

The Wanderers.

By Grace Aguilar

Genesis, 21:14-20.

With sadden'd heart and tearful eye the mother went her way,
The Patriarch's mandate had gone forth, and Hagar must not stay.
Oh! who can tell the emotions deep that pressed on Abra'am's heart—
As thus, obedient to his God, from Ishmael called to part!

But God had spoken, and he knew His word was changeless truth,
He could not doubt His blessing world protect the friendless youth;
He bade him go, nor would he heed the anguish of his soul;
He turned aside,—a father's wo in silence to control.

Now hand in hand they wend their way, o'er hills and vale and wild;
The mother's heart was full of grief, but smiled in glee her child:
Fearless and free, he felt restraint would never gall him now—
And hail'd with joy the fresh'ning breeze that fann'd his fair young brow.

His mother's heart was desolate, and tears swell'd in her eye;
Scarce to his artless words of love her quiv'ring lips reply.
She only saw the future as a lone and dreary wild:
The present stood before the lad in joyance undefil'd.

She knew, alas! his boyish strength too soon would droop and fade;
And who was, in that lonely scene, to give them food and aid?
With trembling gaze she oft would mark the flushing of his cheek,
And list in terror, lest he should 'gin falteringly to speak!

Fatigue she felt not for herself, nor heeded cure nor pain—
But nearer, nearer to her breast her boy at times she'd strain;
Beersheba's wilderness they see before them dark and wide;
Oh, who across its scorching sands their wandering steps will guide?

The flush departed from the cheek which she so oft has kiss'd;
To his glad tones of childish glee no longer may she list;
A pallor as of death is spread o'er those sweet features now—
She sees him droop before the blast that fann'd his aching brow.

“Oh, mother, lay me down,” he cried, “I know not what I feel,
But something cold and rushing seems thro' all my limbs to steal—

Oh kiss me, mother dear, and then ah, lay me down to sleep—
Nay, do not look upon me thus—kiss me and do not weep!”

Scarce could her feeble arms support her child, and lay him where
Some clustering shrubs might shield him from the heavy scorching air;
His drooping eyelids closed; his breath came painfully and slow—
She bent her head on his a while in wild yet speechless wo.

Then from his side she hurried, as impelled she knew not why,
Save that she could not linger there—she could not see him die—
She lifted up her voice and wept—and o’er the lonely wild
“Let me not see his death!” was borne, “my Ismael, my chid!”

And silence came upon her then, her stricken soul to calm;
And suddenly and strange there fell a soft and soothing balm—
And then a voice came stealing, on the still and fragrant air—
A still small voice that would be heard, tho’ solitude was there.

“What aileth thee, oh Hagar?” thus it spoke: “fear not, for God hath heard
The lad’s voice where he is,—and thou, trust in thy Maker’s word!
Awake! arise! lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand—
I will of him a nation make, before Me, he shall stand.”

It ceased, that voice; and silence now, as strangely soft and still,
The boundless desert once again with eloquence would fill—
And strength returned to Hagar’s frame, for God hath oped her eyes—
And lo! amid the arid sands a well of water lies!

Quick to her boy, with beating heart, the anxious mother flies,
And to his lips, and hands, and brow, the cooling draught applies—
He wakes! he breathes! the flush of life is mantling on his cheek—
He smiles! he speaks ! oh those quick tears his mother’s joy shall speak!

She held him to her throbbing breast, she gazed upon his face—
The beaming features, one by one, in silent love to trace.
She bade him kneel to bless the Hand that saved him in the wild—
But oh! few words her lips could speak, save these—“My child, my child!”

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<http://www.jewish-history.com/occident/volume3/oct1845/wanderers.html>