

## “A Highland Mother’s Love”

From the mountain pass the widow's dwelling was ten miles off, and no human habitation was nearer than her own. She had undertaken a long journey, carrying with her her only child, a boy two years old. The morning when the widow left her home gave promise of a lovely day; but before noon a sudden change took place in the weather Northward, the sky became black and lowering. Masses of clouds rested upon the hills. Sudden gusts of wind began to whistle among the rocks, and to ruffle, with black squalls, the surface of the lake. The wind was followed by rain, and the rain by sleet, and the sleet by a heavy fall of snow. Weary, and wet, and cold, the widow reached that pass with her child. She knew that a mile beyond it there was a mountain hut which could give shelter; but the moment she attempted to face the storm of snow which was rushing through the gorge all hope of proceeding in that direction failed. To turn home was equally impossible. She must find shelter.

After wandering for some time among the huge fragments of granite which skirted the base of the overhanging precipices she at last found a sheltered nook. She crouched beneath a projecting rock and pressed her child to her trembling bosom. The storm continued to rage. The snow was accumulating overhead. Hour after hour passed. It became bitterly cold. The evening approached. The widow's heart was sick with fear and anxiety. The child, her only child, was all she thought of. She wrapped him in her shawl; but the poor thing had been scantily clad, and the shawl was thin and worn. The widow was poor, and her clothing could hardly defend her from the piercing cold of such a night as that. But whatever might become of herself, her child must be preserved. The snow, in whirling eddies, entered the recess which afforded them at best but miserable shelter. The night came on. The wretched mother then stripped off almost all her own clothing and wrapped it round her child, whom at last in despair she put into a deep crevice of the rock among some heather and fern.

And now she resolves at all hazards to brave the storm and return home in order to get assistance for her babe, or perish in the attempt. Claspng her infant to her heart, and covering his face with tears and kisses, she laid him softly down in sleep and rushed into the snowy drift. That night of storm was succeeded by a peaceful morning. The sun shone from a clear blue sky, and wreaths of mist hung along the tops of the mountains, while a hundred waterfalls poured down their sides. Dark figures, made visible at a distance by the white ground, may now be seen with long poles examining every hollow near the mountain pass. They are people from the village who are searching for the widow and her son. The night before they had gone forth with lanterns and searched in vain. Daylight brought hope. They have reached the pass. A cry is uttered by one of the searchers as he sees a bit of tartan cloak among the snow. They have found the widow-dead-her arms stretched forth as if imploring assistance! Before noon they discovered

her child by his cries. He was safe in the crevice of the rock. The story of that woman's affection for her child was soon read in language which all understood. Many a tear was shed, many a sigh of affection was uttered from sorrowing hearts, when on that evening the aged pastor gathered the villagers into the deserted house of mourning, and by prayer and fatherly exhortation sought to improve for their soul's good an event so sorrowful.

More than half a century passed. That aged and faithful man of God had long ago been gathered to his fathers. His son, whose locks were white with age, was preaching to a congregation of Highlanders in one of our great cities. The subject of his discourse was the love of Christ. In illustrating the self-sacrificing nature of that "love which seeketh not her own," he narrated this story of the Highland widow whom he had himself known in his boyhood, and he asked: "If that child is now alive, what would you think of his heart if he did not cherish an affection for his mother's memory and if the sight of her poor, tattered shawl, which she had wrapped around him in order to save his life at the cost of her own, did not fill him with gratitude and love too deep for words? Yet what hearts have you, my hearers, if, in memory of our Saviour's sacrifice of Himself, you do not feel them glow with deeper love and with adoring gratitude?"

A few days later a message was sent to this minister by a dying man who requested to see him. The request was speedily complied with. The sick man seized the minister by the hand, and, gazing intently in his face, said, "You do not, you cannot recognize me. But I know you, and knew your father before you. I have been a wanderer in many lands. I have visited every quarter of the globe, and fought and bled for my king and country. I came to this town a few weeks ago in bad health. Last Sunday I entered your Church, where I could once more hear, in the language of my youth and of my heart, the Gospel preached. I heard you tell the story of the widow and her son." Here the voice of the old soldier faltered, emotion almost choked his utterance; but recovering himself for a moment, he cried, "I am that son!" and burst into a flood of tears. "Never, never did I forget my mother's love. Well might you ask what a heart should mine have been if she had been forgotten by me. But, sir, what breaks my heart and covers me with shame is this. Until now I never truly saw the love of my Saviour in giving Himself for me; until now I never realized the meaning of the words, 'The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.' (Galatians 2:20). I confess it! I confess it!" he cried. Looking up to Heaven, his eyes streaming with tears, and pressing the pastor's hand close to his breast, he added, "Praise be to His holy name that my dear mother did not die in vain. For the love of my mother has been blessed in making me see as I never saw before the love of my Saviour. I see it; I believe it. I have found deliverance in old age where I found it in my childhood the cleft of the rock, but now it is in the ROCK OF AGES!"

And clasping his hands he repeated with intense fervor, "**Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee!**"(Isaiah 49:15). ---- By Dr. Norman McLeod