

THE VOW-TREE.

It was a bright and beautiful evening in the month of May, when an old gray-haired man seated himself upon an arm-chair beneath a wide-spreading and luxuriant maple which grew at a short distance from his door. The sound of young voices came floating through the trellis of vines which shaded the doorway, and fell upon the old man's ear like the music of other years. He rested his head upon the cushioned back of his chair, and, while his grandchildren laughed merrily within the house, and the birds warbled sweetly among the green leaves overhead, he went back over his years of life and lived once more his youth. Suddenly raising himself in his chair, he spoke to his youngest grandchild, who was playing beside him.

"Willie, run and tell your cousins to bring chairs and sit here, for I have something to tell them."

The child obeyed, and soon some four or five young maidens, with as many young men, came out, each with a chair, gleefully exclaiming,

"Grandpa has a story for us!"

In a few moments they were all seated about their grandfather and listening attentively to hear the beginning of his narrative.

"My children," he began, "my conversation is of those things which have passed away. I have just been dreaming a waking dream, in which I beheld the past exhibited with such vividness that I am strongly impelled to relate some of its leading features, partly for your admonition and partly for your encouragement.

"Almost eighty years ago I planted the tree under which we are sitting. I will tell you how it was. I was very young then, yet in my teens, and for some two or three years I had been a wanderer from the path of morality and virtue. My health was shattered from the effects of my youthful follies, and I saw that I was about to enter upon active life a mere wreck of manhood, destined soon, very soon to sink into the grave.

"Well, I vowed that I would be a man of virtue once more, and, as I was walking through the field near my father's house, I saw this maple tree, then a small plant, which I could cover with my hand. I plucked it up and brought it to this place, planted it very carefully, and drove some stakes about it for protection, and

then I inwardly made this vow to my God.

"If thou wilt let thy care be over me, and cause me to increase in vigor, health and hardihood, mentally, morally and physically, as thy genial nature must cause this plant to flourish, I will promise to avoid immorality with all that in me is."

"I kept my vow. Day after day went by, and slowly but surely did my little tree collect nourishment from the air and the earth, Just so slowly and surely did health and happiness return to me. But soon the tree grew up to be a beautiful ornament; its nice smooth body and even branches rendered it the pride of the lot.

"In the course of time my father and mother were carried away to the grave, and the old homestead fell to me. I soon found a genial companion, and here we lived together happily for nearly half a century. We saw this tree unfolding its beautiful branches, and increasing in size. But at last my companion died, and now I am left alone to come and sit beneath this old tree, which I have called the Vow-tree.

"May this story admonish you; may you fear to fall into evil habits, and if you are any of you now in the ways of immorality, may it encourage you to overcome your sinfulness. I would not have you think my case was miraculous; any one, who will leave off iniquity will surely find himself rapidly improving.

"Now that I am old, it gives me great pleasure to behold this Vow-tree; my meridian has long since passed, but this tree is yet in its youth; it will shade your grandchildren as it does mine. Clarence read these lines to me"—and here the old man handed an old manuscript to a handsome young man who sat opposite. Clarence opened and read, in a clear voice,

Thou childling of the forest, I take thee from thy home;

And plant thee near the doorway, where I may ever see

Thy little form expanding from out the mellow loam,

Into the luxuriant and noble maple tree.

May the gentle rains of Heaven be a blessing unto thee,

And the winds and pleasant zephyrs, as round thee they may roam,

Bring forth health and lasting vigor unto thee, Vow-tree,

Until proudly thy bold branches be the glory of my home.

The old man resumed—"Those lines I

wrote upon the day I planted this tree, and have kept them ever since, not as evidences of poetical merit, for they have none, but merely as a memento of the past. You may all see that the wish expressed in them has been verified. Now let me say to you, that whenever you are tempted to despond, because of any previous misdemeanor, remember this Vow-tree."

THE SEA OF GALILEE.

This lake is also known in the Gospels as the Sea of Tiberias and Gennesareth; and in the Old Testament as the Sea of Chennereth. It is about thirteen miles in length, and six in breadth; and is formed by the Jordan, which traverses it from north to south, and then flows on to the Dead Sea, sixty miles south. In many respects a great change has here taken place since the time of Christ. Then the shores were filled by a teeming population; towns and villages crowded the banks, and boats swarmed on the waters. Now the only remaining town is Tiberias, a city in ruins, containing about two thousand inhabitants, and wretched and filthy to the last degree. Instead of a large fleet of fishing boats, only one vessel can now be found on its waters. The round hills that come boldly down to the sea are now bare of trees; and though covered with a delightful verdure after the winter rains, become parched and desolate under the summer sun. The lake lies embosomed in a deep basin, more than three hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and enclosed on all sides, except near the inlet and outlet of the Jordan, by hills that rise steeply hundreds of feet in height; while in the back ground on the east side are mountains a thousand feet high. The range of heights stretching around the sea itself is broken by occasional shady ravines and water-courses, and here and there is separated from the sea by a level and exceedingly fertile plain. In one of these plains Capernaum used to stand, but now it has wholly disappeared. Far away in the north Mount Hermon lifts its snow-capped crown to the sky, with the majesty of a summit that has looked down on the coming and going of a hundred generations.

The regions of this sea bears marks of volcanic action, and hot springs still exist on the shore south of Tiberias. The