

QUINCE, AND HOW THE LORD LED HIM.

(By Miss L. Bates.)

CHAPTER XIV.

A HOME WITH MR. CHASE.

"Gee up!" the farmer cried to his oxen as he turned the corner of his field. "Gee, Bright!" the patient animals leaning against the yoke.

Turning the corner, there was a halt. As the farmer glanced outward he saw a lad with a bundle on his shoulder and a book in his hand. The lad was walking briskly. "Halloo!" shouted the farmer.

"Halloo!" was the echo.

"Want to work?" leaving his oxen and coming to the fence.

"I would like work—yes."

"What can you do?"

"I engaged as a harvest-hand with a farmer. I worked only a week," was answered frankly.

"You found you were not strong enough?"

"No; my work suited, but when Sunday came I wanted to rest; I wanted to go to church. There was but one thing to do, he said; I must conform to his custom. I must work or leave."

"I know, I know," laughing good-naturedly. "It was Jethro. I know him. Well, well! If you could stay with him a week, you will do for me. We don't work Sundays. Wife and the girls go to meeting; I do sometimes. You won't object to driving? It's most too far to walk. And our folks are not much for walking any way."

"I like to go to church, and I shall not object to driving there and back," was the reply.

"Church? Yes. Some folks say 'church,' and some say 'meeting-house'; my mother used to call it 'going to meeting,'" said the farmer. Then with a little abruptness, "How much did Jethro give you, if you don't mind telling?"

"He promised to give me twenty-six dollars for two months. I worked a week only; he did not pay me anything."

"Just like him! And he rich as a Jew. Well, seeing it's a boy that will wait on the women-folks, I will pay you twenty-six dollars for two months and call that week in you worked for Jethro. Will that suit?"

"I will do my best to please you. I was feeling very badly about Jethro's not paying me, and I knew that Mr. Seago would be disappointed," was the reply.

"Mr. Seago of Chelmsford?" asked the farmer.

"Yes, sir. I was at school there, and now it is vacation. I was anxious to work; I have no one to help me."

"That is it! I see now," dropping his hand upon the brown rail. "I know that school; I had a boy there once. He was like you in one respect; he had a book open whenever he could get a chance. Dear boy! he's gone. It almost broke our hearts."

He wiped his face with a clean white handkerchief. Quince noted this, and likewise that his entire appearance was unlike that of the farmers whom he had previously met.

The man was leaning against the fence with his face downcast; he was, doubtless, thinking of his boy. When he raised his head, however, his look was bright.

"We will go out there some day and help them to cut and bind—that is, we will look on and encourage them," was said, pleasantly.

Quince began to be afraid that his work would be on that farm. Mr. Chase seemed to divine the thought, for he said presently, "I don't have boys there, nor children; there is too much machinery. No; I just keep a few acres here, and I plough and sow and reap in the old way. Jethro laughs and calls me a slow-boy; but in the end I get more happiness out of my few acres here than he does from all his broad fields. And my wife has not the care Mrs. Jethro has, either."

Quince looked into the face of the lady who was sitting, pretty and smiling, at the head of her table. In the week he had been at Mr. Jethro's he had never seen Mrs. Jethro sitting at the table; it required all of her time to wait upon the farmhands, and Mr. Jethro was always in a hurry.

"Eat quick, boys—eat quick!" he would say, himself setting the example, rapidly swallowing his food and jumping up before the hands were half satisfied. "A short horse is soon curried. I'll go right on; come on as quickly as you can," sounded back to them.

Some of the older, more experienced men laughed and had their joke, but the majority of them started after the farmer with a piece of something edible in their hands.

After dinner Mr. Chase drove into the village, three miles away, and Quince was left to mend the paling that hedged the vegetable garden, Merry and Aldine showing him where the hatchet could be found, and the box where the nails were kept.

"We used to have a brother," Merry began; "his name was Robert. He went to Mr. Seago's school. I heard mother tell Olive so, and she's glad you've been there. I can see she likes you better for being where Rob was."

"When was this?" asked Quince, driving a nail at the same time.

"Last summer," answered Aldine, pushing up still nearer to Quince.

"No, not last summer; two or three summers ago," Merry said, with a pretty air of wisdom quite beyond what Aldine could be expected to possess. "Of course she was a little thing when Rob died," Merry continued, looking significantly into the small pink face; she can't remember him much. Rob was always studying, and since he died mother and father study. We have real nice times, you'll like it, I know."

"Of course you will," chimed Aldine venturing to lay one small hand upon Quince's shoulder; while Bruno walked around with a friendly air.

"It don't take Bruno long to find out anybody. Speak to him, Quince, please; he's ready to make up."

When the last nail was driven, Quince dropped his hatchet and threw his right arm over the dog's neck.

"The old fellow meant to know what I was, didn't he? All right."

"He don't make up with everybody, but he knows you are to be one of us," laughed the child.

Quince started to put the hatchet in its place.

"Father said that when you had done with the fence you could take us into the orchard. The apples are not ripe—only one tree. Father said you would get us some. —Come, Aldine."

The girl was waiting for Quince; she recognized his protection as preferable to Merry's. Her hand was in his, and his steps were moderated to suit hers. Merry had to be satisfied to walk by himself.

After the apples were discussed, the cows were brought home and the stables looked after. By that time Mr. Chase had come and supper was ready.

Quince was surprised to see how the day had gone—to hurry, no fretting, the lamp sent out a rosy light, the table was handsomely laid, and Mrs. Chase and Olive looked even prettier than they had looked at dinner.

Mr. Chase had brought a large package of letters and papers; and, besides, he had something in a box; it was a microscope.

"You have so long wanted one," he said to Olive.

"Yes, papa; you could not have pleased me better," twining her arms around his neck and kissing him tenderly. "You always know just what I want."

"That is because you tell me: I am obliged to know."

"Then I must be more careful," throwing her head back and looking into the bronzed face.

"Father is glad to gratify you, child. He never boards up; he is just willing you should take it as you go. A pleasant childhood is a good investment for after-years."

Mrs. Chase had the microscope in her hands, and was explaining its use to the children. Then Quince was called to examine a fly's wings.

"It gives one an idea of the Creator, the perfection of his work," said Quince looking up.

Mrs. Chase did not look surprised; she seemed to have expected some such criticism from Quince.

Olive remarked upon the telescope and the works of immensity, the precision of worlds, and the exactness of prescribed orbits. One, piercing the heavens, filled the soul with awe; the other opened human eyes to the beauty of common things; and thus a spirit of sympathy and loving-kindness was evoked.

For an hour the lesson went on; then Mr. Chase had a few choice paragraphs to read aloud—something that interested each; and after this Olive read a few verses from the

Bible; a hymn was sung, and then followed a prayer.

It was the fitting close to a beautiful day. Quince said to himself, as he went to his room, "How unlike Mr. Jethro's manner!"

There was not a word from him to the children, save occasionally to growl out in re-buke. As to books, there were a few dime novels minus the covers and with the leaves eaten off at the corners. The oldest boy teased the cat and set the younger children by the ears. Then the father threw down his paper and scolded the boy sharply, and the mother caught up the little ones and hurried them off to the next room, leaving the father still scolding; while Alec seized his hat and went down to the village, where he hung around the saloons, smoking, drinking and laughing over stale jokes and low anecdotes.

It did not take long for Quince to decide which was the happier family; and in his heart he was thankful that his refusal to work upon the Lord's Day, with its resulting dismissal from the service of Farmer Jethro, had turned out so well. He was glad he had come to live with Mr. Chase, and that he was to remain during the summer vacation.

CHAPTER XV.

A LORD'S DAY IN MR. CHASE'S FAMILY.

It was a new experience for Quince to drive to church. Never in the old days had he done anything like this, and he wondered what his mother would say to see him bring out the horses and harness them to the light spring wagon, and then take his place by the side of Olive on the front seat, with Mrs. Chase and the two children, Merry and Aldine sitting behind.

He roared wound through a delightful section of country, and the calm serenity of the morning brought a sense of rest. Mrs. Chase was one who loved every living thing; a bush, a flower, a bird, showed beauty to her eyes.

Loving God, she loved the work of his hands; and she expressed her admiration in a way to inspire another with the same high appreciation. She had so taught her children that they enjoyed the sacred day with a delight beyond that afforded by other days; it was in every sense a good day to them. They looked forward with pleasure to its coming, and they were careful not to squander the precious moments.

They had been talking of the beauty of the morning and the wealth of blessing that met them on every hand.

"It all helps us to be in the right mood when we come to church," Olive said; "I always feel that it is laying aside the week. And the drive brings so much of God about us that the beauty and the blessedness become a personal presence; and thus I am better fitted to listen to his word."

"Are you going to stay to the Sunday-school?" Merry asked, bending over to Quince. "Books are to be had here, and you want some, you know."

"The books will not be mine," was the reply.

"Oh yes; they will be yours for two weeks," was said, with energy.

Aldine was chirping to the birds and wondering if they had their Sunday songs and whether they knew that it was God's day. There was no ban put upon their childlike prattle. It was enjoyment, and thus the drive was something to be remembered, as well as something to be anticipated.

The village was now in sight, and soon the church edifice was before them. It was a more imposing building than Barnston or Scarborough could boast, and the people made it a practice to attend the services.

"You need not drive to the door," Mrs. Chase said to Quince; "we are in the habit of leaving the horses at a little distance away. Then we can all go in together."

This was a consideration quite unexpected to Quince. He had been questioning what he should do with the horses, and, of course, he would be left to go in alone. This he had been in the habit of doing at Barnston when he went to church at all, just dropping down by the door, and almost the first to come out.

Mr. Chase had a pew far up the long aisle. Quince had never before sat so near the pulpit, and strange awe crept over him. Then the great organ sounded, and the people rose. Quince felt a dizzy sensation, and his limbs trembled. Whatever there might be in reserve for him, God had been good in leading him thus far.

Merry had a book, and was singing.

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