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HOW THEY ENTERED CANAAN
(A Collection of Holiness Experience Accounts)
Compiled by Duane V. Maxey

Vol. I -- Named Accounts

ELEANOR M. MITCHELL (Methodist)

Eleanor M. Mitchell, daughter of Col. Francis and Grace Thomas, was born in Frederick City, Maryland, February 24, 1780. About the year 1802 her father removed to Botetourt County, Virginia. Up to this period the family had moved in the gay and pleasure-taking circles of life, having never learned that the human soul is capable of any higher enjoyment than is found at the festive party and in the ball-room. True, they had attended the forms of the religious observance on the Sabbath, but the minister who officiated there gave proof that in his estimation religious pleasures were small, by associating with the youth of his congregation in worldly amusements. How powerless do the sublime truths of the gospel fall upon the ear, when he who utters them connects with their delivery such an example. In that part of Virginia where Colonel Thomas fixed his residence, the Methodist and Presbyterian churches were, at that time, enjoying spiritual prosperity; and under their influence several members of the family were converted to God, and united with the Presbyterian Church.

In the year 1804 the subject of this sketch was united in marriage with Rev. Samuel Mitchell, a local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Shortly after her marriage she united with the same church, as well from a full conviction of the truth of the doctrines and admiration of the economy of Methodism, as from a desire to occupy a position best suited for the discharge of the weighty and important duties connected with her station as the wife of a gospel minister. The responsibilities of a preacher's wife she ever after regarded as only inferior to his who is called of God to the care of souls, and her whole religious character was formed under this conviction. In her dress she conformed to the simplicity and plainness of the early Methodists, from which she never departed. In works of piety and mercy she was ever ready to share; and to encourage the desponding, to comfort the mourner, and to point the conscience-stricken sinner to Christ, were labors of love for which she was peculiarly adapted.

Her house was the home of the toilworn itinerant, where an Asbury, a McKendree, and many others, less noted, but not less beloved, for their sacrifices and labors, were cherished as angel visitants. Though her husband was a local preacher, all his sympathies were with those men of God who literally left all for the privilege of carrying the gospel to the destitute; and all his

feelings on this subject were heartily seconded by his companion. Hence, it is not surprising that her sons, when they felt that God had called them to this work, were cheerfully laid upon this altar, and encouraged to make sacrifices from which a mother's tenderness would gladly have reserved them. But this refers to a later period. In the year 1817 the family removed to Illinois, then a territory, and comparatively a wilderness.

But one consideration induced this exchange of all the advantages and pleasant associations of cultivated and refined society for the toils and privations connected with a residence on the frontier of civilization. It was the desire of the parents to bring up their children apart from the institution of domestic slavery. In early life her husband had emancipated his slaves, of which he had a number. Mrs. Mitchell was one with him in sentiment on this subject; and that her children might be trained to habits of honorable labor, in circumstances free from embarrassment and from temptation, she was content to leave kindred and friends, conveniences and luxuries, and encounter what was then a long and fatiguing journey to a far-off and rude region for a future home.

When they arrived at their new home important changes were made in their domestic arrangements. Mrs. Mitchell's father was the owner of slaves, and consequently his daughters had never been suffered, much less required, to perform what was regarded as servile labor. During her residence in Virginia the superintendence of her household had been the extent of her domestic cares. But she now deemed it important that her daughters, who might not in after life be able always to obtain hired domestics, should learn all that is necessary in conducting the business of a family -- in a word, all kinds of kitchen and house work. Successfully to teach her daughters, the mother proposed to learn herself and set them the example; and thenceforward the labors of the house and kitchen were performed by mother and daughters, the reproach and fatigue of labor being forgotten in the delightful consciousness of duty and independence.

Though subjected to many privations incident to a new country, Mrs. Mitchell and her family were not without the institutions of religion and the means of grace. The Methodist itinerants appear to have made it a rule to keep pace with the tide of emigration to the West. A Walker, a Thompson, a Drew, and others, who still survive, were heard lifting up their voices in the wilderness, and thrice welcome were they to the best comforts her cabin, and afterward her mansion, could afford. Societies were organized, and under the faithful labors of these men of God Mrs. Mitchell had the joy to see her children brought into the fold of Christ.

Several members of the family having married and settled in Platteville, Wisconsin, in 1838, Mrs. Mitchell removed thither with her husband. Though this removal was still toward the extended frontier, so rapid has been the progress of improvement in the West within the last few years that Mrs. Mitchell found a state of society there far more congenial than upon her arrival in Illinois. Here she finished her course, on the 21st of May, 1842, in the sixty-third, year of her age. Her disease, bronchitis, was of long and painful continuance, but with fortitude and patience; nay, with a tranquil and cheerful spirit she endured months of deep affliction. Often while nature was sinking her soul rose above all pain and weakness, and the shout of joy and praise ascended to God her Savior; and when no longer able to speak, she raised her hand in token of final victory. Thus ended the earthly pilgrimage of one whose character is worthy an enduring record.

As a Christian, her profession was nobly sustained by the whole tenor of a well-spent life. Her manners were dignified without ostentation. Truth formed the substance of her character, courtesy its graceful adornment. At a comparatively early period in her religious history she sought and found the blessing of "a clean heart" -- the grace of "perfect love;" and her life, rather than verbal profession, evinced the reality of this attainment.

Eleanor M. Mitchell lived to see her five daughters and three sons united with her in the fellowship of the church, and in the adoption of the children of God. The sons were all members of one annual conference, as itinerant preachers in the Methodist Episcopal Church, two of whom have since died. One daughter preceded the mother to the heavenly rest. May they all meet in that world of light and love!

Source: "Saintly Women And Death-Bed Triumphs" by Maxwell Pierson Gaddis

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THE END