



ALMOST TOO LATE.

TOM HOLLIS led a busy life. He owned a little farm called the Oaks, about two miles from Welwyn, Hertfordshire. He had a nice bright wife, and three pretty, good-tempered children. He lived in the days of stage coaches, when the roads were bad and people did not travel about as now, and when it was quite an event to go to London.

The farmer never left home, he disliked strange faces and strange places too much. Though the journey between Welwyn and London occupied only a few hours, he had but once in his life been to the great metropolis. He had no pleasant remembrance of his visit; it comprised some of the saddest days he had ever spent.

"One thing happening will tempt me to London again," Tom said to his wife.

"I understand," she answered.

"Yes, you know, Susan. If Nelly ever should come back and ask me to go and see her, I would set off to London or anywhere else within reasonable distance."

"Poor Tom!" replied Mrs. Hollis, softly, "I wish

Nelly would come back to us, for your sake as well as her own. I'm afraid you will never hear of her again. She must have been a widow for four years; surely she would seek help from you if she were alive."

"I often think so, yet I never forget to pray that she may come. I always finish up with 'Thy will be done,' for God knows best, Susan."

Nelly Hollis had left her brother's home ten years before the time of which we write. She ran away to London, and married a man who was not worthy of her. Tom followed her, but was too late to prevent her having her own way. He came home with a heavy heart, and this was why he never cared to repeat his visit to London. He said to his sister at parting, "If ever you want a friend, remember I love you."

Nelly believed in the wisdom of the choice she had made, and was very angry, and quite sure Tom judged her harshly. Four months later she wrote a few lines to say she was starting that day, with her husband, to America. Six years passed before further tidings came of her, and then Tom learnt, in a roundabout way, that she was a widow. More he did not know, and he could only wonder what Nelly was doing; how she was living; and sometimes he feared his wife was right, and that he would never more hear of his sister.

The season had been a good one for the farmers, and the harvest supper was fixed for no very distant date. It was the last day of August. Tom's heart was full of thankfulness when he rose in the morning. He owned God's hand in all that befell him; he thanked Him for the fine weather, and for his good crops; and, as he breathed the sweet morning air, he exclaimed,