

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE pleasant autumn days had come round again, and Mr. and Mrs. Snow were sitting, as they often sat, now, alone in the south room together. Mr. Snow was hale and strong still, but he was growing old, and needed to rest, and partly because the affairs of the farm were safe in the hands of his "son," as he never failed to designate Sandy, and partly because those affairs were less to him than they used to be, he was able to enjoy the rest he took.

For that was happening to him which does not always happen, even to good people, as they grow old, his hold was loosening from the things which for more than half a lifetime he had sought so eagerly and held so firmly. With his eyes fixed on "the things which are before," other things were falling behind and out of sight, and from the leisure thus falling to him in these days, came the quiet hours in the south room so pleasant to them both.

But the deacon's face did not wear its usual placid look on this particular morning ; and the doubt and anxiety showed all the more plainly, contrasting as they did with the brightness on the face of his wife. She was moved, too, but with no painful feeling, her husband could see, as he watched her, though there were tears in the eyes that rested on the scene without. But she was seeing other things, he knew, and not sorrowful things either, he said to himself, with a little surprise, as he fingered uneasily an open letter that lay on the table beside him.

"It ain't hard to see how all *that* will end," said he, in a little.

"But," said his wife, turning toward him with a smile, "you say it as if it were an ending not to be desired."