

Up the road moved a little blue sun-bonnet—that was Patience. She had been spending an hour or two at Mrs. Gardiner's, playing with the baby. Mrs. Gardiner had promised her a sheep if she would amuse the baby for awhile every day all summer. The baby was pretty cross, but Patience had to the full the quality of her name, and she beguiled the infant Gardiner to forget the vexations of teething. Patty began to dance with joy when she saw her sister, but while dancing and skipping she carefully carried a little basket.

"It has a hot loaf of gingerbread in it," she cried, handing it to her mother. "Won't that be nice for supper, now Tish is home?"

"Tishia," said Achilles, "I thought perhaps I'd have the new porch up before you came home. It is going up next week, sure. Won't the house look nice then? Do you see how large the grape-vines are I set out last year to grow at the porch corners? I shall turn barrels over them, so they will not be hurt while the men are working. Mr. Canfield told me to-day that this place would not have been worth five hundred four years ago, and now he thinks when the porch is up and the barn repaired, it would fetch a good fifteen hundred. But of course selling is not a question. It couldn't be sold before Patty was twenty-one, and we won't want to sell it then. I say, Tish, if we keep on, won't it be a dandy place in fourteen years? I hope before then to buy as much as ten acres more of land. Mother, you'll have as good a home as anybody has to end your days in."

Mercy gave her little, quiet smile, and went into the house to make ready the supper. It was to be a nice supper in honour of Letitia. She saw through the open door of the kitchen her four children looking at the bees, the flower-bed, and the vegetable garden, while she made ready the supper. Tall and broad-shouldered Achilles looked older than his years; Letitia in her neat print dress and smoothly braided hair, was in the early bloom of girlhood; Patience, swinging her sun-bonnet, was rosy and healthy; and Samuel with his big, brown, far-seeing eyes, and with his developed brow, was a child to largely attract curiosity and attention; grave, thoughtful, and unchildlike in his moods, and thoroughly childish in his simplicity and docility. How good they all were! How beautiful she thought them, her compensation for the many woes that had been hers. Was it true that she should end her days among them, in this little home, or in six years more must she part from them? Certainly it should not be a parting for long or for far. These children were hers, in them was her comfort and happiness.

Patience came dancing in to set the table. "Tish says we are a selfish set to leave you alone to get supper," she cried, "only we all told Tish she must play company, so I came."

Mercy wanted Letitia to be with Achilles every moment that she could. She knew well what a sister's loving influence could be to a boy.

Sometimes, in hours when he had come to himself and to penitence, in his evil days, Thomas had said: "Oh, if I had had a sister to make my home pleasant to me, if my mother had not died so early, I think I should not have been led off as I was."

Still, common sense told Mercy that Thomas had not been bound to go astray merely because he had had no mother and no sister. Other boys had been left in the same condition, and had borne themselves nobly. The cords of a mother's or a sister's influence might have been to Thomas as weak as the wife's had proved.

What beaming faces surrounded that supper-table! Letitia's three miles' walk up the mountain after school, and the hard work of the rest of the family, had provided sharp-set appetites to welcome Mercy's ham and eggs, and good brown bread, and Mrs. Gardiner's loaf of fresh ginger-cake. After supper, when the two girls had cleared away the dishes and they all sat by the open door and window chatting, Mercy could not but remember other days, when this house was a bare wreck, and she and her four children had listened for the steps of the returning husband and father, ready to fly to the barn or the laurel shelter on the mountain, if he came up the road swearing and quarrelling with the demon that had taken him in possession.

"What a difference whiskey or no whiskey makes in a home!" said Mercy to herself. Just then she caught part of the talk between Achilles and Letitia.

"Jim Ladley is beginning to stay down-town nights, and his folks are worrying over it," said Achilles. "Mrs. Ladley says if Jim falls into bad ways and takes to drink it will break her heart. He has always stayed home nights till this spring. She says she could never go through what mother did. I told her mother's troubles were behind her, she had them out with father. Samuel and I have had our lesson, and we'd as soon eat coals of fire as drink whiskey. We know that the door of the saloon is the door of the penitentiary."

"Why don't Mrs. Ladley talk to Jim instead of talking about him?" said Letitia. "She is his mother, and she has a right. Besides, if she talked it over, she'd find she needn't fret. I have heard that Jim spends every evening with Susan Grant. Susan is as nice a girl as there is in town, but Jim is shy of telling his mother, because he is afraid she won't like it. Susan works at Mrs. Spence's. I heard Friend Amos tell Jim he had better make an honest confession to his folks that he liked Susan. Friend Amos said they ought to be glad of it."

"There! I'm glad you told me, Tish. I'll tell that to Mrs. Ladley to-morrow, when I go over there to my work. I reckon she has been so scared about the saloon notion, that she'll jump for joy when she finds it is a nice girl like Susan that is taking Jim off."

Mercy listened. How the years flew by, and how her children were growing up! It was the sterner cares of life that occupied them now. Once their chatter had been of wild rabbits in the wood, of little play-houses, made of stones. Then it had been of the garden and the fowls, the pigs, the calves, and now all weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and truth engrossed their tongues. Love and marriage for others were now their theme. How soon would the whirling years make the subject more personal!

Was she not safer and happier for this maturing thought of her children? She was no longer lonely, she had her friends in her own household, to whom it was no treason to speak her thoughts.

That night, after they had gone to bed, Mercy and Letitia had a long talk about the imprisoned husband and father. Friend Amos had been away on a journey, and had stopped to see Thomas. He had not told Thomas the particulars of the improved fortunes of his family, but he had told him they were well and doing well, working hard, lacking none of the necessities of life, esteemed by all. Thomas had sent ardent messages to them all. The chaplain had told Friend Amos that he believed that Thomas was a truly penitent and converted man; he was doing good in the prison, and his conduct was unexceptionable.

"I have not told Achilles yet," said Letitia, "but I shall to-morrow morning, when he goes out to the barn to do the milking. I want to tell it to him just right, so as to help him around toward feeling better toward father. And I shall tell Samuel too, as we work in the garden. Mother, I believe we shall see some good of father yet."

Then Mercy unfolded to Letitia that plan about having a little separate home for the prisoner and herself when he should be free.

"O mother!" cried Letitia, "we could never let you go. We could not give you up! That would just destroy our home, and fairly break the boys' hearts. Why, father could come here, there is room enough. I see Achilles has begun finishing up that other room in the attic."

"The trouble would not be with the size of the house," said Mercy, but with Achilles. Achilles will never forgive his father. I cannot so much blame the boy; he remembers only all that was evil in him. He had nothing good to remember. After he was two years old your poor father did so badly. There was a great election that year, and it seemed as if excitement that year, and it seemed as if each party made whiskey run like water, treating all day, crowding the saloons with men, and talking to them, and getting the promise of their votes. Your father was one of the busiest; he was a good, bright talker—Samuel gets his speaking ability

from him—always ready to tell a joke or give a quick answer. They kept it up from August till November, and your father was never any good after. Achilles can't remember how fond he was of him, and how proud when he was a little baby. Achilles says his father shall never live under this roof again, and you know how set Achilles is. Our minister talked with him; he didn't tell me what he said, or what Achilles said, but he told me to leave him to time and to Providence."

"Perhaps," said Letitia, "by the time ten years are over, Achilles will have come round a little." She did not say that Friend Amos, greatly touched by the prisoner's penitence, and by the report of the chaplain, had suggested that perhaps the Governor could be persuaded to remit part of the sentence. If Achilles would not receive his father, would it not be better to have him stay where he was?

Next morning she went out with Achilles when he went to milk the cow. She leaned against Spotty's smooth, clean red flank, and patted her silky back, and talked with Achilles as he milked. She told of Friend Amos Lowel's visit, and of what their father had said:

"I'm glad I was sent here; I deserved it, and it gave the children their only chance. I've been a disgrace to them, but they can be a credit to themselves," and she gave the message to Achilles: "Tell Achilles to be a good son to his mother, and to take warning by me."

"Sounds well for him to tell me to be good to mother," said Achilles, giving Spotty's pink udder a needlessly hard squeeze, so that she stepped sideways. "He'll never hear tell of the day when I chase mother and the kids out into a storm."

"Don't be so hard, Kill," pleaded Letitia, "remember it is forgive, if we would be forgiven."

"I see clearly," said Achilles, "that there is likely to be too much of that forgiving done in this family. Some one has to keep a level head and a stiff upper lip, and set their foot down for the sake of the rest. Never your mind, Tish, I'll forgive him just as long as he's locked up safe."

"And then?" queried Letitia. "And then—just as long as he minds his p's and q's, and keeps out of sight of this house."

"Well, never mind, Kill," said Letitia, soothingly. "Six years will be a long, long time."

"Not so very," said Achilles, "when people are as busy as we are; four years have gone like a day. See that nice lot of milk! I reckon you're going to churn to-day, Tish. I'll be glad when it's vacation, and you are here all the time. I say, Tish, you are sixteen past, six years will make you twenty-two. I want you to get married by then, Tish, to some real, well-to-do, first-class, good-looking man. A sober, Christian man that will do well by you, Tish."

"Nonsense, Kill!" cried Letitia, flushing. "Yes, I mean it. Then you'll be safe from father, and I'll have one less to worry for, and a brother-in-law to stand by me in looking after mother."

"Such a fellow to plan and look ahead!" cried Letitia.

When Letitia told Samuel about Friend Lowel's visit to the prison, and what the father had said, her words met with a different reception.

"I knew how it would be!" cried Samuel, stopping his reading. "O Tish, I've prayed God so many times to make father good. God waits a long while, you know the Bible says a thousand years is only a little day to him, but he does it after a while. I've prayed God to bless him, and let him come home and live here with us, and be a real good man. O Tish! then we'd be just like other folks, wouldn't we? It will be so, don't you think it will, after a while?"

"Not quite that way, Samuel," said Letitia. "I think that father is truly sorry, and may come back and do his best, but he never can be quite like other people. This will be always remembered and laid up against him."

"Why, Tishia, God forgives out and out, don't he? My teacher at Sunday-school said so."

"Yes, God forgives fully, and says he remembers our sins and iniquities no more."

But people, Samuel, are not that way; they forgive—and remembre."

"It's very queer," said Samuel, "that God who always does right can forgive out and out, and folks who often do bad themselves can't forgive all, but must keep laying it up."

(To be continued.)

Shared.

BY LUCY LARCOM.

I SAID it in the meadow path,
I say it on the mountain stairs—
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe, the sky, the breeze,
The light without us and within,
Life with its unlocked treasures,
God's riches are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread,
For rest it yields unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild rose red,
Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Into your heavenly loneliness
Ye welcome me, O solemn peaks!
And me in every guest, you bless
Who reverently your mystery seeks.

And up the radiant peopled way
That opens into worlds unknown
It will be life's delight to say,
"Heaven is not heaven for me alone."

Rich by my brethren's poverty!
Such wealth were hideous! I am blest
Only in what they share with me,
In what I share with all the rest.

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.

WHEN Emma, second daughter of Gen. Booth, was thirteen years of age, she was out for her usual walk with the governess, when a donkey-cart drove past, and she noticed the boy belabouring the donkey with a stick. She called out to him to desist, but he only laughed and hit the harder. Snatching herself away from her governess, Emma ran after the cart, and after a long chase at length overtook it and caught the reins. The boy leaped down and tried to pull the donkey away. But he found his match for once. Snatching the stick from his hand, Emma showered her blows upon his head and shoulders, saying, "There, now! how do you like it?" The boy was a strong young fellow, and could no doubt have easily turned the tables upon his assailant. But her tears and pleadings proved more powerful than her blows. He was surprised and touched, and surrendered unconditionally, promising never to repeat his cruelty, and kneeling at her request beside the donkey in the dusty road to ask God to pardon his sin. As they arose from their knees, the conquered ruffian apologized for having brought her so far out of her way, and offered to drive her back. Seated beside him in the donkey-cart, she rode home in triumph, admiring the little steed and exhorting the lad to feed it and treat it with kindness. In the meantime the governess had returned to complain of Emma's rashness, but the delighted mother of the Salvation Army listened with undiagnosed pleasure to the tale and clasped with joy her daughter to her heart.

A RAT STORY.

BRAMWELL, son of General Booth, was only twelve when he led his first service in a children's meeting in a small room at Bethnal Green. He was in the middle of his juvenile sermon when an incident occurred which would have disconcerted many a more practised hand. A large rat came and stood in the doorway, which was behind the audience, and coolly surveyed the scene. Bramwell knew instinctively that if the little urchins present caught sight of the intruder there would be a general scamper. He therefore went on steadily with his address, gesticulating with all his might in hopes of frightening the visitor. But the rat held its ground without flinching. The speaker waxed warmer and warmer in his efforts to dislodge the enemy, until at length even the nerves of the East End rat could resist no longer, and it beat a rapid and welcome retreat, leaving young Bramwell Booth in full possession of the field.