

EARLY MEMORIES.

CONTINUED.

About this time occurred my first religious awakening. It was the year 1816. We had removed to a new, at least a sparse settlement on the bank of the Niagara river. At that day there were between Black Rock and the Tonawanda, about five settlers who had been resident for a good many years. They were Dutch, or Germans, and spoke their own language. About this time a few other families were coming in. Among them was a Mr. F——. He was of Irish descent,—a Methodist, and a local preacher. He purchased the farm (the best in the settlement) of one of these old settlers, to which he added a considerable tract of wild land adjoining. He had money: he drove a carriage; and he fitted up his premises with view to taste as well as utility. All these things stamped him as a man of consequence, and secured him a position of superiority in the estimation of his simple neighbours. But as he was kind and affable, the deference which was cheerfully accorded him, was largely mingled with sincere respect. Up to this time, so far as I know, or believe, there had never been any religious services in the settlement. But through Mr. F——'s influence a Methodist circuit station was established in our little log school-house. Our first circuit preacher was the Rev. Mr. Philmore, a brother I believe, but if not, a near relative of the late American president of that name. According to my recollection of him he was a man of very considerable ability. He had in his preaching the Methodist fire of that day, but without its extravagancies. His preaching was followed with considerable effect. Several professed conversion. A class was formed, and we had prayer meetings and class meetings; and Mr. F—— preached on the alternate Sundays, the circuit preacher only visiting us once in two weeks, and then in the evening. Mr. Philmore, according to the impression I have always retained of him, had an extraordinary power of presenting some of the elementary truths of the gospel in so clear a light as to make it seem impossible to evade them, such as the claims which God has upon us, his creatures, for perfect love, and obedience, as expressed in His holy law. The manner in which these claims have been met by us, with total disregard or positive rejection, even to enmity and rebellion. The perfect, even handed justice of the punishment denounced, &c., &c. But here he seemed to stop, or else in my childish ignorance I failed to apprehend him. He pointed us to no remedy. He exhorted us, it is true, to repent, to pray without ceasing, and to walk humbly, humbly and justly before God. All this I attempted with the most sincere endeavours to do; but I found no peace. My conscience had been dissected: my sins were laid bare and I felt myself lying under an awful condemnation, against which I could urge no plea; to the righteousness of which I could take no exception, and it is also true that we were exhorted to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But to me it seemed that I needed no urging to this duty, as I had accepted the testimony of the evangelists respecting the Saviour, with the most unquestioning faith, and from my habit of reading the Scriptures for the last two or

three years, my knowledge on this subject was such in advance of that of most children of my own age. Thus I went mourning and my distress was aggravated, when I heard others at the prayer meetings, assert that their sins were all forgiven, and that now they enjoyed perfect peace. My agitation was so great that though I strove to be so, it was impossible to conceal it. I was aware that my brothers and sisters, (three older and two younger than myself) had observed it. But instead of offering me comfort and support, they appeared estranged. They seemed to look upon me with a sort of wonder. When I joined them they became silent, or whispered to each other; and looked at me askance, and once, one of them, who had surprised me in secret prayer, stily remarked, "W—— is praying now, we shall soon have him preaching." No encouragement seemed to be given to the remark by the rest, but I felt the iron go into my soul. I sought solitude—wandered away by myself—remained abroad late in the evenings, and when I came in, instead of joining in the cheerful fireside chit-chat, I would steal off to bed and weep there.

The F——s were our next neighbours. We had scarcely yet become acquainted with them, but I felt towards Mr. F—— the greatest reverence. In my childish innocence I regarded him as a holy prophet of God. His children, of whom there were six, I considered among the happiest of human beings. I envied them, not for their wealth or position, but for the much more exalted privilege of being members of a religious family. I had a very high estimation of this privilege, and from my distance they seemed to possess it in the highest degree. Once or twice, being sent with a message, I was present at their family worship. How solemn and impressive! The reverend father, with a solemn intonation, read a portion of the holy word. The whole family joined in a hymn of praise. Then, all kneeling in their places the patriarch and high priest of the household, in earnest prayer invoked the Divine blessing and protection for them all. On my way home my heart would exclaim,—Happy children! With such a home how easy it would be to be a Christian. I was very anxious to get on easy terms with this family, I thought that intercourse with them would do me good. I endeavoured therefore, to make myself agreeable and helpful to them whenever opportunity offered, and as the autumn advanced, I had the high gratification of receiving an invitation, with the other young members of our family, to a little evening party with them. This was exceedingly gratifying. I looked forward to the day with very flattering anticipations. But before joining the party I must introduce you to our entertainers, the young F——s. Mary, the eldest daughter, was a truly estimable young woman of eighteen, dignified, but affable and kind. She scarcely belonged to our party, though she honoured us with her presence during a part of the evening, and by her gentle attentions added much to our enjoyment. Rachel, the next, was a blooming, beautiful girl of fourteen. By her I had become completely fascinated. I regarded her as something more than human,—almost angelic. I could not have been made to believe that she carried any imperfection either of heart or temper about her being.

In her presence I was bashful and awkward, but the slightest attention or kind word from her would thrill me like a charge of electricity. I believe it is not very uncommon for boys of active temperaments to become fascinated with females older than themselves; and although this boy-love is doubtless very silly, it is innocent, as it carries with it no impure desire, or even thought. Burnet was a boy of my own age; bold, thoughtful, and assuming. As the son of a prophet I paid great deference to him, but secretly wished he were more gentle and considerate. The next was Becca, a sweet little girl of ten or eleven, and there were two younger brothers, the elder of whom was John Wesley.

All these, as well as the parents, received us very kindly in the large family room, made cheerful by a glowing fire in the great open fire-place. We had apples, and nuts, and cider; and tales, and riddles, and songs, i. e., Methodist hymns. And then, when,—not the cloth, but the débris was removed, came on the plays. We had button, blind man's buff, seek the slipper, and others. In the midst of one of these a hot, angry dispute arose. Oh my soul! It is my divine Rachel. Her beautiful face dark with rage.—"John Wesley you cheated."—"I did not."—"I say you did."—Approaching her demonstratively, "*Rach, you know you do.*"—Then my angel's long arm came round, giving him a box on the side of his head, which sent him reeling across the room. John Wesley bellowed stentoriously. Pa, and Ma, and Mary, came rushing in—"O dear! What is the matter?" Both believers attempt their vindication at the same time, in words so loud and rapid that neither can be understood. Ma, with both hands seized John Wesley by the collar, and shakes him as a terrier shakes a rat. Pa leads, or rather pushes Rachel out of the room. I take advantage of the confusion, steal out unobserved, and hasten home with a great "lump in my throat," and greater sobs lower down. My beautiful temple in ruins! My angel fallen! My model godly family, the fancied home of piety, peace, and love,—

Oh! Oh! Oh!

In spite of myself, my concern for my soul abated. I lost the desire to attend the meetings, nor was it difficult to find excuses for stopping at home especially when Mr. F—— preached; and so, though not without many twinges of conscience, I soon settled back in to my former state of careless indifference. Still, in one respect the event proved of service to me. My own home rose greatly in my estimation. It was not a religious home strictly speaking, but it was orderly and peaceful. Very seldom were any angry passions evoked, and if a little flame did happen to arise in the course of some childish controversy, it was immediately quenched and was forgotten the next hour; and I never afterwards felt any longing to exchange it for another however pretentious.

The next summer, (the last before going to Canada) I spent in Buffalo, residing with a cousin, whom I assisted in his business. Our next door neighbour was a young tradesman, who was recently married, and nicely settled with a sweet tidy young wife. In pursuit of my duties I had often to call at his house. He kindly noticed me, and one day, observing me looking over the titles of