

The boy became a man; and the hand was still near him, protecting, restraining, controlling, supporting, directing. In the intricate paths of youth, in the rougher ways of manhood its powerful yet gentle influence was alike felt.

Ben Amram saw that hand pouring wealth at his feet, which he might gather at will. It prospered his traffic, and removed rivals from his path. It gave him ships, and sped them safely and prosperously over the ocean. It defended him from losses, and assisted him in his schemes. It guided him in the choice of a residence, and directed him to the partner of his life. It gave him the desire of his heart. It raised him to honour and fame.

He saw the hand beckoning as his brother's messenger drew near; and then the scene was obscured—the mist again filled the apartment.

"Eli Ben Amram," said the visitor, "thou hast seen the sign of the Invisible, upholding the hand of the diligent through the past. Look now upon the future!"

Again he waved the wand, and placed for an instant his hand upon the eyes of Ben Amram. The mist once more divided.

He saw his brother worn with poverty and wasted by sickness. He marked the anguish of his spirit as he read the reproachful letter. He saw the shadowy hand over him also; but again the scene was changed.

A ship sailed upon a distant sea. That hand raised the waves and winds to a storm, and impelled the vessel to destruction. The owner was impoverished, and he was indebted to Ben Amram for the sum of four thousand pieces of silver.

And now the shiftings of the scene increased in rapidity; yet still the hand was there. Jorah repaid the three hundred pieces of silver; while Ben Amram's eldest daughter returned, a destitute and mourning widow, to her father's house. The ship in which his son Jotham sailed was attacked, the passengers were robbed and taken captive, and an exorbitant ransom was demanded. Ben Amram paid the sum, and Jotham returned home in nakedness and want. Fire devoured the possessions of one debtor; blight and mildew destroyed those of another. Famine and pestilence wasted the land; the sources of commerce failed. Ben Amram's boasted sagacity seemed to forsake him: perplexed and bewildered he felt himself unable to stem the current of adverse circumstances.

In all these changes that hand was seen mingling, more shadowy and mysterious, yet still visible. Ben Amram saw himself, notwithstanding all his efforts, reduced to utter poverty; and then, through the mist, he perceived approaching him his brother Jorah. He shrank from him, for he feared to have his own approaches cast back into his own teeth. But presently they met.

"My brother," said Jorah, "the good hand of God has been with me, and has given me competence. Come and share it with me; I have enough for thee and for me."

Then did Eli Ben Amram exclaim, "The Lord gave

and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"

At this instant the door of the apartment opened, and with his son Jotham entered the messenger of his brother. Ben Amram looked around him; the stranger was gone, and the mist had vanished. The letter he had written was before him. He consumed it in the flame of a lamp that burned before him; and in its stead he penned a kind and sympathising message to his brother.

From that hour was Eli Ben Amram never heard to vaunt himself in his wisdom or his wealth; and if one praised his skill and success ("and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself"), he would reply, "Nay, but it was the good hand of my God upon me." And when he admonished his children to attend diligently and circumspectly to their affairs, he always added this precept: "Above all things, seek the guidance and protection of the Unseen Hand."

A LITTLE WHILE;

OR, THE NEW YEAR'S PROMISE.

HEBREWS x. 37.

"A LITTLE while!" A little while!
A little while—for God to toil;
A little while—the foe to fight;
To walk by faith, and not by sight.
A little while—to long for day,
While walking on the narrow way.
A little while—to watch and wait
For Him whose coming's at the gate.
A little while—and He shall come
To take His waiting people home.
A little while of this dark night,
And heaven shall burst upon our sight.
A little while in death's cold river,
And we shall bathe in life for ever.
Then when we meet our Saviour's smile,
How short will seem this little while!
How little worth our joy or sorrow,
When we behold that glad to-morrow!
Now, fights without and fears within;
Now, watching, waiting, woe, and sin;
Now, tears and smiles mingling together,
Dark clouds, with glints of brighter weather.
Now, draughts of sorrow, drops of joy,
And nothing good without alloy;
Our brightest, dearest pass away,
While we are watching for the day,
But then we shall have full amends:
Our joys all shared with long-lost friends.
Then shall our mouth be filled with song.
Cheer up, cheer up, 'twill not be long.
"Behold, I come! and quickly," too;
This is good news for me and you.
Then welcome toil with cheerful smile,
Remembering the "little while."
Work on, wait on, and never fear—
We may not wait another year.

R. R. T.