

"That's true, dear," said my father, looking at her tenderly; "nobody knows that better than I do."

My mother rocked gently back and forward with me in the evening shadows, and talked with me and soothed me, and told me stories how one day I should grow to be a good man—a minister, like my father, she hoped—and have a dear little house of my own.

"And will Susie be in it?"

"Let's hope so," said my mother. "Who knows?"

"But, mother, aren't you sure? I want you to say it will be certainly."

"My little one, only our dear Father could tell us that," said my mother. "But now you must try and learn fast, and become a strong man, so that you can take care of a little wife."

CHAPTER III.

OUR CHILD-EDEN.

MY mother's talk aroused all the enthusiasm of my nature. Here was a motive, to be sure. I went to bed and dreamed of it. I thought over all possible ways of growing big and strong rapidly—I had heard stories of Samson from the Bible. How did he grow so strong? He was probably once a little boy like me. "Did he go for the cows, I wonder," thought I—"and let down very big bars when his hands were little, and learn to ride the old horse bare-back, when his legs were very short?" All these things I was emulous to do; and I was resolved to lift very heavy pails full of water, and very many of them, and to climb into the mow, and throw down great armfuls of hay, and in every possible way to grow big and strong.

I remember the next day after my talk with my mother was *Saturday*, and I had leave to go up and spend it with Susie.

There was a meadow just back of her mother's house, which we used to call the mowing lot. It was white with daisies, yellow with buttercups, with some moderate share of timothy and herds grass intermixed. But what was specially interesting to us was, that, down low at the roots of the grass, and here and there in moist, rich spots, grew wild strawberries, large and juicy, rising on nice high stalks, with three or four on a cluster. What joy there was in the possession of a whole sunny Saturday afternoon to be spent with Susie in this meadow! To me the amount of happiness in the survey was greatly in advance of what I now have in the view of a three weeks' summer excursion.

When, after multiplied cautions and directions, and careful adjustment of Susie's clothing, on the part of her mother, Susie was fairly delivered up to me; when we had turned our backs on the house and got