

Achilles was working for Mr. Ladley building fence, and being nearer his own home than his employer's, and, moreover, tempted by some dumplings which Mercy promised, he was to dine at home.

That afternoon, as Letitia and Mercy sat on the porch with their sewing, Letitia saw a gray man and a gray horse, coming at a steady pace up the road.

"Mother," she said, "there's the man I thought might be Uncle Barum!" She dropped her work and rose. Mercy rose also.

"It is! it is Uncle Barum! he shall not pass without speaking this time!" cried Mercy. And running into the road with Letitia, she held out both hands crying: "O Uncle Barum! stop! stop!"

Uncle Barum slowly turned the gray horse toward the block that Achilles had set for the convenience of Friend Amos Lowell, in mounting and dismounting.

"Yes, yes, Mercy," he said, "your house now looks fit for a decent man to come to."

As soon as he alighted, Mercy threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "O Uncle Barum, I have wanted so much to see you, for so long!"

"You took a precious poor way of showing it," said Uncle Barum. "Come in, uncle, come right in," said Letitia.

"Yes, yes, now there is no one at this house that I don't think unfit to meet," said Uncle Barum.

"I'll lead your horse around to the barn," said Letitia. "No, you won't. I'll take him myself, and see what sort of a barn you keep," retorted the old man.

They let him go to the barn by himself, and they concluded from his stay there, and from seeing him walking about the barn-yard, examining the water-trough, and looking into the pig-pen and the chicken coops, that he was investigating their affairs.

Achilles had ordained that every day Samuel should gather up a certain amount of stones, draw them in his small hand-cart, and lay them up into a wall, which in the course of two or three years was to grow into a nice stone wall, cutting off a good field. Achilles was a great lad to plan for far-off consulates. It was thus that he accomplished so much. The old Saxon proverb, "Do the next thing," was deeply imbedded in his nature, and, as he told Samuel, it was step by step, and a little at a time, that did the work.

Samuel at his work beyond, and a little above the barn-yard, saw and recognized the visitor. He dashed down to the barn and greeted him with childish rapture.

"O Uncle Barum! have you come? How long you have been! Did you know I expected you? Why didn't you come before? Is that your horse? You'll stay all night, won't you? Did you see mother? Wasn't she glad? Tish is home, did you know that? Now you'll see Kill, won't you? Uncle Barum, didn't I tell you our place had got to be real nice? Is it as nice as you thought it was?"

"Your tongue's hung in the middle more than I thought it was," said Uncle Barum gruffly. "Do you ever stop talking?"

"I don't know," said Samuel, a little nonplussed. "Yes, when I'm asleep—except sometimes; Kill says I talk in my sleep. He says mother oughtn't to let me eat so much supper. Do you think that's it, Uncle Barum?"

critically at his surroundings and at his niece.

"You've picked up here, Mercy," he said, "better than ever I thought you would. I had heard of your improvements here, but they beat all I expected. Never would have thought you could do so well in four years. Shows what it is worth to cast the drink devil out of the family. I reckon if the Lord Christ was in the world, going about now, the most devils he'd have to cast out would be the whiskey ones. You've picked up yourself. You look more like old times than you did six years ago."

"I did not know you saw me six years ago, uncle."

"Yes I did. I've seen you more times than you thought. But after that scoundrel got his deserts, I just thought you had no one to hinder you, and if you wanted to see me you could come."

"I had no idea you would let me come, uncle."

"My latch-string has always been out for you, Mercy, whether you knew it or not," replied the old man.

"Uncle! I always knew you had the kindest heart! But I had four children. I had nothing against the children Mercy. My quarrel was with the scoundrel!"

"Uncle," said Mercy, carefully ignoring his reference to her husband, "you were very good and kind to me, and I was very ungrateful and disobedient to you, and I have long wanted to ask you to forgive me. I did write you two or three letters, but you sent them back unopened."

"I wanted nothing to do with you, Mercy, so long as the cursed scoundrel was around," said Uncle Barum with great emphasis.

"After that, uncle, when I had so much trouble and poverty, I did not go to you, for I thought you would believe it was not merely forgiveness but help I wanted. Now you see I am well, and comfortably here in my home, and we need nothing but what our hands can earn, and I can tell you how much I have repented, and ask you to say you forgive me."

She had her hand on Uncle Barum's shoulder, as he sat in her big rocking-chair. Uncle Barum reached up and took her hand.

"Yes, yes, Mercy, I've forgiven you. I have nothing laid up against you or your children. That girl there looks very much like you when you were her age, but she looks, too, as if she had more sense than you had. I say, Letitia, if that's your name—I like it, too, for a name, it was my mother's—I say, you wouldn't run away to get married, would you? You wouldn't marry a scoundrel that drank, would you?"

Thus called upon to pass judgment on both her parents, poor Letitia turned crimson and tears stood in her eyes.

"No, she would not," said Mercy quietly, "there are some things which a girl can learn by her mother's experiences."

Uncle Barum pushed Mercy into a seat near him, and still held her hand.

"What's a woman get married for, any way, long as she's got some one to take care of her, and give her a home? What does she get by marrying, but hard work and no thanks for it, and a raft of children to share her troubles with. What did you get married for, Mercy?"

"Why, Uncle Barum," said Mercy firmly, "I loved Thomas. There was much in him to love. He was as promising a young man as there was in the country then. He loved me, and I loved him, and I do yet."

"Well, Mercy," said Uncle Barum with conviction, "you are a greater fool by a long shot than I thought you were! I always told your mother that that name she gave you would ruin you, and so it has. You are too soft for this world. You never could show proper respect for yourself in laying up an injury, you poor child!"

The tone of these last words and the look that went with them, suggested to Letitia that Uncle Barum's heart was not nearly so fierce as his general language and demeanor.

"Mercy," said Uncle Barum, "when you ran off you left me no one to tie to but Cousin Sacy Terhune."

"I hope she has been good to you, uncle."

"So, so, as good as she knows how to be; she has an eye to the main chance, has Sacy, but she is a sensible woman."

"And she has nice children, I hope."

"Two children; the girl is about the age of Letitia here—Madge. I don't like her much, she's a proud chit. Don't speak to you, does she, Letitia? She always seems ashamed of the way I talk and dress. I tell her I wa'n't learned grammar the way she is, and I dress to suit myself. She says my old coat is horrid; it's a good coat. I've only had it five or six years, good, solid stuff. I mean to make it do me the rest of my days. She turns up her nose at it, and hopes I'll sell it for rags when I go to live in Ladbury. But my old coat will last me out, it is worth more than her popinjay fixin's, hey, Letitia? What do you say?"

"I should say you had a right to wear what you pleased."

"Yes, yes; that's what I say. That's what Philip says. You remember Philip, Mercy? Little boy when you ran away. Now Philip Terhune is a young man worth owning. Twenty, Philip is. He lived with me from he was twelve to fifteen, and I never saw a better boy. Then he went to Ladbury to the High School, and graduated, they call it—last year. Now he is with Homer Perkins, learning stock-raising. Philip Terhune will be about the best stock-raiser in this State. He has sense, and grit, and honor, and dash in him. If you had picked out such a lad as that, Mercy, I'd have put up with it maybe. But there were no such lads in those days, and nothing would do you but the scoundrel, Mercy. I'm going to live in Ladbury. I shall hire that little house with the front yard full of roses—I always did like roses—and the pillars in the porch—the house Amos Lowell owns."

"Oh, that is such a pretty little place!" cried Letitia.

"Yes, yes; a pretty little place. Leased it for five years."

"Won't you miss the farm and be lonely in town, uncle?"

"I'll keep the farm and ride out there every day or two. I'll be busy in town. Jacob Terhune, Sacy's husband, has been appointed post-master at Ladbury. Did you know that, Mercy?"

"I saw it in the paper Mrs. Canfield lent me last night."

"Well, I'm going to help Jacob quite a bit in the post-office on busy days, and that will take my time, and I'll see my old friends to chat with. Sacy and Jacob will live the next block to me."

"I'm glad you won't be alone, uncle," said Mercy.

Samuel had thrust his curly head inside the door and announced to Letitia, "It's done." Letitia went out.

"Hurry and make the fire then," she said, "and then you may go and wash and dress clean for supper. Pick me first a few little flowers to put on the tea-table in the glass. I shall make it a party to-night, on account of Uncle Barum. How nice that you picked so many berries this morning! I will make some biscuit, and have fried chicken, and you can get me some cucumbers from the garden. Ah! there comes Patience from her sheep-earning. Now she can set the table, as soon as she has put on her pink frock and spoken to Uncle Barum."

Patty, being skilfully engineered around the house by Samuel, made her best toilet in the bedroom, and was duly presented to Uncle Barum, who said she was a fine child, placed her on his knee, and kept her there so resolutely that Letitia had to set the table herself.

However, Samuel came down from the attic, washed and in a clean shirt-waist, and did her good service, his tongue flying as fast as his hands.

"Didn't I tell you Uncle Barum was nice? Ain't you glad he came? Did you think he would? Wasn't mother glad? Think he'll come again? Won't he think you know how to make a good supper? What do you s'pose Kill will say?" and so on.

Finally Achilles came and gave his grand-uncle manly welcome. Letitia announced supper, and gave Uncle Barum a seat by her side. Samuel was so well provided with good things that he was busy eating, but after five minutes' silence he began: "Uncle Barum, I killed and plucked this chicken. It was a yellow one, Uncle Barum. Kill, do yellow chickens

taste different from other chickens? Uncle Barum, don't Tishia make nice biscuits? Uncle Barum, a most usually we eat brown bread; we have biscuits on your account to-night. Ur de Barum, I picked these berries. Kill, I've got a dollar and ninty cents laid up in my box now, from berries—strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries. Kill, if with the rest of the berries and nuts and mushrooms, I get four dollars, can't I buy one book after I get my cap and shoes, and those things, Kill?"

Finally, exhorted by all the family and threatened by "Kill," Samuel addressed himself sedulously to chicken and biscuit, and subsided.

"Letitia, you are a good housekeeper," said Uncle Barum.

"She is that," said Mercy. "She can keep house as well as I can."

"Well, Mercy," said Uncle Barum, "you were ungrateful, and ran away with a great scoundrel—"

"Uncle Barum," said Achilles promptly, "the person you mean is my mother's husband and our father, so please do not say what you feel about him—before us."

Mercy and Letitia looked inexpressibly surprised at this new departure of Achilles; Uncle Barum gave a grim smile and concluded:

"Well, Mercy, you ran away, and left me alone. You say you are sorry. I give you a chance to show it. I am going to the village and I don't want to live alone any longer. I want Letitia to come and live with me, as you ought to have done. She can go to school all the same and graduate, if that is what she wants. I think I have a better right to her than Friend Amos Lowell has."

"Friend Amos, Uncle Barum," spoke up Achilles, "was the first man to lend us a hand to help us up when we were flat down. But we owe you a good deal; you took care of our mother for over fifteen years, and were like a father to her."

(To be continued.)

BOYS, DON'T HURRY.

BY C. H. S.

Lucy Scott, in her little book, "Boys and Other Boys," says, "A boy of fifteen once came to a school where he was an entire stranger. Noticing he was slow in making acquaintances, I asked him why he was not more social. He replied, with a smile, 'I shall be as soon as the right boys show themselves friendly.' And so he waited several weeks, coming in and going out in his own quiet, modest way, until the best students, who had held aloof at first, welcomed him as one of themselves. Had he grown weary in his solitary walks, and encouraged the mischief-loving, free and easy class, who were ready to give a 'hail fellow' to anybody and everybody, he need not have waited three days for comrades."

Boys, don't be in a hurry. Wait! Don't take the first cigar or cigarette, or the social glass to please any other boy. Wait! Suppose they say you are "tied to your mother's apron-strings," this anchorage has saved to the world some of its best men. When others want you to go into bad company, and say, "You dassent," have courage to say, "No, I don't dare." Wait, as the other boy did; you'll get the right kind of companions in due time.

HOLD FAST, BOYS.

HOLD ON to your tongue when you are just ready to swear, lie, or speak harshly, or use an improper word.

HOLD ON to your hand when you are about to punch, strike, scratch, steal, or do any improper act.

HOLD ON to your foot when you are on the point of kicking, running off from study, or pursuing the path of error, shame, or crime.

HOLD ON to your temper when you are angry, excited, or imposed upon, or others are angry with you.

HOLD ON to your heart when evil associates seek your company, and invite you to join in their mirth, games, and revelry. Advance.