

would do if his father received a long sentence. He had said little, but he met this hour forewarned and forearmed.

He went up to his mother, and stroking her hair with his rough, grimy hand, he said: "We're all right now, mother. Don't you cry. I'll take care of you! We'll have ten years all to ourselves, now, and that's an awful long time. When it's done, I'll be a big man, and little Patty will be as old as I am now, and Tish will be as old as you were when you were married, and Samuel will be most grown up; and father can't touch one of us if he comes back, and he shan't touch you. Don't cry, mother, don't ever cry any more. You can laugh all the time now, if you only will. Oh, I'm going to do so much for you! I'll make a garden and a fence, and build a new porch, and plant trees and flowers and bushes; and I'll build the barn over, and we'll have pigs and chickens and a cow, and a horse and waggon. I'll fix up the house as nice as Mrs. Lyman's, and you shall have a new dress and bonnet. You just wait and see what I can do. I've got it all planned."

"If you can do so much," said the astute Samuel, "why didn't you do it before?" "What was the good? He'd have spoiled it all. Didn't I make a garden, and he sold all the things out of it? Didn't I earn chickens and a pig and a steer, and he took them all away? What's the good gettin' things to be smashed? Now I've got some chance to do things."

But Letitia had placed herself on the other side of her mother, and clasping her arms about her, proffered consolation in a different fashion.

"You've got us, mother, we love you. We'll help you. Here's little Patty crying because you are crying. Ten years isn't so very long. Yesterday Mrs. Lyman said she'd been married ten years, and it seemed only a few days. And you know he was always good when he was sober, and now he'll be sober all the time. I know he will think of us all, and be sorry; perhaps he'll come back good!"

"He don't get in here unless he is good, sure enough," said Achilles. "I'll be a man, and can keep him out. I shall have a nice home here, and nice things for mother, and you just better believe I won't let him come in and spoil it all."

"Achilles," moaned his mother from behind her apron, "he is your father."

"He never did us any good, if he is our father," said Achilles. "He made us all hate whiskey, seeing how bad it made him. Teacher says it's a good thing to learn to hate whiskey."

"Poor mother," said Letitia, still petting her parent. "You have had such a hard time! Don't you wish you had stayed with Uncle Barum, and never got married?"

Oh, days of peace and plenty with Uncle Barum! How tranquilly the years of her life might have flowed on, in the pretty farm-house on the other side of the mountain. But then, love of her children tugged at her heart-strings. She dropped her apron and clasped her arms about the clinging four. "If I had stayed there with Uncle Barum, I would not have had you," she said.

"We'll make you glad you've got us," said Achilles firmly. "We'll be better to you than ten Uncle Barums, or fathers, either. You'll see good things now, mother, if you'll just quit crying and chirk up, and we'll all lend a hand together. With us all to build up, and nobody to tear down, we can get on."

Letitia picked up Patty and placed her on her mother's lap. Mrs. Stanhope looked into the strong, homely face of her big, rough boy, and to her it seemed noble and beautiful, so did it shine with honest, faithful love. The very intensity of this lad's seemingly unfeeling vengeance toward his father was but the product of his sympathy and affection for his unfortunate mother.

Achilles, in all the ardour of new hopes, longed at once to be up and doing. The cold, lingering March had passed away. These warm, bright April days had marshalled the hosts of the spring-time. During

the weeks since his father had been arrested, Achilles had felt that he could not make efforts which perhaps would be frustrated, and only yield supplies toward fostering the family curse, if his father returned. Now he longed to carry out with a rush all that he had planned. Why was the sun so near the horizon, why must night come when no man can work? Still, stroking his mother's head, and standing near her, because he vaguely felt that his presence consoled her, Achilles looked out of the open door, and saw another horseman coming slowly up the mountain road.

A drab coat with a wide collar, immaculate shirt-front, iron-gray hair falling under a very wide-brimmed hat; Achilles knew him, and the large, deliberate beast which carried him. Bay Betty and Friend Amos Lowell—they were seldom seen apart on the high-roads.

Bay Betty might be freely pardoned for her deliberate pace, as she was burdened, not only with her grave and portly rider, but with a curious amount of luggage. On each arm Friend Amos Lowell carried a large splint basket; behind him, well wrapped in brown paper, was a huge bundle; rising as high as his mare's ears. As Achilles watched him with a boy's ready curiosity about all that is passing, Friend Amos rode close to the rickety stile, and began to unload himself and his mare. Achilles at once darted out to help; he concluded that Friend Amos, the chief merchant in the village, was taking home goods, and that something had gone wrong with Bay Betty. Achilles knew that Friend Amos cherished a myth that Bay Betty was a very spirited beast, and needed the most judicious guidance and control to prevent her from caracoling like a Paladin's war steed.

"Don't get off, Mr. Lowell," cried Achilles. "I'll help you. Is the bride wrong? or has she cast a shoe?"

"All is right with the beast," said Friend Amos, "but I am coming into the house. My name is Amos Lowell, and thee need give me no vain title of 'Mister,' which does not become me. I wish to see thy mother." He had now laid the two baskets and one bundle on the stile, and was looking for a footing for himself. Achilles promptly put the baskets on the ground, and exhorted his guest not to be afraid of the stile, it was stronger than it looked, and would bear. He then followed the visitor to the house, cherishing serious and secret suspicions that he had come to ask payment of some debt contracted by his father.

"But he can't get what we haven't got," said Achilles, "and we haven't a cent but the dollar I've buried under the water trough."

His shrewd sense told him to treat the possible creditor with courtesy, and seizing the only really firm chair in the room, he placed it for him, saying, "Mother! here's a gentleman." Friend Amos Lowell shook hands with Mercy, and patted Patience on the head before he sat down.

"Mercy Stanhope," he said, in his round, measured tones, "to-day is for thee a day of tribulation and reproach. But thee knows, Mercy, that there is One who can make the valley of Baca a well, and Achior a door of hope, and thee mayst sing there as in the days of thy youth. Thee knows that sorrow does not spring out of the dust; nor affliction rise out of the dust; but the blessed Lord is able to make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain. These afflictions seem grievous to be borne, but afterward they may yield thee the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thee knows, Mercy, that chastisement is sometimes greatest kindness, and herein God deals with us as with children and sons."

"It seems to me, Mercy, that the goodness of God, which endures continually, is already to be seen in Thomas Stanhope. This afternoon, when he received sentence, he rose up and spoke words that went to the hearts of all that heard him. He did not complain of his sentence. He said it was just, and that he had rather spend the remainder of his days in prison, where his mind could be kept clear from the poison of strong drink, than to go free and conduct himself like a demon, as in the past. So, Mercy, it seems to me and thee that God is already bringing Thomas Stanhope to his better self. But it was when Thomas spoke of thee and the children that our

hearts were stirred. He begged all that heard him not to neglect and despise thee and the little ones, for his sake. He said he had been most bad and cruel, and that thee and the children were innocent and deserving. He asked all to lend thee and the little family a helping hand. Now thee is free of him he hoped thee would enter into a time of peace, and find that comfort his evil course has denied thee.

"Thee knows, Mercy, that in Ladbury people know Thomas Stanhope and his godly forebears, and there are those that have grieved to see Thomas wander out of the way. But, Mercy, prayers are not made in vain, and there are prayers for Thomas Stanhope lying yet answered before the throne of God. The Lord will answer thee, Mercy, that all here have known thee from a child; thee has their pity in thy troubles, and the hand of help will be held out to thee. Even if Thomas Stanhope had not pleaded for thee and the children with tears, our hearts would not have been hard to thee and thine. Thee has four brave children here, Mercy; the good Lord grant that they may be as olive plants about thy table. With industry and economy thee may build again thy ruined house."

"We are going to build it," spoke out Samuel, taking the remark in its most literal sense, "Kill's going to build it, and I am going to help him."

Friend Amos Lowell looked at Achilles, who had returned to his mother's side. The boy's eyes flashed.

"Now that work will do any good," he said, "I'm going to work like a tiger cat. I have worked, but he always sold and smashed everything. Now there's some sense trying, I'm going to begin to-morrow morning. I'll mend the fence, and make a garden, and clean up the yard, and plant things."

"Thee is right," said Friend Amos. "'Doe the next thinge' is a brave proverb of our forebears. Begin with what lies next at hand, and by patient continuance in well-doing thee shall reap if thee faint not. Mercy Stanhope, thy mother and the parents of Thomas Stanhope were godly people, though not of the Quaker persuasion; but the Father in heaven knows his children by many names. Thee is about to reconstitute thy household. Thee must do it in the fear of the Lord, and lay the corner-stone on prayer. Has thee a copy of God's Word?"

"Yes," said Mercy, "it has been hidden for four years under the eaves in the room above, so that it should not be taken away."

"Thee will bring it down, Mercy, and read a portion to thy children, and kneel with them and ask the presence and blessing of the Lord God. Do so, Mercy, this night."

Mercy and her children were awed by this presentation of their duty and position. In some way these words seemed to give their hope a substantial background; old things seemed melting and fading away; terror, riot, cursing, were all passing out of their lives, and they were exhorted to zeal, labour, peace, prayer. Here was a new life indeed.

"I did not come to thee empty-handed, Mercy," said Friend Amos. "Out of the goodly competence the Lord has committed to me, in trust for him, I have brought thee a portion for thy need to-day. Let the children go and bring in the two baskets and the bundles."

At the word away sped Achilles, Letitia, and Samuel to the stile and back again, loaded heavily, their faces all flushed with excitement and expectation.

"The little one in thy arms, Mercy," said Friend Amos, "is pale and sad of face. I see she has need of nourishing food, of warm garments, of toys, and of good cheer. It is not well to take a child from its mother, but if thee will lend her to me for a season, until thee has had time to make this sad and empty house a better shelter for so frail a little flower, my wife Sara and I will cherish her tenderly. We will return her to thee in a few weeks, able to laugh as a child should. Let me carry her to Sara to-night, Mercy, for her good. Thee and the others can then begin to work out the salvation of thy home, and whenever thee demands back thy babe, she shall come well plished in clothes and playthings. Will thee come to me, my babe!

The Lord denied me children, but I have a warm heart toward all little ones."

Patience resigned herself with a restful sigh to Friend Amos Lowell's strong arms.

"The babe has answered for herself," he said, taking a drab silk handkerchief of soft and large dimensions from his pocket, and knotting it about her head and neck. "I have brought thee, Mercy, a few gifts; thee has repaid me double already, in lending me the little child. Thee shall shortly come in and see her, and thee will find she thrives."

So before she was aware Mercy found herself alone in the room with the baskets and bundles, while the three elder children attended to the stile Friend Amos, who carried little Patience in his arms.

"Go, comfort the mother," said Friend Amos, waving his hand to Letitia and Samuel, while Achilles stood on the stile holding Patience, that the deliberate old Quaker might commodiously seat himself on Bay Betty.

"I have a word for thee, my lad," said Friend Amos, "what is the name?"

"Achilles."

"'Tis a heathenish name," said the Quaker with disapprobation, "but thee need not match it with heathen conduct. I see in thee a noble and manly spirit toward thy mother. Let me tell thee, to-morrow morning at five o'clock the train leaves on which thy father goes to his long sentence in the penitentiary. His heart is sore, and full of bitter regrets for all the evil he has done to his family. I want thee, boy, to be at my house at half-past four, and I will go with thee to see thy father off, and to say a word of good cheer to him."

"I don't want to see him?" cried Achilles. "I don't want to bid him good-bye, or say a word of cheer. He don't deserve it. I wish he had got twenty years, so he'd never come back to abuse mother. When he does come, though, I'll be grown up, and able to fight for them, and I'll do it, too. He shan't have it all his own way any more! Ten years is better than nothing."

"I grieve to see in thee an unforgiving, unfilial spirit," said Amos.

"You haven't lived here," retorted Achilles.

"It is true," said the gentle Friend, "and I am the less fitted to judge of thy provocation. But the good Lord is merciful to the merciful. Thy burden is great, so is thy mother's, but Thomas Stanhope has also a heavy load on his heart. The tears were in his eyes as he spoke of his ruined home. I want thee to come as I have said. The day will be when thee will be glad thee heeded the counsels of age and experience. In the house thee will find clothes. Thee will not forget that cleanliness is a part of godliness, and that soap and water may be counted as a lesser means of grace. I shall be on the look-out for thee at half-past four."

This quiet insistence conquered Achilles. The boy felt that he was as sure to keep that tryst as the sun was to rise. He hugged little Patience and handed her over to Friend Amos, and his steps were hastened to the house by the joyful shouts of Samuel and Letitia.

The floor and table were covered with the treasures unpacked from baskets and bundles. Bread, cheese, sugar, tea, rice, bacon, a ham, potatoes, eggs, calico, white cotton, a box filled with thread, needles, buttons, scissors. These were some of the treasures. There was a roll of gingham, several yards of crash towelling, caps, shirt waists, a suit for Samuel, a suit that would fit Achilles, two bed-quilts. Fortune seemed to have emptied her cornucopia.

There was such a bountiful and savory supper as had not been known in that house for years.

Letitia wished at once to begin cutting and sewing, but her mother persuaded her to wait and begin the next day with a general house-cleaning, and thus have a nice place in which to sew. The sight of so many comforts had revived Mercy's housewifely instincts.

Mindful of Friend Amos Lowell's injunction, Mercy brought down her long-hidden Bible; then lighting a lamp, the children pressed about her as she indefinitely searched for a portion to read. Heaven guided her choice: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

(To be continued.)

\* The unfilial language of the children in this book is very shocking, but it shows more clearly the effects of the liquor traffic. The children come out all right, however, under happier influences, as will be seen by reading further on in the story.