

## Tales and Sketches.

## HARVEST-HOME.

BY ERNEST GILMORE.

It was nearing the time of the Harvest-Home.

"We're going to have things up to the last notch," said Farmer Greene's wife to her nearest neighbor, Farmer Doane's wife, who walked over a distance of half a mile for a friendly chat. "We will begin to-morrow making preparations. Such a pile o' work to be done! Bakin' and brewin', an' boilin' and stewin', for so many men and boys, not to speak of the women and children—the women to help wait on the men, and the children to follow their mothers. If I do say it, it's as true as law and gospel that Nathan does like to make a splurge at Harvest-Home, never thinking what drudges it makes of the women folks. But if there's one thing more than another that Nathan prides himself on, it's *my currant wine*." And a glow of pride overspread Mrs. Nathan Greene's comely face. "And 'tis good, if I do say it. Henrietta, run and bring Mrs. Doane a glass of that wine we opened for dinner. Bring two glasses—one—oh here, Henrietta, supping you just bring the bottle and three glasses; of course you'll want one yourself."

As Henrietta, a bright-faced, healthy young girl, went to do her mother's bidding, the latter said, "These children *do* love mother's wine so."

"I don't wonder they love it," said Mrs. Doane (who seemed willing to be thrown entirely in the shade by her prosperous neighbor), as she sipped the delicious wine given to her by her hostess. "I've tried my best, and I think *my* wine is good, but it can't compare with yours."

"Come, mother, give a tired fellow a glass of wine," said little Ben Greene, rushing up the steps of the broad veranda where the ladies were sitting. Ben was as fine a specimen of robust boyhood as one ever sees—handsome, too, and very winsome. He had a smiling face and honest blue eyes, and his heavy hair was wet with perspiration just now. When his mother poured out the glass of wine he took it quickly and drank every drop, saying laughingly, as he returned the empty glass to her, "There's no wine like mother's wine; it has such a delightful *twang*, and touches the right spot every time."

Strange how blind some mothers are. Strange that, instead of Ben's suggestive remark arousing fear in those two mother's hearts, it only pleased them, and they both laughed, Ben's mother saying, as he turned away, "Such a boy!" And then, after he was out of hearing, adding, "I don't believe I have a favorite among my four children, but if I have, it is Ben."

Dear, precious Ben! he seemed to be everybody's favorite. His sunny face was welcomed everywhere. He was the small boys' champion, although only twelve years old himself. He was the big boys' admiration, the daring, venturesome, ever-ready-for-a-good-time Ben Greene. He was envied by more than one mother, and Mrs. Doane was one of the envious number.

"He is a boy to be proud of; so bright, so full of life and health," she said with a sigh; "if only my little Charlie was like him."

"How is Charlie?" asked Mrs. Greene kindly.

"He is getting as thin as a rail, and I feel if he keeps on this way for a few weeks longer he will vanish entirely."

"I am very sorry. He must be sure to come over to Harvest-Home; he needn't work any, but he will have a good time only looking on."

It was the day preceding Farmer Greene's Harvest-Home that a gentleman arrived at Farmer Doane's; it was Mrs. Doane's uncle. Not having seen his niece since her marriage, he was warmly welcomed by her. He was a sunny-hearted, sunny-faced man, but a cloud overspread his face as he noticed the run-down condition of the farm, the crops being poor, and all things bore the impress of neglect.

"You see, 'twould be different if Daniel was well, apologized Mrs. Doane; "but he isn't able to see to things generally, and so we kind of drift along."

"All wrong, all wrong," said Uncle Richard decidedly; "one can't fight the battle of life drifting; one must steer. If your husband isn't able to see to his farm he ought either to sell it or get a head to run it."

"You ought to see Farmer Greene's farm, and you can, if you choose," said Charlie Doane; "we're all going over there to-morrow to Harvest-Home, and won't it be jolly? Such a lunch as they have! Sandwiches, and biscuits, and cold chicken, and corned beef, and pickles, and cheese, and pies, and cakes, and the best *wine*, and—"

"*Wine!*" exclaimed Uncle Richard. "Surely you children don't touch wine."

"Why not?" asked Charlie, surprised; "it's good wine, and mother loves it."

Uncle Richard looked at his niece soberly, who asked: "Why, where's the harm in drinking home-made wine at Harvest-Home?"

Uncle Richard explained in a long, serious talk wherein the harm consisted; it stood out very distinctly before his niece and her two boys, Charlie, aged twelve, and Ray, aged eight.

"Promise me, boys, that you will never drink wine again; you will not be sorry."

They promised, and so did their mother; and the next day when they saw Ben Greene lifted from the grass where he had fallen heavily, and carried into the house, they were not sorry that they had refused the sparkling wine.

Years rolled on—twenty of them—again Uncle Richard comes to visit Farmer Doane's. This time broad, rich fields greet him—there is a rich harvest to be gathered.

"They've been sowing good seed and laboring untiringly, and they now have their reward," he said in great delight.

Ray is still unmarried, and at home, the head of the farm, but Uncle Richard misses Charlie's face, and inquires for him.

"You will have to be introduced to him; you will never recognize him; he is so changed. After dinner we will drive over and see Charlie."

"Going to call at Farmer Greene's? I thought you were after Charlie; I am anxious to see him," said Uncle Richard a little later, as they drove into the spacious, beautiful grounds that had once belonged to Farmer Greene, but were now owned by Charlie Doane.

A healthy, happy young man came out quickly to greet the party, *it was Charlie*, and clinging to his hands were two wholesome, laughing children—*they were Charlie's*, and in the doorway stood a sweet faced, smiling lady; *it was Charlie's wife*.

"I can hardly believe what I see," said Uncle Richard, as Charlie grasped his hand and led him into a delightful, roomy house; "what a change! what a change!"

"Under God, it is all owing to you, Uncle Richard. I was a little fellow when I saw you before, but what you said that night before the Harvest Home stirred me strangely; it stirred us all, somehow, for things picked up after that, and when father stopped drinking wine his head grew clear, and things did not drift any more; it seemed so good to see him able to run the farm again. I resolved then to sow some seed that would bring us joy, not sorrow."

"A wise resolve, but where are the Greens?" asked Uncle Richard, in a voice husky with deep emotion.

"If you are not too tired we will take a short walk, and I will tell you where they are."

They walked down the back yard path, heavy on either side with luscious fruitage, crossed the meadow, and reached a little country burial-place.

"Mr. Greene and his two daughters have moved away to some distant place. *There sleep the mother and her two sons*," Charlie pointed to three grass-grown graves, upon whose slabs Uncle Richard read with moist eyes, "Mother Greene, aged 50," "Benson Greene, aged 20," "Harold Greene, aged 18."

"She sowed the seed of a maddened brain when she gave her bright, beautiful boys the wine that proved to be their ruin; she was insane for two years before her death."

## For Girls and Boys.

## WHAT SAVED HIM.

"It's only to add another 0. Don't you see? It would never be noticed, and would make the \$1,000 \$10,000. Now don't be squeamish about it, we might as well look out for ourselves. There's no chance for promotion here. We might go on for years earning a pitiful ten dollars a week, when this sum would give us a chance to strike out, for we could soon make tracks."

"What do you mean?" asked Robert Langley, placing the cheque on the table.

"Why, cutting,—going of to England,—disguising ourselves, and all that. Don't you see, there's romance about it too, that would just suit you? Wouldn't we have jolly times, though? Ten thousand! Whew! Why, it's almost worth getting hung for, provided one has a jolly good blow beforehand."

For two years Robert Langley had been under the influence of this reckless, unprincipled boy of eighteen. Little by little the foundations of his morality had been sapped. He was not, therefore, prepared to resist the temptation, as he might have been if he had not yielded time and again to this bad adviser.

Besides, old Wilson, the cashier, under whose immediate supervision he was, was not a kind employer. Stern and cold himself, he frowned down anything like an approach to merriment, as if it had been a breach of discipline, and was never known to smile upon any one in his office.