

I remember what you did for us youngsters while we were growing up. We depended on you as much as on our mother. There is no one else in the world to whom I would so soon commit the rearing of my darling child. May I ask this additional favor of one to whom I am already indebted for so much?"

So Martha took little Alice, and reared her to a useful, lovely womanhood. After teaching two or three years, she too, had gone to a home of her own.

"Come and live with us, Aunt Martha," said Alice earnestly.

But Martha shook her head. How could she leave the old homestead? How could she go to new surroundings, among new people? Besides she had a feeling that it was better for the young people to begin life alone together, without the presence of even one so near as herself.

After they had gone, Martha Grayson was really alone for the first time in her life. But she would have plenty to do to keep her from getting lonely, she told herself. She thought of a dozen ways in which her time could be occupied, to drive away the little spectres of unrest that might otherwise come slipping in. With the resolution of a strong will, she took up her tasks and found in them, as a rule, the remedy she sought. But not always! There were days when the very emptiness of the house seemed to create a sound; when the echo of her own footsteps startled her; when the ticking of the clock seemed like the ringing of church bells. She fell to lying awake at nights,—a thing she had never done before.

She fought off these feelings bravely, however. It was only in the late autumn, when the days grew short and the nights chill; when she could no longer with pleasure roam about over the hills, or sit under the apple-trees in the orchard, listening to the birds in

the trees above; when, worst of all, her old enemy, rheumatism, which had admonished her with sundry pinches and twinges of late that it was in the vicinity, began to storm the citadel of her activity; it was only when all these circumstances commenced to mar the even tenor of her life that Martha began to think seriously, in the long night watches, what her future should be.

To be sure, she could go and live with Alice; but she hardly felt this was the wisest thing to do. Only one other plan commended itself to her.

In the little city of Springfield, twenty miles away, was a home for aged and lonely women, such as herself. She had first heard of it through a cousin who lived near by; since then some of her friends had gained admission, and all the reports she had heard of it were very favorable. She hesitated, however, to take this step, and busied herself about her home, taking up the duties for which, day by day, she had less and less strength and inclination, now that there was no one to do for but herself.

A severe attack of rheumatism during the winter, when she was helpless for weeks, settled the matter, and in the early spring she sold her farm and personal belongings and arranged for her entrance into the Home at Springfield.

It was hard, of course,—the breaking up of old ties, the leaving of familiar surroundings; but she had known from the beginning that it would be so; and with a resolute courage, reinforced by much sound philosophy and sweetness of disposition, she went through it bravely. The move once accomplished, she made every effort to adjust herself to her new environment. She tried to be happy and contented. Nevertheless, in the quiet of her own room, Martha Grayson fought out many a battle.

One night the struggle was especially sharp. It had been one of those