

TRUE STORIES OF MY CHILDHOOD.

BY UNCLE JOHN.

XXVII.

HOW I CAME TO GO AMONG THE METHODISTS.

HE first person to whom I unfeignedly led my purpose to serve God was my poor mother; and I did so at the first opportunity. I have said it was on a Sunday night I formed the deliberate purpose to lead a new life. The next day I was sent by my employer with the horse (faithful "Old Mink,") and cart to do some errands through the town, such as I had to attend to nearly every day—namely, to call at the market, and several slaughter-houses, particularly that of Mr. Thomas Bright, at the corner of Ontario and Duke streets, for whom Mr. Ketchum had a great regard, for what were called the "green" hides, in contradistinction to "dry" ones. But on my way to those places I must needs call at my mother's, who had then a temporary abode on the south-east corner of King and Sherbourne streets, and avow my newly-formed purpose to my best earthly friend. She came out to the gate to meet me, and before we parted I said, "Mother, I am determined to set out and serve God and try to save my soul." It was like life from the dead to her poor withered heart. After referring to the cheering fact that Nathaniel, the next older than I, had taken to pray at his bedside each night and morning, she said, Well, John, your father is not a man to look after you; go and join the Methodists, you will find friends among them." I promised, and drove off with a resolute heart.

How I managed to get through that week among the wild men and boys in our large establishment, I can hardly tell; but I kept myself as much as I could apart from the rest, read my Bible, and such grave sort of books as fell within my reach. I almost always had a book of some kind on my person, and read it at every leisure moment. There was one lad—not of our establishment, but often there—between whom and myself there was a great attachment, whom, because of that familiarity I feared to meet, not feeling pluck enough to avow my purpose to my old companions, and I made several dodges to avoid meeting him; but a few days after it was unavoidable. I was walking by the side of the horse I was driving, whose heavy load prevented me driving rapidly away, when I saw my erstwhile friend bearing down upon me with eager pleasure in his countenance at the prospect of meeting me after our longer than usual separation, rushing towards me with, "Well, John, how are you?" In answer, I said abruptly, "Well, Jem, I'm determined to reform my life, and try to save my soul." It seemed to afford him great pleasure, and he chimed in at once, "And so will I, John, try to be religious, too." Poor fellow! there was now a new tie between us, a tie which has never been severed.

But to return to the place where I lived. My serious reading was taken notice of, and some of the boys said, "John is becoming very religious." One of the hired girls, Margaret Magar, an obliging creature, for whom I had always a kindly feeling, one day when I was assisting her in doing something which she could not very well do alone, said, in a way to elicit my confidence,

"John, have you any notion that you are going to die soon." "Why no, what makes you ask me that?" "Why, the boys think you must have some idea that you are going to die, or you would not be so serious, and be reading the Bible so much." I disclaimed any premonition of death, but said that I was resolved to try and be ready for death when it did come, as all are exposed to death. Not many months after, that young woman came and joined the society class to which I belonged; and when I travelled my first circuit, her house was one of our stopping-places in our monthly rounds. She still survives, a venerable and much respected widow, at the head of an affluent household, all of whom are members and supporters of our church in the rising town of Alliston, now rejoicing in the name of Mrs. Fletcher.

During that first week I was surprised into the last profane word I ever allowed myself to utter, the result of an evil habit. I was riding Old Mink to pasture, barebacked, with nothing to hold or guide him but a halter, when, suddenly turning a corner, he was set upon and frightened by a dog, which angered me so, that I bestowed at least one word of abuse upon him which I instantly felt defiled my mouth, and repented of; and, through the grace of God, never allowed myself to use again. Thus did I bid farewell to foul language forever.

The next Sunday I met brother Nathaniel at our mother's, and with many tears stated my purpose to him, which he was prepared to approve, for he had started one or two weeks before me. He told me had been at class-meeting, and asked me to accompany him the next Tuesday evening. We tried to improve that Sabbath in attending at the meeting-house on King street. The circuit preachers were absent at the second of the two famous camp meetings held in the township of Ancaster, and we listened to exhorters, who declined entering the pulpit. The one for the morning was John Huston (from the country), afterwards a travelling preacher; and the one for the afternoon, "Willie Clarke," a gifted young Irishman, who, however, did not wear his piety very threadbare, but many years after gave a son to the travelling ministry, a very devoted man, who died early.

To fulfil my engagement about going to class on Tuesday evening, and yet not be observed by my fellow-boarders, I slipped out supperless when they went into tea, turned up Newgate street (now Adelaide), to Bay street, till I saw my brother coming over the commons. We met, and walked together to the class-leader's (Mr. Patrick's) door. The class that evening was very small—nearly all the more lively and prominent members (and there were only about thirty in all) were still absent at the camp meeting—perhaps eight or nine at the most. Mr. Doel "met" the class, and I was impressed and thrilled by everything I saw and heard. The manner in which they received my impassioned declaration of purpose—the testimonies of all—the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs by which they "taught and admonished" each other—were all touching and exciting to me. But I was most of all impressed by the way poor John Richards, himself a poor Ready-to-halt, seized my hand after we had got out into the road, and exhorted me with tears never to imitate

his early backsliding from his first love among the Baptists, when a boy in England. Though a man of a sorrowful spirit, he was most blameless in life and conversation.

During the conversation which took place between John Richards and my brother (who were of the same trade, and well acquainted,) that evening in the road, I heard them speak in glowing terms of admiration of the deep piety and intense devotion of a young man, now absent with others at the camp-meeting, who had been a member of the church about three months. When the opportunity offered I naturally claved to such a one, and met with the utmost condescension from him, though fully ten years older than myself. We lived hard by each other, and used, on the evenings when there were no meetings, and often after the society meetings were over, to go out of the town, either up Yonge or Dundas street, and thence into the woods, sometimes in winter as well as summer, and for hours to pour out our souls to God in prayer, and to each other in Christian communion. Great was the benefit I received from that heavenly-minded young man. That was John Russel, whom I portrayed as an "Early Classmate," in the pages of my first work, PAST AND PRESENT.

For four weeks I met in class with dear William Patrick, without being formally received on trial (as the usage then was), or my name being inscribed upon the class-book. The quarterly love-feast was approaching, and the actual members received their tickets, without which they would not be permitted to enter. The love-feast, as was most common then, was to be before the eleven o'clock service on Sunday morning; the doors to be opened at half-past eight, and closed at nine. The leader said to me, "John, you have no ticket of admission; but I will keep the door, and if you are there by the time I unlock it, I will let you in." I was there a full hour before the time, sitting upon a log not far off, employing the interval in reading my New Testament, and hymn-book, with which I had provided myself, and always carried on my person. (The hymn-book I read consecutively through, as much by course as the Bible.) At length the leader approached down the road; I rose to my feet and went to meet him; he opened the door and let me in. When the speaking began I declared my purposes. At the close, the church door was opened by the "preacher in charge," Rev. John Ryerson, giving an offer to any who "wished to join on trial," "to stand up." Nathaniel and I arose, the only ones who did, and our names were taken down, after an appeal had been made to the members, and we were accepted by show of hands, a usage which should never have been dropped. At the close of the love-feast, the Lord's Supper was administered, and we joined in the holy communion for the first time. That ever memorable and pregnant event occurred June, 1824, fifty-seven years ago, when I lacked about two months of fifteen. A tie was then created, which, thank God, has never yet been severed, and I trust it never shall.

We had no presiding elder, as was usually the case, that day, but dear old Father Youmans acted as elder, it being what was then called "only a temporary quarterly."

THE BLIND WEAVER.

A WEAVER sat at his loom,
A blind old man was he;
And he saw not one of the shuttle's threads,
Which he wrought so cunningly,
But his fingers touched each line,
As the pattern before him grew;
And the sunset gleam of a smile divine,
Its light o'er his features threw;
As plying his work to a slight refrain,
He sang it over and over again—
*Light and Darkness and Shade,
Shade and Darkness and Light;
We never can tell how the pattern's made,
Till the fabric is turned in our sight!*

And slowly the fabric grow,
As his shuttle, from side to side
With a cunning twist of his wrist he throw,
And its lines were multiplied.
But still the surface was rough,
And the pattern you could not trace;
For the threads seemed blindly broken off,
And showed neither beauty nor grace;
But he plied his work to the slight refrain
And crooned it o'er and o'er again—
*Light and Darkness and Shade,
Shade and Darkness and Light;
We never can tell how the pattern's made,
Till the fabric is turned in our sight!*

And thus at the Loom of Life,
Like that blind old weaver, we
Are working the threads of our own designs
To a Pattern we do not see;
And still, with a patient love,
That is wiser far than we know,
There is One that looks from His throne above,
And directs the shuttle's throw.
And spite of our broken threads,
He is working His Great Design;
And the Pattern that seemed unmeaning here,
With a heavenly grace shall shine!
So we'll ply our work to the old refrain,
And sing it o'er and o'er again—
*Light and Darkness and Shade,
Shade and Darkness and Light,
Shall have done their work when
the Pattern's made,
And the Fabric is held up to
sight!*

EARNEST JOE.

LISTEN, boys, and I will tell
What I learned when young as
Would I other boys excel, [you.
This advice I must pursue:
Always try to do your best,
Whether in your work or play,
Earnest be, and never rest
Till you win the well-fought day.'

Lazy Ned, that has no care
Whether he succeeds or no,
Never can expect to share
Honors gained by Earnest Joe.
Listless Tom, who puts no heart
Into sports upon the field,
Only knows the joys in part
Which the games to others yield.

Is a thing worth doing, boys?
Do your best and do it well;
He who all his powers employs,
Persevering, must excel.
Listless Tom will never succeed,
Lazy Ned will never rise,
Earnest Joe will keep the lead,
He's the boy to take the prize.