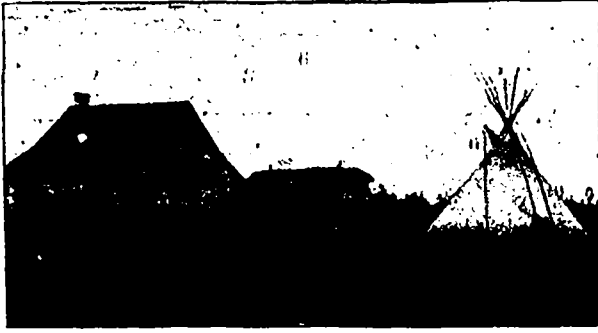




VALLEY RIVER SCHOOL. (See page 255.)

they seemed like machines working in a dull routine, without interest, and almost without consciousness.

Month followed month, year succeeded year, and no letter reached them. They heard of a man who was reported to have seen Harry, and they went ten miles to meet him, but he knew nothing. He had only heard from another man that Harry was at the gold-diggings. That was all.

You might see Steele walking by his horses as he went with the wagon. He never whistled now, nor sang as he once did, but plodded on in a sort of dream. This was the end of him. The horses started one day, and he was not quick enough. He was knocked down; the wheel went over him, and he was carried home in the wagon a corpse. After this his wife did not linger long. She had no disease; but she ebbed away, and was found dead in her bed. I buried her beside her husband.

Ten years after that I was reading the Communion Service, and came to the Fifth Commandment. As the choir commenced the "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law," a loud and bitter cry rang through the church, overpowering the voices of the choir, who stopped, awe-struck, as they heard—

"I cannot. I have none. I have been the death of them. O, my God, my God!"

There was a long and awful silence. At last I gathered courage and went on, although I could hear sobs and groans from time to time. Before I finished the Commandments a man rose up and left the church. I looked! it was Harry Steele.

I went up into the pulpit, but I could not preach. I simply said:

"My brethren,—We have had our sermon to-day. Children, you will never hear such another. I will only say, remember that we have a Heavenly Father, and if our sins against our earthly parents are so grievous, what of our sins against Him? Yet He is still our Father, still waiting to receive and forgive. Whilst we can, let such of us as have earthly parents still

living, love, honor, and succor them; and let us all love God more, and serve Him with all our hearts—our *hearts*."

I then went down from the pulpit, and proceeded with the service.

I had not to seek Harry. He came to me himself, and we were together for several hours in my study. They sent for me to come and have some food, but he could not cease speaking and weeping, and I could not cease hearing and weeping with him.

If ever there was a broken-hearted, wretched man, it was Harry Steele.

"If I had but gone to my mother," he said, "when you begged me—if I had but written to my parents regularly—it would

have been so easy; it would have given them such comfort; but I did not. I do not know why I did not, but I did not. Sometimes I was going to do it, but I could not say I was living as they wished. Then I was nearly starving. Then I began to grow rich, and thought I would return suddenly, and that would delight them. Then I gambled and lost all, and was ashamed. I began again. I grew rich. I have five hundred pounds of my own. What was the use of it? I came home, meaning to make them comfortable in their old age, and they are dead, and I killed them—killed them both. O, my God, my God! There never were such loving parents; never such an ungrateful son. O, I remember one thing after another, and my head is ready to burst, and my heart too. O, my God, how can I say 'Our Father'? How can I?"

It was a bitter repentance, but the more bitter, the more sincere and thorough. Harry became a changed man: so gentle, so humble, so anxious to do good. I often found a sovereign in the offertory; and I knew the yellow Australian gold, and who had given it.

Harry became my gardener, my friend, my companion. After a few years his hardships in Australia bore their deadly fruit. He fell into a decline. He lies beside his parents in the churchyard. He had placed grave-stones over them, and left directions as to his own. The inscription is—

HENRY STEELE,

AGED 30.

DIED 1860.

HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER.
FATHER, I HAVE SINNED AGAINST HEAVEN
AND BEFORE THEE :
AND AM NO MORE WORTHY
TO BE CALLED THY SON.
JESU, MERCY.

Conquer we shall, but we must first contend,
'Tis not the fight that crowns us, but the end.