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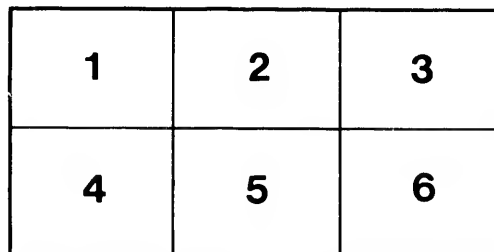
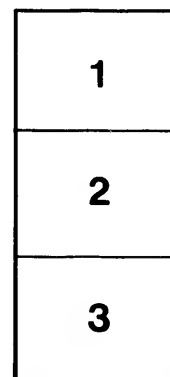
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Three Girls and Their Motto. Page 43.

THREE GIRLS

AND THEIR MOTTO

BY

E. L. S. E.



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Three Girls and Their Molds

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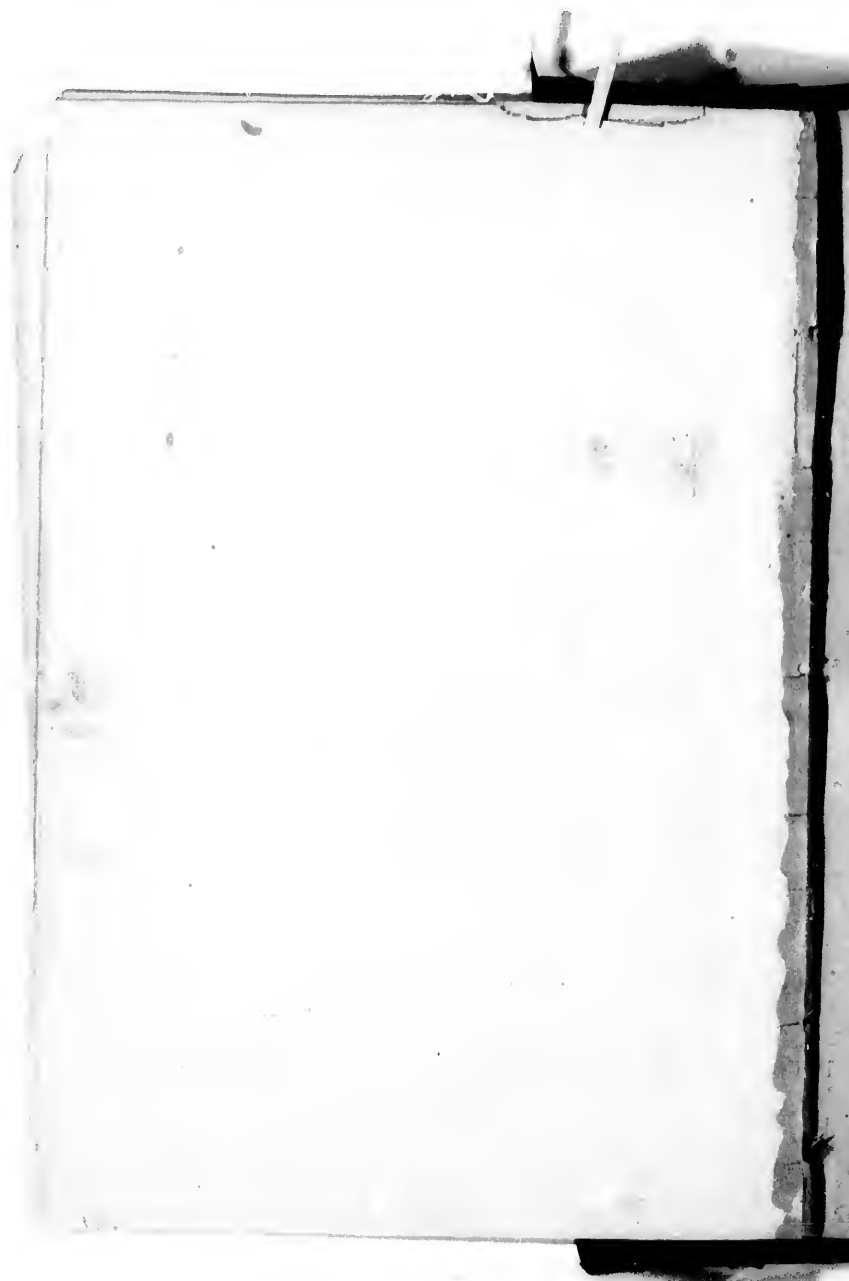
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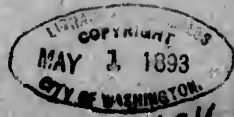
THREE GIRLS

AND THEIR MOTTO.

BY

E. L. S. E., *i. e. Mrs. H. P. Estey*

Author of "Walter Harley's Conquest."



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THREE GIRLS AND THEIR MOTTO.

CHAPTER I.

ETHEL'S PERPLEXITIES.

"I DECLARE, this is the worst room in the house to keep tidy!"

The speaker was Ethel Gladwyn; the room was the children's room, and Ethel was the children's eldest sister. She was very busy just then, sweeping, stopping often to pick up some childish treasure that had slipped from little fingers and rolled away to an unobserved nook, there to remain snugly hidden till sweeping day.

Ethel was alone; so her remark was addressed to no one, unless it might have been the big wax doll, Mollie, and she, not in the slightest degree disturbed by it, sat quite straight on the bureau, gazing with wide-open eyes and an amiable smile on Ethel's labors.

The state of the room did not seem to trouble the fair sweeper very much, however, for her face was very bright and pleasant, and she caroled a gay little song while she worked. Perhaps, with her sensitive

nature, that responded quickly to every change in her surroundings, it would have been impossible for Ethel not to be happy on this sunny, spring morning, when all nature was waking to new life. Yet there were times when we might have seen her in a more serious mood; for Ethel was a thoughtful girl, and now that she had left school, and life, with its responsibilities, began to open before her, she often found herself face to face with problems more difficult to solve than those of algebra or geometry.

Ethel was a Christian and, above all things, desired to live a true Christian life. Yet it was so difficult at times to decide what was right and what was wrong, since even good people held such diverse views! Then too, it was a puzzle to Ethel, how she could be wholly given up to the service of Christ when so much of her time and thought must necessarily be taken up with the affairs of this life. In short, it was by no means clear to her how one could live in the world, and yet not be of it.

Now, however, she was too busy to do much thinking. She had just finished her sweeping, when there came a light tap at the door, and some one said: "Ethel, are you there?"

"Yes, Grace, come in;" and the next moment a girl about Ethel's age, looking very pretty in a new spring suit, entered the room. It was Grace Maynard, Ethel's dearest friend.

"There! I have come to bother you when you are

busy, haven't I?" she exclaimed. "Ann told me you were upstairs, so I came right up."

"That is right; you are not interrupting me a bit. I have finished sweeping. Come to the sewing room, Grace."

"I am not going to keep you a minute, Ethel. Could you lend me that fashion plate—the one with the child's pretty dress in it, you know? Mother is having a dress made for Aggie, and I want her to see that pattern."

"Yes, certainly; sit down, Grace."

"No, thank you; I must go in a minute."

"Is that your new suit?" Ethel asked.

"Yes; how do you like it?"

"It is just lovely; who made it?"

"Miss Harbury."

And so they chatted on till the minute had extended to nearly half an hour. At last, Grace said:

"I really must go. Mother will wonder what has become of me. I went down town to match some braid. I expect she will think I am never coming back with it." So saying, she started to go; then, turning back again, she said: "Before you choose your new suit, Ethel, you ought to go into Howard & Denning's shop—they have the loveliest dress goods! Just go in."

"Yes; I must," replied Ethel. "What a bother it is, this business of choosing dresses."

"Do you think so? I like it."

"Perhaps you wouldn't, if you had so many to plan for as we have."

"Yes, Ethel, I think I should. Mother would not, though; she gets a sick headache whenever we spend a morning shopping. But I should never get tired of it if I had plenty of money; the lack of that precious article is my only trouble."

"I think I should not enjoy shopping if I had all the money I could desire," replied Ethel. "It is not that, Grace, but it seems to me sometimes, as though it was hardly worth while."

"Worth while what?" said Grace, a little impatiently.

"Spending so much time and thought on things that perish with the using."

"I am sure we would be perfect guys if we did not spend time and thought on them. I hope, Ethel, you will not get any strange notions into your head, and insist on wearing antediluvian garments to prove your detachment from worldly things; for, if you do, I give you fair warning, I shall not own you as a friend," and Grace laughed merrily as she ran downstairs.

Ethel laughed too, because she could not help it; but when she turned back to the sewing room, after bidding her friend good-bye, the serious look stole again into her face. She never spoke of her inmost thoughts to another without regretting it. It was so hard to make even dearest friends understand just

what her thoughts and feelings were! It was the instinctive longing for human sympathy and help in her girlish difficulties that had led her, somewhat impetuously perhaps, to speak out the thoughts of her heart that morning; and she felt half disappointed that they had been treated so lightly. But then she reflected it was no time to discuss serious questions when Grace was in one of her merry moods. She should have chosen some better time.

Having thus dismissed the matter, she went about her household duties again. Those finished, she seated herself in a low chair by her bedroom window, with some sewing. This was her favorite seat, for she could look out on a tall elm tree, where every spring the birds built their nests. How Ethel loved to watch them! Sometimes one of them would hop along a branch quite near to the window, and then, with head on one side, would watch her curiously. It seemed to be satisfied, after this close inspection, that Ethel was one to be trusted; and, perhaps in bird language, told the others so; at any rate, they grew more and more tame every day, and would perch on the window-sill to pick up the crumbs that Ethel scattered there, while occasionally one more venturesome than the rest would snatch a morsel from her hand.

As Ethel sat there sewing, her thoughts reverted to the conversation of the morning. As she had said to Grace, there were many to think of besides herself.

Since leaving school, she had tried to share with her mother the care of planning for the summer and winter outfit of the five younger brothers and sisters who made up the household; and no small care it was, as those who know can testify. Ethel, however, entered on her new duties with much energy. She had a knack of putting things together tastefully, and making over dresses to look as well as new—a gift especially acceptable in a family whose means are limited, as was the case with the Gladwyns.

Ethel was quite ambitious. She wanted to tuck and embroider all the dresses as elaborately as the style then prevailing demanded; but, sometimes, the question had come to her mind whether these things were worth the time and thought they cost.

Now the busy season had come around again, and with it a renewal of all this worry and care. Certainly the perplexity was greater because ways and means had to be carefully considered in this household. But Ethel was far-sighted enough to perceive that added wealth would not necessarily assure diminished care. The question could not be solved by money alone; yet there must be, she thought, some way of solving it.

Just then a quick whir, a rustle of leaves, and a rather more than usual twittering and chirping, caused her to look up. Robin Redbreast had brought, in triumph, a long tangle of string to weave into its half-built nest.

Ethel's work dropped on her lap, and she gazed dreamily out, watching the busy little birds, flitting to and fro among the sunlit branches; watching the constant interchange of light and shadow, as the sunbeams glided down among the dancing leaves to play on the gnarled trunk and boughs of the old elm tree. How full of life the world of nature was, this bright noontide! *Busy* life—not *anxious* life. Ah, that made all the difference; that was the reason why the outer world was so full of joy, whilst the inner one was so full of care. Did the Father above intend that his children should be fretted and careworn, while all the universe around was rejoicing? Surely not. Had not the Lord of all drawn lessons from bird and flower for anxious mortals? Had he not said: "Take no thought [anxious thought] for the morrow"? But how can we help being anxious, how can we help taking thought for our raiment, what we shall put on? And, with the question still unanswered, Ethel turned to her work again.

As she drew a thread from her work-basket, a little crumpled piece of paper fell to the floor. She stooped to pick it up. It was one of Georgie's reward cards, torn by busy little fingers. "I declare," said Ethel, half aloud, "that is some of baby's work." She straightened it out, and these were the words that met her eyes: "Seek ye first the kingdom—" the rest had been torn off. She read it over again slowly, as though it contained some new idea,

and almost involuntarily said aloud, "What kingdom?" Why, the kingdom of God, of course. Ethel had known the text since childhood. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." How often she had read it! How little meaning she had attached to it! But now this little fragment of a text suddenly became luminous, and flashed a ray of brightness on her difficulties. In the light of this command those other precepts became clear. Ethel had found help for that day, and many days to come. The glad look came back to her face, and she began to sing, while her busy fingers worked faster than before.

It was not long before voices in the hall below announced the arrival of the children from school. Presently Millie came up to her sister's room. She was just twelve, but already almost as tall as Ethel. Flinging down her school-books, she sank into a rocking-chair, and began to fan herself vigorously.

"Oh, Ethel, you wouldn't believe how hot it is. I am nearly roasted. It's lovely and cool here. I wish I could stay home, instead of going to school."

"Stay home and sew!" suggested Ethel, mischievously. She knew Millie disliked sewing.

"Yes, I would sew. I would rather do that than study—some things; and then at home you could leave off when you wanted to."

"I wonder how much work would be done, if we always left off whenever we wanted to," said Ethel.

Millie made no answer to this; then she said, abruptly: "Didn't you hate algebra when you went to school?"

"I don't remember *hating* it."

"Oh, you never hate anything; but I do dislike algebra, and I never shall like it. I got on pretty well at first, and then I missed fractions when I was sick in the winter; and there is so much to work up, and I cannot understand the reason for half the things I do. Mr. Parkhurst tried to explain things to me this morning, but I could not see them any clearer. The other girls are working problems, and I am just discouraged. I hate to be behind all the time."

"Well, then, go on and work problems with them, and we will look over fractions together at home. You will understand the theory better as you practice more."

"Perhaps I will," said Millie, brightening up.

"And now, to change the subject, Ethel, don't you think I could wear my gingham dress this afternoon? I am so warm in this."

"I should think not. Why, you have quite outgrown it, Millie."

"Well, then, I wish mother would get a new one, right away."

"Miss Fanjoy is coming this week to sew; but you needn't fret, there will be more cool weather. This warm day is simply a warning to prepare for summer. But there is the dinner bell. Come, Millie, we must

not keep them waiting." And Ethel folded up her work, slipped thimble and scissors into place, and put away her work-basket; whilst Millie vainly searched for her drawing book, which she afterward recollected she had left downstairs. "A place for everything, and everything in its place," was a motto as constantly present to Ethel's mind as it was conspicuously absent from Millie's.

The two girls went down together to the cool, shady dining room, where the rest of the family, with the exception of Mr. Gladwyn, who did not come home until evening, were gathered for dinner. The central figure, of course, was mother, always so serene, so cheerful, so ready to enter into the joys and sorrows of her children. Home would not be home without her. She had reached life's prime, and had borne her share of its cares and burdens; yet her brow was not careworn, and her heart was still youthful. Perhaps some will imagine this was because she had a natural capacity for throwing off care, or a faculty for taking life easily; such, however, was not the case. The secret was this: Mrs. Gladwyn had early learned to bring every real care to her Heavenly Father, and leave it with him; while every unnecessary care she laid aside—a secret which Ethel, who closely resembled her mother, both in appearance and disposition, had yet to learn.

Next in age to Ethel came Harry, a bright boy of fourteen; then Millie, of whom mention has already

been made. And they were both growing so tall that they began to call Mrs. Gladwyn "little mother." Then there was Bessie, who was nearly ten, Georgie, a lively little fellow of six, and baby Clarence, the pet of the household, and just the dearest baby that ever lived. He had reached his second year, and his attempts at talking proved a constant source of amusement to his brothers and sisters.

And now you will want to know something of their home. It was a large, old-fashioned house, standing on a corner of a quiet, shady street. It had been built years before, in the days when Melvin was only a village, and houses were few and far between, and land was not so valuable as at present. So, though it looked very plain alongside of its more modern neighbors, with their French roofs, projecting windows, and little balconies, it had its compensations; for at one side there was a large, old garden, with fruit trees and lilac bushes, roses and peonies, that had been planted long ago by the former owner, with many other pretty flowers, that the girls took delight in tending. On the side of the house next to the garden was a broad veranda, partially covered with ivy, where easy chairs and a hammock proved very inviting on long summer afternoons and evenings.

The house itself was well adapted for a family; for it was roomy, and its large closets, pantries, and storerooms would have delighted the heart of any housekeeper. But perhaps that which impressed one most

was the air of comfort which pervaded the whole house. There was no stately drawing room shut off from daily use, and filled with costly furniture and bric-a-brac, at the expense of all the other rooms. It is true there was a parlor, tastefully, though not expensively, furnished; but it was always open, and often, after dinner, Mrs. Gladwyn would while away a pleasant half-hour there, reading some favorite author, or glancing over the pages of a new magazine. In the twilight, Ethel would sit down at the piano to play for her father, who dearly loved music. Even Harry found it pleasant to read his book of adventures in the cool, shady room, which looked very inviting on hot days.

Well, what difference did it make, after all? Could they not have enjoyed the books and the music just as well in the ordinary living room? I do not say they could not; and yet the room in which were gathered their choicest things had a refining influence, which was felt almost unconsciously.

CHAPTER II.

SEED SOWING.

"I SUPPOSE, Ethel, you remember that the missionary meeting is held this afternoon," said her mother, as they rose from the dinner table.

"Oh, dear me! I had quite forgotten it." Her tone seemed to indicate that she wished her mother had forgotten it too. The truth was, Ethel had made other plans for that afternoon, and she disliked to have them disconcerted. "It seems to me that meetings are very inconvenient at this busy season," she said.

"Have you anything special to do to-day?" inquired her mother.

"I wanted to finish Bessie's waist this afternoon, and then I thought that perhaps we could do some shopping together; and I really ought to go in and see Aunt Margaret."

"It is not absolutely necessary to finish the waist to-day. As to the shopping, we can go to-morrow morning, which will be a better time; and I have no doubt you will have time to go and see Aunt Margaret after the meeting. A couple of hours a month is not a great amount of time to give up to a good cause, even at this busy season."

How very little the time seemed when it was put in that way! Ethel felt quite ashamed, and just then the text of the morning came stealing into her mind: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Yet she had felt unwilling, for a little time, to turn aside from the cares of earth to unite with others in asking that that kingdom might come, and with them learn of its progress in the world. Ought she not, rather, to be glad of such an opportunity? This thought put a new aspect on missionary meetings. Both Ethel and her friend, Grace Maynard, had decided some months before to regularly attend the meetings of the Woman's Missionary Aid Society in connection with their church, and hitherto had kept their resolution pretty faithfully. But I cannot say that either of them felt as much interest in missionary work as she ought, perhaps not so much as she would have liked to feel.

Ethel was soon ready to accompany her mother. On their way they called for Grace, only to find her out."

"Perhaps she has forgotten it, as I did," said Ethel. "Or, possibly, she intends to go, but cannot be there until later."

There were not many at the meeting; as Ethel had said, it was a busy time. Some, doubtless, were unavoidably detained. Some, perhaps, might have gone if they had only thought so. Yet to Ethel it was a very pleasant and interesting meeting. It seemed quite different from former meetings. Was

it not because she realized, as never before, that they had come together to pray and work for Christ's kingdom. If dear to Christ, it surely must be dear to his child—his loyal follower. Yes, Ethel rejoiced to feel it was dear to her; and she took a new interest in the letters of the missionaries regarding their work, their trials and joys, their encouragements and discouragements. Though Ethel kept hoping that Grace would be there, the hour passed, and she did not come.

After the meeting, Ethel went to call on Aunt Margaret, an invalid aunt of Mr. Gladwyn. She was a dear old lady, and was very fond of her nephew and his wife and family. She was particularly attached to Ethel. Perhaps it was natural that she should take a livelier interest in the eldest child than in any of the others. She had watched her grow up from childhood into young womanhood, and now no one, she thought, could do anything better than could Ethel.

To Ethel, Aunt Margaret's house was almost the same as home; her earliest recollections were interwoven with it. How well she remembered the happy days she used to spend there! How she would sit in the little rocking-chair that belonged to Aunt Margaret when she was a little girl, and hold the big doll, almost as large as herself, that had also descended from that remote period. Then dolly would be put to sleep on the sofa, while Ethel went to the kitchen

to watch her aunt make pies, always sure that she would have a little one all for herself. Then she would put on her pink sun-bonnet, and away she would run to the garden, chasing Frisk, the little dog, round and round the narrow paths, till at last, tired out, she was glad to rest in the shade, and eat a piece of Aunt Margaret's currant cake, better cake, she was sure, never having been made.

Ah, those happy careless days of childhood; how full of sunshine they were! Ethel often looked back to them now, yet not regretful'y. She was glad to be of some use in the world; she would not be always only careless and happy.

Aunt Margaret was not able to go about her house now as once she did, and there was always something Ethel could do; reading the newspaper, or arranging flowers, or trimming a cap, or directing Ruth, the faithful domestic, in the preparation of some new and dainty dish, Ethel was always ready, and equally at home in all. To-day Aunt Margaret must have out her last summer's dress, and ask Ethel's advice as to making some alterations in it. Ethel's decision proved satisfactory, and she promised to come some day soon and show Ruth how to make the needed alterations; for Ruth not having much housework, did most of Aunt Margaret's sewing. Then Ethel told her aunt about the meeting that afternoon, sure of an interested listener; for Aunt Margaret was heartily in sympathy with all the good that was doing everywhere, and

rejoiced to see the young people taking hold of the work from which she had been laid aside.

Ethel went home with something of the pleasure that comes from the consciousness of having "looked on the things of others" for a while. She found time to finish the waist before tea; so she accomplished the best part of what she planned after all. Tea was only just finished when Grace Maynard came in. She and Ethel read French together, and this was their evening for study.

"You were not at the meeting this afternoon, Grace," said Ethel, as they went up together to her room.

"No, I was too busy to go this afternoon; we have a dressmaker at the house, and you know what that means. I have been trying to decide how to have my sateen dress trimmed. I intend to have lace on it, and I went all over town looking for some to suit. I found a pretty piece at last, but it was too late then to go to the meeting."

"Would it not look as well without the lace," suggested Ethel, who did not care for so much decoration.

"Oh, it might do; but it would not look so dressy. You see the Leslies want me go with them to the seaside this summer. Of course I want to go, and mother would like to have me go; and they are such stylish girls! And Leonore says that Bay View, where they are going, is a very fashionable watering-place; so, of course, if I go, I want to look as well as

the rest. If father only consents, I shall go. Most likely he will, as he generally does everything I want him to do. Now for our French; you had better begin, Ethel."

Ethel and Grace had been schoolmates. There was also a stronger bond between them, for they had united with the church at the same time. In disposition, they were very unlike; so much so, indeed, that one almost wondered at the attachment between them. Grace was a gay, lively girl, who liked nothing better than to have a good time, and gave little thought to the graver questions of life and its responsibilities. But Ethel knew that within there was a real earnestness which would make her a power for good, if it were developed. Grace often laughed at Ethel; called her a philosopher and theorist, and declared that her ideals were too high for ordinary mortals, and could not be worked out in a world like this. Yet she really respected them, and tried to realize them, more even than Ethel knew.

The reading was finished. The sun had just disappeared beneath the horizon, leaving the west all aglow with golden light. Swallows wheeled round and round in airy circles and robins poured forth their happy song. The busy day was ended. Nature was ready for rest. Looking out on that quiet evening scene, Ethel recalled the thoughts of the morning; perhaps they would not have been spoken had not Grace, at that moment, said:

"A penny for your thoughts, Ethel." Ethel hesitated. It is difficult, often, to express an idea that is clear to one's own mind, so that others can see it too; but after a moment's pause, she said:

"I was thinking of a text that came to me with new force this morning,—'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' What do you think that means, Grace?"

"Why, I think—oh, you know it means, of course, that we should seek first to become Christians."

"Seek to enter the kingdom," suggested Ethel.

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Grace.

"Doesn't it mean something more than that? It has seemed to me so, as I have thought about it to-day. The idea came to me as it had never done before, that having entered the kingdom of God we should henceforth make it our chief aim to advance that kingdom."

"Yes, certainly; all religious work has that end in view, and I am sure we try to do our share," said Grace, complacently.

"I was not thinking just now of religious work, as you term it, Grace. It seems to me that the kingdom of God touches our lives at every point, that the commonest duties bear some relation to it, and that by every act and word we are either advancing or hindering its coming."

"Do you really think so?" There was almost a look of awe on Grace's face as she spoke.

"Yes, Grace, I do; and the thought has been a

help to me, for I can spend so little time in so-called religious work, and so much time must be taken up with ordinary duties that I am glad to know that even in these I can in some way do something for that kingdom. I have been so perplexed lately, and now I feel I have found a guiding principle. It seems to me it simplifies life so, to have this one great purpose running through it; and it ennobles it too."

"But, Ethel, how can these ordinary duties of every-day life have anything to do with Christ's kingdom?"

"I cannot quite tell yet how everything has to do with it; that is something I have still to work out. But I think you will grant that those who profess to belong to Christ's kingdom ought to be actuated by a different spirit from those who do not. What that spirit is we are told in his word, for it says,— 'the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Now, these are elements that can enter into every act of our lives, and the more of them we have the more fruitful our lives will be, and the more helpful to others."

"Yes, I see that; but I am sure there are some things that must occupy our time and thoughts that refer only to this world, and that have nothing to do with spiritual things. Dress, for example."

"Why, that is just where my text applies," replied Ethel, her dark eyes brightening as she spoke. Our Lord had been speaking of those ever-present ques-

tions that steal away so much of our time and thoughts. 'What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' And we are told that 'after these things do the nations of the world seek'; but we should rather 'seek the kingdom of God.' If that is our aim we will, with regard to dress, for example, be simply concerned to have it convenient, suitable, and within our means; and so, whether we can vie with our neighbors or not will be a matter of little concern to us. So, also, many other matters, deemed all-important by the world, will take the second place in our thoughts because of this other ruling thought: this higher aim and purpose."

"That is all very well in theory, but I think one could hardly put it in practice."

"Not in one's own strength, certainly; but with divine help we need not fear to try. For my part, it is my desire and purpose to 'seek first the kingdom of God.' Indeed, how can I, as a Christian, do otherwise?"

Ethel spoke thoughtfully and solemnly. It was as though she had anew consecrated herself to the Lord who had bought her. The Christian pathway was opening up before her, and she saw more plainly than ever before, that it would lead far from worldly conformity; but she unhesitatingly committed herself to it.

The two girls sat silent, each wrapped in her own

thoughts. In the one heart was peace—the peace that comes to those who own Christ as all in all. In the other, conflict—conflict between her own will and the higher blessed will that would fain lead her in paths of peace.

While they had been talking, the twilight had been deepening, and now earth lay hushed and still in the gathering darkness, while in the heavens above, the new moon waxed momentarily brighter, and stars began to twinkle faintly. At length, Grace rose. "I must go, Ethel," she said. "We have sat so long talking, it must be late."

"Do not go yet, Grace. I think Harry has gone for the mail; when he comes in, he will go home with you."

"I cannot stay longer to-night, Ethel; and I do not want any one to go with me. It is only a few steps, you know."

"Grace, let us both try to carry out that text in our daily lives. Will you?"

Grace hesitated for a moment, then she said: "I do not see the text quite in the light in which you do. I think I do seek the advancement of Christ's kingdom. I will try to do it more faithfully." She spoke in a constrained tone.

Ethel turned away disappointed. She was young and enthusiastic. She wanted those whom she loved to like the things she liked, to have the same hopes and aspirations, to view truth in the same way. It

pained her that they should think differently. She did not stop to reflect that her heart had been prepared to receive the truth, while to Grace it had come with a suddenness which made it unwelcome. To say the truth, Christian though she was, Grace had always thought that there were some things that belonged to religion, and there were other things with which it had no concern at all; and because she attended with some degree of faithfulness to her religious duties, she failed to realize what inroads the world was making upon her life.

And yet she would sing most heartily, "All for Jesus, all my days and all my hours"; but, even while she sang, she never thought that *all* meant *all*. To-night the Good Shepherd, who was leading her ever onward, had given her a glimpse into a life more wholly devoted to him, and her first impulse led her to shrink back. She felt that she did not want to apply Scripture truths so closely to every-day life. She was dimly conscious that the Bible set before Christians a high standard of living. She was sure she could not attain to it, so she felt inclined to shut her eyes, and go on as though it was not there; yet the truth would be there all the same, and she would be wronging her soul by turning away from it.

Some such thoughts passed through Grace's mind as she walked slowly homeward. Conscience had been awakened by Ethel's words, and now it told her she might have been at the missionary meeting that

afternoon instead of fussing over the trimming of a dress. It told her, moreover, that every waking thought, just at present, was given to planning a summer outfit as fashionable as that of the Leslies. In truth, conscience spoke far too loudly for Grace's comfort, and, as she came in sight of home, she gladly dismissed the unwelcome thoughts.

There was a light in the sitting room, and, as it was a warm evening, the windows were open. As Grace passed by on the piazza, she paused to look in. Her father was sitting at a table with some accounts spread out before him: her mother was sitting near, sewing.

"I hardly expected this bill to be so large," Mr. Maynard remarked, taking up a somewhat extended account.

"Nor I, either," returned Mrs. Maynard. "I am sure the portiere was the only expensive thing bought, but Grace does all the shopping. I will ask her to look it over and see if it is all correct."

"Perhaps she might economize a little."

"I am sure, my dear, she is not extravagant. You know girls at her age must look nice, and she does look pretty, doesn't she?"

"Yes; but to my mind she would look just as pretty without so many ribbons and laces."

"You are no judge; you are so very quiet in your tastes," returned his wife. "Besides it is the fashion, and she must be in the fashion."

"I suppose so," said Mr. Maynard; and Grace thought she heard him sigh, as he turned back to the pile of papers before him.

Poor, dear, patient father, never complaining, only working a little harder when the demands made upon him were greater. Grace saw to-night what she had never noticed before, that he was aging. How gray his hair was getting, and how deep were the lines of care on his forehead. She remembered how little recreation he had taken during the past year, and how late he worked, and she realized in that moment, as she never had before, the self-sacrificing devotion of her father to his family. Strange that such a vision comes but seldom. Alas, it sometimes comes too late!

None would have guessed that any such emotions had stirred Grace's heart, as she came gayly into the room a moment or two later. She just seemed the same careless, happy Grace that she always was.

"Here, you extravagant little girl, look at this. You will ruin your poor father at this rate," said Mr. Maynard.

And Grace only said: "You see what a dreadful thing it is to have daughters, papa." And she looked at him with such a merry twinkle in her eye, that he had to smile a little in spite of himself. "Never mind," she added, consolingly, "Perhaps I may be married some day, and off your hands."

"I pity the man who gets you, my dear," returned her father.

"So do I, papa, with all my heart." And so the lively talk went on; while Grace looked over the account, and for the first time realized how quickly little things count up. She seriously pondered whether many of them were not quite unnecessary. When she had finished, she said:

"I am going to turn over a new leaf, papa. You will be surprised to see how economical I shall be."

"It will be a surprise, I am sure," returned her father. He thought it only a passing resolve, which would give way at the first temptation. How should he know there were really serious thoughts in his gay young daughter's heart.

When Grace went to her room, the first thing that met her eye was the sateen dress, and instantly the conflict began. Here was an opportunity to put in practice her resolve. She might do without the lace trimmings she had planned. This, however, she found she did not at all wish to do. "It is only a matter of a dollar or two; how little difference that will make!" she said to herself. "I can begin to economize on the next thing." Something within whispered: "It will be harder next time;" and she knew that was true—knew that if she did not begin now, she would most likely not begin at all.

Then she began to think of other things in which she might economize. Yes, there was much she might do without, she knew. But then it meant, she thought, giving up the society of the Lealies; for she never

could go in that set if she dressed so plainly. Yet after all, would that be a very great loss? She knew that the Leslies cared not for the kingdom of which she was a member; certainly did not *seek* it in the way of which Ethel had spoken that evening. How much would she be the gainer if she grew to think as they did, and live as they did? Grace did not care to face that question just now. She would so much rather drift along without thinking about these things.

There was one thing, however, she must decide that night; and that was about the trimming on her dress. "I think I will give it up," she said to herself; then she took up a little piece of lace she had brought as a sample, and tried it against the dress. How well it looked! She began to waver. "I believe I *must* have it after all," she said, aloud.

Ah, that convenient word "must"; how often it serves to cover a selfish determination with the cloak of apparent necessity!

But just at this moment a thought of her father's careworn and anxious face crossed Grace's mind. It was enough; she unpinned the scrap of lace, and tossed it aside; then as she hung up the dress, she said, resolutely: "There, Grace Maynard, you are not going to have one bit of lace on this dress; *not one bit!* And this is only the beginning of economy, now mind."

Miss Norcross, the dressmaker, felt somewhat disappointed when she found that Grace had decided to do

without the elaborate trimming they had designed the day before. But as she saw that Grace had made up her mind, she had the ready tact to fall in with her views, saying that the dress would certainly look very quiet and ladylike; which had the effect to make Grace feel quite satisfied with her decision.

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CHAPTER III.

GRACE MAYNARD'S RESOLVE.

AS the days went on, Grace did not find it an easy task to keep the resolve she had so firmly made regarding her expenditures. She had always been indulged in everything, and the idea of giving up anything on which her heart had been set, was quite new to her. She was very desirous now of going to Bay View with the Leslies. She knew it would be an expensive trip, and she had begun to question lately whether her father could afford it; yet, every day, the prospect of spending a few weeks there grew more enticing. She would see so much more of society there than she possibly could in the quiet town in which she lived.

Grace loved gaiety and excitement. She knew too, that she possessed qualities that would make her a social success. It seemed to her, the more she thought about it, that it would be foolish to throw away such a good chance. The temptation grew even stronger when Leonore brought the news that a cousin of theirs from New York, a wealthy young man, had decided to spend part of the summer at the seaside with them. "And I wrote him," she said, archly, "that we should be accompanied by a charm-

ing young lady. Now, after that, I am sure you will not refuse to go with us."

"What a dreadful girl you are, Leonore," said Grace. "I am not at all sure that I can go."

"Oh, you must! we will have such splendid times together. This is Saturday; and you must make up your mind before Monday, Grace."

"Very well. I will let you know for certain, then."

As Grace walked homeward, she felt her firm resolutions of a few days before melting away like snow before a March sun. The feelings that she had then experienced had given way to others. After all, her father could not be very much worried over his business. The firm was prosperous. Who ever heard of the firm of Maynard & Perry being otherwise? Why should she not have all she wanted? Yet she fancied her father would rather that she would not go. She resolved to ask him, and find out for certain.

It was late in the evening before she had a chance to talk to her father alone; for he was busy in the little room he called his office for some time. When, at length, he had finished, Grace called him out on the veranda.

"It is such a lovely evening, papa," she said, "you ought to be out here enjoying it."

"Business before pleasure, my daughter; but it is damp, child; you will catch cold."

"Oh, I am only going to stay a few minutes, and I have a shawl. Now, tell me, like a dear, good father, whether I can go to Bay View this summer."

She was a good deal disappointed when, after a moment's pause, Mr. Maynard answered, slowly:

"I would much rather you would not go, if you can content yourself elsewhere."

"Of course, I will not go if you do not wish it," said Grace.

Her father noticed the regret in her voice, and answered: "I do not want you to give it up against your will, daughter."

Grace made no answer. Her thought was, I cannot give it up in any other way. "You cannot afford it?" she questioned, after a few moments of silence.

"Hardly," was the reply.

Nothing more was said. Mr. Maynard was not accustomed to talk of his affairs to his family, and Grace felt no inclination to ask further questions. She went to her room sadly disappointed. She felt that she ought to give up her bright plans for the summer; yet it seemed very hard for her to do so. She had been looking forward to this visit with the highest anticipation. Now there seemed nothing but a blank left.

Grace arose the next morning listless and discontented, and little disposed for the engagements of the Sabbath. It was a glorious morning, this first Sunday in June. Earth was bathed in sunshine; the

little birds seemed fairly quivering with rapture, as they trilled their happy lays.

But Grace felt out of harmony with all around, as she walked to church that bright morning. At the church door she met Ethel, and they passed in together. As Grace glanced at her friend's face, there flashed into her mind the words, "the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Something of that joy shone in the face turned toward her. Instinctively, Grace recognized it, and longed that she also might experience it.

The first hymn given out was that familiar, old one, containing the words :

"Oh, may my heart in tune be found,
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

The hymn, as it happened, was sung to a familiar tune. The congregation joined in the singing, and the harmony, borne along by many voices, rolled grandly through the church, bringing inspiration to the soul.

Ah! Grace knew that her soul was out of tune; that it made a jarring discord, while her voice blended with others in sweetest harmony. She wished it was otherwise, and determined to fix her thoughts on the service; but before the prayer was ended, she realized that she had completely failed. In spite of her best efforts, her thoughts wandered far away. She hoped for something helpful in the sermon, and felt disappointed when the morning announcements brought

to her remembrance that it was missionary Sunday. That meant a missionary sermon, and what help could there be for her in such a discourse.

But Grace soon became interested. The text was a familiar one. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Earnestly and solemnly Mr. Clifford unfolded the text to his hearers. There were many thoughtful listeners that morning, but none more so than Grace Maynard. The words sank deep into her heart, and awoke anxious questionings there. The Lord of glory had become poor that he might make her rich; that he might bring precious gifts to her, and had she ever denied herself anything that she might send the good news to others.

Her heart made answer, "No." What a selfish life hers had been! And yet she called herself a Christian; yes, and really wanted to be one too, only she had not realized all it meant to be a follower of Christ. Now, in this hour, there were awakened within her longings after a better and higher life than she had hitherto lived, and a holy purpose was formed in her heart to live unto him who had done so much for her; a purpose, that by his grace was to grow stronger and stronger, until it became the ruling aim of her life.

There was one expression that followed Grace; it was this: "In the light of eternity, will you regret

having made some sacrifice for Christ's sake? Ah, my friend, whatever else you regret, you will not regret that." And Grace kept repeating those words over and over to herself: "Whatever else you may regret, you will not regret that."

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CHAPTER IV.

NEW THOUGHTS AWAKENED.

"I DO wish," said Mrs. Maynard, as they gathered at the dinner table, after church, "that Mr. Clifford would not talk so much about giving. We are continually being asked to give a little more to this and that and the other thing. For my part, I get tired of hearing about it; particularly as we give all we can, and I dare say others do the same."

Mr. Maynard's face grew thoughtful. He made no answer for a moment or two, then said, "It seems as though we ought to give more, though I do not see how we can. There were father and mother, not well off, at least we would not think so, and with ten children to clothe and feed; yet they gave as much to missions as I do, and I have only three children and a much larger income."

"Very likely," replied his wife, "and no wonder; living was not nearly so expensive then as now, and as their home was in the country, no doubt they did not have to live in the same style that we do."

"Indeed, they did not," said Mr. Maynard, smiling as he mentally contrasted his present elegant home with the plain old-fashioned home of his childhood. "I am sure we had as much happiness though."

"No one said you did not," returned his wife. "All I say is that the case with us is so different. We are obliged to live in more style; therefore we are obliged to spend more money, and consequently we cannot give away any more than they did, if we are richer."

Mrs. Maynard put quite a marked emphasis upon the word obliged. Mr. Maynard noticed it, and said, "I do not know that we are *obliged* to live as we do."

"Why, yes, we are, James. How could we move in society, if we did not?"

This was always Mrs. Maynard's final argument, and one that had always been accepted as conclusive by her husband and children; for could anything more dreadful be imagined than to be left out of society, whatever that might mean. No; cost what it would, they must be found in the fashionable circle of Melvin.

Grace listened to the conversation with keen interest.

"How quiet you are, Grace," said her father. "What is the matter?"

"I was thinking, papa."

"Really now, Grace," put in her brother Ned, saucily, "do you ever think?"

"Sometimes I do, Ned; only sometimes. I think just now it is time to go to Sunday-school, and I must ask to be excused. Come, Ned," she added, as she left the room, "you had better get ready; we can go together."

"I don't know that I shall go," he returned.

"I don't know why you should stay home," said Grace.

Ned made no answer. However, when she appeared at the door a few minutes later, he joined her.

"It is altogether too fine a day to be cooped up in Sunday-school," he said, as they left the house.

"And soon it will be too hot to go out," said his sister, "and in winter, too stormy; and at other times, too rainy. What is the matter with you lately, Ned? You always have some excuse for not wishing to go to Sunday-school. I suppose the real reason is, you don't want to go."

"I do not. It does well enough for the little boys, but none of the fellows go."

"Some of them do," said his sister.

"Oh, yes, some of them go, I know," returned Ned; and there was that in his tone which said very plainly that he did not care to belong to that set.

Just then a carriage whirled by, and Ned exclaimed "There go Larkins and Slason. My! how that horse does go! They're off up the road. It will be just splendid to-day." And the youth looked after them longingly.

A strange fear and anxiety was awakened in Grace's heart, as he spoke. She had heard that young men often came down the road in the evening very much the worse on account of liquor; what if her brother should ever learn to spend his Sundays so!

They had reached the school-room door by this

time. "Aren't you coming in now, Ned," said Grace.

"Time enough, I guess. There's Al Smythe. I want to speak to him a minute."

Grace looked after him with misgiving. She did not like Al Smythe at all. He was some two or three years Ned's senior, and aspired to be thought a young man. There would have been no harm in that, but unfortunately it meant with him taking on the vices of manhood, not its virtues. Grace, who knew his influence was for evil on her brother, took her seat in her class with a troubled heart. The last year or two Ned's life had been growing away from hers. Sometimes she had looked upon it as a matter of course, boys were so unlike girls. But at other times, when she saw Hal Gladwyn going about with his sisters Ethel and Millie, and becoming every day more fitted to move in the circle in which they did, she wondered why it was different with her brother, and thought there must be something wrong somewhere.

This afternoon she looked anxiously for Ned, but in vain; he did not come. She had no more time for thought, however, as her group of girls gathered about her ready to begin the lesson. Never before had Grace felt so unfit for her duty. To be sure, she had prepared the lesson in a manner which generally would have satisfied her; that is, she had read over the lesson and the lesson helps, and in anticipation of a busy week had done this the previous Sunday, after her return

from Sunday-school. But the truths of the lesson did not enter and affect her heart, so full of other things; so now she had no experience to bring to her class, and she felt that her teaching was lifeless and formal. She was glad when school was over and she could join Ethel, for she wanted to have a talk with her.

"Come Ethel," she said, "I want you to come home with me. I will not keep you long," she added, as Ethel hesitated. "I know Bessie and Georgie monopolize you on Sunday afternoons, but Millie can read and sing to them just as well as you can, and it will do her good to take charge of them once in a while. I want particularly to have one of our talks together."

Thus urged, Ethel yielded. It was but a few steps to Grace's home. The girls found a pleasant, shady seat in the garden. Then Grace began by saying:

"Do you know, Ethel, I was almost afraid this morning that I was not a Christian when I thought how I have lived from day to day all for myself, and not remembering how much I owe to Jesus? Yet I do love him, Ethel, I really do; only I never realized before how far off I have followed him. I wished so much while listening to the sermon that I could do something more, or give something more, but I do not know how to do it. You know, Ethel, if I were to deny myself ever so much, it would make no difference. I would not have any more to give away, for I have no stated allowance as you have. To be sure,

I can have money whenever I want it by asking for it, yet it scarcely seems like giving of my own."

"Perhaps your father would give you an allowance if you should ask him."

"I did say something about it once, but he did not seem to care to do it. I suppose he thought I was too extravagant to be trusted."

"But you could agree to buy certain articles of dress with it—that is the way I do, and I think it teaches one to be careful, and so spend money to advantage."

"Well, I might try again, sometime; but that does not help me at present."

Grace sighed, and her usually merry face looked troubled. Presently, she said, abruptly:

"I do not know what is the good of being told to do things when we cannot do them."

There was a touch of impatience in her voice as she spoke.

"There is one thing we can do," said Ethel, quietly; "we can ask God to make it plain to us; how we can do the good things we desire to do, yet find no means of doing. He will surely show us the right way."

The words fell with a calming influence on Grace's restless heart,

"Yes, Ethel, we can do that," she said; then added, "There is so much that puzzles me; I begin to wonder whether many things I do are just right—"

for a Christian to do, I mean. I am sure that I am not one of those consecrated, zealous Christians, of whom we sometimes read. I do not know whether it is possible to be one in the ordinary circumstances of life. What do you think?"

"The grace of God can make it possible for you and me as well as for any one else; perhaps we are afraid to ask for it. I think my text: 'Seek first the kingdom of God,' will help us. If we were to ask with regard to every course of action: 'Will this advance or hinder that kingdom?' Surely, it would not be very hard to decide what it would be right to do."

"Perhaps not. It might be hard to do the right thing when one had found out."

"But we can have Divine help in our difficulties if we only ask it," suggested Ethel.

"I know that; but, Ethel, I am afraid I am not willing to do whatsoever he saith." The words came slowly and with effort. "It is dreadful to think that, isn't it; yet what can I do?"

"I would tell Jesus all about it," said Ethel, gently.

"What! That I am not willing?"

"Yes, for he is your best friend. Why should you keep anything back from him? He will help you."

"But do you think he will indeed make the way plain, and show me what to do?"

"Surely he will," said Ethel, her own faith grow-

ing stronger, even while she spoke. "Has he not said: 'if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . and it shall be given him;' has he not promised to make crooked things straight, and darkness light before us?"

There was a triumphant ring in Ethel's voice that made Grace feel that she was speaking from her own experience.

"I have been thinking to-day," Grace said, "of ever so many things that I could not make different, crooked things that I could not straighten; now I will bring them all to our Father in heaven, and I will not be discouraged any more."

"That is right, dear. Do not grow discouraged; you ought not, when you have such promises. None of us should," said Ethel, as she rose to go.

Before they parted at the gate, Ethel said:

"Do you intend to go to Bay View?"

"No; I have given that up," replied Grace, quietly.

That last remark, or something connected with it, kept Grace thinking for quite a while after saying good-bye; then suddenly her face grew bright, and she turned back to the house with quick steps. Evidently some light had dawned on her way. As she was about to go into the house, her father, who was sitting on the piazza, spoke to her:

"I am afraid I disappointed you last night, little girl, about that pet plan of yours. Mother and I have

been talking it over, and I have no doubt we can arrange it; so you can call that settled."

"Father, I have given it up," said Grace, decidedly. "I don't mind one bit, and you must not think I do. We will all go away somewhere in the country together, and have a good time. Now, don't say another word; there's a dear, good father. You know when I make up my mind, it is no easy matter to get me to alter it, and you had better not try."

"What made you change your mind about wanting to go then?" said her father.

"Oh, one thing and another; partly that sermon this morning. I felt while listening to it that I did so want to give something to missions; and I have been thinking that, since I am not going to Bay View, perhaps you would give me a little of the money the trip would have cost, and I could give that." She had drawn a low chair near her father, and was looking up into his face with her earnest, brown eyes. She had seldom looked more lovely to him. A pleased expression came over his face.

"You are sure you would rather do that?" he questioned.

"Yes, perfectly sure," she replied.

He took out his pocket-book, and turned over the bills. "How will that do?" he asked, as he dropped one in her lap. It was a twenty-dollar bill.

"Oh, you dear papa," and Grace jumped up, and put her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

"There, child, it is nothing to make a fuss about. I declare you look more and more like my mother every day. You would look more like her if you wore your hair so"—and he parted and tried to smooth down the fluffy bangs as he spoke. "I believe you are going to resemble her in character too. Well, you could not be like a better woman."

"How I wish she had lived, so that I could have seen and known her."

"I have often wished that she had been spared to enjoy a happy old age, and see her grand-children grow up around her; but it was not to be, and doubtless, it was well. She had always wished to live until we were all grown up, and able to do for ourselves; and this desire was granted. The sermon this morning made me think of her very much. Her life was patterned after those teachings more than mine has been, daughter—I used to think her too unworldly; I see now she chose the better part," and Mr. Maynard gazed musingly out on the fair scene before him.

Grace's thought was—"How I wish I might be like her." Just then she caught sight of Ned coming, and went to meet him.

"You didn't come to Sunday-school after all, Ned," were her first, half-reproachful words.

"Oh, well, you see, when I got through talking to Al, I found school had begun, and I hate to go in late; so I took a walk, but I will go next Sunday, sure."

"I'm going to church to-night, you know, and I'll sit downstairs with you, if you don't scold me."

This was quite a concession, for Ned had formed the habit of sitting in the gallery with some of his chums, a habit not very conducive to devotion. It was no wonder, therefore, that Grace was well pleased, while Ned's gracious manner quite lulled her anxious fears to rest.

Very happy she was that evening, as she laid her offering on the collection-plate. Very happy too, as she came to the table of the Lord, for had she not drawn nearer to her Lord, and entered into fuller sympathy with him in his work in the world? Yes, and though she knew it not, she had taken a step upward out of her life of selfishness toward a life of devotion to Christ.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE KINGDOM OF GOD.

ETHEL stood at the door of the parlor taking a critical survey of everything. It had just been cleaned, the last room in the house to be put in order. Ethel had been helping her mother to put things in place again; after that was done, she still busied herself with the finishing touches, without which she declared, the room never looked like anything. They were only little things—knotting a fresh ribbon in the scarf on the easy-chair; training an ivy around a bracket; setting a vase of flowers here and a picture there, just where they would show to the best advantage. But Ethel knew that just such little things give character to a room.

At length all was done to her satisfaction; yet as she stood to take one last view, before going to other work, there came to her mind a thought of the Maynards' elegant parlor, furnished in the latest style, and adorned with handsome fancy work, and a feeling of discontent came over her. So when her mother, who was going out, paused for a moment to look in, and said, "Well, Ethel, you have made the room look very pretty," Ethel answered:

"It might look pretty if only we had something

new in it. We have not had one new thing for this room this spring. I do get so tired of arranging the same old things over and over again every year."

"They are not at all worn," said her mother.

"Oh, no; I do not mean old in that sense, but old-fashioned."

"The room always looks well to me. Perhaps I do not care about new things so much as you do," said Mrs. Gladwyn, thoughtfully. "And then, you know, Ethel, we cannot afford to keep pace with the changing fashions, just now particularly, when the expenses of our growing family are heavy."

"I know that," said Ethel, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"You see what a misfortune it is to be one of a large family," said her mother, merrily.

"No, mother, dear, we have ever so much better times, because there are so many of us. After all, the room looks well enough, and we can enjoy ourselves just as well in it, perhaps better, than if it was handsomer." And Ethel turned away quite in good humor again.

It was not long after when little Bessie came upstairs to say that Aunt Annie had come. Aunt Annie lived in Milton, a few miles distant from Melvin. She had a young family, and plenty of care, and so did not often find an opportunity to come and see them; but she was one of those cheery people whom it is always a pleasure to see. She was a very welcome visitor at the

Gladwyns'. Ethel ran down to meet her, and greeted her rapturously.

"I will come wherever you are, Ethel," said her aunt. "I was so tired that I just sank down in this rocking-chair to rest. How delightful your parlor looks! I enjoy this room so much whenever I come here. It is so restful."

"I am glad you find it so, auntie," said Ethel. "I was just saying to mother this morning that I wished we had something new in it. It is so old-fashioned."

"It is all in keeping, though," said Mrs. Lee. "Nothing can make up for want of harmony in a room. When I was younger, I used to feel very much as you do, Ethel. One day I read something that helped me. It was this, that it was not such a matter of importance to have our house furnished in the style of any one period, as it was to make the home a little kingdom of God."

"Isn't that a beautiful idea," said Ethel.

"Yes, I thought it so. It seems to me that that is what we, as Christians, should above all other things desire; only you must remember, dear, that our Lord says in one place, 'my kingdom is not of this world.' So we must be prepared, oftentimes, to give up the seen for the unseen. Yet it is not very hard to do this when we think how much he gave up to make us inheritors of his kingdom, is it?"

Ethel only pressed Aunt Annie's hand for answer.

Too many thoughts had been awakened in her mind for words, just then.

Mrs. Lee could not stay more than two hours, so when Mrs. Gladwyn came in a few minutes later, Ethel went downstairs to set out a luncheon, taking Bessie along to help her, leaving the two mothers to have a pleasant chat by themselves. When all was ready, she called them down to a most delicious little lunch. And then there was so much to talk about, and so many questions to ask, that before they knew it the two hours had passed away. Before Mrs. Lee left, however, she urged them all to come and see her.

"It is lovely weather now, and everything looks beautiful," she said. "You really ought to come and spend a day at Milton."

"Let us make up a picnic," said Ethel.

"Oh, yes, a picnic," cried Millie, enthusiastically; "when can we go?"

"We will leave it to mother and auntie to decide that," said Ethel.

"It will be convenient any time for me," said Mrs. Lee.

"Some day next week, then," suggested Mrs. Gladwyn. "Say Wednesday—that is a good day; the washing and ironing will be out of the way."

"Wednesday, then, if it is fine," said Annt Annie.

"And if not fine?" put in Millie.

"If not fine, then Thursday or Friday," said her

aunt; so it was arranged, and amid a chorus of good-byes, Aunt Annie left.

Did she know that the helpful words she had spoken to Ethel that morning were as good seed, which would spring up and bring forth fruit in after days. Perhaps not; she had only passed along a thought that had helped her. She always tried to do that; if she ever had any other kind of thoughts, she kept them to herself.

Ethel, on her part, always wanted to share everything good with Grace; so that evening, when they met, she told her what Aunt Annie had said, adding: "Is it not strange that it should have been just in line with our verse?"

Grace caught at the idea; it seemed something she could get hold of, and work out every day. She pondered it over after she went home, as she was busy over her fancy work; not without some troubled feelings, for she kept questioning whether their home would answer to that description, whether the chief aim was to make it "a little kingdom of God." It was her own dear home—a happy home—but, somehow or other, their family life was not just like the Gladwyns'. Yet Grace's parents were Christians, and members of the church; what made the difference between the two homes? Was it not, that in the Gladwyn home the chief aim was to do the will of Christ in all things? Grace did not, as yet, fully realize it; only she had a feeling that there was

something more unworldly about her friend's home than about her own.

Mrs. Maynard, had she been asked, would have said, that certainly religion was the most important thing, and that she wished her children to be Christians; and that to 'seek first the kingdom of God' was the right thing to do. But in reality, she was more concerned to occupy a prominent place in society, and to have her children get on in the world. That had been, and still was, the chief aim of her life; though, perhaps, she would not have acknowledged it—indeed, she scarcely realized that it was so.

There had never been a time in the history of the Maynard family when they could not live in comfort; but Mrs. Maynard aimed at style. Her home must be elegantly furnished, her children handsomely dressed, and all the demands of society must be rigorously met. It required no little contrivance to do all this in their earlier years of married life, when Mr. Maynard's income was not so large as it afterward became. But Mrs. Maynard was very capable. Her busy fingers fashioned dainty and elaborate garments for her little daughter, filled her rooms with choice fancy work, and made up for the deficiencies of the housemaid, often young and inexperienced; meanwhile, the inner life of herself and children, so much more important than the outer life, was well-nigh forgotten. How often the busy mother told Ned to run away, and not bother her! how well

pleased she was to have him out of the way, taking it for granted that his companions were all right! So it came about that now Ned gave his parents much anxiety in many ways.

These earlier years of care and worry, and of bearing self-imposed burdens, had worn down Mrs. Maynard's health; and now she was a frequent sufferer from nervous headaches. Often she would say, "I do not see how Mrs. Gladwyn keeps her health with such a family as she has. My three have worn me down. Perhaps she may be stronger than I; though, for that matter, there never was a healthier girl than I was."

Mr. Maynard had prospered in business, but his family being an expensive one, the demands made upon him were heavy, and he worked early and late to meet them; so he saw but little of his family. To his two daughters he was very indulgent; with his son he was inclined to be severe. He had resolved that his son should go to college, and have the advantage of a higher education; an advantage which he had not himself enjoyed. Yet Ned showed but little inclination for study, and his carelessness at school was a constant disappointment to his parents. A few kind words might have helped matters, and led to mutual understanding; but instead of this, Mr. Maynard showed his disappointment and vexation by hasty and harsh reproofs, which only tended to separate father and son more widely.

Grace was just becoming old enough to feel these things, and to share in her parents' anxiety; to feel, moreover, that a different course toward Ned would be wiser; yet, withal, not knowing how to help matters, or, as she had said to Ethel, "how to make crooked things straight." "Well, I can try to do my part in the home, anyway," she said to herself; and that was the outcome of all her thinking.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

A PICNIC would hardly seem complete to Ethel unless her friend Grace was there; so Grace and her sister Aggie were asked to join them, and gladly they accepted the invitation.

The following Tuesday found Ethel and Milly busy in the kitchen, making preparations for the picnic. Millie, naturally indolent about household matters at ordinary times, and requiring frequent reminding to keep her up to her duties, always shone forth on special occasions like the present. So now she whisked eggs, beat batter, frosted cakes, and filled tarts, with commendable zeal. Every little while she would run to the back door to see what the weather promised to be. On one of these occasions she observed clouds gathering.

"Oh, Ethel, do see those clouds; what if it should rain to-morrow?"

"What did you remark, Millie?" inquired Ethel, who was just looking in the oven at her cakes.

"I say, I am afraid it will rain to-morrow; look at those clouds."

"It does not look like rain to me," said Ethel, glancing hastily out of the window, and catching a

glimpse of blue sky. "Come, Millie, these patties are done; you can take them out of the pans while I put the other cake in."

"You did not look in the right place to see the clouds," said Millie, in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, I am too busy now; perhaps they will have cleared away when I get time to look for them."

"They are coming over, I am afraid," said Millie. "Wouldn't it be too bad if it should rain to-morrow?"

"It would be a disappointment, when we have made all our preparations."

"And the grass would be wet; so it would be of no use to go Thursday," continued Millie, dolefully.

"Well, it hasn't rained yet," said Ethel.

"Rain or shine, we have to take things as they come," remarked Ann, philosophically, pausing in her ironing to glance out of the window.

"There's James," cried Millie, suddenly, spying the man who did their gardening. "He knows all about the weather. I'll ask him." And away she went to the garden.

"James," she said, "do you think it will rain to-morrow?"

"No, miss, I don't; we are in for a spell of dry weather."

"But just look at those clouds, James."

The gardener looked in the direction pointed out, then resuming work, said:

"Those clouds don't amount to much. It may sprinkle a little before morning ; but it won't be much, anyway."

As James was considered an oracle on weather matters, Millie returned to the house quite in good spirits.

By evening, however, it was so dull and cloudy that Millie began to lose faith in the oracle, especially when even her father joined the others in expressing the fear that the day would not be fine.

Night settled down, dark and still. A patter of raindrops was heard on the elm leaves, and Millie had to go to bed with her doubts unsatisfied. She was the first one to awaken in the morning, and no sooner did she discover that it was a fine day than she hastened to arouse the other members of the family.

Soon all were astir. Then came the business of getting ready. Ethel helped her mother make sandwiches, and pack the basket. Millie undertook to dress the children, losing her patience a good many times while doing so. At last everything was ready. Grace and Aggie joined them, and they set off for the train, a merry party, ready to be amused and pleased at anything.

There were but few passengers in the train that morning. Outside of our young friends, they could be counted on one's fingers. An old gentleman reading a newspaper very diligently, a young, and rather tired-looking mother with three little children, a pleas-

ant-faced, elderly lady, whose little grandchildren were held up to kiss her goodbye before the train started, a pale young girl, in rather shabby mourning, upon whom life's burdens and cares seemed to have fallen early, and a grave and studious-looking young man, who had been wrapped in his own meditations before the entrance of the picnic party, but thenceforward found the merry group a more interesting study. These made up the company.

Soon the train was rapidly speeding along through green fields, and past thriving farms. Presently, the speed slackened.

"We are coming to West Milton, now," said Ethel. "The next station after this will be ours."

As the train stopped, two women came aboard. Apparently they had plenty to say to each other, for no sooner had they taken their seats, than they began a stream of conversation which flowed on unceasingly.

Again the whistle sounded. This time the girls gathered together their baskets and wraps in readiness to get off. The brakes were put down hard, and the train came to rather an abrupt standstill. The two women engaged in animated discussion of their neighbors suddenly dropped alike their voices and the thread of their conversation, and gave their undivided attention to the party that filed out of the car. The old gentleman looked up from his paper, and the elderly lady smiled most benignly on them. The young girl

gazed wistfully out of the car window at the bright faces. Her life had few pleasures. The young man raised the window shade higher, wondering whether all the sunshine had gone out of the car, then gave himself up to his book; yet, singularly enough, he heard what the talkative woman across the aisle said to her neighbor.

"Do you see the girl with the red flowers in her hat?" she was saying; "that's Miss Maynard. You've heard of Maynard & Perry, haven't you? Most every one has. Well that's his eldest daughter," a statement sufficiently clear to her friend, who responded:

"Stylish, ain't she?"

"Yes; I took a good look at her dress as she passed, and I have a notion that I'll make Miranda's like it; pleats and——" but here the train started, and the young man heard no more.

Meanwhile, all unconscious of the interest they had excited, our young friends trudged on. It was not very far to Aunt Annie's; and there was Aunt Annie herself in the front garden, and there were the children, who, when they saw the party coming, set up a shout of delight, and started on the run to meet them.

Aunt Annie gave them a warm welcome, and helped them put away the baskets. The younger members of the party went off to see the colt, and the brood of chickens, and the white rabbits given to Ernest on his

last birthday, and all the other attractions which made this country home so delightful. The older ones, after a talk with Aunt Annie, set off for a ramble. They went through the orchard, lingering a moment to peep in the yellow-bird's nest; then out into the field, single file, along the path by the fence, stopping to gather some wild roses, and to pick here and there a bright strawberry that shone out temptingly from among green leaves; and so on up to the grove, which crowned a little height.

Oh, how cool and shady it was, and how sweet the aroma of fir and pine trees! And how quiet it was, save for the music of a little brook that babbled along its rocky channel in the valley beneath, or the occasional noisy chatter of a squirrel, which eyed the intruders from the safe vantage of some tall tree.

Millie went in quest of moss and ferns, and other woodland treasures. Ethel and Grace sat down on a rustic seat, from whence they had a view of green meadows and distant wooded hills, while nearer a stream, to which the babbling brook was a tributary, gleamed out here and there between its fringe of trees. For a while the two girls sat silent; at last Ethel spoke:

"We do not have so much to say to one another as those two women on the train," she said.

"Didn't they talk, though," said Grace; "but Ethel, did you notice how that young man looked at us?"

"No, I didn't."

"Why he scarcely took his eyes from us. I felt quite provoked at him. Sometimes I would look straight at him, and then he would drop his eyes and appear to be reading his book. I rather liked his face, though thoughtful and grave. I wonder who he can be? He doesn't belong to Melvin, I am sure."

"If he was grave and thoughtful I dare say he set us down as very frivolous and silly."

"Why, were we?" asked Grace, looking rather dismayed.

"No, of course not. What makes you take everything in earnest to-day. Hark! Is that Millie calling? Let us go and find her."

They followed a path that led through the grove to where the brook had worn for itself a hollow, and fell tumbling over the rocks in a series of miniature cascades to the valley beneath.

"Come over here," called Millie, "it's just lovely." She was sitting on a broad, flat stone on the opposite bank. "See here," she said, as they crossed over and seated themselves beside her, "all these fern roots for the fernery, and is not this a pretty piece of moss?"

"Where did you get them?" asked Grace. "I must have some too."

"Well, there are plenty more where I got these, underneath that bank."

"I will not get any ferns until the afternoon, but I will look up some moss now," said Grace.

They wandered about for a while, exploring the farthest limits of the grove, and returning with their hands full of moss and trailing vines.

"Had we not better go back to the house now and get our baskets," said Ethel, "it is about time we set out our dinners; the children will be ready for it."

"And I will be ready too," said Grace. "I don't know when I have felt so hungry."

"I am as hungry as a bear," echoed Millie. "Come, girls." And away they went, back through the shadowy grove out into the sunshine.

"There's Fannie Weldon, I do declare," exclaimed Grace, "just coming through the gate. Won't she be surprised to find us all here? Come, girls, hurry up." There was a flutter of dresses, a race to see who would get there first, and soon Fannie Weldon was surrounded, while a shower of questions was poured on her from every side.

"When did you come?" "How did you get here?" "Where did you spring from?" they asked, all in one breath.

"Why, I have been out at Forest Glen, visiting some friends. I drove in this morning, and finding I would have to wait two hours for a train, I concluded to call on Mrs. Lee. That is how I happened to be here. Now what has brought you all here?"

"Oh, a picnic, of course; not a large one—just we, us, and company," said Grace.

"You are not going in by the one o'clock train; you must stay with us," insisted Ethel.

They were all by this time seated in the cool, pleasant parlor, fanning themselves with their hats; then Mrs. Lee came, and joined the others in urging Fannie to stay.

"I am sure your invitation is a very tempting one—too tempting, in fact, to resist. I suppose I had better enjoy all the recreation I can, for I shall be busy enough next winter, as it will be my last year at college."

"You look paler and thinner than when I last saw you, Fannie," said Mrs. Lee, gazing anxiously at the young girl, whose form and face told the tale that it was energy and ambition rather than physical strength that enabled her to do all she did.

"Yes, I suppose so. I am feeling very well, though only a little tired sometimes; but I expect to gain strength this summer, for uncle has purchased a cottage at Long View, and we are all going down there for the summer months."

"Won't that be delightful," chimed in the other girls in chorus.

"Yes, indeed, we expect to have fine times, just rusticated, quite in camp style, you know, and I want all my friends to come and see me; it is just a lovely place for picnics."

Fannie grew enthusiastic as she went on to describe the charms of Long View, which was a quiet seaside

resort, not as yet invaded by many pleasure seekers, and therefore all the more delightful to those who enjoy laying aside for a time the conventionalities of city life. She finished up by declaring that Ethel and Grace ought to persuade their fathers to rent cottages there for the summer.

"It would be very pleasant to be all together," said Grace, "but I know it is no use suggesting it, for mother thinks the sea air does not agree with her; besides, she prefers to board when away from home. She always says she would like some quiet country place where she can rest.

"Well, then, I know just the place to suit her," said Fannie, "and that is Forest Glen where I have been staying the past few days. It is almost out of the world, shut in among hills, and not even a railway passing within ten miles. You can get good home-like board at a very reasonable rate at the farm-house where I was. There are plenty of berries in berry time, and there is plenty of cream to eat with them. There are pleasant walks and some pretty drives. I'll give you the address, if you like."

"Thank you, I will tell mother about it. I am sure it is just the place she would like."

"If you decide to go, I will drop a line to Mrs. Benton, and tell her you are special friends of mine. You will have no trouble then in obtaining board."

"You are a jewel, Fannie. I am so glad you had to wait here for a train to-day."

"It was quite a coincidence," said Fannie. "Why, here is Bessie. How she is growing! I hardly knew the child."

Bessie came in rather shyly, and shook hands with Fannie; then hung about her sister. After a while she said, in a half-whisper, "Ethel, when are we going to have the picnic?"

"Why we are having the picnic now, are we not," replied Ethel, laughing.

"Yes, but I mean the *real* picnic."

"I suppose that means unpacking the baskets, and having our dinner; that is a very important part of the picnic, I am sure."

"I vote we proceed at once to have the *real* picnic," said Grace. "If it had not been for you, Fannie Weldon, we would have had our dinner set out by this time; we were coming for the baskets when we saw you, and we have been talking ever since, and leaving the poor children to starve."

"No danger of their starving while Aunt Annie is around," put in Millie, laughing.

"With my invaluable assistance, girls, you will be able to set out your table in just one-quarter of the time it would have taken you without me," said Fannie.

"Did I ever hear such conceit," retorted Grace; "after that I have a great mind to give you the heaviest basket to carry." And so they went gayly to the grove.

When all was ready, Aunt Annie was asked to join

them. I need not describe their dinner, for every one knows how pleasant it is to eat in the open air, under the shade of murmuring pines, even if the milk is full of specks and ants run over the table-cloth. Everything was pronounced excellent, and any mishap was only a signal for merriment. At length all were satisfied, the baskets were repacked, the table-cloth shaken, and the ants and flies were allowed undisputed possession of the remains of the feast.

Aunt Annie returned to the house; the children went off to play; and the girls wandered at will through the grove, making it echo with their merry talk and laughter. At length, Grace, Ethel, and Fannie sat down to rest on the spreading-roots of an old pine tree. Ethel busied herself picking over and arranging the mosses and ferns she had gathered. Fannie leaned back against the tree, and gazed dreamily out on the sunny meadows and circling hills, hazy in the distance. Grace fanned herself with her large hat. Quiet settled over the group. Grace was the first one to break the silence with the oft-used quotation, "When shall we three meet again?"

"I hope not in 'thunder, lightning, and rain,'" said Fannie.

It was only natural after this that they should begin to talk of their plans for the future, and gradually, almost without knowing it, they drifted into quite a serious talk.

"It seems to me, sometimes, as though I can scarcely have patience until I finish my studies. I am so anxious to be doing something in the world," said Fannie; "there is so much to be done."

"What do you plan to do after leaving college?" asked Ethel.

"I hardly know what my part will be yet; but I do know that I want to work just where I am most needed, and where I can do most good."

"Since I left school," said Ethel, "I have many times wished that I had some special work to do; but I have stronger home ties than you, Fannie, and it was very plainly my duty to share the burdens mother has so long borne alone. But I have felt the need of a stronger and more definite purpose than the general one, to live as good a life as possible. You cannot imagine how perplexed I have been, sometimes, as to what time to give to various pursuits, and I have often wondered whether things that seemed to be duties were really worth while, after all. One little verse has helped me so much, lately; it is this: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.' That places a definite object before me. To bring about that kingdom in my heart and life, and in the hearts and lives of others whom I may reach, should be my one and continual aim. And you, in the great outside world, and I, in my little world of home, can equally well seek that kingdom."

Fannie's eyes brightened. "I shall make that verse

my motto too, Ethel, for that is what we are in the world for,—we who profess to be Christians,—and we are disloyal to the Great King if we do not use all our energies to extend his kingdom.”

“I have added another verse to it,” continued Ethel, “because I think it helps one to see how to seek that kingdom. It is found in Romans 14 : 17 : ‘The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’”

Grace, who had taken no part in the conversation hitherto, now looked up, and said : “Why, girls, you make me feel dreadfully. I have never looked upon life in this serious way ; though I *have* thought a little more about it lately. Not so much as I should, however.”

“I wanted you to take that text for a motto,” said Ethel, “when I spoke to you about it a few weeks ago.”

“I know. It is since then that I have thought of things differently from what I did before.”

“Won’t you take it for your motto now, then ?”

“I am almost afraid to. I am sure I would forget about it half the time.”

“Well, even then, that would not be so bad as forgetting it *all* the time,” remarked Fannie.

“Jesus has promised that the Holy Spirit shall teach us all truth, and bring to our remembrance all things,” said Ethel, gently. “Grace, dear, we know where to go for help ; ‘Our sufficiency is of

God.' Without his aid we should certainly fail, but you know we never seek his help in vain."

"Yes, I know that," answered Grace, remembering with a thrill of gladness how very lately she had received help in trying to walk in the Christian way. "Yes," she added, "I will try, with you, to seek that kingdom; and let us report to one another sometimes. It will help us; at least, it will help me."

"It will help us each," said Fannie.

"And do you not think," said Ethel, "that, as we try to act upon this principle, we shall see more and more how widely it can be applied; how, in fact, it touches our lives at every point. Then we can bring together our various experiences, and help one another."

"How much it means to be a Christian," said Grace; "more than I ever thought. I think," she added, a little hesitatingly, "we ought to pray for one another, that we may be earnest and faithful."

"I will," said Ethel, gently.

"I will too," said Fannie.

"And I will," added Grace, softly.

So three young hearts were bound together by strongest ties, pledged to help one another in that which was henceforth to be the one great aim of their lives, the seeking of Christ's kingdom.

For a while they sat silent, letting the quiet loveliness of that summer afternoon throw over them its spell of restfulness. Through opening vistas of the

trees they caught a glimpse of sunny meadows, and gleaming waters, and far-away hills, over which perpetual peace seemed to brood. The slumberous sighings of the pines, the murmuring of the little brook in the dell below, the merry voices of children ringing out in the distance, were the only sounds that broke the dreamy quiet.

By-and-by lengthening shadows warned them that it was time to prepare for the homeward journey. So they wended their way to the house, laden with ferns, and mosses, and vines. Then came the hunting up of the children, and the gathering together of baskets and wraps.

Aunt Annie went with them to the station, trying to think in the last moments of all that she wanted to say to Ethel, and all the messages she wished to send to friends.

Soon came a whistle, and the rush of the incoming train. Then there were hurried good-byes, a waving of hands as the cars moved away, a short journey, more good-byes as they parted from Fannie, who went on farther, and they were home again, and the bright, happy day was ended.

But something remained; for, with the fleeting moments of that day had been interwoven thoughts and words of faith, hope, and love; and these, we are told, abide.

CHAPTER VII.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

GRACE thought much in the weeks that followed about this kingdom that she had promised to seek. That word about making home a "little kingdom of God" had sunk deep into her heart; and, not waiting for any great work, she began with that which was nearest her. So she tried to be more gentle, and kind, and patient than ever before, and cheerful too; for she wished to be as a sunbeam in the house. For the first week it was not very hard; nothing especial happened to try her. Her cheerfulness and good spirits, her readiness to help every one, from Bridget up, seemed infectious, and the wheels of domestic life rolled on with unwonted smoothness.

But, alas, the second week came in chilly and rainy. Perhaps the gloomy weather had a depressing effect; perhaps the various members of the household met with more to try their patience. Whatever was the reason, every one seemed to be out of sorts.

Mr. Maynard was taciturn; Mrs. Maynard, worn out from the effects of her spring sewing, was nervous and irritable; Aggie was unusually fretful; Ned found as much fault as he dared with everything and everybody; Bridget appeared sulky, in reality she

was suffering with toothache, but she said nothing about it; Grace, blessed with good health and more natural cheerfulness than the others, was the only one who kept on the even tenor of her way. She laughed Ned out of fault-finding, soothed Aggie, and encouraged her mother, and took no notice of Bridget's sulks. But natural amiability wore down under the strain.

There came a day before the end of the week when Grace grew discouraged and tired of being good. Aggie was so unreasonable, Ned so exasperating, Bridget made such stupid mistakes, that Grace felt as though she would like to join the general chorus, and find fault too; in fact, she thought she was quite justified in doing so. She had been very busy that day, trying to make up for Bridget's inefficiency. She had too, a piece of fancy work on hand that she was anxious to finish. Going upstairs, somewhat tired, she found her room littered with Aggie's playthings. Her hitherto suppressed vexation she could no longer conceal. She did not stop to think about it or she would not have spoken as she did. She would not have neutralized the influence of the past week, and she would not have stored up unpleasant memories that would be long in taking themselves away. She did not stop to think, and so she called out imperiously:

"Aggie, come quickly, and put your things away. This room looks dreadful."

"I'm so tired, Grace; you might put them away this once."

"I am busy now, Aggie. Besides, you ought to do it; it won't take you long. My! you have been rummaging over this drawer, and everything is topsyturvy; you have no business to do that. Now I want the silks to work in the centre of these flowers, and I have to waste all this time looking for them, and everything is in a tangle." Grace's vexation did not subside until the missing silks were found.

Then Aggie began, not in the very best humor, to gather up her dolls and doll clothes. While doing so, she somewhat carelessly, as it seemed to Grace, knocked against a little table and overturned a vase of flowers. Luckily, the vase did not break; but the water was spilled on the carpet and splashed the table-scarf that Grace was making, arousing her indignation anew.

"Oh, Aggie, what a careless girl you are!" she exclaimed. Whereat Aggie began to cry, and Mrs. Maynard came in to see what was the matter.

"You should not be so cross with the child," she said. "You know Aggie is not well."

"I believe she is as well as any of us, only she has gotten into the habit of fretting and being selfish, and wanting others to do everything for her; and now she must needs upset this vase to make a little more work."

"I couldn't help it," cried Aggie, indignantly.

"I am sure, Grace, it is very unkind of you to say such things," said her mother. "You had better not have vases of flowers in your room if they make you so cross."

Grace felt vexed that her mother should take Aggie's part, and found it hard to regain her temper. Her vexation was increased soon after by seeing Ned come down the street with Al Smythe. This put her out of all patience. She hated to see the growing intimacy between the lads, and as soon as her brother came in she began:

"I don't see what makes you go with that Al Smythe, Ned. I cannot bear him."

"Al is a good fellow," replied Ned, carelessly.

"How can you say so, Ned. I am sure he is anything but good."

"Why, what do you know about him?"

"Well, I never knew any good of him, and I am sure his influence over you is not for good; you are not half so agreeable as you used to be before you went with him."

"I guess I am as agreeable as some other people not very far off. If you find me disagreeable, Al Smythe's sister doesn't. She asked me to come in and see them often."

"When did you become acquainted with Miss Smythe?" said Grace, icily.

"Oh, I have seen her when I have been in at Al's; real sociable, pleasant girl she is too. Well, I guess I'd better be off, since my company is so little to your liking." And Ned went away, whistling gayly.

Poor Grace, it had seemed bad enough that Ned should take Al Smythe for a companion, but the

thought of Al Smythe's sister proving an attraction was still worse. Grace felt quite discouraged. How many mistakes she had made that afternoon, and all because she had allowed herself to give way to ill temper. Then she felt vexed to have provoked Ned, just when she wanted to gain an influence over him. "It does seem hard," she said to herself, "to be called cross and disagreeable when I have been pleasant every day, and only just given way now."

But when she thought it over that evening, she saw that she had felt too satisfied with herself on account of an amiability which was largely the result of good health and buoyant spirits. When temptation had come, she had yielded; but she saw plainly now, that she had no excuse for yielding, and that she could not afford thus to give way if she really would be an influence for good in her home. So, feeling more keenly alike her own responsibility and her own weakness, she sought anew and more earnestly for help from on high.

As for Ned, he no sooner recovered from his vexation than he began to feel ashamed of himself. "I wonder," he said to himself, "if Grace thinks I really care for that Larry Smythe; why she is not half the girl Grace is. It was hateful and mean in me to say what I did, anyway. I'm sorry now."—"Why don't you tell her so?" conscience whispered. But though Ned knew it would be right, he could not bring himself to do that just now. He contented himself with saying, "Perhaps I will, some time."

So the golden opportunity was allowed to pass, and the brother and sister for the time being were farther apart than they would have been had it not all happened. Grace felt this, and it made her all the more regret her hasty words, and seek greater patience for the future.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOREST GLEN.

GRACE took an early opportunity to persuade her mother to spend a few weeks at Forest Glen.

Mrs. Maynard had been very anxious for Grace to go to Bay View, and to that end had planned to give up her own summer outing. To be sure, it was scarcely fashionable not to go away in the hot weather, but then she could tell her friends that she really preferred to stay at home rather than have the fatigue of travel. As to the rest of the family—Aggie could visit friends; Ned would probably want to go fishing with some of the boys; and Mr. Maynard neither cared for nor needed holidays, at least, so his wife supposed. It must be confessed she was disappointed to find that Grace held so firmly to her decision to give up Bay View. When her mother had argued with her, Grace's only answer had been, "I do not wish to have a holiday at the expense of all the others. I am sure that you and father need rest and change more than I do."

"But you are young," the fond mother said. "I want you to have all the enjoyment you can, now."

But Grace only laughed, and bending over and kissing her mother, said, "There are two kinds of en-

joyment, mother dear, and I mean to have the *best* kind—the kind that will last.”

Certainly Grace did not fail to have the truest enjoyment in the quiet, country hamlet where the next two months were spent. It was a real pleasure to see the worried expression fade away from her mother's face, and to find that Aggie, hitherto pale and delicate, was becoming sun-burned and hearty.

Ned had not wished to come with them. “It would be so dull,” he said. However, as he could not gain his father's permission to join a fishing party, he concluded there was nothing to be done but go with his mother and sisters, and find what enjoyment he could at Forest Glen.

At first, he could scarcely find sufficient adjectives to express his disgust for the “poky little place,” as he called it. But when he found there was capital fishing in the lake, and that Mr. Eenton owned a boat, and he could have the use of it whenever he wished, he concluded Forest Glen was not such a bad place after all.

What Grace's impressions of the place were can best be told in her own words, just as she wrote them to Ethel:

Forest Glen is the quietest place I ever saw, and one of the loveliest too. It is only a little hamlet, and the houses are quite scattered. The farmhouse where we are staying is just delightful. It is an old house, large and roomy, with an ample veranda on one

side. Mrs. Benton is just as kind as she can be ; she has taken quite a liking to Ned, who does full justice to her cooking !

We spend most of our time out of doors. There is a large, old tree a short distance from the house, with a seat up among the branches. It is just lovely to take one's book or work there, and while away the summer afternoons.

I have found something to do in this out-of-the-way place. Here I have found my first music pupil, Little Margie, Mrs. Benton's ten-year-old daughter. There is an organ here which belongs to Mrs. Benton's niece, who is now away in the city. Margie is very fond of music, and proves quite an apt pupil, and her father says if she learns to play nicely he will buy her an organ.

You would laugh to see me trying to teach reading to Joe, a little orphan boy employed on the farm. I gave him some children's picture books to look at, but found he could not read, and I have since then been trying to instruct him. What success I shall have I cannot yet tell.

They have a Sunday-school here. I went to it the first Sunday after my arrival. It is kept up by Miss Alice Gray, the school-teacher here. She is a sweet, gentle girl, and I love her already. This little school seems so different to ours at home. There are only three classes in it, and sometimes Miss Gray has had to teach them all herself. I have undertaken the infant class. I love the little ones dearly, and know I shall miss them when I go back to town again.

But Grace found something else to do, of which she said nothing to Ethel. Grace was now Ned's constant

companion, and was glad of the opportunity thus afforded of coming to know and understand him better. They made many excursions together. One day, when on one of these excursions, Ned told his sister all his troubles: How he could not like Latin and Greek, and how much he wished to go into business. And Grace began to think seriously whether it might not be better for him to do so, and promised to speak to their father about it.

Mr. Maynard occasionally came out to Forest Glen to spend a Sunday with his family. At such times Grace besieged him with earnest requests to stay a whole week with them. He always declared, however, that he could not leave his business. It was therefore a great surprise to all when, one Tuesday, Mr. Maynard walked in, valise in hand, and announced that he had come to stay a whole week.

This filled Grace's cup of happiness to overflowing. Mr. Maynard left all care behind him, and as fully enjoyed the various excursions as did the young people. Grace had scarcely imagined that her father could unbend so much. She did not find an opportunity to fulfill her promise to Ned till near the close of Mr. Maynard's stay; then, one evening, she asked her father to take a walk to the top of some rocks, not far from the farmhouse, to see the sunset. The sunset, however, was only a secondary consideration with Grace that evening; her real desire being to have a talk with her father about Ned. So, as they watched the sun

sink behind the hills in a golden splendor which deepened into crimson, they talked it all over. Grace told of Ned's aversion to college and his longing to enter business life; Mr. Maynard spoke fully of his ambitions for his son, and his desire that he might enjoy every advantage. However, he promised Grace to think over the matter, and give it his favorable consideration.

When Grace told her brother this he was well pleased, and said, "If father would only try me, he would find I would do well."

So as the days drifted by, Grace hoped and felt that good was being done.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG HOUSEKEEPERS.

WHILE Grace was rusticated at Forest Glen, Ethel was having a short experience of house-keeping.

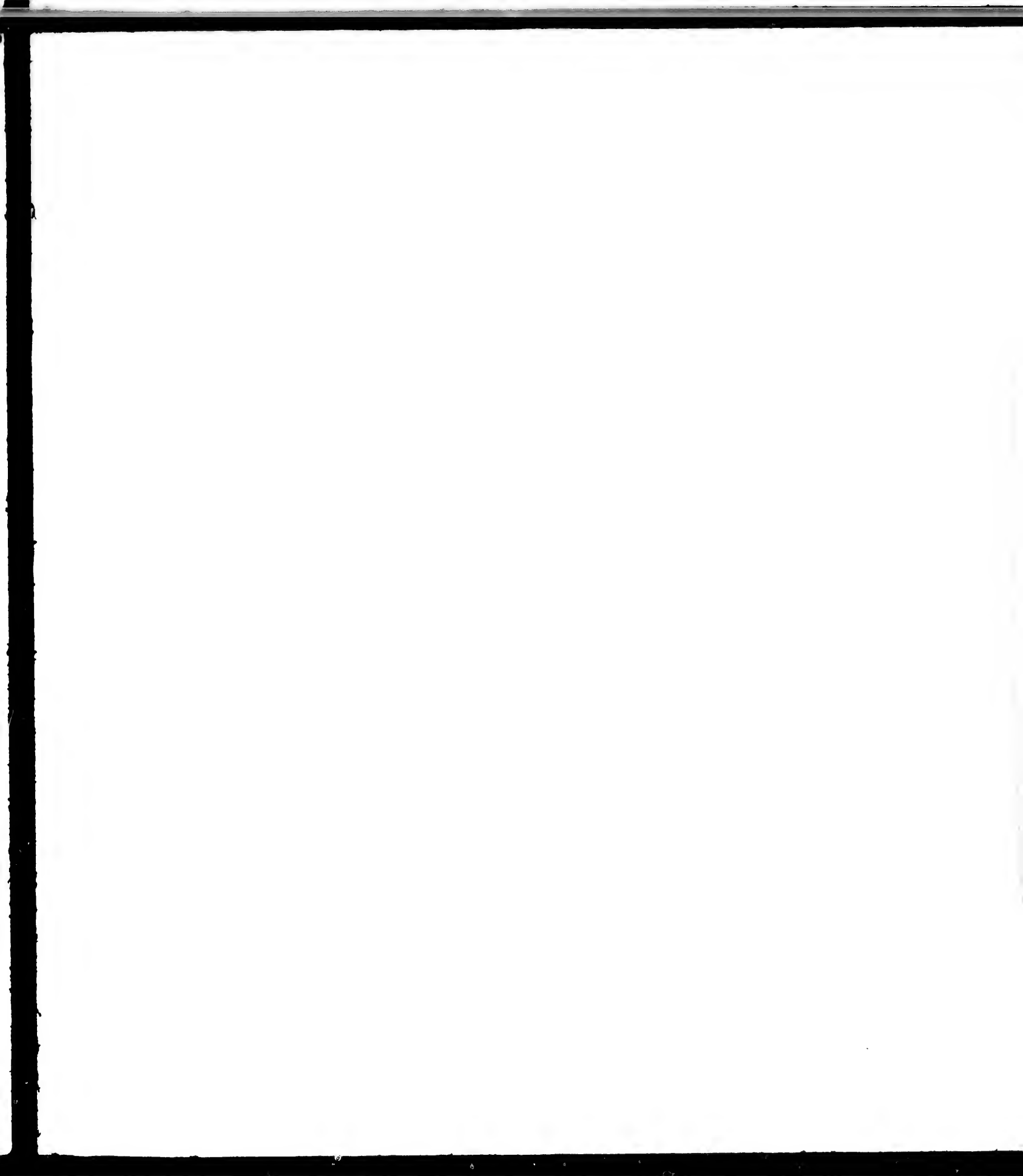
In the early part of July, Mrs. Gladwyn received a pressing invitation from a very dear friend and former schoolmate to spend a fortnight with her.

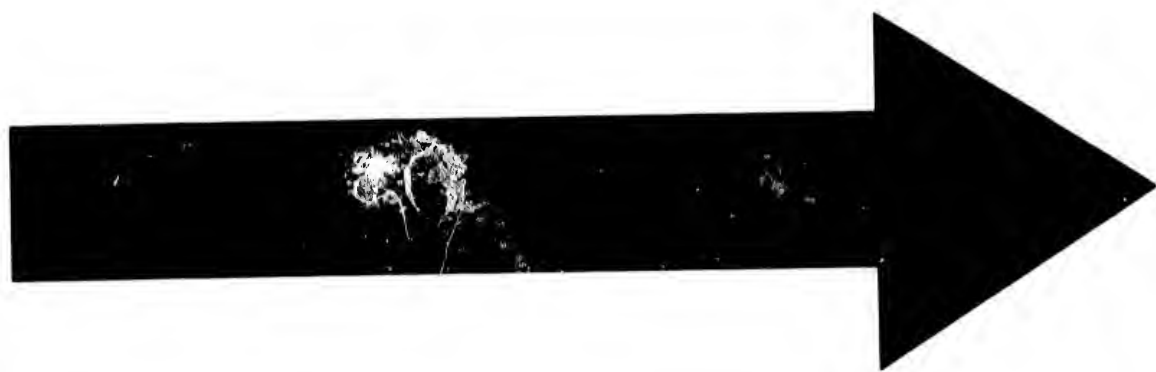
"You had better go," said Mr. Gladwyn. "There is no reason now why you cannot leave."

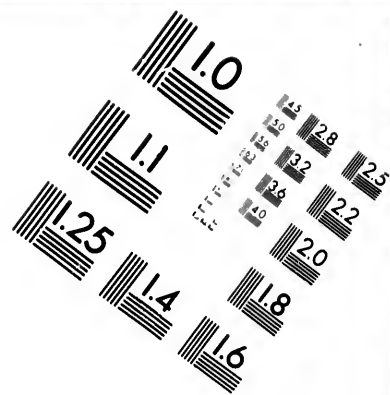
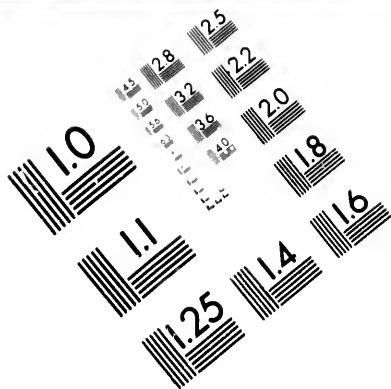
"Why, mother, you must go, that's all," said Ethel. "Don't you suppose that Millie and I are able to keep house and look after the children while you are away for a while?"

So all objections being at last overruled, Mrs. Gladwyn consented to go, and her elder daughters busied themselves helping her to get ready. It was such an unusual thing for Mrs. Gladwyn to take a holiday without having any of the children with her, that it seemed quite an important event to her family.

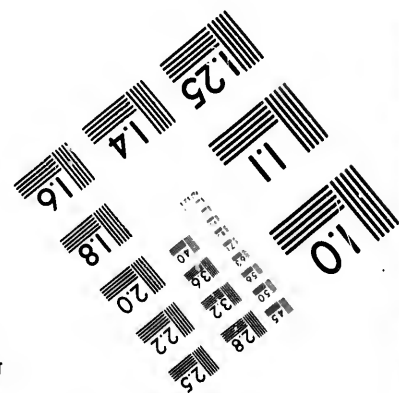
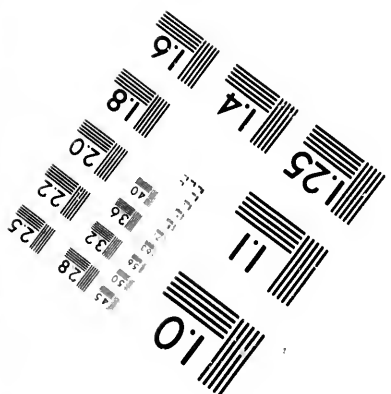
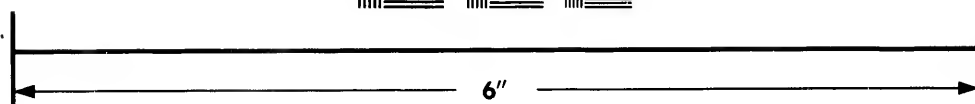
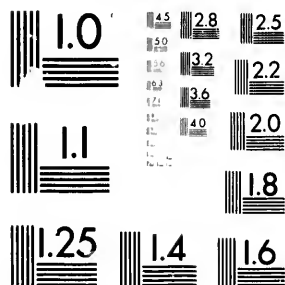
At last the day came; the coach was at the door, and with many parting charges Mrs. Gladwyn left. The girls returned to their household duties with a new, strange feeling of importance and responsibility. Perhaps it might be said that these feelings were





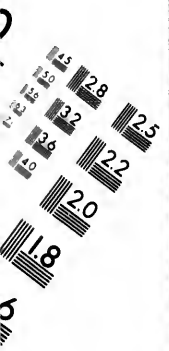


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divided between them; Millie feeling the importance, and Ethel the responsibility. Millie threw herself into the work with energy.

"Just think how early we shall get through this morning, Ethel," she said, as she flew around putting things in order. "I think I will always get up early in this hot weather."

It was eight o'clock when everything was done, and the girls sat down to rest awhile.

"I say, Ethel," exclaimed Millie, "let us have an outing to-day. The children would enjoy it, and Ann could go with us. Ann hasn't much to do, this being Thursday."

"It would be pleasant," said Ethel; "but where can we go? It must be some place near. How would Marlow Heights do?"

"Just the very place I was thinking of."

"Very well; if we are going, we had better begin to get ready," said Ethel. "We ought to start as soon as possible. Ann can get the lunch ready, and we will see to the children."

Ann was by no means reluctant to leave the house for a day in the open air, and in a surprisingly short time she had packed up a nice lunch and was all dressed ready to go.

Marlow Heights lay just beyond the outskirts of Melvin. A short, steep climb brought one to a grassy bit of table-land, bearing clumps of ferns, and here and there a group of fir trees making a pleasant shade.

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Three Girls and Their Motto.
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There was always a breeze there that repaid one for the climb, as well as a fine view of the surrounding country. Ethel and Millie had been there often, and knew just the place from which the best view could be obtained. It was a craggy piece of rock at the eastern end of the Heights, from which you could look down a steep slope on the dusty streets and houses below; or gazing farther out, catch a glimpse of the distant ocean, so far away that some people could not distinguish it from the blue sky. The girls called this rock, "Lookout Point."

Up the steep, narrow path they went, in single file. Once at the top, all began to enjoy themselves in their own way. Baby Clarence shouted with glee as he chased the bright butterflies. Bessie and George set to work to gather wild flowers and ferns for Ann.

"Come, Millie, let us see if 'Lookout Point' is just the same," said Ethel; and away went the two girls to their favorite resort to gaze on a landscape that, though always the same, was always new.

Just now town and country lay spread out beneath them bathed in shimmering light. The little bit of ocean in the distance shone like silver in the sun's rays. The girls found a shady nook, and sat down to take in the scenery, spread out like a panorama before them, finding real pleasure in pointing out to one another, as they had often done before, places that they knew.

"There is Mrs. Pelham's house; we can look right down on it," said Millie. "Do you know that she

told me one day when I was there that she had never once been on these Heights? And she lives so near too! She said, 'she had no time.' I pity that poor, little girl of hers; she is not allowed to stir off the door step for fear she will get dirty. One day last autumn, when you were away, Ann and I were coming up here with Bessie and Georgie. I asked Mrs. Pelham if Bella could come too. You never saw a more delighted child when she got up here. She seemed like one who had entered a new world. Is it not a pity that people should miss so much beauty?"

"I suppose Mrs. Pelham is a very busy woman," said Ethel.

"She makes herself busy; she could take time, if she chose to let some things go. I think I would come here sometimes, if I were in her place, if only for the sake of the child."

Just then they heard Harry calling them; and went back to have their lunch, which they all enjoyed thoroughly.

Then when the afternoon shadows began to lengthen, with Harry for a guide, they wandered over the Heights, exploring every nook and corner. Before six o'clock they turned their steps homeward, as their father returned from business at that hour, and it would not do to keep him waiting for his dinner.

They had enjoyed the day so much that they all thought they would like to have such an outing every week through the remainder of the summer.

The next morning Ethel brought out the mending basket. Now let us begin the mending, and we can finish it all to-day."

"Very well," said Millie. It was easy to see, however, that she was not very enthusiastic about it. "I do hate darning and patching," she said, after a while; "I always feel as though I would like to buy new things as soon as everything begins to wear out."

"It's not the pleasantest thing in the world to mend," said Ethel. "But it is a good thing to have to do things we do not like to do, sometimes."

"It's not a good thing for me, I am sure, for it makes me cross, especially on hot days like these, when the needle gets so sticky."

"Put it through the emery cushion," suggested Ethel, handing one over as she spoke.

Millie took it, and stabbed the needle vigorously through it, then set to work again. "The needle works quite easily now," she exclaimed. All went well for a few moments, then the thread knotted, and Millie, in a fit of impatience, tried to drag it through, with the result that the rent she was trying to mend was made larger. This was enough to aggravate anybody; however, it aroused in Millie the determination to be revenged on the hole by mending it in spite of itself, as she declared. It was with quite an air of triumph that at last she exclaimed:

"There, that's done; now, Ethel, what next can you give me to do."

"Here is an apron of Bessie's; the edging is torn, and there is a button off; you can try that."

Millie sewed on the button, and then began at the edging; but soon she dropped her work, and exclaimed:

"Do see that little bird down in the yard; it has fallen from the nest. I must go down and see it." Away she went.

Ethel sighed; Millie had done so little in the hour they had been at work. She saw it was of but little use to depend on her.

Meanwhile, Millie, down in the yard, chirruped away to the little bird, and brought it crumbs. I cannot say, however, that the bird appreciated her kind intentions. On the contrary, it seemed quite frightened.

Ethel worked away with a growing impatience in her heart. She began to feel quite cross with Millie for leaving her to do the sewing alone.

"Oh, look, Ethel, see the little thing try to fly," called Millie, from below.

"Well, Millie, you may have time to look at it, I have not," said Ethel, with rather more emphasis on the "you" and "I" than was necessary.

"Why don't you leave the mending, and come down here for a while," her sister said. "You needn't fret about the work. I'll help you by-and-by; anyway, if we do not finish it to-day, we can finish it to-morrow."

"I am not going to leave any to do to-morrow, I

shall do it to-day, if I have to put in every stitch myself." And Ethel snapped off another needleful of thread energetically.

"Very well, suit yourself," returned Millie, with exasperating coolness.

Ethel shut her lips tightly; she felt very cross now.

The children had come from play, and had gathered around Millie, watching every movement of the little bird with the greatest interest. Then Ann came out, and took it in her hand, and baby Clarence laughed and clapped his hands.

"See, Ethel, pitty birdie," he called. Ethel looked down; she could not refuse little Clarence anything, and the bright smile on the baby's face brought an answering smile to her own.

"Yes, darling," she said. "I see." And as she watched the happy, interested group, her impatient thoughts began to give way to more kindly ones.

After all, Millie was still a child in many ways, ready enough with offers of help, but soon wearying of her self-imposed tasks; Ethel realized that she had expected too much of her; she must take her as she was, not as she might be, and not count too much on her help.

"I wonder," she thought, "if I could ever be as patient and wise as mother is in training her children."

"Have you finished everything? Why did you not leave something for me to do?" said Millie, when about half an hour later she came upstairs.

"I have left your own things for you to do, Millie. I expect you will find them enough; and if you take my advice, you will attend to them to-day."

"Perhaps I will; anyway, I'll see to them all right."

But Millie was one of those who put things off. In the afternoon she went to see Fay Wilton, a young friend. When she came home, she was too tired to sew; besides, she had brought back with her a book, lent her by her friend, and she was very anxious to begin the reading of it. The book proved so interesting that she spent the greater part of the evening upon it. But then, she argued with herself that she had all the next day in which to do her work, and besides, she meant to get up so early that everything she had to do would be finished by breakfast time. With these thoughts she fell asleep, and knew nothing more until aroused by Ethel calling:

"Come, Millie, get up; it is seven o'clock."

Millie opened her eyes, dreamily. "Seven o'clock! dear me, how provoking!" She reasoned, "I cannot get up early now, and I may as well take another little nap." So she closed her eyes again, with the result that she was late for breakfast.

Ethel, on the other hand, had been awake and up early, and had planned out quite an amount of work for the day. There was a little dress which had been cut out for Clarence a week before, and had been laid aside when their mother began to get ready to go away.

"I will make that to-day," thought Ethel. "It will be a good thing to get it out of the way; the first of the week is always a busy time."

She generally went to see Aunt Margaret on Saturday afternoons, but she had no intention of leaving that out of her programme; the dress was to be finished by the middle of the afternoon, giving her ample time for her Saturday visit, as well as for the study of her Sunday-school lesson.

Ethel realized that she could not do what she had laid out for the day, unless she could keep steadily on without interruption; so she planned out work for others, as well as herself. Ann, of course, could attend to the kitchen work and the cooking, and Millie would be able easily to do the other housework, and look after the children, leaving Ethel undisturbed at her sewing. It is one thing to plan for one's self—quite another to plan what others shall do, and Ethel found this out before the day was over. As usual, she had counted too much on the assistance of Millie, who proved an uncertain factor in working out the problem of the day.

For a time, things seemed to go on well. Ethel put together the dress, tried it on, and fitted it as well as she could on such a restless little mortal as Clarence.

Then just as she was getting on nicely with her work, there came a ring at the door, and shortly Ann appeared with word that Mrs. Bennison was downstairs. Ethel looked aghast. Of all persons in the

world, Mrs. Bennison was the last one she wanted to see on a busy morning, for the good old lady always made a prolonged visit.

"Dear me, Saturday morning of all others!" said Ethel, with a despairing glance at Ann, who well aware of Mrs. Bennison's peculiarities, giggled, then asked:

"Shall I say you are engaged?"

"Oh, no, I will be down in a moment, Ann," replied Ethel, her momentary feeling of vexation passing away, as she thought how often her mother had been similarly interrupted, and how kindly and patiently she always listened to the oft-told tale of aches and ailments. She remembered too, how often her mother had said: "What seems an interruption may be more truly my work for the time than what I am obliged to lay aside."

With these thoughts in her mind, Ethel was able to give a real kindly greeting to the old lady. When Mrs. Bennison said she had been a long distance to see some one on business, and feeling tired had come in to rest for a while, Ethel felt her sympathies aroused; and remembering what a warm day it was, and recollecting too that her visitor was fond of milk, she insisted on going and getting some. It did her heart good to see how thoroughly the old lady enjoyed the glass of milk and the little seed-cakes that she brought for her.

"I feel so refreshed," said Mrs. Bennison, when at

last she rose to go. "Thank you very much, dear, for your kindness." Then taking both of Ethel's hands in her own, and looking lovingly into the brown eyes that met hers, she added, "You have begun to serve the King in youth, child. Keep on. His is a good service."

And Ethel, looking after the bent figure that went slowly away from the door, felt unworthy to have had the privilege of ministering to this true child of the King.

When she went back to pick up the work she had laid down half an hour before, Ethel began to think how very acceptable it would be if Millie would lend a hand for a little while. But where could Millie be, and what could she be doing? She had not been seen nor heard from for some time.

"Millie, Millie," called Ethel.

"Yes," the answer came, somewhat slowly.

"The parlor is not dusted yet."

"Well, I am coming, just in a minute."

Ethel knew something of what Millie's minutes were, so she concluded it would be better to go up to her room, and see what she was doing.

It was just as she suspected. Millie was curled up in an easy chair, reading a book.

"Millie!" said Ethel, reproachfully. "I thought you were going to help me so much this morning?"

"So I am," exclaimed Millie, jumping up hastily.

"You know this is the book Fay lent me yesterday."

I picked it up, and only meant to look into it for a minute ; and then I could not lay it down till I had finished it."

"You had better not have taken it up till your work was done. It would have been all the better for keeping."

"Yes, I know ; but I will be so quick now that I will quite make up for lost time. It will not take me long to dust the parlor."

"But this room is not put to rights yet."

"Oh, I'll do that afterward. I'll not be long. You'll see."

It would have seemed unkind to say anything more when Millie was so anxious to make amends ; so Ethel did not say what she had learned from her own experience, that there is always a *best* time in which to do things, which one must improve if she would not be in a perpetual hurry. And Millie went off, duster in hand, humming a merry little air, as she flitted about her work.

As to Ethel, she seemed doomed to interruptions. First, Georgie came wanting a piece of paper and a pencil. His sister went and found them for him, feeling inwardly impatient at the hindrance.

Then Clarence came up, crying most dismally ; he had fallen down and scratched his arm, and soiled his dress. Then he had rubbed his tearful eyes with his dirty little hands, making streaks all down his cheeks. Altogether, he presented a doleful appearance.

"What a dreadful state you are in! What made you fall down?" exclaimed Ethel, rather unsympathetically.

"Yes, I couldn't help it. Oo wash me."

"I am too busy; Millie will."

"Millie busy too, and Ann busy," sobbed Clarence.

Just then Georgie appeared, and Ethel sent him to call Millie. Two or three minutes passed before Millie came, which did not improve Ethel's temper.

"I think you might at least look after the children when you know I am so busy," she complained.

"Ann was very busy, and I offered to whip the whites of the eggs for the top of the pudding. I was doing that when Clarence came in, and he would not stay with me, but must go and find you."

"Well, do what you can with him now. Georgie must be washed too, before dinner."

"You take the easiest part, sitting here in the cool, while I have to run around and do the work," said Millie, fretfully.

"If you think this is easier, I am sure you are welcome to do it," returned Ethel. "Don't, Clarence," she exclaimed, rather impatiently, as the little fellow took hold of some embroidery.

"What made you undertake that dress on Saturday?" said Millie. "It is not wanted for to-morrow. I am sure I would put it away, if it made me so cross as it does you."

Truth is not always acceptable. It was true that

it was unnecessary that the dress should be finished on that day ; it was also true that Ethel was somewhat cross. But it was quite unwelcome to her to have these facts suggested.

" You know, Millie, as well as I do," she said, " that the first of the week is a busy time ; Clarence needs the dress as soon as he can have it. As to being cross—I don't think I am cross."

The afternoon proved no better than the morning. Millie had quite forgotten the untidy bedroom ; and when she called it to mind, she felt hot and tired, and complained of her head aching. So Ethel laid aside her work and helped her. Then when Millie gave the children their Saturday bath, she had trouble with them, and Ethel was obliged to go and settle matters. It was no wonder that as she went back to her sewing she felt tired and nervous. In her haste, she sewed a sleeve wrongly, and had to rip it out ; but only the more firmly did she resolve that the dress should be finished that night.

Fay Wilton came in after tea, and a game of croquet was proposed.

" Come, Ethel, we want you to make up a side," said Harry.

" I am really too busy ; can't you get Percy White to come over and play ? "

" Percy is away."

" Well, Bessie could take a ball."

" Oh, Bessie is no good as a player," returned Harry,

somewhat impatiently. "Can't you come and play one game at least?"

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Gladwyn, looking up from the paper he was reading.

"We want Ethel to come and play croquet," said Millie. "We can't have sides unless she does; and she won't. She is bound to finish a dress for Clarence, and I can't get her to do anything."

"Gently, daughter, Ethel is our housekeeper now; we must not expect her to stop for everything. How would I do instead of Ethel?"

"Oh, Mr. Gladwyn, would you play with us; that would be just lovely," exclaimed Fay.

As to Millie and Harry their good humor was quite restored by their father's timely offer; and all went off to the garden well satisfied. Ethel could hear their merry voices as she sat at work upstairs. She longed to be with them; she knew it would be better for her; still she kept on, growing more tired and irritable every moment, and getting out of patience whenever the children interrupted her.

Darkness was gathering fast when the players came in. Ethel knew that George and Clarence ought to have been in bed half an hour before, but she had not insisted on it, because she did not wish to be hindered. Now, Clarence, like all overtired children, was fretful; Georgie was in very high spirits, and not at all inclined to go to sleep quietly; Fay Wilton and Millie were still talking together downstairs. So Ethel was

left alone ; and as she was really tired, it was not much wonder if her patience, taxed to the utmost, often gave way. When at last Millie came upstairs, Ethel's vexation burst forth :

" I do think, Millie, you might have excused yourself from Fay, and put the children in to bed."

" I don't know that I could have done it. Anyway, it would not have been much use for me to come, for you know you told me this afternoon that I only made trouble with the children, and had better leave them altogether."

Ethel could say nothing, as she remembered that in a moment of vexation she had spoken words to that effect. She could not, however, refrain from remarking, " You haven't tried to help me much to-day."

This was too much for Millie. " I did try, I am sure," she exclaimed, " but nothing satisfied you, Ethel. I wish you had let that dress alone ; it has made you so cross." And with that, Millie picked up her work, the mending she had not done the day before, and went downstairs, leaving Ethel thoroughly put out with herself to think she had been betrayed into fault-finding.

Meantime, Millie was doing some thinking as she sat alone at her work. Her heart condemned her, and told her that she might have done more for Ethel ; that she had been selfish in taking the greater part of a busy morning to finish reading a story book, and Millie felt sorry, and resolved she would do better

another day. But then she remembered how often before she had resolved to do better, and had failed. Was she to go on that way always?

With that came other thoughts. She had heard it said that our good resolutions are broken because made in our own strength. Was that the reason for failure? Something within said "Yes," so plainly that Millie could not help but hear, though she did not wish to. Why then did she not seek a Saviour's help to overcome these faults of hers? to make her life what it should be? what in her best moments she wished it to be? Often these questions had come to Millie's heart before; but she always had tried to evade them. She did not do so now, but thought them over seriously. And so that day of failure was not altogether a failure after all, since in it were awakened thoughts that in due time brought forth good fruit in her life.

How little we know of one another's inner life! Ethel's thought was: "Millie does not care; she is growing more heedless every day." And for a while this thought chafed and irritated her. But Ethel knew where to take the little troubles and worries of life. She laid them down at the Master's feet, realizing as she did so that she ought to have done this before; that because she had not done so she had failed to receive the help she needed. Yet now help came; gentler thoughts prevailed; and she was ready to excuse Millie. "I have expected too much of her,"

she said to herself, "and have found fault with her, because she did not come up to *my* ideals of what she ought to be and do ; I must be more patient."

By-and-by, Millie came upstairs. "Can't I help you, Ethel," she said.

Ethel looked up brightly. "No, thank you, dear. Go to bed like a good child ; you must be tired. I have only these button-holes to work now."

Still, Millie lingered ; then putting her arms around her sister, she said : "I believe I have been thoughtless to-day. I might have helped you more. I am going to try and do better another day."

And Ethel said, "I have been a cross sister to-day, haven't I ? I will try not to be so again. There, good night, dear."

It was late when Ethel had finished. As she thought over the day, she wondered whether it had been a successful day in the truest sense of the word. It had certainly been successful in so far that she had accomplished what she had planned to do. But then she called to mind all her hasty words to the children, all her impatient feelings, remembered too, that Aunt Margaret would miss her usual Saturday visit, and that her Sunday-school lesson was still unprepared. And the words came stealing into her heart, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," that kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Ah, read in the light of those words, the day had been a failure. She had missed the best things—the things

that abide ; but she had learned a lesson that was not soon forgotten.

The following Wednesday, Ethel stood at the dining-room window gazing rather abstractedly out, with a shadow on her usually bright face. A few moments before she had been singing as she went about her household duties. The cause of the sudden change was to be found in the little note she held in her hand. It was from her father, to the effect that he would bring home to dine with him Dr. Somerville and his wife. Few words, but quite sufficient to make Ethel feel flurried and nervous. It was not so much the thought of the dinner that troubled her ; though that was, of course, an occasion of some anxiety to a young housekeeper, yet with Ann's efficient help she knew that it could be provided. But to have to entertain a doctor of divinity ! The mere thought was quite overwhelming.

Poor Ethel had never as yet been able to overcome a certain embarrassment when in company. She was painfully troubled with a self-consciousness from which it seemed impossible to escape, and which made her manner constrained. She was told that the remedy was to forget herself, but the harder she tried to do this the worse she became. She had about concluded that it was of no use to try ; that it was impossible for her to be easy and natural like some people.

Now you will see why this little note so disquieted her. "If mother were only home," she mused, "it

would not be so bad ; but I shall be afraid to speak a word before so learned a man. His wife too, no doubt, is an excellent housekeeper, and will observe anything that goes wrong. Oh, dear ! How I wish they had not happened to come this way just now ! But there, I must go and talk with Ann about dinner." That arranged, her heart felt a little lighter.

While she was busy making ready for her expected guests, her favorite text came to her mind ; could that be a help to her in her difficulties ? " After all," she said to herself, " it matters very little what they think of me. I am only a humble member of Christ's great kingdom trying to do his will ; and these friends also belong to that kingdom and serve the same great King, and the little I can do for them I can do in his name ! " Even as these thoughts came to Ethel she felt her anxiety give way to calmness. Self was lost sight of and forgotten in the thought of Christ, and the one supreme desire to serve him.

So when Mr. Gladwyn came, bringing his guests with him, and Ethel was introduced to the learned doctor and his wife, she felt none of the trepidation so natural to her.

After all, they did not prove so very dreadful to entertain. Doctor Somerville was very genial, and his wife gentle and unassuming, and Ethel enjoyed every moment of their stay. The doctor was an old school-mate of Mr. Gladwyn's, and the two had many a hearty laugh talking over old times together.

"We have had such a very pleasant evening, dear," said Mrs. Somerville, as she parted from Ethel. "I am so glad to have met you."

The pleasant words were welcome to Ethel, but she felt still more pleased when her father said, after their friends had gone:

"You filled your mother's place well to-night, my daughter." That was compliment enough for Ethel, for she knew her father thought that her mother excelled as an hostess.

The days slipped quickly by, and Mrs. Gladwyn came home again, and Ethel was glad to give up the responsibility of housekeeping; yet she felt that she had learned many helpful lessons during her mother's absence.

CHAPTER X.

PRINCIPLE TESTED.

THE last week of August had come, and the Maynard family prepared to return home. It was very pleasant, certainly, to look forward to meeting again in their own dear home; yet they could not leave the place where they had spent so many pleasant days without some feelings of regret.

Ned was in high spirits, because his father had written that instead of going to college he might try business for a year. The boy's eyes fairly shone as he told his sister about it, winding up with the declaration, "It's my opinion, Grace, that at the end of the year father won't know how to get along without me."

Grace wanted to laugh outright at that, but she managed to keep a straight face, for she did not wish to hurt her brother's feelings. Indeed, she was pleased to see his enthusiasm; and as she noted the earnestness and manliness awakened in the hitherto careless lad, she said to herself, "I believe business is the right thing for Ned."

For herself, Grace felt that this had been a very happy summer. She had tried to do something for others. Only a little she felt it to have been, but better than

nothing. Joe could read fairly well—we'll enough to get on himself. Margie could play and sing a number of hymns now for her father's benefit. As to the little ones of the infant class, Grace just wished she could take them all with her, she had grown to love them so. The day before she left, they came by twos and threes to bid her good-bye, and as she looked down into the dear little faces, she felt it had been a great privilege to speak of Jesus to them.

And Grace had helped in other ways, of which she did not know. She never knew how much Alice Gray, who had toiled on faithfully in the Sunday-school amid many discouragements, had been cheered by this fresh, young worker who had come among them. She did not know either how some young girls, as yet without the kingdom, had watched her every word and act, and had come to the conclusion that she was living for something higher and nobler than self.

On returning to Melvin, Grace was disappointed to find that Ethel had just gone away. Fannie Weldon was still at the seaside; so there was no one to run in and see and talk with. She felt rather lonely, and was genuinely glad when two or three days later she met Leonore Leslie.

"Why, I had no idea you had come home again," exclaimed Grace.

"We only came this morning," replied Leonore. "We did not stay quite so long as we planned, but cousin Harold promised to spend a few weeks with us

when we returned ; and we thought it was just as well to come home now. September is such a lovely month here. I am so delighted that you are home, Grace. I heard you were away, and was so afraid you might not have returned. Of course, we wish to make cousin Harold's visit as pleasant as possible, and I want you to help us. I have ever so many plans in mind now."

"I do not know that I can add much to the enjoyment of your cousin's visit," said Grace. "I suppose you had a delightful time at Bay View?"

"Oh, Grace, you ought to have been with us ; it was just splendid. So much gaiety and life ; something going on morning, noon, and night. And then we met such nice people ! But there ! I had better not begin, for I have so much to tell you. I am afraid I would not know when to stop. Now, Grace, you must come over on Thursday afternoon, and have a game of lawn tennis. Harold will be with us then, and he is an enthusiastic tennis-player."

"Thank you, Leonore, I shall be happy to come," said Grace.

When, on the following Thursday, Grace was introduced to Harold Winthrop, she wondered whether he could be enthusiastic about anything. There was no expression on his countenance that would indicate that he had ever been in earnest about anything ; however, he certainly understood the art of making himself agreeable, and also proved to be a good tennis player.

Mr. Winthrop was a good student of human nature,

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and could adapt himself with ease to very different dispositions. With the frivolous, he could talk the veriest nonsense; and with those of an opposite turn of mind, the most charming sense. He carried on conversation with delicate tact and skill, paying great deference to the opinions of others, carefully avoiding points that might raise an argument. So he managed always to make others well pleased with themselves, and as a natural consequence, well pleased with him.

From some words he dropped as they were looking over a sketch-book that evening, Grace learned that he was quite a traveler; and calling him out she was very much entertained with his amusing and interesting description of places he had visited, for he was more observant of people and things than one would suppose from his appearance.

"Why, I didn't know cousin Harold could talk in that way," said Rita to her sister Leonore. "He never talked like that to the Langley girls at Bay View."

"Well, you see they were different from Grace," said Leonore.

From that time there was a continual succession of excursions, picnics, etc., planned by the Leslies for the entertainment of their cousin, and to all of these Grace was invited.

It happened that on these occasions Harold Winthrop was most frequently Grace's escort. Grace hardly realized that marked preference was shown her; she only knew that she liked to talk with him—he

was so witty and clever. And the golden autumn-days passed on like one bright dream.

The end of September came, and looking back over the month, Grace recollected with a feeling of shame that she had not been to prayer meeting once since her return home; there had always been some other engagement. Now she began to question whether there had been anything in her conduct that would lead Mr. Winthrop to suppose that for her to live was Christ—that she put first and chief in her life the seeking of his kingdom. She was afraid there had not been. She felt that she ought to have taken a more definite stand, and resolved to make amends for past failures by going to meeting the next Friday evening. But Friday proved rainy, and Grace had a sore throat; so she could not go to meeting as she had intended. Leonore and Rita Leslie, accompanied by their cousin, came over to call after tea, and stayed through the evening.

The following Sunday evening Grace was accompanied to church by Mr. Winthrop. She had no sooner seated herself than she saw by a glance at the communion table that the Lord's Supper was to be observed that evening. She had quite forgotten that it was the first Sunday of the month; now a tumult of thoughts arose in her mind. What should she do? Stay, and observe the sacred ordinance, or go out at the close of the preaching service? Her first thought was to do the latter. She felt unworthy to partake of the sacred emblems, having given so little thought to

her Lord and Saviour through the month past, and having lived so much unto herself. But then she reflected, "I have taken solemn vows upon me, and though I have not been faithful, yet to turn away now will be but another backward step. It would surely be better to seek forgiveness for the past and help for the future." Even while she thought, the words of the text came as a message to her, "Will ye also go away?" A reverent hush fell on her heart. She thought she could almost hear her Lord speak to her, in tones so tender and sad, "Will *you* also go away?"

The sermon was ended, the benediction had been pronounced, the organ pealed forth, and the congregation began to disperse. Grace sat as in a dream, hearing still those words, "Will ye also go away?"

Harold Winthrop was about to go; but seeing Grace still seated, he turned and said, "Must you remain this evening?"

"I *wish* to," she answered, quietly.

"I will wait for you then," he said. "You know my cousins expect you to spend the evening with them."

Yes, Grace knew it, though at the moment she had forgotten it; she knew too what Sunday evening at Elmcroft meant—some singing of sacred music interspersed with a good deal of worldly conversation—and feeling that it would be anything but helpful to her religiously, she said, "Please excuse me to them; I cannot go to-night."

There was no time to urge the matter, so Harold could but assent, and join the stream of out-goers.

And thus these two who had thought alike on so many subjects, found themselves separated in thought and feeling by a wide gulf. It expressed itself in those two words, "must," "wish"; what appeared to one to be merely an irksome duty, was to the other a sweet and precious privilege.

In that quiet hour Grace found peace and help, and felt strengthened to meet another month's duties and temptations.

She had, indeed, need of grace and strength, if she would keep her heart free from the world and in readiness for Christ's service; for this was to be for her a month of testing—a testing of the principles by which she professed to be governed. Would she stand the test?

Harold Winthrop's visit was drawing to a close; and Leonore Leslie was to have a ball, the grand finishing up of all the entertainments of the past weeks.

Now Grace had decided not to go to any more balls. She had come to this decision while at Forest Glen. When a young girl she had been accustomed to go to gay parties, where dancing formed the only amusement. She enjoyed them, and thought dancing no harm; so when she received an invitation to one, after her public profession of faith, she never so much as thought of declining it. Remarks were made upon her course by some of the church-members, perhaps not in the

most kindly manner. These remarks reached Grace's ears, and instantly a spirit of opposition was aroused. She was not going to be governed by other people's notions of right and wrong; she would act according to her own judgment. But thenceforward she was not altogether at rest.

Still deeper thoughts were stirred that summer. It was after the quiet talk the girls had at the picnic, and before going to Forest Glen, that Grace overheard Mrs. Sewall say at a sewing circle that Hetty Carter thought she might dance, as her Sunday-school teacher went to balls. Grace felt conscience-smitten. Hetty was in her class, and as she knew had serious thoughts regarding her soul's salvation. Was she to be hindered in entering the kingdom by the worldly example of one who ought to lead her to Christ?

Grace pondered the subject deeply. Her first thought was to give up her class. Then she recollected that she could not give up her influence; that *must* go on. She began to see more clearly too, that she had been surrounding herself with the wrong kind of influences. The influence of the ball-room was not such as to help her Christward and heavenward. The Christian life was opening out before her, and she was beginning to realize that she could not be conformed to the world, and at the same time transformed into the image of Christ. So she made her choice.

It was an easy thing to make the resolve in that quiet nook up among the hills, where she seemed to

breathe a purer atmosphere and felt drawn nearer to God. It was not so easy to carry out that resolve when she came down again into every-day, busy, gay life. When the invitation to the Leslie ball came, Grace wished it had been given by some other person than Leonore Leslie, and had come at another time, if at all. It would have been so much easier for Grace had she taken a decided stand with regard to worldly amusements on first joining the church. It was hard to retrace her steps. Moreover, her mother gave her no help. "I think you are altogether too scrupulous, Grace," she said. "It does seem too bad to give up going to the Leslies' entertainment; it will be such a very select affair. If you have objections to dancing, surely you can go and not dance."

"No, mother, I could not. You know I like dancing, and I would rather stay away than go as a mere spectator. Besides, even if I could be only that, I would still have the name of going; people would not stop to ask whether I danced or not, and my usefulness would be just as much hindered."

"Well, Grace, of course, you can do as you wish about it. You know I like to see you interested in good works, and do not wish you to be gay; but I think you might have strained a point this once when the invitation came from such intimate friends as the Leslies.

"Supposing I had; then, having begun the season with the Leslies, how could I refuse the Warings, and

the Braithwaites, and all the rest of our friends. No, mother, I must decide now."

In spite of Grace's firmness it cost her considerable effort to write a note to Leonore, in which she declined the invitation and gave her reasons for doing so. And when the next day Leonore came over, and overwhelmed her with entreaties to come just this once, and gave numberless reasons why she should, Grace was persuaded to reconsider the matter.

She was honestly perplexed, and wished either Ethel or Fannie at home, so that she could ask their advice. Ethel could not be reached quickly by letter, Fannie could. So Grace wrote to the latter, stating at length all the reasons for and against going to the Leslies, and asking advice.

The next day Fannie's answer came; and this was all she said with reference to that part of Grace's letter: "With regard to your difficulties about the invitation you have received, I have but this word to write—'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'"

"There!" said Grace, throwing down the letter with a gesture of impatience. "She has just put the responsibility of the decision back on myself again. I wish that she had said something that would fit." Here she paused. After all, what could Fannie or Ethel or any one say that would fit her case any better than the words of Scripture. The only trouble was they fitted too well. When she listened to what others had to say on the subject she was very much perplexed

as to her duty; when on the other hand, she looked at the Scripture words honestly and fairly, her perplexity vanished; the way was plain before her.

Was she willing to take that way? She would have to give up something? Yes, an evening's pleasure—but was that anything to be compared to the privilege of being a co-worker with God? Then the words of that sermon that had helped her so long before came to her mind, "In the light of eternity, will you regret having made some sacrifice for Christ's sake; ah, whatever else you regret, you will not regret that." And then and there Grace gave herself anew to Christ and his service, and took another step upward in the Christian way.

Harold Winthrop was much disappointed at Grace's decision, and resolved to try to persuade her to alter it. A magazine to be returned made a good excuse for calling on the following afternoon. Grace knew instinctively the real object of his visit, and as she went down to the drawing room felt somewhat as one might feel who was marching right up to the enemy's guns. However, she tried to appear unconcerned, and chattered away in a very animated manner upon a variety of subjects, skilfully avoiding all reference to the approaching ball.

But Mr. Winthrop was not to be so easily turned aside from the object of his visit. He became abstracted and the conversation was one-sided, until at last Grace said, with regard to some subject:

"Do you not think so, Mr. Winthrop?"

"To say the truth," he answered, "I cannot think of anything but my disappointment at your refusal to come to the ball next Thursday; my pleasure will be quite spoiled, I can assure you."

Grace had planned beforehand what she would say if the subject was referred to; but there was something in the earnestness with which Mr. Winthrop spoke and the pleading look with which he regarded her, that put all her well-ordered sentences to flight, and she could only say:

"I am sorry that my not going will prove a disappointment to you; but after all," she added, glancing up archly, "I do not believe you will miss me so very much; there will be ever so many nice girls there, and you will not find it hard to console yourself for my absence."

"I must play the agreeable, I suppose," he said, gloomily; "but I shall not enjoy myself if you are not there, that is certain."

Grace said nothing. With downcast eyes she studied the carpet intently, while Harold studied her; then, after a moment's pause, he said, gently:

"I think you might take pity on me, Grace."

She started. He had never called her by her Christian name before, and it thrilled her. She looked up to meet the gaze of a pair of hazel eyes, that seemed as though they would read the inmost thoughts of her inmost soul.

"Will you not come this once, just to please me?" he pleaded.

Grace dropped her eyes quickly again. Did Harold Winthrop know what she knew now for the first time, that she would rather please him than any one else in the world? Yes, he knew; he was by no means unconscious of his power, and felt pretty sure of victory. But there was another power than man's at work in that young girl's heart; a power which Harold had not taken into account. And so it was that when Grace looked up again all her self-possession had returned, and she met his gaze calmly as she said, very quietly and simply:

"I would like to please you, but I would rather please Christ."

It was Harold's turn to be embarrassed now. He felt as he looked on that countenance, on which shone the light of a holy victory, that no arguments of his could reach her; she had been placed far above them. For a moment he felt annoyed, as much at his own failure as at her refusal. But he was not passionate by nature, and it was against his principles to make himself miserable about anything when he might just as well be happy; so he maintained his equanimity, and after a few commonplace remarks took his departure.

Grace stood at the window watching him as he walked away, and there came to her heart a consciousness that she had let something go out of her life—

something that might have been—yet not for one moment did she regret it.

As for Harold Winthrop, he had felt attached to Grace as he never had been to any other girl. She had been much in his thoughts of late, and he had resolved to take some favorable opportunity to tell her of his feelings; but the events of the last few days had put a different phase upon his thoughts. He did not wish to have one for a wife whose religious principles would prevent her going with him into gay society. He saw very plainly that he could not induce Grace to give up her principles, and he was not willing to give up his own; so he decided it was better that they should be friends only. Yet he never lost the pleasant impressions received while enjoying the company of this sweet-faced young girl.

CHAPTER XI.

CONFLICT AND VICTORY.

IT might be supposed that having once made her decision, Grace would have no more conflicts. Perhaps she expected so herself but, like all mortals, she had her ups and downs. She was not always in an exalted state of mind, and she had yet an even harder battle to fight with herself.

Thursday evening had come and, as it happened, was particularly dull at home. Mr. Maynard had gone back to his office. Ned had been given permission to go to some entertainment. Mrs. Maynard had the sick-headache; so after Aggie went to bed, Grace was left alone. She tried working, then reading, but felt too restless to settle down to anything. At last, yielding to the impulse of the moment, she climbed the two flights of stairs to the upper story of the house, where from a little turret window she could look over to the Leslie's residence, and see the gleaming lights and catch strains of music. She knew it was not a wise thing to do, yet she sat there picturing to herself all the brightness and gaiety within the stately rooms at Elmcroft.

Then she thought of Harold Winthrop. Was he all devotion to Clara Prescott to-night? The thought

stabbed her. She turned quickly and went down to her own room, and there sitting alone in the darkness she struggled with herself. A rush of tumultuous thoughts overcame her; all the attractions and allurements of this world were presented to her mind in brightest array. The glory of that other kingdom seemed very far away; she could not lay hold of it in her weakness. She scarcely knew how to pray; at last she said aloud, as though she was speaking to some one, "I will seek the kingdom of God first," and then came peace.

It was shaken but once more; that was the next day at dinner, when Ned said, "Tom Bennett told me that the ball last night was just fine. Clara Prescott was the belle of the evening. Mr. Winthrop danced with her a great deal." Ned eyed his sister sharply as he made this last remark, but he got no satisfaction.

"Indeed!" was Grace's only reply; but her inward thought was, "Will they give me no peace—not even at home?"

She went out into the garden when dinner was over, feeling sad and lonely. She stopped to look at a beautiful passion-flower that had just opened. Flowers have their messages oftentimes for those who will heed. As Grace looked on it she thought of the suffering Saviour; and then the words came to mind:

"I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou given for Me,"

and her heart grew glad at the thought that she had given up something of this world for him.

As Grace passed into the house she saw a woman who did sewing for her mother, and stopped to inquire after her family. At any other time it would not have occurred to her to do this; but now, drawn closer to her Saviour, she felt a deeper sympathy for all needy ones, and the sad, patient face of the woman attracted her attention. She listened with new feelings of interest as the poor mother told of her little sick boy who had never recovered from an attack of the measles, and seemed to be going into a decline.

Grace's sympathies were aroused at once. "To think," she said afterward to her mother, in speaking of it, "that I never should have known about that poor little boy, and he living so near!"

"I ought to have gone and seen the child myself," said her mother. "I really did not know he was so ill, but we were away, and before that I was poorly, and there were many things to be done." Mrs. Maynard had not stopped to inquire whether this visit might not be more important than some of the "many things" she referred to.

It was not long before Grace paid a visit to the home of the poor widow, carrying with her some little delicacies that she thought might sharpen the appetite of the sick boy.

Little Joe lay propped up on a lounge near the window. He did not appear to be so ill as he really

was, for his cheeks were flushed, and his eyes were very bright.

"He likes to be where he can see what is passing," his mother explained. "On warm summer days I let him sit out in the garden. He so loves to watch the birds and bees and butterflies—anything living, in fact, even a spider. See, now he has the pussy." And she pointed to a large Maltese cat, curled up beside him.

"So you like birds, Joe, do you?" said Grace, sitting down by him. "Well, if your cat will be good, and not touch it, I will let you have my canary for a while."

"You are ever so kind," exclaimed Joe. "I should just love to have a bird. I'll see that Maltie does not hurt it. He doesn't dare touch the birds that are in the garden. Won't it be company for me, mother?"

"Yes, it will be lovely. I am sure we are very much obliged to the lady."

"Do you get much work to do, Mrs. Bent?" said Grace.

"Yes, miss, I get considerable work; not but what I would like to get more. It is hard to get along at times."

"Especially," put in Joe, "when you do fine work, and don't get paid for it; like that you did for——"

"There, there, Joe," interrupted his mother; "that will do."

"Why, don't you always get paid for your work,

Mrs. Bent?" said Grace, in surprise. It was a new idea to the girl.

"Why, no," said Joe, "there was that piece of work she did for Mrs. Leslie. It took her days to do it, and she has never got a cent for it."

"It was embroidery, miss, and, of course, I expected to be well paid for it. I did it about a year ago, and have not received any pay for it yet. Mrs. Leslie always says she has no money, but will send it. Yet she never does. Joe is so indignant about it that it is hard for him to keep still; but I tell him it does no good to make a fuss. I was disappointed, though."

"I should think so," said Grace, feeling indignant as she thought of the handsome appointments of the Leslie household. "I would not have thought it of them."

"Ah, miss! no more would I. But folks say that they live beyond their means."

After some further conversation Grace took her leave, promising to bring the canary and some books for Joe the next time she came.

She went back to her own cosy, comfortable home, feeling that she had obtained a glimpse of a different world from that in which she lived; a world of which hitherto she had known little and thought less—a world of hardship and poverty, of daily struggle for daily bread. And all this time she had been going on carelessly and happily, thinking of life only as a pleasant thing to be enjoyed, and the fleeting days as

so many fair flowers from which to sip sweetness. But she was growing in earnestness, and now formed the resolution that from henceforth she would not be as the butterfly flitting from one pleasure to another; the rather would she be like the bee, gathering sweetness from each opening flower, only to lay up in store for others.

When Grace told her mother how Mrs. Leslie had treated the widow, she did not seem quite so surprised as her daughter had been.

"But, mother, I cannot understand it," said Grace. "Mrs. Leslie is a kind woman; they all are kind-hearted. I am sure they would give to a person in need. How could she withhold what was rightfully due the poor woman?"

"I suppose, my dear, she used the money for other things that she fancied she must have, and thought the woman could wait. Doubtless she meant to pay her, and has gone on meaning to pay her for so long that now, perhaps, she feels as though she had done so."

"Poor Mrs. Bent cannot live on good intentions though, can she?" said Grace. "I feel, mother, as though I should never care for Mrs. Leslie's entertainments again."

That Grace Maynard should have declined to attend the Leslie ball from conscientious scruples caused no little comment among the circle of her acquaintance. The following is a sample:

"And so Grace Maynard has really given up dancing and all that sort of thing," said Miss Clemens to her intimate friend, Pearl Harper. "What a pity it is to become so bigoted and narrow-minded! I didn't think Grace was that kind of a girl. For my part, I like broad ideas."

Yet this young lady of "broad ideas" had no thought beyond the little world of fashion in which she moved; felt no interest in seeking to uplift the suffering and degraded, either at home or abroad; made no effort to take even the humblest place among those who were seeking the coming of God's kingdom upon earth.

Meanwhile, Grace went quietly on. In a very simple, straightforward manner she told her Sunday-school scholars of the change in her feelings; told them how deeply she regretted not having taken a decided stand with regard to worldly amusements before, and that now her desire was to be consecrated in heart and life to her Lord and Master, and that they too, with her, would follow Jesus.

That tender, earnest, serious appeal went to the hearts of the girls, who loved their teacher devotedly; and from that time her words came with power to them, since she could truly say, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."

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CHAPTER XII.

NED MAYNARD.

AS winter drew near, with its long evenings, there was one thought more often present to Grace's mind than any other, and that was, how to win her brother Ned from the evil influences which gathered around him. He was nearing the age when it was not possible to compel him to stay at home evenings. Home must be made pleasant enough to attract him. The responsibility, Grace felt, rested upon her.

Ned's companions were not the kind he cared to invite to the house, or introduce to his sister; while with Grace's friends he felt awkward and shy, and when they dropped in of an evening he invariably made his escape as soon as possible.

Grace now devoted herself to pleasing her brother. She laid aside her fancy work to play games with him. She tried to be interested in anything that interested him. But Ned was restless; one night or two of such quiet employment was enough for him. Grace puzzled her brain to think of something that would really interest him, but without success, until one day he happened to help her out of her difficulty by saying:

"My! don't I wish I could play the violin like

Carl Hoffman! He will give lessons now too, at a quite reasonable price."

Carl Hoffman was not much older than Ned, but he had begun to learn to play the violin at a very early age. He practised perseveringly and faithfully, and in time became quite proficient. He had just now returned from a short sojourn in one of the large cities, where he had taken lessons from an excellent teacher.

Every one in Melvin was talking about Carl Hoffman, and he was in great demand to play at local concerts and entertainments. He soon announced that he would give lessons, and forthwith many young people became possessed with a desire to play the violin, Ned among the number.

Grace seized the opportunity. "Why don't you take lessons? It would be so nice for you to be able to play on the violin, and I would play your accompaniments."

"Oh, it's easy to talk! But it's not likely that father would buy a violin. A good one is quite expensive you know; and besides, I know mother could never bear hearing me practise."

"We'll see," said Grace; privately resolved to do all in her power to persuade her father and mother to gratify Ned's wish.

That very evening, finding an opportunity, she spoke to Mr. Maynard about it.

"Ned wants to learn to play the violin, father."

"He does? Well, he would soon tire of it."

"I don't think so. I think he would take a real interest in it, and if only he once became interested in something of that kind it would be so much better than the things he cares for now. I'm so anxious about Ned, father!"

A stern look came into Mr. Maynard's face; Ned's conduct was a sore point. He said nothing; and Grace had to take up the conversation again.

"You will let him take lessons, won't you, father," she pleaded.

He looked down on her earnest face, and smiled: "You will have your way, daughter; but how can I afford it when I have to supply all your numerous wants—silk dresses, etc."

"Now, papa, you know I have not had a silk dress this summer, and I will do without anything if you will only get the violin for Ned."

"But if I do, it will drive your mother distracted to hear Ned scraping away, morning, noon, and night."

"I will undertake to persuade mother," said Grace. "I am sure I can find some out-of-the-way corner where Ned can practise."

"Very well, he can try; but it's my opinion he will soon give it up."

"Oh, thank you! I am so glad," said Grace, taking no notice of the latter part of her father's speech. "But, father," she went on, "do you really find us a very expensive family?"

"Ruinous, my dear! You will bring me to the poor-house!"

"Now that is the way you always put me off, papa," said Grace, reproachfully. "But I really want to know, because I would do without many things if I thought you could not afford to let me have them."

"Well, Grace, times are hard in business circles just now; and I do feel somewhat embarrassed sometimes. But if I can tide over this season I expect to be all right. I do not care to say anything to your mother about these things. She would worry, and she is not strong enough to bear any extra anxiety; but I have of late been somewhat worried over business matters."

"I am so glad you told me," said Grace; "for now I shall study to be very economical and careful. Poor father, I wish I could help you, you have so many burdens to carry."

"Rich father! you ought to say, with such a daughter!" returned Mr. Maynard, looking fondly at the bright-faced young girl by his side.

It was a great deal for Mr. Maynard to say, and Grace's heart thrilled with pleasure at the words. A new bond of sympathy had been formed between father and daughter. Grace felt honored that her father should have placed confidence in her, and resolved to be worthy of it. She saw too, that when she had thought him taciturn and morose, he had been inwardly worried and worn, bearing burdens that weighed heavily on him.

Mr. Maynard thought, as he turned to his writing again, "What a change there is in Grace! She thinks of every one but herself now."

Through Carl Hoffman, Ned was able to get a second-hand violin, and entered with ardor on his new pursuit. Contrary to his father's predictions he did not give it up, but kept on faithfully practising, and took real pains to improve. Grace felt well satisfied with the results of the experiment.

She had still another plan, about the success of which she felt even more anxious. She and Ethel had talked over matters, and decided to have a reading club, which should include just a few of their most intimate friends. Grace was particularly anxious to have Ned join this. When she spoke to him about it, however, he at first flatly refused. "What do I care about readings, and that sort of thing?" he said.

"But do come, just this once, Ned. Ethel sent you a special invitation; and we have refreshments afterward, and I think it will be a very pleasant evening.

Whether it was the invitation, or the prospect of refreshments, or both, it was not known. Suffice it to say that Ned concluded to go, and the appointed evening found him at the Gladwyns', in company with his sister. At first he felt somewhat like a fish out of water; but there was something so genial and unaffected in the Gladwyn circle that it was impossible not to be influenced by it, and Ned's embarrassment and shyness passed away in spite of himself. He was

somewhat surprised to find that Mr. Gladwyn was an active member of the reading circle, and took as much interest in it as any one.

After the readings were finished, and conversation became general, Mr. Gladwyn managed to have a chat with Ned, taking the opportunity to ask how he was getting on with his music. "I hope you will be able to play for us some time soon; it would add very much to the pleasure of our gatherings."

Ned felt pleased at the thought that there was some part he could take in making these evenings pass pleasantly, and resolved to practice more diligently than ever.

On their way home, Grace said, "How did you like it, Ned?"

"Oh, well enough," was the answer, somewhat carelessly given.

But, though Ned chose to appear indifferent, he had really felt keenly interested. New thoughts had been awakened; new ambitions aroused. The opinion and views of his own set did not look very well when he contrasted them with those of the circle with which he had found himself that evening. From that time on he became a regular attendant at the meetings of the reading circle, and began to take a lively interest in them. As a result some trashy literature found its way into the fire; a result which would have made Grace truly glad, if she had only known.

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CHAPTER XIII.

FANNIE WELDON.

WHILE Ethel and Grace were busy with a round
of duties and engagements, their friend, Fannie
Weldon, was passing through a very different experi-
ence.

The summer vacation had not done all for the young
student that she had hoped. Not that she did not have
a pleasant summer. It was simply delightful; but her
very enjoyment of it led her far beyond her strength.

Mrs. Lane, Fannie's aunt, was not a strong woman,
and she had by degrees come to lean on the young
girl who, ever since her mother's death, had made her
home with her uncle and aunt.

Fannie went out with her little cousins on the shore,
and took them in bathing; and on rainy days, when
their noise made their mother's head ache, she invented
games and told stories to amuse them. But there
was other work for rainy days also; for Fannie did
most of her own dressmaking, and took advantage of
the holidays to put her wardrobe in order. So she had
brought with her a good supply of sewing.

Then scarcely a week passed without a picnic, for
many of their friends came out to see them. And
there was baking to be done and other preparations to

be made ; and Fannie flew from one thing to another in a whirl of excitement, which she so thoroughly enjoyed that she never stopped to consider whether or not she was tired. A little study, of course, she must sandwich among the other things. So the bright July days passed. Then the close days of August came, and even at the sea-shore the air was heavy and warm.

Then Fannie suddenly found all work a much harder than it had been before. She had to force herself to her accustomed duties. The children bothered her, sewing worried her, study had never seemed so irksome.

At last, near the end of their stay, Fannie was taken ill. There seemed, however, nothing alarming in her illness, and her aunt was surprised when she pleaded to be taken home. "Why, child, it is only a bilious attack ; you will be better in a day or two."

But Fannie did not get better in a day or two, and when a doctor was consulted he looked serious, and advised immediate removal to her town home.

So they took her home, and the family physician was called in. Mrs. Lane was thoroughly alarmed now, for Fannie lay moaning and tossing on her bed, in a semi-conscious state. Dr. Lyons, when questioned looked grave, and said he feared it was meningitis, but that it might not be.

His fears came true. For days Fannie tossed in restless delirium, her one piteous cry being, "Take me

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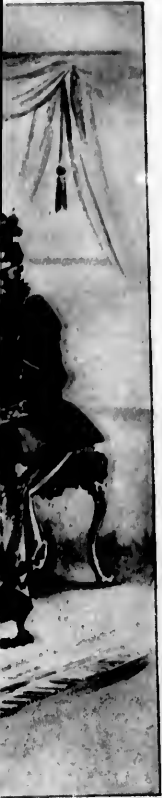
Three Girls and Their Motto.
Page 135.

home—please, take me home." For days the struggle between life and death waged fiercely; and when at length returning consciousness brought to Fannie the knowledge that life had conquered, she could almost have wished it otherwise, so weak and miserable did she feel.

It seemed so strange to be unable to do anything but to lie passive and be waited upon; to feel at every movement that she had a back, and to be so tired when people came in and talked! And then to know that all this must go on for weeks—even to be afraid, sometimes, that it might be always so. Oh, it was hard, very hard for the young girl, who only a few weeks before had looked forward with joyous anticipations to life and its duties!

Fannie said little in the presence of her aunt. She would not add to her care by complaining, but in her heart she fretted. She could not be reconciled to this strange providence.

It was a bright, lovely winter afternoon when Ethel and Grace visited their sick friend. They had often called to inquire after her, but Fannie had not been well enough to see them before. Now they were ushered into the shaded bed-room, where in a large easy-chair sat, or rather reclined, the invalid, wrapped in shawls, and supported by pillows. Could that be Fannie, so worn and white, her face bearing unmistakable traces of suffering. Yes, it was Fannie, but how changed! The tears rushed to Ethel's eyes as she



pressed the thin, white hand held out to greet her, and looked down on the face that brightened with its accustomed smile of welcome.

Mrs. Lane left the girls to themselves, knowing that they would like to have a chat together. Fannie recalled that summer afternoon when they three had sat together, and dreamed bright dreams of the future. They had not been together since.

"Do you remember, Ethel," she said, "how we talked about seeking the kingdom of God? I did think then that I would do much, so much for God, some day. And now, with a heart just as eager and as anxious for work as ever, I can do nothing; am only a burden to the very ones I fain would help. Isn't it hard? I know you would say that my friends don't think it a burden to care for me, and no one could be kinder than aunt. But I want to be doing; it is hard to lie still."

"Now don't fret, Fannie; it will only make you feel worse. You will soon be well again," said Grace.

"I know I ought not to fret; I say so to myself a dozen times a day. Yet, in fact, I have nothing else to do. I am not allowed to read or work, and I do not sleep well. What can I do but think? And is it not natural sometimes to fret. Besides, I often fear I shall never be well and strong again."

"Oh, you must not think that, Fannie. I do not wonder that you are discouraged. I know I should not be half so patient if I were in your circumstances. But

you will be better soon, I am sure," said Grace, smiling so brightly that the patient smiled a little too.

"I am telling you my discouraged feelings," said Fannie. "I don't tell them to everybody, but I felt I must tell them to you and get some help. It seems strange to me, sometimes, when I am so desirous to do good work in the world, and there is so much to be done, and such need of workers, that I should be laid aside so completely."

"There is one thing to think of, Fannie," said Ethel, "that is, that no one, sick or well, can be shut out from seeking God's kingdom; for you know that other verse says, 'The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' You can seek after those things as well as we."

Fannie, turning her large eyes thoughtfully toward Ethel, responded, "I can cultivate the passive virtues, as Mr. Clifford calls them. And they are the hardest, he says. Indeed, they are so hard to me that I often feel I cannot." There she paused; for, deep in the recesses of her heart, she heard a still small voice say, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." And she wondered whether she had any right to say, "I cannot."

Ethel, noticing the pause, and fearful of wearying her, rose to go.

"Must you go?" said Fannie.

"We have stayed long enough to-day, dear; we must not tire you. Try not to be discouraged," she

added, as she leaned over for a parting kiss. "You will do work when the right time comes, and remember that time 'will never come too late.'"

As an answer, Fannie only pressed her friend's hand tightly in her own, and smiled through her tears.

Ethel's words started new thoughts in the young invalid, and at once she formed the purpose to pray daily that she might help in the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom by her patience, faith, and love. But her faith and patience were to be yet sorely tried. As she began to gain strength she took the notion that it only required an exercise of determination on her part in order to be as well as ever.

"I have just made up my mind to be well," she said. "And I am not going to be put back by every ache and pain I feel." So she insisted on doing a little serving for her aunt; told the children stories when they came to her room on dull afternoons, and even sometimes peeped into her school books, heeding no warning of aching back or head. "I *ought* to be able to do something now," she said to herself; "and I *will*, no matter how I feel."

She kept up with so much outward show of cheerfulness that her aunt really thought her much better, and being very busy herself began to forget that Fannie had so lately been an invalid.

Suddenly the young girl was taken down again. She had to give up and lie in a darkened room, her

head aching wildly. "Oh, doctor, when shall I be well again?" she moaned.

"Never," was his reply, "unless you make up your mind to take better care of yourself in the future than you have done in the past."

Fannie could entertain no thought except that of obedience to the suggestion; yet she grew sadly discouraged.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

GRACE was much pleased, as the winter went on, to find that her plans for Ned were proving successful. He took a lively interest in his father's business, and seemed determined to make the most and the best of himself. Yet withal, Grace felt anxious, for she knew her brother was without the true safeguard of youth, since he had not given himself to God. She often tried to persuade him to go with her to prayer meeting, but always in vain.

A season of special interest came in the church; many were brought in, but Ned remained still outside, apparently not even drawing near to the kingdom of God. Grace felt disheartened; perhaps it was well that she did, for it led her to prayer and dependence on God. "And as she prayed that Christ's kingdom might come into the heart of her brother, it made her more careful to watch her own life, lest she should cast a stumbling-block in his way; and so keeping near her Saviour, she grew in humility, gentleness, and kindness from day to day.

Ned was not altogether so unimpressed as he appeared to be. There were times when he wished to be a Christian, but his careless companions had a

strong hold on him, and he avoided—he scarcely knew why—those who might have been a help to him.

It happened that spring that Shirley Dean came home for a visit. Shirley had gone away two years before to enter his uncle's dry goods establishment. He had done well in the great city, and already occupied a good position; but that was not all that could be said of him. One of the first things he did after reaching his new home was to send for his letter of dismission, and unite with the church there; and soon he became an active member. So it might be said of him that he was not simply diligent in business, but also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Shirley had had a hard winter. There had been extra work for him to do outside of his own department. He was one who did not spare himself; so it was no wonder that when spring came he was worn out. His uncle consequently gave him leave of absence, and he came home to rest.

But what had all this to do with Ned? Certainly Ned did not think when he heard that Shirley Dean was coming home that it was a matter of very much importance to him, and yet such a little thing as that was to turn the current of his life. The acquaintance between them had been slight, for Shirley was older than Ned by several years. Ned thought that two years of city life might have made Shirley forget him; so he was agreeably surprised and highly pleased to

receive a very friendly greeting when they chanced to meet.

Shirley was very much interested to hear that Ned was in his father's office; and by his kindly manner he won Ned's heart completely.

Shirley had come home to rest, but he had no wish to rest from work for the Master. His heart went out toward the unconverted youth of the town, and he proposed to the young men of the church to hold a prayer meeting among themselves. This suggestion was adopted.

The first meeting, though not large, was a good one. Hearts were stirred with the desire to do something for the salvation of others, and each one promised to try and bring another to the next meeting. Shirley himself was active in this work of bringing in others. Ned was among the first ones whom he asked. Now Ned would have said "no" to any one else, but he did not like to refuse Shirley, and promised to go almost before he knew it; then he wondered how he had come to give his consent.

Perhaps he had never felt so queerly as when he walked in the direction of the church the following Tuesday evening. It was surely not possible that he, Ned Maynard, was going to a prayer meeting. When he came near the church, he walked up and down for a time, not liking to go in; often he was on the point of turning away.

Just then Shirley came along. "Glad to see you,

Ned," he said. "Come right in. We meet in the Bible-class room." Ned followed him, and found himself in a religious meeting.

That little meeting made a deep impression on Ned's mind. The influence of it followed him, and the next Tuesday found him there again. He felt less curiosity this time as to who would take part in the service, for now his heart had room but for one earnest desire, and that was to know and experience—what these young friends seemed to possess—peace with God and joys such as the world could not give. It was not very hard in that little gathering to confess this desire. After the meeting was over, a talk with Shirley proved helpful, and that night it might have been said of Ned—"behold he prayeth."

How glad Grace would have been if she could have known; but as it was, she prayed with a faith that often wavered, a heart that sometimes fainted, because as she thought the answer did not come.

During two weeks her anxieties had been awakened afresh; for Ned seemed to have lost interest in everything, even the violin. He was absent-minded, and she knew something troubled him, but she could not find out what it was. Her heart grew fearful. Was he being led farther astray? At that thought she, with renewed earnestness, lifted up her heart to God for him. It was quite a surprise for her, therefore, when one day Miss Fairley, one of the Sunday-school teachers, said:

"I am so glad Ned is interested in religious matters!"

"I did not know it," said Grace.

"Why, yes; he rose in the prayer meeting which the boys have among themselves, the other night, Fred told me."

"I am so glad," said Grace. "Ned is so reticent, he never even told me he went to the meetings."

At first Grace felt that her brother might have told her of his feelings. But she soon reasoned herself out of that. Ned was naturally reserved, she knew; and if he sought and found help from others, why need she mind, so long as the prayer of her heart was answered. She wisely resolved that she would let Ned speak to her first. She felt sure he would tell her of his interest when he was ready.

The following Tuesday evening Grace was seated at the piano, her fingers wandering idly over the keys, when Ned came in and stood by her. There was a gladness in his face such as his sister had never seen there before. Her eyes met his questioningly; then she said:

"Have you not some good news to tell me to-night?"

"Yes, Grace," he answered. "I have given my heart to the Saviour, and I am going to try and serve him faithfully."

"Oh, Ned," said Grace, joyfully, "it seems almost too good to be true. And yet I know it is true; God

has answered my prayers, though I have often been unbelieving. Now we can walk in the Christian way together.

"Yes," said Ned, "though you are far ahead of me, for I am but just beginning. And, Grace, I have been thinking that I tried you very much oftentimes. I am afraid I used to try and provoke you just because I knew you were trying to be good. Will you forgive me?"

"Don't say a word, Ned; if you only knew how often I have wished I was a better sister to you—!"

"I am sure there could not be a better sister," replied Ned. "Do you know, Grace, I used to think you were not a Christian; but when you gave up going to that ball at the Leslies' I felt sure you had the real thing; for I knew you were fond of gaieties. And since then I have thought more about religious things than I ever did before."

At that moment Grace felt how small had been her self-denial, how great her reward!

CHAPTER XV.

ETHEL'S VISIT.

THE month of April had come, and Ethel was looking forward with very pleasant anticipations to spending a few weeks with her aunt and cousins in New York. To one who had lived all her life in a quiet little town, and who had never seen a large city, such a visit seemed quite an event. Still, as the time drew near, Ethel almost wished she was not going. She wondered if she could content herself for eight long weeks away from her own happy family circle. A dozen times a day she caught up little Clarence, and hugged and kissed him, declaring she did not know what she would do without him. As to the children, they thought that to part with Ethel for so long a time was dreadful.

It happened very fortunately for Ethel, that some acquaintances were going to New York early in April, and it was arranged that she should travel with them.

The day fixed for her departure came at last, and she was accompanied to the train by a merry party, including, besides her brothers and sisters, Grace and Aggie Maynard. So many last messages as there were to be given! Such good-byes and hand shakings, with merry words interspersed! Such charges

to be sure and write soon ! Then Mr. Gladwyn came with tickets and baggage checks, and Ethel was soon comfortably seated in the car with her traveling companions, Mr. and Mrs. Hardanger, and Miss Brant, Mrs. Hardanger's sister. A few more words, a chorus of good-byes, as the engine bell rang, then the train glided out from the station, the familiar faces vanished, and a feeling of loneliness came over Ethel as she thought how long it would be before she would see them all again.

However, Ethel could not indulge such feelings, for she must converse with Miss Brant, who sat beside her ; and then the rapidly changing scenes continually presented as the train sped along, quite turned her thoughts. She was fond of railway travel, and did not become weary as the day wore on.

Just as twilight began to gather, the train rolled into the station at New York, and Ethel began to feel the nervousness and excitement natural to a young and inexperienced traveler. The ceaseless clanging and clashing and rumbling that reverberated through the building as trains passed in and out ; the restless tramp of feet, and the hum of voices as passengers went to and fro, all served to bewilder her ; but outwardly she appeared as calm as though coming to New York was a matter of every-day experience. It was, however, a great relief when Mr. Hardanger remarked :

"There is Mr. Wyndham." And in a few moments

Ethel had met her cousin. Quiet, grave, with a dignified manner, yet withal very kind, always knowing, apparently, the right thing to say and do,—such was Clarence Wyndham. He was head of the Wyndham household; for his father had been dead for some years.

“So this is Ethel,” he said. “I am very glad to see you. Come this way; the carriage is waiting.” And he led the way out of the bustling station into a quiet side street. “I should hardly have known you,” he continued. “You were but a child when I last saw you. Did you have a pleasant journey?”

“Yes, indeed, I enjoyed it thoroughly. And now, I suppose,” she added, as she seated herself in the carriage, “I shall have my first glimpse of New York.”

“Yes, although it is getting too dusky for you to see much now; but before many days are over you will, I hope, have a better acquaintance with it. Laura and I are looking forward to showing you all the sights.”

Lights were gleaming out here and there when at last they drew up before the Wyndham home.

“Here we are at last,” said Clarence. “Welcome home.”

Ethel was speedily ushered into a pleasant, cheerful sitting room, where an open fire gave a cosy aspect to everything. Here gentle Mrs. Wyndham made her feel at home at once by her kindly welcome; while

Laura, the only daughter, a bright, gay, and impulsive girl, insisted on removing her cousin's wraps, saying as she did so: "You must come to the fire and warm yourself. These spring evenings are so chilly."

Ethel was not at all sorry to do so, while she answered her aunt's inquiries about her home circle, and entertained Laura with some of the incidents of her journey.

"And now, my dear," said Mrs. Wyndham, after they had talked awhile, "if you feel thoroughly warm, I will ring for Mary to show you to your room."

A pleasant-looking girl appeared in answer to Mrs. Wyndham's summons, and conducted Ethel up a broad flight of stairs to a spacious and elegantly furnished apartment, and then asked if there was anything she could do for her. "No, thank you," replied Ethel, who was accustomed to wait on herself, and felt that she would much rather be alone.

Then she began to consider what to wear that evening. Her wardrobe was not extensive, but she had the satisfaction of knowing that it was in good taste; so she soon made her decision. As she glanced around at the elegant appointments of her room, and reflected that this city home was very different in many respects from her own, she thought: "I wonder if I shall do everything just right?" And instinctively she began to feel the trepidation so natural to her. But

a second thought came: "I can try and please Christ in everything." And that thought brought an inward strength that banished all vain and foolish fears.

Ethel found the days passing very pleasantly. Of course there was much to see, and her aunt and cousins took her to every place of interest, and did all they could to make her visit an enjoyable one. It was scarcely possible, however, for her to be long among them without meeting difficulties; for the Wyndhams had views with regard to some things quite unlike those held by Ethel. And one day, the following week, she undertook to solve one of those difficulties, in a way that would satisfy her own conscience and at the same time gratify her friends. It was by no means an easy matter.

That morning, at breakfast, Clarence had mentioned that a noted actress was to appear at one of the best theatres.

"Isn't that fortunate!" exclaimed Laura. "I am so glad, Ethel, that you will have an opportunity to see and hear her." It did not occur to Laura that her cousin might have scruples about going to such amusements.

Ethel ventured to say, somewhat faintly, perhaps, that she did not go to theatres.

"I suppose," said Laura, "you have nothing worth going to in that line in Melvin. Now that you are here, you must not lose the opportunity of hearing and seeing all you can."

Ethel went on to explain, not without some effort, that she did not go to the theatre because she did not consider it was right to do so.

"Why," said Laura, "do you really think it any harm to go?" And Clarence put in:

"We only go to the very best, of course; and I am sure you would enjoy it. So you had better lay aside your scruples for once, Ethel, and go with us on Wednesday."

Laura took up the conversation, and as she enlarged on the pleasure of seeing really good acting, Ethel felt strongly tempted to go with them; and before she left the breakfast room she had promised to consider the matter.

"And remember, Ethel, there must be only one answer, and that must be 'yes,' or I shall be dreadfully disappointed," said Laura. And Clarence added:

"I am sure I hope your decision will be favorable."

Ethel passed out, and went to her room with a troubled heart. What might she do, what ought she to do about the matter? The question of inclination she quickly put aside, for she had always been taught to think but little of her own wishes. The desire to please her cousins, who kindly wished to give her all the pleasure they could, weighed more with her. "It surely could not harm me for once," she thought. "And as to the matter of influence, that certainly cannot signify, since no one here knows me. But,

Then, what is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong, no matter where we are and who is influenced thereby. Dear me, what a puzzle it all is! How I wish I could go and ask mother about it! Yet I know she would say that I must decide for myself."

Ethel thought of prayer, and almost instinctively began to repeat the Lord's Prayer. But when she came to the petition, "Thy kingdom come," she stopped. "It is of no use for me to pray that," she said to herself, "unless I am determined to do what I can to bring about its fulfillment. I must place myself on the side of all that is helping to bring about that kingdom. I must not put the least grain of influence on the side of that which hinders. Now, is the theatre helping or hindering that kingdom?" Ah, there was but one answer to that question; and in that moment Ethel saw clearly, and once for all, what must be her attitude toward all worldly amusements.

Her decision being made, but one thing troubled her; and that was having to decline her cousins' proffered kindness. The way, however, was smoothed considerably for her. When Clarence met her later in the day, he said:

"About that matter of going to the theatre, Ethel, do not let our feelings or wishes in any way interfere with your doing just what you think to be right."

Ethel appreciated the thoughtful kindness which helped materially to relieve her of her embarrassment.

"Thank you, Clarence," she said. "I cannot feel it to be right to go."

And then she told him very simply her reasons for declining to go to the theatre, namely: That as a member of Christ's kingdom she could not lend the slightest influence or encouragement to that which was hindering it.

Clarence looked thoughtful. "I have long supposed myself to be a member of that kingdom," he said, "yet I am afraid I never thought it meant anything much excepting living a moral life, and giving to the support of the church." Then he added: "I suppose that principle of yours would apply to many other things."

"Yes," said Ethel. "I think it would help one to decide many difficult questions."

Clarence said no more; but into a receptive heart a new thought had entered, and who could tell what fruit that little germ of truth might bear?

It was harder for Ethel to tell Laura her reason for not going to the theatre than it had been to tell Clarence; and it was more difficult for Laura than for her brother to see and appreciate it.

Laura was a perfect contrast to her brother in disposition. She was gay, and fond of all amusements and pleasures, and often laughed at old "sober-sides," as she persisted in calling Clarence, declaring that she would not for the world be so indifferent to all the attractions of society. Clarence was, however, but

little affected by his sister's lively sallies, and always had an answer ready for her. Though not particularly fond of society, he did not avoid it, but conformed to all its usages with great exactness, because he believed it to be the proper thing for him to do.

On the previous Sunday, Ethel had heard the announcement of the Wednesday evening prayer meeting with a feeling of pleasure, and had determined to go. Now, when Wednesday came, she spoke of it to her aunt, who said:

"Certainly, my dear. William shall drive you there; and you shall not go alone. I will go with you."

Ethel was equally surprised and pleased to have her aunt accompany her.

"It is so many years since I went to prayer meeting," said Mrs. Wyndham, as the carriage stopped at the church door, "that I believe you will feel more at home than I will, Ethel; so, after all, you will have to lead the way. Oh, there is Mr. Charlton. How fortunate! He will show us to a seat."

If Mrs. Wyndham felt that all eyes were turned toward her, she showed no consciousness of it, as she followed Mr. Charlton to a seat, and accepted with her own pleasant smile and thanks a hymn book from some one sitting near.

But, oh, the rush of thoughts that came over her as she sat there! Memories of by-gone days came back freshly and vividly to her mind. Ah, where

now were the ardor and devotion of those early days! She was awakened from her reverie by the entrance of the minister.

The short address that evening proved peculiarly helpful both to Mrs. Wyndham and Ethel. The speaker's remarks were founded on Mark 8: 22-26. Very vividly he pictured the scene: The poor blind man, led to Jesus by friends. The compassionate Saviour taking the afflicted man by the hand, and himself leading him through the crowded, narrow streets out to the quiet fields, and there giving him sight. What words of love that poor, ignorant man must have heard as he walked hand in hand with the Great Teacher! How the eyes of his soul must have been opened! "Just so," the speaker went on, "we cannot see the way before us; we often know not the right way; but our blessed Lord and Master, pitying us in our weakness and blindness, takes us by the hand and leads us."

The hymn, "He Leadeth Me," was sung, and then, one after another told how they had been led, often by ways they had not known, but ever in right ways. Ethel added her word. She felt at home, though all around her were strangers; for were they not members of the same heavenly kingdom, and serving the same King?

Mrs. Wyndham said but little as they drove homeward, yet while the two sat together in the library after their return home, she said:

"I used to think, Ethel, that your mother did not train her children for society, sufficiently; that for their sakes she ought to have gone more into the world. Now I see that it was I who made the mistake. I would that my children had been at the meeting to-night, instead of where they were. You would scarcely think it, but once I was a regular attendant at prayer and social meetings, and loved them. My marriage brought me into a circle more or less worldly, though holding a form of religion, and gradually the world gained possession of my thoughts, my time, and my affections. But after my husband was taken from me, then in my sense of loneliness and desolation I realized how little the world could do to comfort me, or fill the aching void; and now I wish that my children had that in their hearts which would give abiding happiness. I often think that if I could but see Laura an active, working Christian, how happy I should be; how much anxiety I should be saved. Clarence is all a son could be, I am sure, but he talks sometimes as though he scarcely believed in Christianity. He is very intimate with a young man who is quite skeptical, and I often fear for him. Ah, Ethel, you do not know a mother's anxieties. If I had to live my life over again, I would do differently. Now it is too late."

"No, dear aunt," said Ethel. "Do not think that. It is even as we heard to-night. Jesus is leading you."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Wyndham. "Oh, if I could be sure of that I would not feel so sad."

"I am sure he is." And she added, softly: "I believe, if we ask him, he will lead your dear ones too."

Mrs. Wyndham's eyes were full of tears. "Dear child," she said, "God grant it may be so."

Ethel felt happy and glad that night. She had been drawn nearer to her Saviour; for one cannot give up anything for Christ's sake without being drawn sensibly near to him.

Clarence scanned his cousin with a searching glance as she entered the breakfast room the next morning. But he saw in her countenance no sign of regret, not even when Laura exclaimed:

"Oh, Ethel, you ought to have been with us last night. You do not know how much you missed."

"In my opinion, Cousin Ethel did not miss much," her brother responded. "Neither the play nor the acting came up to my expectations."

"Well, I am not much of a critic. The dresses were fine," remarked Laura.

"And then you saw Mr. La Blanc," said Clarence.

"Was he there?" said Mrs. Wyndham, quickly. And Ethel noted the anxiety in her tone.

"Yes, mother; he occupied the box next to ours. Hence Laura's enjoyment of the play."

"You are simply absurd, Clarence," said Laura. But she blushed as she spoke.

"Now, Ethel," said Clarence, "it is time that you should give an account of yourself. I should judge from your looks that you had the best of it, after all. You were at prayer meeting, I believe."

"I did enjoy my evening very much. And I think aunt did too."

"Why, mother, were you there!" exclaimed Clarence, in surprise. "What is going to happen? I believe Cousin Ethel will revolutionize this household yet."

"I do not wonder, my son, at your surprise," said Mrs. Wyndham, gently. "I have felt since last evening that had I been more regular in my attendance at such meetings, it would have been better for my household. I fear that too long you have seen in me only the form of religion." There were tears in her eyes as she spoke, and silence fell on all.

It was broken at last by Laura, who said:

"By the by, Ethel, Mr. Fulton was at the play last night. He comes from Melvin, I believe, and has been in the city only a short time."

Ethel was only slightly acquainted with Mr. Fulton; but she knew him as one who, standing aloof from church-membership himself, criticized professing Christians severely. She felt thankful that she had not yielded to the temptation to attend the theatre, and thus add another to his list of inconsistent Christians.

When Ethel and Laura were alone that morning,

Laura said: "It is perfectly ridiculous, the way mother feels about Mr. La Blanc. She can't bear to have me to speak to him, I believe. Did you notice how she looked this morning, when Clarence mentioned him?"

"But, Laura, you would not encourage a friendship your mother didn't approve?"

"Oh, I don't encourage it, particularly, but I can't help talking to him when I have the chance. I think he is perfectly splendid; but mother has heard things against him, and she is so frightened that they become too much interested in him. The very idea of such a thing is absurd! Why, he is not thirty—ever so much older than I. I would marry him, even if he should ask me. I am not in love enough with him for that."

But girls do not always mean all they say, and from the way Laura spoke, Ethel thought that she cared more for Mr. La Blanc than she wished to confess; and as she looked at the bright, happy young girl before her, an anxiety akin to that Mrs. Wyndham felt sprang up within her heart.

"I believe you think more of him than you care to acknowledge," said Ethel; "but if your mother has reason to disapprove of him, do you not think it is a great mistake to allow yourself to become so interested in him?"

"Yes," said Laura, doubtfully. "But I think mother is mistaken. She has a prejudice against him,

and is ready to believe all she hears; and you know it does not do to believe everything."

"I know that," said Ethel, "but I think it is more than likely that the reports which have reached your mother are true. And, Laura, no one could be more anxious for the real happiness of a daughter than her mother; particularly such a mother as you have."

Laura made no reply for a few moments. Then she said: "Anyway, mother has herself to thank for it; for she was very anxious that I should go to Mrs. De Lacy's ball, and that was where I first met Mr. La Blanc. I did not want to go at that time. I do not know what came over me. A religious fit, I suppose. However, I went. Mother said it would never do to refuse."

Ethel was silent. She was thinking how hard it was to undo past mistakes. She now understood her aunt's hopeless, discouraged feeling. But Ethel's was a cheerful, hopeful nature, and she remembered the blessed words: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God; with God all things are possible." And henceforth she made it her constant prayer that God would lead her cousin to himself.

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CHAPTER XVI.

NEW SCENES AND NEW FRIENDS.

THE days passed quickly and pleasantly, and Ethel felt really sorry when the time came to leave, though she was glad to feel that she would soon be at home again.

On her way home she was to stop at Slateville, a large manufacturing town, and spend two or three weeks there with the Carters, her mother's cousins.

It was a bright morning when Ethel bade good-bye to New York. Clarence Wyndham accompanied her to the train, and saw her comfortably seated in a parlor car. A ride of a few hours brought her to her destination, where she was met by Adelaide, the eldest daughter of the Carter family, who gave her a hearty welcome.

Ethel found the household to which she now came very different from that which she had just left. There was nothing of the repose here that characterized the Wyndham home; all was bustle and stir. There was always a great amount of work on hand, and it seemed trebled by the fact that the Carters treated their guests with the account not only of what they were doing, but also of what they had done and what they intended to do. Still it was a very

bright family circle, and all were as kind-hearted as could be.

Their father, whom Ethel had never seen, was a sea captain, at present away on a long voyage. Mrs. Carter was a thin, nervous little woman, who managed to get through a good deal of work in spite of much chronic ill health. Adelaide, the eldest daughter, had a quick, business-like way; indeed, Ethel found that she was the business manager of the family. Her dress was severely plain, and tended to a masculine style. Next to Adelaide came Fay, a clever girl, very entertaining and thoroughly capable; and then Zella, whom Fay introduced to Ethel as our "pretty sister, whom we allow to sit in the parlor while we do the housework." But though the two sisters teased Zella considerably because she did not like to wash dishes for fear of spoiling her hands, they nevertheless owed much to her taste. It was Zella who planned the dresses, trimmed the hats, and made the house pretty with simple and inexpensive decorations.

Then there was George, the only brother, who was younger than his sisters. It seemed a little singular that in this stirring, bustling family the boy should be the quietest of all; but so it was. George was quiet and slow—provokingly slow, his sisters declared. He, it seemed, took after the Carter side of the family.

"It is too bad!" said Adelaide to Ethel. "If George only had half the energy there is in us girls, he might amount to something; as it is, he never

will. Poor fellow! I do not know what we would do without him, either."

Ethel had not been with them long before she came to the conclusion that the sisters would indeed very much miss their brother. He was always ready to do errands for them, as well as to help them carry out their plans; and he had a quiet perseverance which led him, when a thing was committed to him, to leave no stone unturned until it was accomplished. In fact, he was one on whom they could depend. Though not particularly quick at his studies, Ethel found in conversing with him that he had a thorough grasp of those subjects in which he took most interest. In fact, a little observation soon convinced her that he was not wanting in force of character, but appeared so to his mother and sisters simply because they could not comprehend energy that was manifested in any other way than their own.

This was just the place to find out the best way of doing things, and Ethel gained many valuable hints from her busy cousins; while she, on her part, took a lively interest in all their plans. It was the busy season with them—the time of year when there is much to be done within the house as well as without. The girls had a good deal of sewing on hand, and, of course, Ethel, having just come from New York, was supposed to know all about the latest styles; and they continually consulted her respecting the best way of making up their summer dresses.

"There is one person, Ethel, I should like to have you meet while you are here," said Mrs. Carter, as they sat at work one morning; "and that is Mrs. Allan. I am sure you would like her."

"Yes, indeed, you would," echoed Ada and Fay.

And Fay added: "I want to see her about the sewing circle the young people are getting up, as they have asked me to be leader, or president, and I wish to get some hints. This is her day for receiving callers. So, Ethel, you and I can go this very afternoon. I'll introduce you as an active church worker, and that will be enough to make you friends at once."

"Oh, pray, don't call me an active worker!" exclaimed Ethel. "I do not know half so much about working as you do here. I simply do what I can."

"Well, no one can do any more," returned Fay. "You need not be afraid, little cousin, that you are going to meet any one that will quite overawe you, and make you feel very small. Margaret Allan isn't that kind of a person. She is just as nice as she can be."

"Did I see her on Sunday?" inquired Ethel.

"No, she does not attend the church on the hill, but is a member of Harlem Street Church—a mission interest."

"You know, Ethel," said Mrs. Carter, "when Mr. Allan brought home his city bride, we all said she certainly never would be contented to attend Harlem Street Church, to which Mr. Allan belonged, and in

which he had always taken quite an interest ; but we were mistaken. His young wife sent for her letter of dismission and joined the mission church, and entered heartily into its work. Many persons were surprised that she did not come at least once a day to the church on the hill ; but Mrs. Allan felt that she had been called to work in the other."

"It is just principle all through with her," said Fay.

"Yes," said Ada, "and it has made such a difference in that church."

"Why, of course, it did," said her mother. "Mrs. Allan took right hold of the work, and was thoroughly social with the people ; and made it her church home, not in name merely, but in reality."

Naturally, Ethel felt quite an interest in one of whom she had heard so much, and looked forward with pleasure to seeing her.

There was, as Fay had said, nothing in Mrs. Allan to overawe one. Kindly gray eyes, that shone out beneath a noble brow, a pleasant smile, a genial manner,—these were the first things that engaged attention. One glance into that face, and Ethel felt drawn to her ; and equally was the mature woman attracted to the young girl ; for kindred souls are ever thus drawn to one another.

There were other callers there, and after the introduction, while the others were conversing, Ethel had an opportunity to take mental notes of the surround-

ings. The first thing that impressed her was the simplicity with which the room was furnished, and its homelike air. There was no attempt at display; indeed, much of the charm of the room lay in little touches such as might be within the ability of any one to make. A vine trained over the arched doors, a pretty flowering plant on one little table, and a few flowers in a vase on another, with other things, showed a room not fashioned after some prevailing style, nor one that was a mixture of three or four different styles; but a homelike room, expressing the individuality of the owner. All this Ethel observed before the other callers rose to take leave; after that, she became so much interested in Mrs Allan that she forgot all else.

"What do you think of her?" said Fay, after they had left the house, and were on their homeward way.

"I think she is simply charming," said Ethel.

"That is what every one thinks. I always ask people who meet her for the first time what is the secret of her charm. Now I am going to ask you that question."

Ethel thought a moment, and then answered: "Don't you think, Fay, it is because she is so interested in others and in everything that concerns them, and seems not to think of herself?"

"That is a good explanation," said Fay. "Now I shall begin to act upon the hint it contains, and from

this time forward aim to show a great interest in other people."

"Ah! but don't forget that the interest must be real, not seeming," said Ethel. "But there, I need not say anything to you, for I know you take a real interest in others."

"Such as I have may be real enough, yet I take a vast deal more interest in myself than in anybody else," said Fay, honestly.

"We are all pretty much alike in that respect."

"Yet some do forget themselves. I wonder how they do it?" questioned Fay.

"Is it not because they study how they can best serve Christ? Because they are so much taken up with seeking to bring about his kingdom on earth that they have no time to think about themselves?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Fay. But though she assented to it, the truth did but pass into one ear and out of the other. It had no especial meaning to her; was not a light shining on her way and making it clear. Perhaps she was not ready for it.

But with Ethel, the truth she had thus tried to express to another became clearer to herself than ever before, and consequently more helpful.

In the days that followed, a friendship was formed between Mrs. Allan and Ethel which had a molding influence on all the after life of the latter. Possessed of ample means, Mrs. Allan used it not for her own pleasure, but for the good of

those around her. The young people of the Bible class, the literary circle, and the missionary society were often entertained in her pleasant home, and there many of them received their first aspirations after that which is noblest and best in life. Many changes were made too in the mission church, and it no longer appeared so unattractive as it did when Mrs. Allan first saw it.

Some account of those first experiences Ethel gleaned from her friend as they were talking together one day about modes of church work.

Ethel remarked: "The contrast must have seemed great to you when you first came, between your own church in the city, where you had so many advantages, and this little mission church. I wonder, almost, that you did not unite with the older church on the hill, where you would have found yourself in many respects in more congenial surroundings."

"I was, indeed, strongly tempted to do so," replied Mrs. Allan, "but you know, dear, that Mr. Allan belonged to this church and took a great interest in it, and I resolved before I came, that it should be my church home too, and that I would devote my energies to its work. But I never shall forget my first Sunday at Harlem Street. I could have cried, it made me so homesick. I had been used to a beautiful church edifice, fine music, excellent appointments, an inspiring ministry, and fellow-workers who were at once devoted and refined Christians.

The building in which I then for the first time worshiped, was to my eyes plain and unattractive; it was not even well kept. The little organ was squeaky, the singing poor, and the congregation seemed apathetic.

"I had been so heroic before coming to Slateville, and had resolved to work in just the corner of the vineyard in which I was placed. But when I reached home that morning I said to my husband, 'We must attend somewhere else, at least once a day, for I cannot stand this.' He turned a grave, surprised look on me, and said, 'Why, Margie, I did not expect that from you.' I felt rebuked. How easy it had been to talk! How hard it was to practice! I began to wonder what sort of a Christian I was. I fought the battle out that day. It was harder than ever I had imagined; but I have never regretted my decision, and Harlem Street Church is very precious to me now."

As Ethel looked into the bright, happy face of her friend, she knew that she would never regret that decision; nay, rather, she would be filled with gladness when she should hear the King say, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me."

The day came at last when Ethel was to part from her kind and hospitable friends and return to her home, from which it seemed to her she had been absent months instead of weeks. It was with a thrill

of gladness that she thought of meeting all the dear ones again.

Her journey was not to be altogether a lonely one. It so happened that she had for her companions for a part of the way, Dr. Somerville and his wife, whose brief visit the previous summer had filled her with such dismay. She did not feel at all afraid of them now; and the journey by steamer was very delightful in their company.

After a while they had an addition to their little party. At one stopping place Dr. Somerville espied among the passengers coming on board a young man of his acquaintance. Frank Raynor, that was the young man's name, was an active worker in a church over which Dr. Somerville, until lately, had been pastor. They were mutually glad to meet, and, of course, the doctor brought him forward to join their little circle. To say the truth, Ethel felt sorry at first; naturally reserved, it was always an effort to her to talk to strangers, and she could not help wishing that Mr. Raynor had happened to be going that way some other day.

Mr. Raynor, on the contrary, perhaps because he was of a different temperament, did not seem at all sorry that the doctor and his wife were accompanied by a young lady; and he kept up a lively conversation in which Ethel soon became interested. She found herself thinking the new accession to their group quite a pleasant one.

It happened that Mr. Raynor found out that they had a mutual acquaintance, a young man who had attended school when Ethel did, and who was now studying in Germany. This young man was an intimate friend of Mr. Raynor's, and corresponded with him regularly. Of course, these circumstances naturally made a subject of conversation interesting to both. Mr. Raynor recollected that he had some letters from him in his pocket giving graphic descriptions of life in Germany. So he produced them, and read extracts from them; and then the conversation drifted into a discussion of foreign countries in general, and Germany in particular.

"Dear me, how quickly the time has passed!" said Mr. Raynor, as the afternoon drew toward its close. "I usually find these steamboat trips rather tedious, but thanks to my pleasant company, this one has proved quite the reverse."

Then good Dr. Somerville, having left them to themselves, returned; and soon they reached their destination. Here Ethel had to take the train for Melvin, and so parted from her fellow-travelers.

A few hours more, and she was home again; and then such a welcome as she received! It was little wonder that Ethel felt herself that night to be the happiest girl in all the world.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE INVALID.

IT was late in the afternoon of a perfect day in June when a carriage might have been seen coming slowly along the road to Long View. The only occupants, besides the driver, were two ladies, one of whom was evidently an invalid, for she was cushioned in shawls and pillows, and her pale face wore that look of languor and weariness which tells so plainly of weakness and suffering.

It was a fair scene that lay spread out before them. Stretching away on either side were fields covered with the bright, fresh green of early summer. Daisies and buttercups sprang up everywhere by the roadside. Along the way it was wondered who could be going thus early in the season to Long View. But down in the little hamlet it was well known that Mrs. Lane and her invalid niece were coming to Woodbine Cottage; for Mary, the good-natured maid-servant, had been there through the previous week getting everything in readiness, and that morning she and the children had come down by train, while Mrs. Lane accompanied Fanny in a carriage, as the latter was not yet sufficiently strong to travel by train.

A turn in the road brought the occupants of the carriage in sight of the sea, and in a few moments they drew up in front of Woodbine Cottage. The driver lifted out Fannie tenderly, carried her into the house and laid her down on the broad, comfortable lounge, in what had been the sitting room the year previous, but which was to be Fannie's room this summer.

Fannie lay on the couch, looking out on the familiar scene and contrasting, as she did so, her present condition with the life and energy she had felt a year before. It was little wonder that such thoughts filled her with sadness. Just then her aunt said cheerily:

"Doesn't everything look natural, Fannie? Not a thing is changed. It seems but yesterday since we left it all."

It was the last drop making the full cup overflow. Fannie had hard work to keep back the tears and steady her voice, as she answered:

"Yes, everything looks natural."

"You are tired," said Mrs. Lane, noticing the quiver in her voice. "I will go and get something for you to take, and then you must rest;" and Mrs. Lane hurried away to prepare a lunch for her patient.

Fannie was glad to be left alone for a while. She looked out over the dancing, blue waters, far out on the distant horizon where a sail gleamed white in the sunlight, and thought how, but a few months before, such beauty would have thrilled every nerve and

fibre of her being with delight. Now she was almost too weak and weary to look at it. "Nothing changed," she repeated to herself; "why, everything is changed to me. It seems but yesterday since we left; to me it seems an age. I can scarcely realize that I am the same being who went in and out so gayly last summer."

And with this thought Fannie gave up, and had a good cry, only for a few minutes, however, for through her tears she saw the children coming up from the shore. "I must not give way any longer," she said, "I must have a cheerful face for the happy, little darlings." So slipping off the sofa, she bathed her face.

She had only just time to settle herself again on the lounge, when her aunt came in with a little tray on which were daintily set out the needed refreshments for the invalid. If Mrs. Lane saw traces of tears on the young girl's face she was wise enough not to say anything about it. She gave a lively account of how Mary and the children had passed the day. "I told the children," she added, "that they were not to come in here till you felt strong enough to see them."

Fannie felt inwardly thankful to her aunt for her thoughtfulness. By the time she had finished her lunch, however, she felt quite able to see her little cousins.

They came in, eager to show her the shells they

had picked up, and to tell her of a lovely place where she could sit and watch all their games.

"And will oo play wiv us, and build sand towers like oo did last year," piped in curly-headed little Amy.

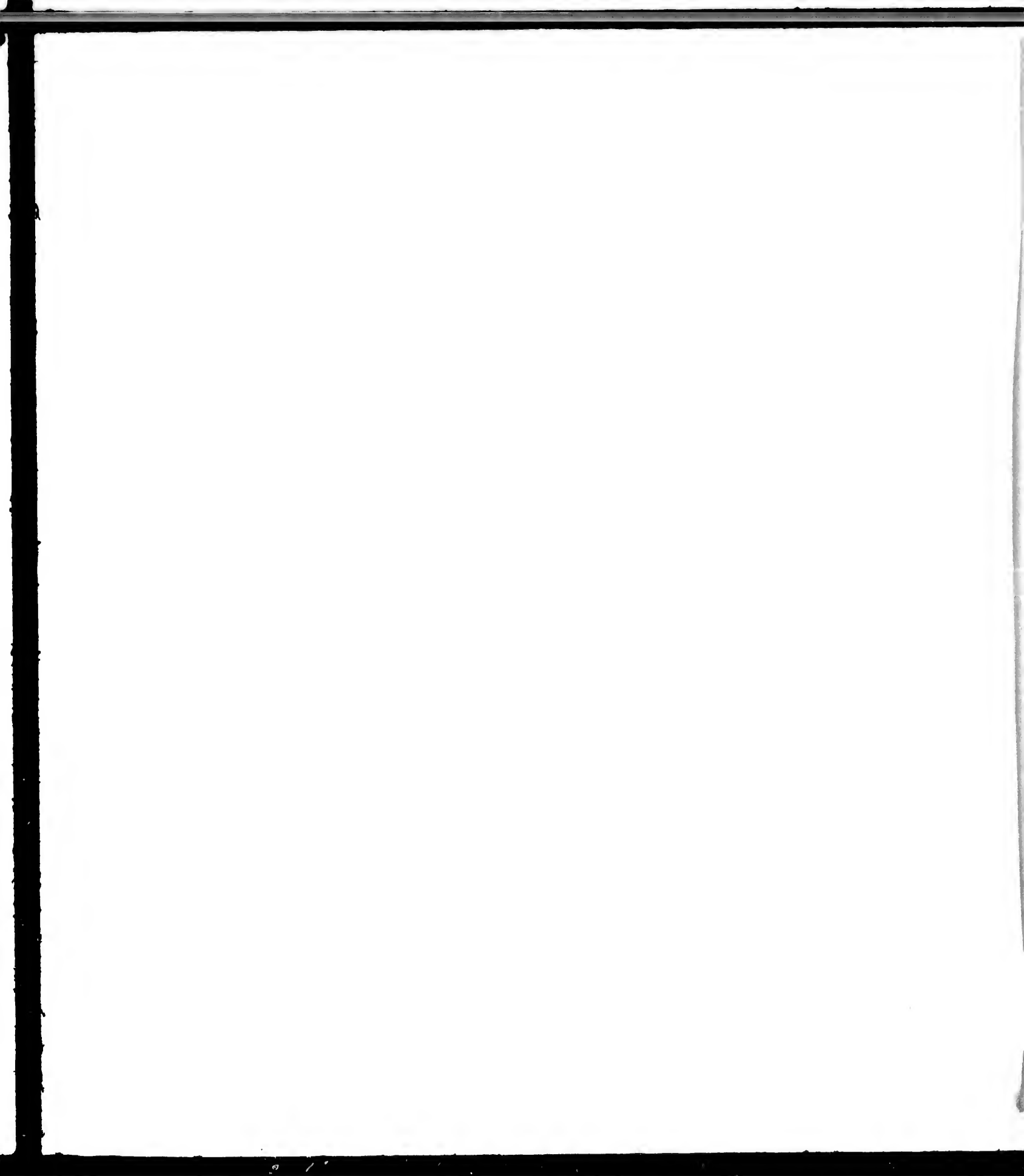
"No, darling, Cousin Fannie can't play with you; but I can watch you playing, and that will be just as good."

"We went in bathing," broke in Jesse. "We went out ever so far."

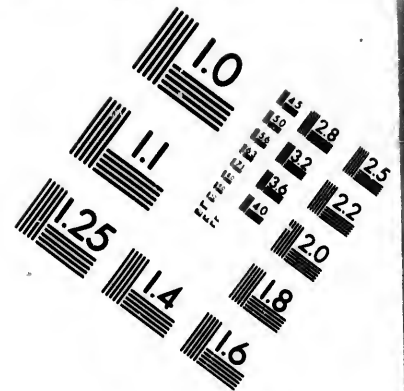
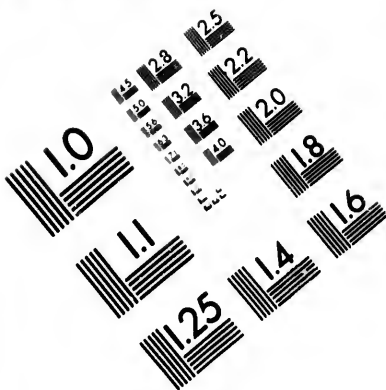
"Oh, yes," chimed in six-year-old Harold, "I went away out, where the water was deep. Lennie Smith is going to teach me to swim. I can swim now, I guess—almost," he added, a little doubtful whether he really had acquired this accomplishment.

We never make an effort to go out of ourselves and enter into the joys of others without reaping a reward. And so when a little later the tea bell rang, and the children trooped away to the dining room, and once more Fannie was left to quietness, there was a bright look on her face, and a feeling of peace in her heart as she gazed again on the tranquil scene before her, over which the quiet light of evening was falling.

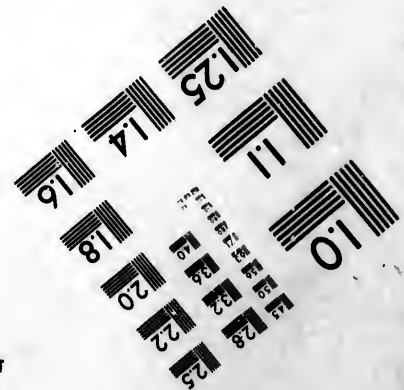
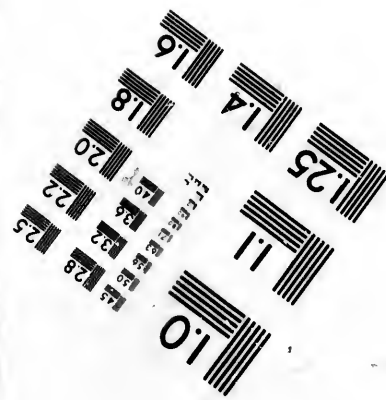
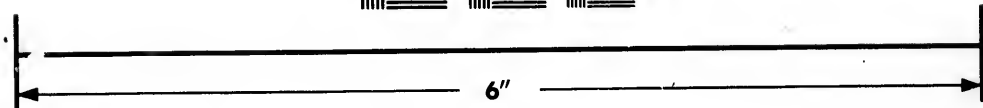
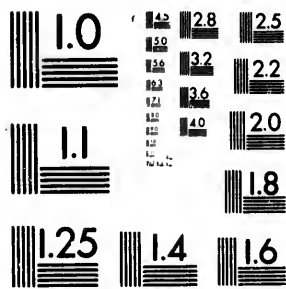
She had lost health and youthful gaiety, yet a voice seemed to whisper in her ear, "there remains something better." Had she not always been striving after the "best things"? Yet the "best things" must be those that endure. Health and earthly joys







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she knew were fleeting, but "now abideth faith, hope, love"; the consciousness that her life afforded ample room for the exercise of these virtues brought with it calm confidence and rest of soul. "Though I may be always an invalid," she murmured softly, "I shall still be able to seek after the 'best things'—to seek that kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The sunlight had faded from the scene. In the eastern heavens the rising moon grew momentarily brighter, till it flooded the earth with its mild radiance, and cast a shining pathway over the restless waters. Weary with the day's journey, the young girl sank into quiet slumber. In her heart there was great peace, of which the repose that brooded over nature was but a faint emblem; even the peace of those who love God's law, and "whom nothing can offend."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A LESSON OF HOPE.

ONE bright, sunny morning, a few days after the Lanes had arrived at Woodbine Cottage, Fannie was sitting in an arm-chair by the front door, reading, when she heard the garden gate click, and looking up saw a lady, a stranger, coming in. Fannie's first impulse was to run into the house, for since her illness she had a great dread of meeting strangers. But she instantly reflected that the lady would be at the door before she could disengage herself from her shawls and wrappings; so she concluded that it was better to sit there and face the ordeal. It was such a very pleasant face that met hers, however, her dread melted away at once.

"Miss Weldon, I believe," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Allan, and your next-door neighbor for the summer. I have been wanting to call on you, and seeing you sitting out here this morning, there seemed to be a good opportunity to run in and make your acquaintance; though indeed I feel as though I was acquainted with you; for I have heard so much of you from your friend and mine, Ethel Gladwyn."

At the mention of Ethel's name, Fannie felt at ease, and said: "Then you are the Mrs. Allan whom Ethel

met at Slateville. I remember that she spoke of you, and at the time I wished I could see you, and know you too; and now my wish is fulfilled. I think I may regard that as a favorable omen for the beginning of my sojourn here; may I not?"

"I cannot say," replied Mrs. Allan, laughing. "You may live to regret your wish; however I certainly hope that will not be the case. What delightful weather we are having here! You must feel stronger already."

"I think I do. At any rate, I hope I am better."

Then Mrs. Allan began to ask questions about Long View, making inquiries concerning the different walks and drives. Fannie grew interested, and described them with considerable animation.

Mrs. Lane joined them, and soon they were conversing together as easily as if they had known one another for years.

"Why, I had no idea I had been here so long," said Mrs. Allan, glancing at her watch. "I am afraid I have wearied you," she added, turning to Fannie.

"No, indeed," exclaimed the young girl. "I hope you will come in and see me often."

"I shall be pleased to do so," said her new friend, adding, as she said "good-bye": "And you must often come in and sit with me."

"Well, Fannie," said her aunt, after Mrs. Allan had left, "so you really have seen our neighbor, and

talked with her. Don't you remember you told me that you could not possibly see her if she called?"

"Oh, auntie, she was so nice, I did not mind her a bit. She didn't ask me how long I had been ill, and what brought on my illness, and did the doctor think I would ever be strong again. It makes me miserable to have to answer so many questions about myself."

"You foolish child! It was only old Mrs. Dane who asked you all those questions, I am sure. You are too sensitive."

"I can't help it, auntie. But I like Mrs. Allan, because she draws me away from myself. Is it not fortunate she is staying here this summer?"

"Very. I am glad on your account; for she will be company for you oftentimes when I cannot be with you."

Through the summer days that followed, Mrs. Allan and Fannie were much together, and Fannie felt the influence of her new friend's cheery and hopeful spirit.

One day, shortly after their first meeting, they were sitting together on the sands. It was a bright day. The tide was coming in, and there was a fascination in watching the waves as they followed one another in quick succession, breaking on the sandy beach in long lines of foam. Children played on the sands, their shouts of delight ringing out above the noise of the dashing waters. But all the brightness and

sunshine and life around brought no pleasure to Fannie; for it was one of her "blue" days. She sat in a cosy, sheltered nook, playing listlessly with the sand, taking it up in handfuls, and letting it slip through her fingers, while she gazed pensively on the animated scene before her. At length she could no longer keep her sad thoughts to herself.

"Do you see that wrecked vessel over there, Mrs. Allan?" she said, abruptly.

"Yes, dear. Quite picturesque, is it not?"

"I don't know. I wasn't thinking of it in that light. Do you know I feel sometimes as though I was just such a wreck. The tides of human life and interest ebb and flow unceasingly, but I am out of reach of them, stranded on the sands of time, a useless barque."

Mrs. Allan made no direct answer, but said: "By the way, I hear they intend to put that wreck, as you call it, in thorough repair; and another summer will, in all probability, see her sailing the ocean again."

"Is it possible? I did not know anything could be done with it," said Fannie.

"Nor I, either, until yesterday, when I heard what I have just told you. Now, you see, your fate may be as good."

"I wish it might. But there are times when I get so discouraged! It seems as though I never would know again what health is."

There was a few moment's pause, and then Mrs.

Allan said, in the sweet, measured tones which were always hers when she spoke her Heavenly Father's word: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

The well-known words stirred Fannie's heart as they never before had done. She looked up from the sands, with which she had been idly playing, and her gaze wandered over the wide expanse of blue waters, to where sea and sky met. She thought of the great Creator, who made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is therein, and remembered that this mighty Creator was her Maker also, and had revealed himself to her as a God of love. Had she then any reason to be discouraged as she looked out upon the future? Even in that moment the young girl in her conscious weakness leaned upon the Almighty Strength, and was lifted out of her despondency.

There was a radiance in her eyes as she turned her face toward her friend, and said, with a solemn earnestness as though she was recording a vow: "I will hope in God."

From that time forward Fannie was no more heard to compare herself to a wrecked vessel; while, on the other hand, it was noticed that she took a lively interest in the repairing of the barque.

Her friends could see a marked improvement in Fannie's health. The sea air, combined with a due

amount of rest and exercise, proved beneficial; a faint color began to steal into her cheeks, and she found herself able to walk more. Along with all this came a uniform happiness and contentment that Fannie scarcely would have thought possible to her a short while before.

It was true, she still had no very definite prospect of being able to do any great work in the world; but ever since that bright morning on the sands, when she had taken fresh courage from the words, "Hope thou in God," her despondency had vanished.

She had many talks with Mrs. Allan after that, and more and more grew willing to leave the shaping and ordering of her life in the hands of a wise and loving Heavenly Father.

Thus the summer passed away, bringing health of body and peace of mind to the young invalid.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHANGES.

ETHEL did not see much of Grace that summer. Mrs. Maynard was poorly, and spent all the hot season at the pleasant country resort with which they were so delighted the previous summer. Ethel often, however, received letters from her friend, full of descriptions of pleasant excursions. Evidently Grace was more in love with Forest Glen than ever.

Mrs. Clifford, their pastor's wife, stayed some weeks there also, which of course added to Grace's enjoyment. A nephew of Mr. Clifford's spent his vacation at the same place, and Grace often made casual mention of him as accompanying them in their various jaunts and rambles.

"I wonder why it is," said Ethel to herself, as she laid down Grace's last letter, in which she spoke of leaving 'dear Forest Glen, where she had passed the happiest summer of her life,' "I wonder why it is that everything has been so charming, so lovely, so delightful to Grace this summer."

She found the answer to her question when her friend returned. Grace was engaged. The young man who had won her heart was Ernest Seaford,

Mr. Clifford's nephew, who was finishing his course at a theological institution.

"I don't think I have ever seen him," said Ethel, when Grace confided to her the interesting news.

"Yes, you have. You know the day we went to Milton on the picnic. Do you remember that solemn young man I said looked at us so? That was Ernest."

"I recollect now that you spoke about him, but I don't remember him particularly. Is he just as solemn now?"

"Oh, no, he is just splendid when you come to know him; but he will be here for a few days this autumn, and you will have an opportunity then to see him."

Ethel had no doubt that Mr. Seaford was all that could be desired, and was glad for her friend's sake, yet she could not help feeling lonely. All Grace's thoughts evidently were now wrapped up in another. Ethel, of course, could not enter into her feelings, and she felt that though Grace was the same as ever, she was, in a certain sense, lost to her.

"Please don't look so doleful, Ethel," Grace said one day, when Ethel was taking an especially gloomy view of things in regard to her leaving the church. "No doubt there will be some one else to take my place in church work. And that reminds me that we are going to gain a very active member soon; one who will be quite an acquisition to our staff of church

workers. Ernest writes me that a Mr. Frank Raynor, of Brantford, is expecting to settle in Melvin."

"Is he? Oh, that will be very nice!" said Ethel, heartily.

"Why," said Grace, in some surprise, "are you acquainted with Mr. Raynor?"

"Yes—at least, that is—only slightly. I met him while away." Ethel felt provoked to know that the color mounted to her cheeks as she made this very simple statement. What difference need it make to her, whether Frank Raynor, or any one else came to Melvin?

Grace looked at her quizzically. "You never mentioned him to me," she said.

"I didn't think about it," returned Ethel.

"Well, Ernest is well acquainted with him, and says he is a splendid fellow."

"He seemed very pleasant," said Ethel, trying to appear indifferent, without succeeding very well.

Grace said no more, but a smile played around her lips, and she thought, "Perhaps—who knows, Ethel may not miss me very much, after a while."

The winter passed and spring came again, and found Grace in a whirl of busy preparations; for in the early summer she was to become the wife of Ernest Seaford.

Mrs. Maynard had at first objected to so early a date being fixed for the wedding. They might wait awhile. Grace was young yet, and she ought to have

a little longer time to enjoy her girlhood. But Grace presented all the arguments: Ernest was so lonely; Aggie was growing up to fill her place in the home; she was no younger than her mother was when she was married; and so at last the matter was settled. Leonore Leslie was to be married about the same time as Grace. She had made what was considered in worldly circles a "brilliant match"; her betrothed being reported very wealthy. Of course, her wedding was to be a very fashionable one, and Grace, who looked upon Leonore as quite an authority in social matters, was influenced by her views.

But suddenly there came a break in the plans and preparations. Grace was sewing one afternoon when she saw Ned coming up the walk to the house. He beckoned to her, and she ran quickly down to meet him.

"What is the matter, Ned?" she exclaimed; for she knew by his look that something had happened.

"Father has been taken very ill, suddenly—paralysis, we fear. He is unconscious. They are bringing him home now; and we must break the news to mother as gently as we can." Ned spoke hurriedly in broken sentences.

Grace felt like one stunned; mechanically she turned and went into the house with her brother.

"Will you tell mother, Ned?" she asked.

"No, you had better do it, Grace."

Grace scarcely knew how she reached her mother's

room, nor how she told the sad news. Mrs. Maynard bore up under the shock better than her children had expected. As yet none of them could fully realize the sorrow that had come to them. They only felt the dark shadow that had fallen on their home. Heavily indeed it rested on the hearts of these stricken ones when they gazed on the unconscious form of their loved one. Was it possible that those lips might never speak to them again? They could not bear the thought, and clung to the hope that he would recover.

"I can think nothing else but that father will get well," said Grace. It was her first sorrow. She had scarcely realized before that sorrow could come to her. Now it seemed strange that the sun would shine so brightly, and all the outer world go on the same when she was so heavy-hearted. Yet there was comfort even in their sadness. Grace realized it with a thrill of thankfulness, that evening, when her brother said:

"Mother, shall we have a few words of prayer together?"

"Yes, my son," answered Mrs. Maynard, her sad face brightening a little. And each one of the sorrowing group felt comforted as the son and brother read the forty-sixth psalm, and then in a few simple words brought their needs and their sorrows to the Heavenly Father.

The next morning Grace brought the Bible and

laid it before her brother; and from that time forward, family worship, which had been sadly neglected in the Maynard family, was never omitted.

The weeks that followed were very quiet ones; weeks when all the busy preparations that had been going on before, were laid aside and forgotten. Of how little consequence they appeared now! But many were the lessons learned during those weeks of waiting and watching in the sick chamber. Grace had time to think now, and she saw plainly how her heart had become involved with the world again. This shadow that had crossed her pathway had been needed. She drew near to God again, and consecrated herself anew to him, and came forth from the season of trial a stronger Christian.

Mrs. Maynard, sitting by the bedside of her husband, whose lips could frame no sound, thought with a pang how little she had known of him all these years; how she had become engrossed with household cares, so wrapt up in her own feelings that she had no time to think of his. She wondered now whether anything had been worth while that had been so much to her. She had glided into worldliness too, unconsciously perhaps, but really. Sometimes conscience had been awakened, but only for a time; then she had lapsed again into her old way of thinking that she must do as others did. In these quiet hours she drew nigh to God; so for her also this trial brought blessing.

It was a glad day when the doctor gave hopes of Mr. Maynard's ultimate restoration to health. Slowly, very slowly, he improved. At last when autumn came, it was decided that he was sufficiently recovered for Grace's wedding to take place. A very quiet wedding it was, very different from the one planned. Only the nearest and dearest friends were there, for Mr. Maynard could not bear any excitement. It touched all hearts to see him as he sat in a large arm-chair, appearing so broken down, yet trying to smile on the guests.

After the ceremony, Grace came over to her father, and stooped to kiss him. He drew her near, and held her hand closely in his as though he would fain keep her always; then looking up said, "Ah, Ernest, you are taking away the sunshine of our home." He paused a few moments overcome by his feelings, then, laying Grace's hand in that of her husband, said with quivering lips, "God bless you, my children."

The pathos in his tone brought tears to many eyes, but smiles quickly followed, as congratulations were offered. Grace would fain have lingered after luncheon, chatting with one and another, but the time of departure was near, and the carriages were waiting at the door. Then came hurried good-byes and hosts of good wishes, and amid showers of rice the young couple drove off.

So Grace left the home of her girlhood to enter on a new and untried sphere.

CHAPTER XX.

LAURA WYNDHAM.

LAURA WYNDHAM sat in the library, pondering over two notes that had arrived by the morning mail. One was from Ethel Gladwyn, with an invitation to visit Melvin whenever convenient; the other contained an invitation from the Fentons, friends of Laura.

There had been a time when Laura would have accepted the latter in preference to the former; for the Fentons were gay people, and she was sure of having such a round of amusements while with them that time would not hang heavily on her hands. Yet in spite of this, she felt no inclination to accept their invitation. For the first time in her life, she felt that gaieties and amusements could give her no pleasure. Her heart was restless and unsatisfied. She felt drawn, she scarcely knew why, to Ethel's home. "It will be very quiet there," she mused; "for Ethel does not go to anything. But on the whole, I believe I should like it. At any rate, it will be a change."

And so it happened that the very same week in which Grace was married, Ethel received a note from Laura, saying that she would be happy to come to Melvin the following week.

"Oh, Ethel," exclaimed Millie, "what made you ask her? She has such a lovely home, while everything here will seem very plain, and unlike what she is used to."

"Don't you think, Millie, that you have somewhat mixed ideas about that word 'home'? Our home is just as lovely as hers; our house and its furnishings are not so handsome and costly; but such things do not make the home. Many a mansion, abounding in every luxury, is not a home in the true sense of the word. Besides, Laura knows that we cannot afford the same style of living that they maintain; so she will know what to expect."

Ethel did not have the same feelings of anxiety regarding Laura's visit that she might have had a year or two previously. She had entered too fully into the spirit of her motto for that. The yearning grew stronger within her every day that her cousin might be brought into the kingdom of God. And still, as she went about making preparations to receive her guest, was this desire that the visit might bring to Laura a heavenly blessing.

On the appointed day Laura came, and it was not long before she fitted into the household as though she had always been a member. She charmed the children with her lively stories, and the interest she took in all their plays and games. Indeed, her winning ways, her readiness to help, and her merry talk, made her a favorite with all the family.

Laura, on her part, enjoyed the society of her cousins. She did not find their home by any means so quiet as she had imagined. Indeed, she had not been there long before she realized that the Gladwyns possessed the secret of true enjoyment. She saw too, that religion with them was not a mere form, something distinct and separate from their daily life; on the contrary, for each one it blended with all their duties and all their enjoyments.

"I will ask you to read to-night, Harry; my eyes are tired," said Mr. Gladwyn one evening which they had spent in most pleasant social companionship.

So Harry read the first chapter of the First Epistle of John. Wonderful words! Yet never before had they seemed so wonderful to Laura. She glanced around on the group. Did they all know what it meant to have "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ"? She believed they did, and because of this they had "fellowship one with another"; and she felt like one left out, alone, in this little company. Then Mr. Gladwyn, in a brief, earnest prayer, brought them all near to a throne of grace; and Laura could but feel that there had been nothing in that evening's enjoyment which made such an ending seem out of harmony; on the contrary, it brought the day most fittingly to a close.

She recognized then, for the first time, that true religion and true enjoyment go hand in hand; and as the days went on she was more and more convinced

of this. "I wish I could feel as they do," she said to herself, "but I am easily influenced. When I get back to different society, I shall feel differently, perhaps." Yet she did not, after all, wish to feel differently. To say the truth, the gay society she once had enjoyed had lost its charm for her. What was the reason? Laura was not naturally reserved, and she soon confided to Ethel the secret of her dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

They were sitting together in Ethel's room one evening, and Laura told her cousin all about it. The substance of it was that Mr. La Blanc was engaged to be married to a wealthy Southern lady. The formal announcement had been made; so there was no doubt about it. "And, oh, Ethel!" she added, "I never knew till then how much I thought of him. I cannot care for anything now. And the worst of it all is that mother is thankful, and so is Clarence. So I have no one to sympathize with me."

"Perhaps, some day you will be thankful too, dear," said Ethel.

"Perhaps," replied Laura, rather disconsolately. "Though, for my part, I never could believe anything against him. I have heard he drank heavily at times. Of course, I knew that he took wine moderately. And for that matter, Clarence used to take his glass occasionally; but he doesn't now. You know, Ethel, he is so changed in many ways. He is so anxious now to do good to others. He has a class in Sunday

school—a class of boys, I believe; and already he has quite an influence over them. He has given up theatres, and all that sort of thing; and he seems a great deal happier than he used to be.”

Ethel thought, with a throb of joy, then Clarence too, is seeking to bring about God's kingdom on earth. Then she spoke: “I am so glad to hear it, Laura. His life seemed so faultless, and yet it lacked something. But now the love of Christ constrains him to a loving service.”

Laura resumed: “Clarence certainly has more influence over me than he ever had before. I wish, sometimes, I was like him. I do feel, Ethel, that I desire to be a Christian; but I am such a giddy little thing. Perhaps to-day I might be good, and to-morrow be tempted back into the world again.”

“Then you are afraid to trust God. You think he cannot keep you in the hour of temptation,” said Ethel.

Laura looked thoughtful. “Well, not exactly that,” she replied, hesitatingly.

“If you would but decide to give up all for Christ, you need not fear for the future, Laura; for we have ‘exceeding great and precious promises.’ I think the real trouble is, you are ‘halting between two opinions.’ ‘Choose you this day whom you will serve.’”

Laura said nothing, but those last words clung to her. They kept repeating themselves over and over to her mind. She could not sleep. “I must decide to-

night," was the one thought that would not leave her. Ah, it was a great struggle; but, before the morning dawned, another soul had been born into the kingdom of God.

There was one thing only that troubled Laura, and she confided it to Ethel. "I do so dread seeing Mr. La Blanc again. I am so afraid I shall be as fascinated with him as ever. What shall I do?"

"Do you not remember," said Ethel, "that it is recorded of the disciples once, when they were in trouble, that 'they went and told Jesus'? Now, Laura, that is what you must do whenever you are tempted, or tried, or perplexed; and you will surely find help."

And did Laura find help in living the Christian life? A letter she wrote to Ethel that winter will tell some of her experience. After telling with much interest of some Christian work that she had found to do, she continued:

"I am finding out now what true happiness is; and oh, Ethel! I met Mr. La Blanc at a reception the other day, and I wondered that I ever cared for him. My eyes are opened now to see how little of true worth there is in him."

Ethel's heart was filled with thankfulness as she read this letter, and thought of the young life that had been turned away from selfishness into channels of usefulness.

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD FRIENDSHIPS RENEWED.

FIVE years have passed away. Again the Lanes are spending their summer at Long View, and Fannie is with them; not now an invalid looking wearily on life, but strong and full of health and vigor. It is the last summer she will spend with them; for Fannie has found her life work, and in a few weeks will leave her native land in company with a band of devoted missionaries for far-away China.

And now, on this bright, sunny morning when we shall take a last glimpse of her, she is busy preparing for visitors, going from room to room and putting finishing touches everywhere, arranging the flowers and vines that Harold and Amy bring her, making their seaside home look pretty and attractive. For Fannie had written to the two other members of the trio of girlhood days, saying, "come down to Long View, both of you, and let us spend one more day together—we three and no more."

It so happened that Grace was visiting at her old home; so she left her two little ones in charge of their fond grandparents and auntie, and set off with Ethel to spend a day at Woodbine Cottage, and renew and strengthen the friendship of early days.

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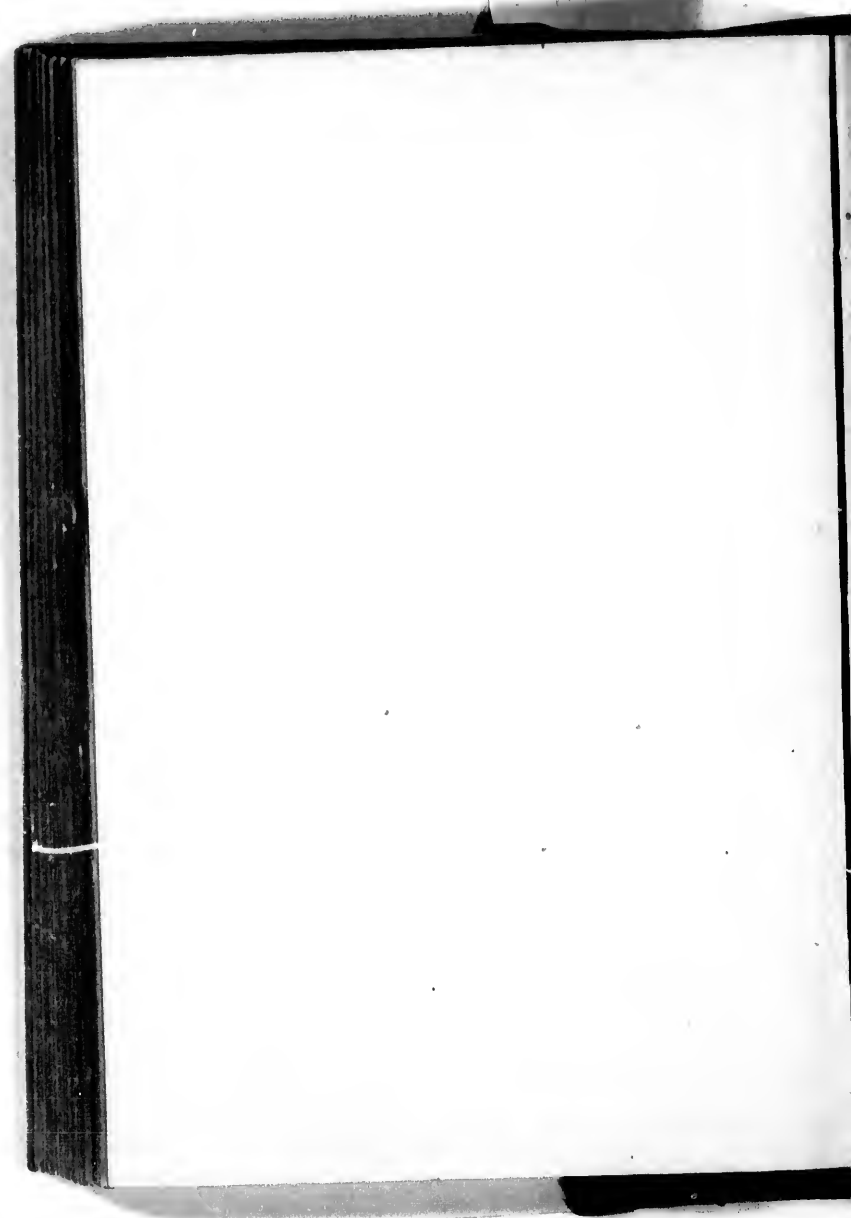
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Three Girls and Their Motto.

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They could not have had a lovelier day for their brief visit if their wishes regarding the weather had been specially consulted. It was simply a perfect summer day. Every little leaf thrilled and quivered in the west wind; every little wave danced and glistened in the sunlight. It was a day that in its brightness and beauty recalled that other summer day, long before, when they had sat together under the murmuring pines, and talked and dreamed about a future that had now become the present.

The years that had passed away since then had brought but few changes, save that the three had grown into womanhood, and begun to take upon them the cares and responsibilities of life. Yet they all felt like girls again as they met once more, for one day, at least, care free—and rambled on the seashore, and climbed the rocks, just as in days of yore.

It was long since they had talked together, face to face; so now they opened their hearts to one another. Fannie told how the months of sickness and weariness and waiting through which she had passed, and which seemed so hard at the time, had really proved a blessing to her. Then she had wanted to work simply because it was her nature to crave activity; she had made her own plans regarding her life, and her heart was bent on fulfilling them. But in her trouble she had learned to say, "Thy will, not mine, be done"; and, when health and strength were restored to her, she simply asked from day to day,

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus she had been led on step by step, till she had resolved to give her life to work among the darkened millions of China, seeking in this way the kingdom of God, and looking only for the commendation of the Great King.

And Grace told how helpful it was to her, amid the many distractions of life, to have one ruling purpose; and since that purpose was a high and noble one it tended to uplift her in thought and action above the littleness that too often characterizes ordinary life.

And Ethel confided fully to her two friends all her hopes for the future. Of course they knew ere this, what I tell you now, young friends, that in a few weeks Ethel would become the wife of Frank Raynor. But Ethel had something more to tell them to-day, and that was that she would be mistress of Elmerost, the former home of the Leslies. Mr. Leslie had removed to California with his family, and being in somewhat embarrassed circumstances, had offered his property at a great sacrifice, and Frank Raynor had bought it.

Grace clapped her hands with delight when she heard the news; then noticing her friend's thoughtful look, said: "What makes you look so sober over it, Ethel?"

"Oh, Grace, it is such a responsibility. I am so afraid, sometimes, that I will not make a right use of all that God has given me."

"You are just the one who will," said Grace. "I am afraid I could not be entrusted with so much."

"Do you remember," continued Ethel, "that long ago we promised to pray for one another. I feel now how much I need your prayers on my behalf, for you know, Grace, that I shall not only have great opportunities of usefulness, but also great temptations to live for self and the world."

"Yes, I know," replied Grace, her face growing thoughtful as she remembered some of her own past experiences.

Then Fannie said, "You will remember me, will you not, when you make known your requests unto God. You know how much I shall need strength and help."

"Oh, Fannie, when I think what a grand work you have given yourself up to do, I feel as though we at home have nothing to do and do nothing," said Ethel.

"No, not so," replied Fannie, quickly; "you have much to do at home. Just think how much interest you may awaken in missions if you only bear them much on your heart; and then in many ways you can be a help and comfort to the missionaries."

"I know one thing," said Ethel, her face brightening as she spoke, "as long as we own Elmeroft, it will always be open to workers in Christ's kingdom, and we shall gladly bid them welcome 'in his name.' So," she added, turning to Fannie, "you will know

where to come when you return to this country for rest."

So they talked on through that long summer afternoon; and running through all, and blending with all in their memories of that day in after years, were the silvery cadence of the waves dashing on the sandy beach, and the rush and stir of long grasses, as the breeze swept lightly over them, laden with the mingled sweetness of sea and land. The time passed all too quickly. Soon it was tea time, when they spent a pleasant hour with the other members of the family.

Then they were left alone again; and as the closing hours of that happy day drew on, the three, arm in arm, wandered over the grass plot, or stood to look out over the rippling waters, silvered by the beams of the rising moon. And in the hush of that evening twilight we will leave them soon to be widely separated, walking different pathways through life, but each one actuated by the same guiding principle, running like a golden thread through all the days, and binding together in one harmonious whole, the fragments that make up life. And that principle was the one they had adopted long before, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God."

THE END.

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