

the fire; you look perishing with cold; and she drew a rude chair up to the warmest corner; then, suspiciously glancing at the child from the corners of her eyes, she continued setting the table for supper.

Presently came the tramp of heavy shoes, the door was swung open with a quick jerk, and the "goodman" presented himself, wearied with labor. A look of intelligence passed between his wife and himself; he, too, scanned the boy's face with an expression not evincing satisfaction, but nevertheless made him come to the table, and then enjoyed the zest with which he dispatched his supper.

Day after day passed, and yet the boy begged to be kept "only till to-morrow," so that the good people, after due consideration, concluded that as long as he was so docile and worked so heartily they would retain him.

One day, in the middle of the winter, a peddler, long accustomed to trade at the cottage, made his appearance and disposed of his goods readily, as if he had been waited for.

"You have a boy out there splitting wood, I see," he said, pointing to the yard.

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"I have seen him," replied the peddler, evasively.

"And where? Who is he? What is he?"

"A jail-bird," and the peddler swung his pack over his shoulder. "That boy, young as he looks, I saw in court myself, and heard his sentence: 'Ten months.' He's a hard one; you'd do well to look carefully after him."

O, there was something so horrible in the word "jail," the poor woman trembled as she laid away her purchases; nor could she be easy till she called the boy in and assured him that she knew that dark part of his history.

Ashamed, distressed, the child hung his head; his cheeks seemed bursting with the hot blood; his lips quivered, and anguish was painted as vividly upon his forehead as if the words were branded in the flesh.

"Well," he muttered, his whole frame relaxing as if a burden of guilt or joy had suddenly rolled off; "I may as well go to ruin at once; there's no use in me trying to do better; everybody hates and despises me; nobody cares about me; I may as well go to ruin at once."

"Tell me," said the woman, who stood off far enough for flight if that should be necessary; "how came you to go so young to that dreadful place? Where was your mother—where?"

"O!" exclaimed the boy with a burst of grief that was terrible to behold—"O, I hain't got no mother! O, I hain't had no mother ever since I was a baby? If I'd only had a mother," he continued, his anguish growing more vehement and the tears gushing out from his strange-looking gray eyes; "I wouldn't ha' been bound out and kicked and cuffed and laid on to with whips; I wouldn't ha' been saucy and got knocked down and run away, and then stole because I was hungry. O, I hain't got no mother! I hain't got no mother! I haven't had no mother since I was a baby!"

The strength was all gone from the poor boy, and he sank on his knees, sobbing great choking sobs and rubbing the hot tears away with his poor knuckles. And did that woman stand there unmoved? Did she coldly bid him pack up and be off—the jail-bird? No, no; she had been a mother, and though all her children slept under the cold sod in the churchyard she was a mother still.

She went up to that poor boy, not to hasten him away, but lay her fingers kindly, softly on his head—to tell him to look up and from henceforth find in her a mother. Yes, she even put her arms about the neck of that forsaken, deserted child; she poured from her mother's heart sweet, womanly words—words of counsel and tenderness.

O, how sweet was her sleep that night! how soft her pillow! She had linked a poor suffering heart to hers by the most silken the strongest bonds of love; she had plucked some thorns from the path of a little sinning, but striving mortal.

Did the boy leave her? Never! He is with her still, a vigorous, manly, promising youth. The unfavorable cast of his countenance has given place to an open, pleasing expression, with depth enough to make it an interesting study. His foster-father is dead; his good foster-mother aged and sickly, but she knows no want. The once poor outcast is her only dependence, and nobly does he repay the trust.

## THE HEAVENLY HOME.

It is not the walls of the building in which you live that makes your earthly home, but the company of those you love.

A little boy about four years old, was returning from school one day. He bounded into the house, exclaiming as he hung his hat in the entry: "This is my home! this is my home!"