and in the strength of human ties revealed as she told it, was something elemented and essentially great.