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THE STORY OF MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER*

Rain, rain, rain. Streight Creek is swelled into a turbulent, muddy torrent that threatens bridges and fences. All living things have fled to places of refuge, and no sound is heard save the dull roar of the rain; not a bright spot anywhere in the sky. Plainly I am to be a prisoner again all day. Perhaps I cannot better occupy my time than by jotting down the story of my great-grandmother; for I have not a memory like grandmother's, where the most trivial incidents of childhood are imaged more vividly than the occurrences of last week; and it may be well to note down, while I have the opportunity to obtain the most minute particulars, a story which is not only interesting in itself, but furnishes a curious study of the conflict within a human soul, of the two strongest passions of which the soul is, perhaps, capable, religious fanaticism, and maternal love.

A few extracts from an article by Mr. Robert Dale Diven in the August number of the Atlantic Monthly will serve to introduce my story:

"Richard Flower, an experienced English agriculturist, possessed of considerable means, had emigrated, some years before, to the United States; and had settled at Albion, in the southeastern part of Illinois, and about twenty-five miles distance from a German village founded by emigrants from the Kingdom of Wurttemberg, schismatics of the Lutheran Church, led by their pastor, George Rapp. These people came to America in 1804, settling first on the waters of Conequenessing, Pennsylvania; afterwards, namely in 1813, on the Lower Wabash River and about fifteen miles from the town of Mount Vernon on the Ohio. There they

*Written by Jacob Henrici, during a visit to his grandmother, Judith Schick Trautwein, in 1873. Jacob Henrici was born in Pittsburgh July 4, 1850, died in Pittsburgh November 26, 1930, aged 80. He was a nephew of Jacob Henrici, who was, for many years, head of the Harmony Society. Jacob Henrici, the younger, the author of this narrative, conducted a book store for many years at No. 6126 Penn Avenue, East End, Pittsburgh.
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purchased thirty thousand acres, chiefly government land, and erected a village containing about a hundred and sixty buildings, one-half brick or frame, the other half of logs. They held it to be a religious duty to imitate the primitive Christians, who "had all things in common"; to conform to St. Paul's opinion that celibacy is better than marriage; and desiring also to be, like the early disciples, "of one heart and of one soul," they called their little town Harmonie.

Their experiment was a marvelous success in a pecuniary point of view; for at the time of their immigration their property did not exceed twenty-five dollars a head, while in twenty-one years (to wit, in 1825) a fair estimate gave them two thousand dollars for each person,—man, woman, and child; probably ten times the average wealth throughout the United States. . . . Intellectually and socially, however, it was doubtless a failure; as an ecclesiastical autocracy, especially when it contravenes an important law of nature, must eventually be, Rapp was absolute ruler,—assuming to be such in virtue of a divine call; and it was said, probably with truth, that he desired to sell out at Harmonie because life there was getting to be easy and quiet, with leisure for thought: and because he found it difficult to keep his people in order, except during the bustle and hard work which attend a new settlement. At all events he commissioned Mr. Flower to offer the entire Harmonie property for sale.

When my father first reached the place, he found among the Germans—its sole inhabitants—indications of plenty and material comfort, but with scarcely a touch of fancy or ornament; the only exceptions being a few flowers.

The toil and suffering had left their mark, however, on the grave, stolid, often sad German faces. They looked well fed, warmly clothed (my father told me), and seemed free from anxiety. The animal had been sufficiently cared for; and that is a good deal in a world where millions can hardly keep the wolf from the door, drudge as they will, and where hundreds of millions, manage as they may, live in daily uncertainty whether, in the next week or month (chance of work or means of living failing), absolute penury may not fall to their lot. A shelter from lifewearing cares is something; but a temple typifies higher things,—more than what we shall eat and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. Rapp's disciples had bought these too dearly,—at expense of heart and soul. They purchased them by unquestioning submission to an autocrat who had been commissioned—perhaps as he really believed, certainly as he alleged—by God himself. He bade them do this and that, and they did it; required them to say, as the disciples in Jerusalem said, that none of the things they possessed were their own, and they said it; commanded them to forego wedded life and all its incidents, and to this also they assented."

1. Acts iv. 32. The land was entered in the names of the entire community; and was conveyed by Rapp, under a power of attorney from them, to my father.
2. I Corinthians, vii. 8. They lived together as the Shakers do.
3. Acts iv, 32.
4. An error. Rapp left Harmony through fear of the neighboring settlers to whom he had rendered himself obnoxious.
With this society the fortunes of my ancestors were strangely connected in three distinct lines. Among the first members of the society who came to this country was my great-great grandmother, a widow named Leucht, with two daughters. She perished, like Moses, upon the threshold of the promised land, and lies buried at Middletown in the eastern part of Pennsylvania. Her daughters proceeded on their way to the settlement of the society at Harmony, in Butler County, Pennsylvania. The youngest of the two girls, Magdalene,—about twenty-one years old at the time of their arrival in America,—had been followed across the ocean by her betrothed, Jacob Schick, a native of a village near Stuttgart, and who had formed her acquaintance while on his "Wanderschaft". Prompted by his love for Magdalene, he expressed a desire to become a member of the society; but he was informed by Rapp that the society was not prepared to receive any new members until matters in the new village became more settled. Disappointed, he obtained employment in a distillery near Philadelphia where he worked for a year, at the expiration of which time, upon renewing his application, he was accepted as a member of the society, and was united in marriage to Magdalene.

In Schick's knowledge of the manufacture of liquors, Rapp shrewdly foresaw the means of adding to the wealth of the society. A distillery was erected and placed in his charge. The future prospects of the young couple seemed bright. Two children, Albert and Judith, came, in time, to grace their board. By-and-by it came to Rapp's ears that Schick was dispensing the products of the still with too liberal a hand to the villagers. He was removed from the distillery and given charge of the sheep, of which the society possessed a vast herd. Alone, for hours, he watched them on the hills surrounding the village. Schick was a man in every respect worthy of his name. In addition to great personal courage, he possessed a mind qualified to work out its own trains of thought. Love for his wife was all that bound him to the society, for, although a believer in Christianity, he had no faith in the doctrines of the society. His wife, on the contrary, believed the following of Rapp's teachings to be necessary for the salvation of her soul. She thought he was the chosen of the Lord, and be-
lied that he had power to perform miracles. They had
lived together happily for five or six years, when Rapp
promulgated his monstrous decree, that, in order to become
disciples of Christ, there must be no more marrying, nor
giving in marriage; and that those who were already mar-
rried should separate forever. Schick at once prepared to
remove his family from Harmony, when he was met by the
resistance of his wife, who declared that she would not ac-
company him. All entreaties proving futile, Schick pre-
pared to leave, with his children, believing that the mother-
heart would soon yield in their absence. Here he was met
by a new obstacle. No objection was made to his taking
his little girl, but he found that in removing the boy, he
would be resisted by the powerful society. Yielding to cir-
cumstances, he departed with the girl alone, and took up
his residence at Greensburg, where he gave the little girl
in care of his sister-in-law. After he had lived in Greens-
burg several months, he instituted cautious inquiries, and
learned in what house in Harmony his boy was kept. He
next hired a man to go with him on horseback to Harmony,
to abduct the child. They approached the town after dark,
Schick bidding his companion wait for him a short distance
out of town. The villagers were at church, and Schick's
approach to the house was unnoticed. Cautiously he push-
ed the door ajar and look in. At a long table, with his
back toward the door, was seated an old man engaged in
the manufacture of long brimstone-tipped matches. (Luci-
fer matches had not then come into general use). Opposite
him sat the boy, building toy-houses of the unfinished
matches. His quick eye caught sight of his father, as he
pushed the door wider open, and he screamed, "Der Schick!
Der Schick!" As Schick darted forward, the old man sprang
up and would have offered some resistance, but a well-di-
rected blow laid him upon the floor, and seizing the child,
Schick flew like the wind down the village street, and
reaching his accomplice, the latter was soon galloping away
with the child, toward Greensburg. Schick had no horse,
and in the meantime the alarm having been given, he per-
ceived the Harmonites approaching in pursuit. Calmly fac-
ing them, he pointed his two pistols at them, and in an in-
stant they fled like a flock of sheep. "Shame on ye!"
cried Rapp. "A score of stout able-bodied young men to
be so intimidated by one man". "Ah, father", said they, "we always told you that man has something more than human power to back him".

When Schick thought he could induce his wife to leave Harmony by abducting her children, he little knew her. A year after the events last recorded, he removed to the neighborhood of Pittsburg [sic.], where he purchased fourteen acres of ground and began the business of market-gardener. He then formed the daring project of abducting his wife herself, believing that the absence of her children had softened her heart, and that if he could once get her outside of Rapp's influence, she would not return.

He hired a young man to join the society on probation, in order to learn where his wife was, and what was necessary for the adventure. The plot succeeded. His agent reported that he had conversed with Magdalene, having told her that he has seen her husband and children in Pittsburg. She made anxious inquiries about the children, but declared her intention never to leave the society. The next day, with four trusty friends, Schick set out in a light spring wagon for Harmony. Five miles from Harmony they stopped at a tavern, had supper, and ordered breakfast for six persons, early in the morning. On learning the object of their journey, the landlord tried to convince them of its futility, but finding them determined he said, "Well, I will make a bargain with you. If you have the lady in the morning, I'll furnish breakfast gratis for all, while if you return without her, you shall pay for six. Do you agree?" "Certainly", replied my great-grandfather. Schick's spy had reported that his wife was living at the doctor's house, a place familiar to Schick,—and that patrols walked the streets of the village every night, except between the hours of twelve and one o'clock. At half-past twelve the village was wrapped in silence. Three of the adventurers, with a wagon, remained on the outskirts of the town, while Schick and a companion, with a dark lantern, and an axe to break open the door, crept noiselessly through the deserted streets. Fortunately they found the door open. Removing their shoes, they crept up stairs and peeped into the front room. Two men were lying asleep. They looked into the next and found the object of their search. The light awoke her, and seeing them, she screamed. Before she could repeat it,
she was gagged with a handerchief and was being carried, bedding and all, down stairs. They reached their companions undetected. No one in the village knew anything of what had happened until the following morning, when they went to awaken Magdalene. Then they found she was gone, and with her the bed, but her clothing was untouched, and on the stairs they found a pillow. "Ah, that Schick!" said they. "We always knew he was in league with the Devil."

Schick did not take his wife's clothes, because the Harmonites wore a peculiar costume, but when they reached the wagon he produced clothing that he had brought from Pittsburg, and made his wife put it on. Then they started. Two miles from Harmony she darted from the wagon into a thicket at the roadside. It was intensely dark, but they knew the moon would soon rise, so they surrounded the thicket and waited. When the moon rose one of them entered the thicket, through which ran a small brook. He found her lying in the brook, her head alone being above the surface. They returned her to the wagon, and wrapped her in the bedding. It was early April, and on the surface of the brook, where she had lain for an hour, while they were waiting for moonrise, a thin coat of ice had formed. She shivered like one with the ague. They hastened to the inn where they had stopped in the evening, and procured dry clothes for her, her own being dried while they breakfasted. They had twenty-five miles to go, and did not reach home until nine o'clock at night. Her children were asleep, but her arrival awakened them, and they sprang to greet her. "Ah, dear children, you will go with me to the good old father (Rapp) will you not?" was her salutation. "No".

"Go away from me then, you are not my children", she exclaimed, thrust them from her, and would not notice them again. For several days she remained in a kind of stupor, paying no attention to anybody or anything, refusing to eat, and grasping at every opportunity to try and effect her escape. Once she broke away from them, and ran half a mile before Schick overtook her.

The fifth night of her stay she sprang from bed and ran at full speed in her night-clothes. Her husband stopped to put on his garments. The night was bitter cold, and there was a slight snow on the ground. He traced her by the prints of her bare feet in the snow and overtook her in the woods, half a mile from the house. She refused to
return, and when he tried to carry her, she grasped at bushes and saplings, where she clung with the tenacity of a maniac. In this dire extremity he forgot himself and struck her. Just as he struck, she turned her face toward him, and received the blow upon her nose. Years afterward the memory of that blow, and the stream of crimson blood that spurted out over her white garments and the snow, haunted him. He was in despair, "In God's name, Magdelene", he cried, "come home. You shall return to Harmony tomorrow. Anything rather than perish here!" "Are you sincere?" she asked, 'Your hand upon it'. He gave her his hand and they returned.

The excitement reacted and left her too weak to start the next day, and it was necessary to prepare provisions for her journey. She said she would go alone, on foot. They gave her a supply of provisions, and Schick gave her a half-dollar to pay her ferriage. He knew it was useless to give her more, as it would only go to Rapp. She begged her passage on the ferries, and on her way was overtaken by a wagon going within two miles of Harmony. She engaged a passage on the wagon for twenty-five cents. Several miles from Harmony she adroitly slipped off, saving her money, which she handed, intact, to Rapp, on her arrival.

But the sight of her children had awakened within her all the mother's love that had lain dormant so long. Day after day she besought Rapp and prayed and besought him to get her her children. "My children, my children. Father, thou art almighty. If thou sayest but the word, they will be brought here. Oh, give me my children!" Wearied by her constant importunity, he pronounced her insane, and caused her to be locked up. She escaped at midnight, and awakened him with a cry for her children. He had her removed to a house two miles out of town, where she was imprisoned in the loft. She crept through the trap-door and let herself down by her bed-cord, lacerating her hands terribly, and was flying to Rapp, when her keeper overtook her, and struck and kicked her, so that she was confined to her bed for weeks. A woman of the village, who came to see her, heard her story and spread it abroad, so that it reached the ears of Rapp. Fearful of public opinion, he sent a physician to investigate, who reported the
woman in a sad plight. Her keeper was then excommunicated from the church for four weeks,—that being the most severe punishment Rapp could inflict!

My great-grandmother began to recover, and it seemed as though mother-love was going to conquer after all, for she ran away from Harmony and was going to seek her children, when, a few miles from Pittsburgh, she met Rapp's son, who questioned her, and on his portraying the awful consequences of her deserting the church, she wept, and said she would return, if he would promise her his father's forgiveness.

She never tried to go to her children again.

Only once—long years afterward—did the old mother-love spring up again. Her daughter—then a grandmother—called to bid her farewell on her departure to Ohio, as she never expected to see her again. As they parted at the train, the poor old woman gave scream after scream, and when the cars moved away, she sank upon the earth. Many an eye, among the passengers on the train, was wet with sympathetic tears. She died at the age of seventy-six.

In the old apple-orchard at Economy—buried according to the usages of the society, which prohibit any show of respect for the dead, among a hundred others, with no stone to mark her resting-place, lies, after a troubled life, all that was mortal of Magdalene Schick, my great-grandmother.