

CHAPTER XV.

TRUE FRIENDS.

SHORTLY after the receipt of the two letters from Chicago, Mrs. Pierce was formally informed that she was a divorced woman. She had now lost both property and husband; the house in which she lived, and which her money had built, and the labor which she and the children had put on the place, were to enrich a stranger; her good name, which she valued more than any material possession, was made a plaything for cruel gossips to tarnish with slanderous tongues. Nothing seemed left to her except her children and her faith in God. Sometimes in her darker moments doubts of a superintending Providence over the affairs of men came into her mind.

Though never a very robust woman she had always been healthy and energetic, but now she had received such a blow that her health began rapidly to fail. Dreading to meet the inquisitive glances of people who knew her story, she kept at home and dwelt a good deal more than was good for her on her trouble. Occasionally she went to church, but after the first two or three times she went no more. The cold looks that were cast on her by many of the members of her own church, the "stand to one side, I am holier than thou" manner of these good people, chilled her sensitive nature so that she resolved to stay at home