

church, you can lean upon my arm, mother; faint consolation, but it came from a full heart.

"You must indeed be your poor mother's helper, Curtis," and she pressed me tearfully to her bosom. Johnny came and took my hand, as if claiming my protection; little Amos was helped up between mother and me, and the girls drew up their crickets close beside us,—a sorrowing, yet loving group. I looked around, and for the first time felt all the responsibility of an elder brother; and I then solemnly resolved to do all I could to make my mother and the little ones comfortable and happy.

"I want to be like my father," I said aloud.

"You look some like father," whispered Johnny.

"Be as good," added Sarah.

"Yes, Curtis, be as good," sighed my mother.

Weeks passed away, and I was true to my resolution. My mother's quiet and uncomplaining sorrow chastened and improved me; while the confidence she placed in me, and the assistance I was able to afford in settling her business, gave me a sense of responsibility which I had never felt before. I desired nothing so much as to merit her good opinion and her love. Those were happy days, when I was in constant intercourse with such a mother as mine was.

The next winter, in order to pursue my studies to more advantage, I attended a higher school, and was there thrown among a new set of boys, boys older than myself, and very differently trained. There was something in their dashing, off-hand style, that attracted me; their bravado and recklessness I mistook for courage and generosity; they hated study, evaded every regulation, and played jokes upon the teacher; and this wretched want of principle I fancied was only a certain free and easy manner, common to young gentlemen. A skating party was talked of about this time. The next moonlight

evening, it was proposed to skate five miles up the river, and have a supper at the Fall House, a hotel somewhere in that region, of great gaming reputation. I was strongly urged to go, and as strongly did I desire it, especially as I was proud of a title earned among the boys, of 'the swift skater;' it seemed an excellent opportunity of exhibiting my skill to my new comrades. Somehow or other I felt a strange backwardness to speak to my mother about it. Ah, there is always something wrong, when children are afraid to talk with a mother, regarding their plans and pastimes. At last the very morning came, and as yet it had not been mentioned at home. 'Now or never,' I said to myself, going into her chamber after breakfast, in some degree braced for a refusal. The plan was partly laid open.

"Who did you say the boys were, Curtis?" she asked.

"Why, Tom Jones, and Sam Coburn, and George Kent, and some like others,—but skating so, I don't suppose I should see much of them," I added, with a tone of apology.

"They are not the companions you should choose for my son," she said gently.

"Well, mother, I suppose we can always expect to associate with such boys as we like;" and this was the first time I, in any degree, questioned her opinions.

"Yes, Curtis, we are at liberty to choose our companions. Duty obliges us into close contact with those whom we can neither respect nor admire, whom we should never think of selecting as companions; treat all kindly and civilly, but be careful not to admit them to the easy intercourse of friendship," said my mother earnestly.

"I really do not see the need of being so very particular; only once, it cannot harm me." Perhaps there was a pout on my lips; certainly was a pout in my heart.

"If a young man would keep his tongue he must be particular in little things."