

green, and on this, surrounded by a group of open-mouthed rustics, stood a man in the prime of life. He was raised a little above the heads of his auditory, and was engaged in singing a hymn, an occupation in which, however, only a few of his audience had the courage to join. It was a well-known one; but hymn-singing was not fashionable in Combe Hadley. Indeed, the greater part of the men and youths gathered around the open-air preacher were far more familiar with the songs sung at the Brown Cow, just opposite; while even the little urchins who played at ring-taw excelled in whistling the choruses. The verse which Mr. Howard, the evangelist, was singing just now was that one so dear to Christian souls:

"Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace."

One or two feeble old women took up the strain as the singer went on, while two or three old men put in a faulty bass; so that, after a while, what with the ringing manly tones of the evangelist, and the feeble ones of those who had joined him, the singing was brought to a very respectable conclusion. There might have been an audience of fifty, or more, around Mr. Howard; and, as his quick eye glanced over the motley assemblage, an unspoken prayer went up to the Throne, that he might have grace to speak "words in season" to them. Decrepit age was there, leaning on its staff; for some of those red-cloaked old women and wrinkled old men were nearing eighty. Others were farm-labourers in the pride of manhood, with smock-frocks and pipes, showing more careless *nonchalance* than reverence. Beside them were youths and maidens decked out in their Sunday finery, and casting shy glances at one another; while mingled here and there were little children, and worn, poverty-stricken mothers, whose glances were even now raised inquiringly to the speaker, as if to ask whether he could tell them of any better portion than that