

Letitia grown so tall and fair and gracious? Why did she receive this young man so oddly, out of doors? Was the new step-father like Uncle Titus of old, who would not allow suitors within the house? But no; the meeting had been open and easy, and from those signs of amity made toward the house, the young man seemed on good terms with all there.

Presently Thomas could see a man enter the front room of the house, coming from the rear with a lamp in his hand; he placed the lamp on the table in the bow-window, and sat down to read a paper. He was in his shirt-sleeves, large, strongly made, beardless; it seemed to Thomas that he had the bearing of a young man, but at that distance he could not tell. The curtains of the bow-window were up, and after a little Thomas saw a slender woman in a dark dress come into the room. It was Mercy! He remembered her figure and gait, and her way of carrying her head, so well! She went up to the reader, laid her hand caressingly on his head, and then drew it down about his neck.

The man arose, placed Mercy in a rocking chair, turned away from the light, put a stool at her feet, and then evidently proceeded to read the paper to her. When had Thomas ever shown this thoughtful care for Mercy? When had he seated her in comfort and read a paper to her? His whole course toward Mercy, as he looked back on it, seemed to have been one of selfishness and neglect. Did he not deserve to see his once home made an Eden by some other man, and he himself shut out? Yes, he did. He would go away and never look on this sight again. He felt so terribly ill that it seemed as if he should die there so near to his lost home, unless he could creep away very promptly. If he could only get back to the cabin he would lie there quietly and die. They would find his body some time, and the money in his belt would bury him. No one would recognize him. There was nothing on him by which to identify him. The Bible the chaplain had given him had on the fly-leaf the name Adam Clarke; they would think he was Adam Clarke. Finally, in pain and despair, he had reached his loft, and lain down there, only longing to die.

It was now over a week since Achilles had brought home that news about the lost coat, and about his father. Patience was out of danger, but very weak and frail, and Mercy was greatly exhausted by nursing her so constantly. Absolute silence was kept at the cottage, as Patience slept much of the time. On this Saturday evening, Achilles decreed that his mother should go to bed up in Letitia's room, and not rise until Monday morning.

"Thirty-six hours' rest will set you up again," he said. "Letitia can take care of Patty to-night, and to-morrow Tish must lie down and rest all day, and I will be nurse and housekeeper. We will have no meal cooked but breakfast, and the house shall be as still as a church all day, so that you can all rest."

This was now the third Sunday that Samuel had been debarred from going to church of Sunday-school; consequently he had no library book to read, and, condemned to entire quiet, Sunday was likely to be a dull day to him. The chief delight of Samuel was speaking or reciting; he delighted in delivering orations, which he called "sermons;" he liked reciting hymns in the most impressive manner, and as he had a very retentive memory he knew hymns by the dozen, and passages of Scripture ditto.

"Achilles," he said, as he brought in the milk on Sabbath morning, "I've got my chores done, and I'll tell you what I mean to do. I'm going to put me up a picnic, and go to the old log cabin, and spend the day. I like to be out there alone, and I can shout and preach, and sing and recite, all I want to. Here you'll make me creep around in stocking-feet, and not speak above my breath, for fear of waking up mother, or Patty, or Tishia."

"All right," said Achilles, "only see that you don't have any other boys there with you."

"Hoh! If any came there, and saw me, they'd run like mad, they are all so afraid of catching fever."

"There's a book for you, Friend Amos sent by Philip last night."

"The Life of Livingstone, it's a present," said Letitia.

Samuel gave a whoop of joy. "Now I will have a good time!"

"Confound your uproar!" said Achilles; "get out as fast as you can, before you have mother and Patty roused up."

Samuel took a pail of milk, some bread, butter, eggs, and fruit, his books, and a hammock of his own construction, and went off to the log cabin.

Thomas, after a night of fever and painful dreams, had fallen into a state of half sleep, half coma, and lay quiet on the straw.

Samuel swung up his sacking hammock in the lower room, prepared bark and chips ready for a fire on the hearth, whenever it should seem proper to light it, and boil the eggs or toast the bread which he had brought. He hesitated whether to play church, and have Bible reading and singing first, or read first in his new book. The charms of the book prevailed; he concluded it was too early for church, so established himself in his hammock.

He had read for some little time, when a deep groan startled him, then another. Whence did these sounds come? He laid by his book to listen. Then a human voice: "Mercy! Mercy! Oh, my wife! oh, my lost children! Lord God, this is the just punishment of my sins." Then silence; then: "Lost, all lost. I shall die alone, unhelped—it is just. I reap as I sowed. O Lord, forgive my many transgressions! pardon me for the sake of Christ." Then broken words as of Scripture: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. . . . Come unto me all ye that labour. . . . Thy sins as scarlet—shall be as snow."

This voice was from the room above, and evidently some one was there in deep distress. There was nothing cowardly about Samuel. He climbed the little rough ladder leading through a hole in the floor, and when his head and shoulders were above the floor-level, he saw a man lying on the heap of straw; his shoes and coat were laid upon a projecting beam; he tossed and threw his arms about, and did not seem to notice Samuel. The boy went to him, knelt by him, touched him, crying:

"Man! man! wake up! What can I do for you?"

The half-conscious man moaned, "Water." Samuel hastened down, took a bowl from his basket, filled it at the spring, and brought it to the sufferer. The long, cool draught revived him; he asked:

"How did you come here, boy?"

"I came here to have a nice time by myself and play church. What is the matter with you?"

"I am sick. I think I have taken a very heavy cold; I ache so. Oh, I am in such pain it seems as if I must die."

"So was my sister when she was sick of the fever. I know what I ought to do for you. You need some hot water to bathe your head and neck and arms, and soak your feet; and you need a good bowl of hot mint tea. There is plenty of mint here by the spring, and I have sugar in my basket. Keep still and I'll fix you up all right."

Feeling very important, Samuel went down the ladder, lit his fire, and filled a big iron pot with water. The pot was one which Achilles had left in the cabin, as sometimes in the spring he needed hot water for sick sheep or lambs. Leaving the water to heat, Samuel went for mint, and taking the quart cup he had brought in which to boil his eggs, he made a bowl of strong mint tea well sweetened. Then he carried up the hot water for his patient to bathe, and while he was doing that Samuel made him a slice of toast and carried him that with the mint tea.

"You ought to have a better bed, and take off your clothes," said Samuel; "I know where I can get things for you. You keep still awhile." He set off on a run toward the barn. Uncle Barum had directed that a chest of his clothes, and the few things in the little hall room, where Samuel had slept in his house, should be given to the boy. As the Stanhope cottage was so small, and now so full, and the things were of little value, they had been put in a blue chest in the barn loft, which was clean and dry and kept by two good mousers free of rats. Samuel thought first of going to consult Achilles, but that would take time; it might disturb the sleepers at the quiet house; the things were his own.

He took from the chest the empty tick

that had been his straw bed, a little pillow, a blanket, a thin quilt, two towels and two night-shirts of Uncle Barum's; then pocketing a small piece of soap that lay on a beam in the barn, he set off toward the cabin, lugging his burden along on his back. Arrived at the cabin, he bade his patient undress and put on a night-shirt, and meanwhile he hastily put the straw in the tick, spread the quilt over it, and laid the pillow in place; then he helped the sick man, who could hardly stand, to return to bed, and spread the light blanket over him.

The man gave a deep sigh of relief: "Oh, what a good bed!" closed his eyes, and seemed to sink into sleep.

Samuel went for a quantity of pine and hemlock branches to put into the empty window-frame and screen the light from the sufferer; brought up a little empty box from below, covered it with a paper from his lunch basket, and put it for a table by the bed's head.

Taking the sick man's coat to lay as additional covering over his feet, he found the Bible in the pocket and laid it with the scrap of soap on the table. Then he went below for a square bottle among the rubbish lying there, and filled it with a bouquet of daisies and red clover. When this was placed on the improvised table, Samuel told himself that he had made a "real beautiful room for the man."

Common sense warned him that he would do well to stay below, although the soft summer breeze of the mountain blew freshly through the open upper room. Swinging in his hammock reading, his thoughts were with the suffering stranger, and he heard his fevered mutterings about "deputies," "square men," "corridors," "taps," "dispensary," "hospitals," "evening class," "numbers," "guards," and so on, without understanding what they meant. Several times he went up to give the patient drink, and finally about six o'clock he carried him a large bowl of tea, and then left him for the night.

Returning home, he milked, fed the fowls, filled the wood-box in the kitchen, and laid the fire ready to light in the morning. His mother was still in bed; Letitia had also been sent to bed by the masterful Achilles.

"I'm going to sleep on the floor by Patty's bed and take care of her to-night," said Achilles to Samuel. "You go up to bed when you get ready, only go bare-footed, and make no noise."

He went into the lower bed-room and closed the door. The moon had risen. Samuel thought about going to bed; then he thought of the poor sick man, who might need help; why not run across to the cabin, and sleep in the hammock? He was strangely drawn to his poor sufferer. Gently shutting the house door he sped away to the cabin.

The night passed quietly enough. Samuel slept too soundly to hear the moaning or talking of his patient. At the first dawn the boy awoke, lit a fire, made a bowl of tea, and carried it to the loft. The man drank it eagerly.

"How do you feel?" said Samuel. "Seems to me you look very queer and lumpy."

"I feel so," said the man. "I wish I had a looking-glass."

"Perhaps it's measles," suggested Samuel, "or chicken-pox."

The man started, then cried, "Pull away those branches, boy—give me all the light you can."

Samuel obeyed. The man bared his arms and looked at them an instant. "Run, boy! run and leave me! This is small-pox! I must have taken it where I slept that first night! Don't stand there! Go."

"What will you do?" asked Samuel coolly.

"Never mind me—go."

"But if I'm going to catch it, why, I have; and where shall I go? I don't want to take it to my folks at home. I don't believe I'll get it. I'm vaccinated; oh, you should see the mark, big as a dime! I don't take things. Patty has had scarlet fever, and I never took that."

"Boy, what is your name?"

"Samuel Stanhope."

The man fell back on the bed, groaning in anguish.

"I'm sorry you feel so bad," said Samuel, "don't you know what to do for small-pox?"

The wretched sufferer roused himself. "Yes, I do. I have been a hospital nurse for years. You are right, boy. Your risk is run; you can now carry infection if you go near your people. I can tell you what to do for me, and if you take the disease I shall be well enough, by then, to nurse you properly. Besides, there is as much or more chance that you do not take it, than that you do. In my pocket there is money for what we need. Can you get some corn meal for gruel, some sugar, and plenty of cream of tartar? The best English doctors use only free drinking of cream of tartar in small-pox, and rub with oil. We need a bottle of oil, and I wish we had some carbolic acid—and some tar."

"There's tar at the barn, and mother has the acid; she got it to keep round, since Patty was sick. I'll go home and get what we need," said Samuel; "I don't want any money."

"Don't—go near your mother!" cried poor Thomas, falling back exhausted. The excitement of his son's danger had nerved him for a little; now he felt a deathly weakness.

Samuel ran at the top of his speed toward his home, seated himself on the barn-yard fence, and hailed the house. Achilles appeared in his shirt-sleeves, greatly amazed, and very angry.

"What are you out there bawling like that for at this time in the morning, waking up mother? Where have you been?"

"Don't come near me, Kill," said Samuel, as his brother advanced. "I've got the small-pox."

Achilles halted, but looked at Samuel as a fit candidate for an insane asylum.

"At least, I may have it on me," began Samuel; but here Mercy appeared. She had gone early into the room of her younger son, but finding the bed undisturbed, had become alarmed and hurried downstairs. To Achilles and his mother Samuel told his startling tale.

"He's a real nice-looking man, mother; he's a hospital nurse. He's a good man, too; he prays ever so much, and says texts when he's out of his mind. His name is Adam Clarke; I saw it in his Bible. I've been exposed all I can be, and he knows what to do. You had better give me things that I need, and I'll stay there at the cabin till he's well, and we're sure I don't catch it. I don't believe I will. But I might bring it home, if I came. Tish might get it, or Kill. Kill mustn't catch it, mother; who'd take care of you then? I'm not a bit afraid."

Mercy wrung her hands. "He ought to be carried to a pest-house."

"There is none in the county," said Achilles. "It would make a terrible scare. No one ever goes near the cabin—it is on the corner of our own land now, you know. Perhaps the boy is right."

"Yes, mother, don't you be frightened. I'll come every morning and every evening, regular, to this fence, and tell you just how I feel, and how I get on, and if I miss coming, even once, send Kill."

"If he gets sick," said Achilles, "I'll make a room in the barn-loft, and nurse him there myself."

"I know I shan't get it," said Samuel. "I'll stay in the lower room most of the time, and I'll burn tar, and sprinkle acid, and I'll live on gruel, and drink cream-of-tartar water. I'll be careful, and I don't believe the man is going to die. He isn't very thick out with it, only three or four on his face, but more on the rest of him."

Mercy was crying bitterly over Samuel's danger. Achilles put his arm around her.

"Cheer up, mamsey, Samuel will come out all right, and this poor man must not be left alone like a dog. He is some one's son or husband, and our human relation, you know."

(To be continued.)

JAMES CARLYLE'S EXPERIENCE.

JAMES CARLYLE, brother of Thomas Carlyle, once said, regarding school inspections: "Ye make a terrible to-do about eddication nooadays, by what was the case when I was young. The day at the schule when I was nine years auld, my teacher was hearin' me say my cachers, and I said 'he believes' instead o' 'he believeth.' He knocked me doon, and pu'd my legs and bangit me on the desks; an' I ran oot an' lay at the fit o' a hedge among dokens and nettles three hale days."