

## CHAPTER XLVII

## DAWN IS NEAR

Up to the black gates, but not beyond them. The dawn following such a night will seem more like a daughter of the night than promise of day. It is day that follows, notwithstanding. The sad fair girl survived, and her flickering life was the sole light of the household; at times burying its members in dusk, to shine on them again more like a prolonged farewell than a gladsome restoration.

She was saved by what we call chance; for it had not been in her design to save herself. The hand was firm to help her to the deadly draught. As far as could be conjectured, she had drunk it between hurried readings from her mother's Bible; the one true companion to which she had often clung, always half-availingly. The Bible was found by her side, as if it had fallen from the chair before which she knelt to read her last quickening verses, and had fallen with her. One arm was about it; one grasped the broken phial with its hideous label.

It was uncomplainingly registered among the few facts very distinctly legible in Master Gammon's memory, that for three entire weeks he had no dumplings for dinner at the Farm; and although, upon a computation, articles of that description, amounting probably to sixty-three (if there is any need for our being precise), were due to him, and would necessarily be for evermore due to him, seeing that it is beyond all human and even spiritual agency to make good unto man the dinner he has lost, Master Gammon uttered no word to show that he was sensible of a slight, which was the only indication given by him of his knowledge of a calamity having changed the order of things at the Farm. On the day when dumplings reappeared, he remarked, with a glance at the ceiling: "Goin' on better — eh, marm?"

"Oh! Mas' Gammon," Mrs. Sumfit burst out; "if I was only certain you said your prayers faithful every night!"