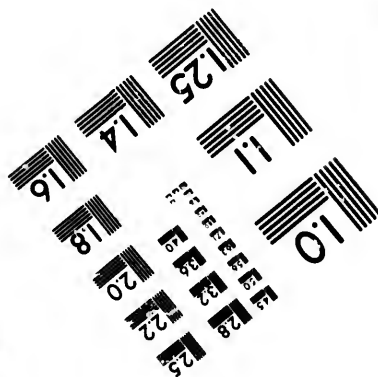
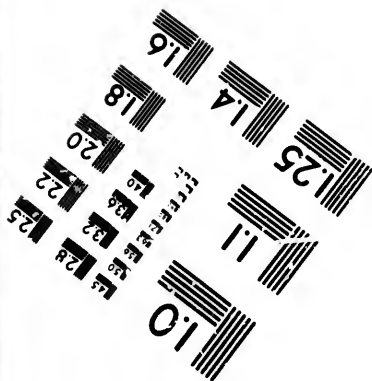
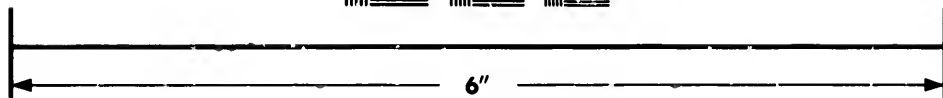
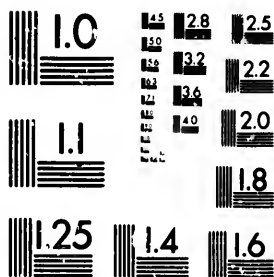


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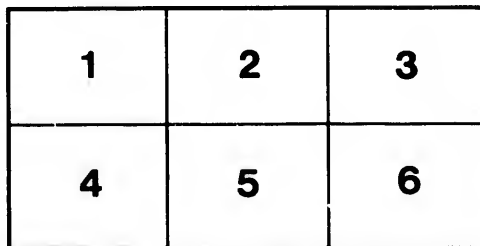
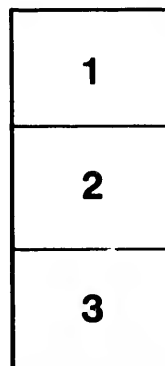
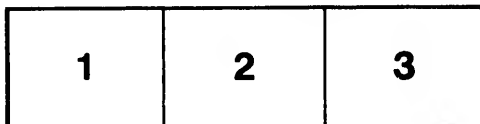
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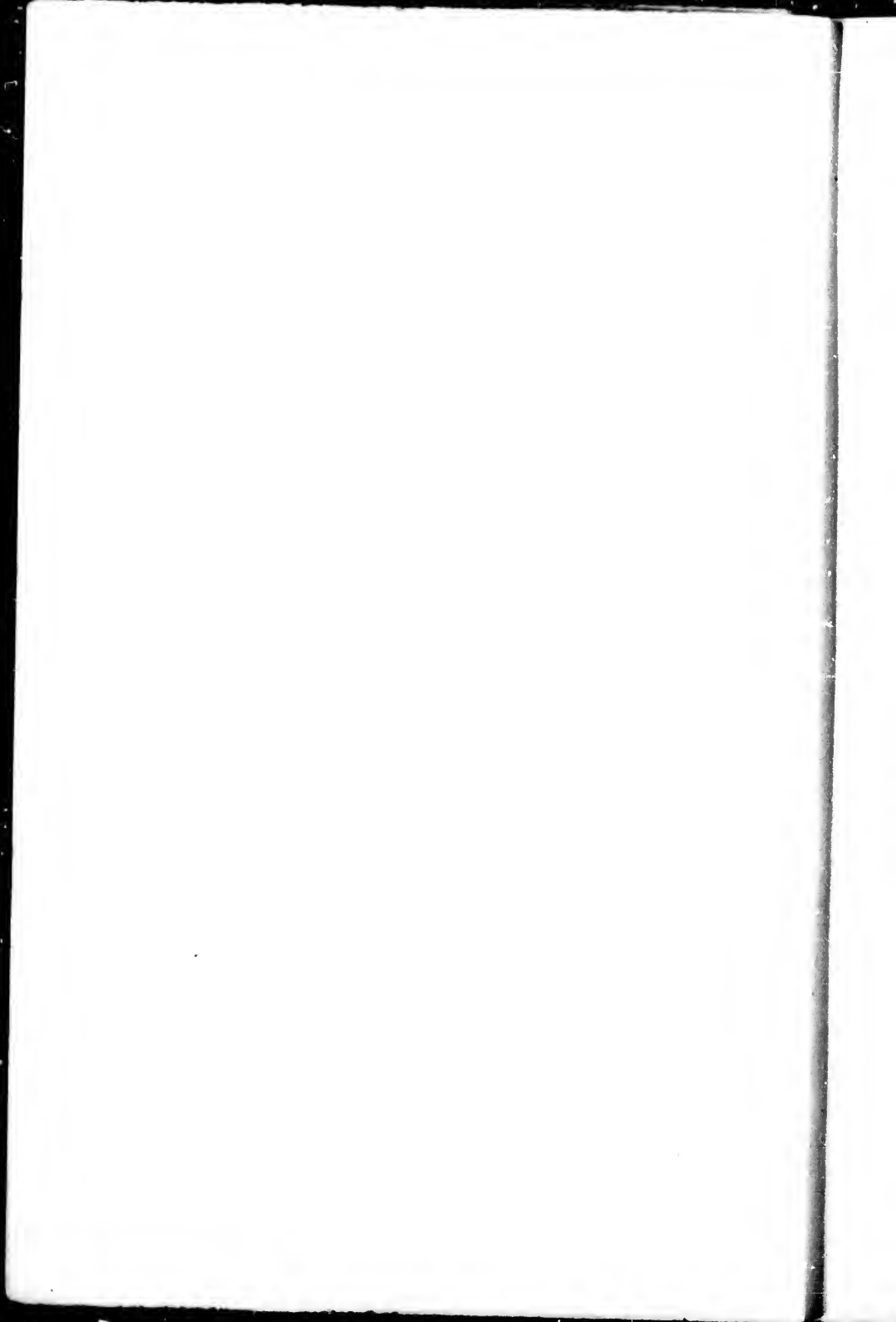
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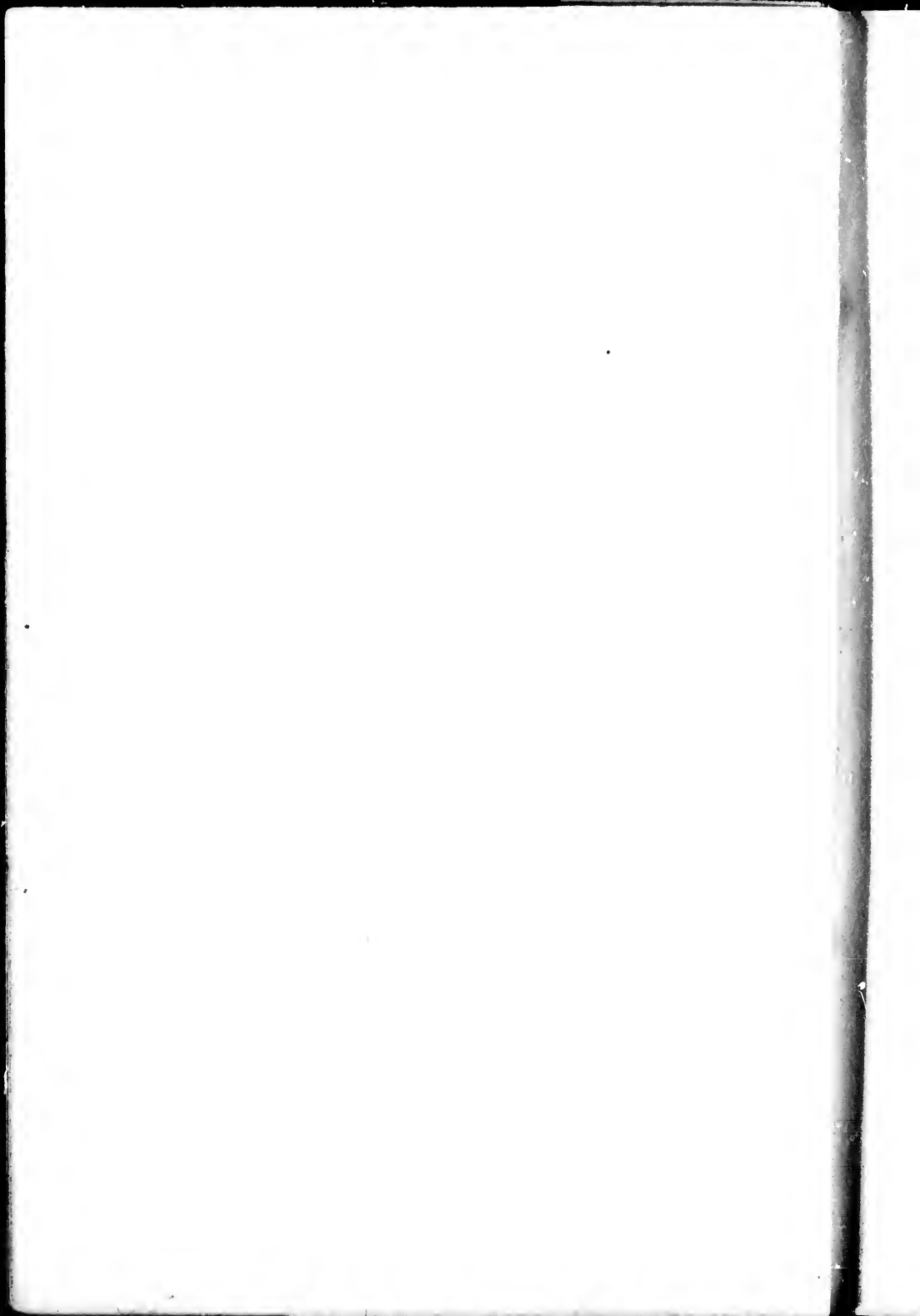
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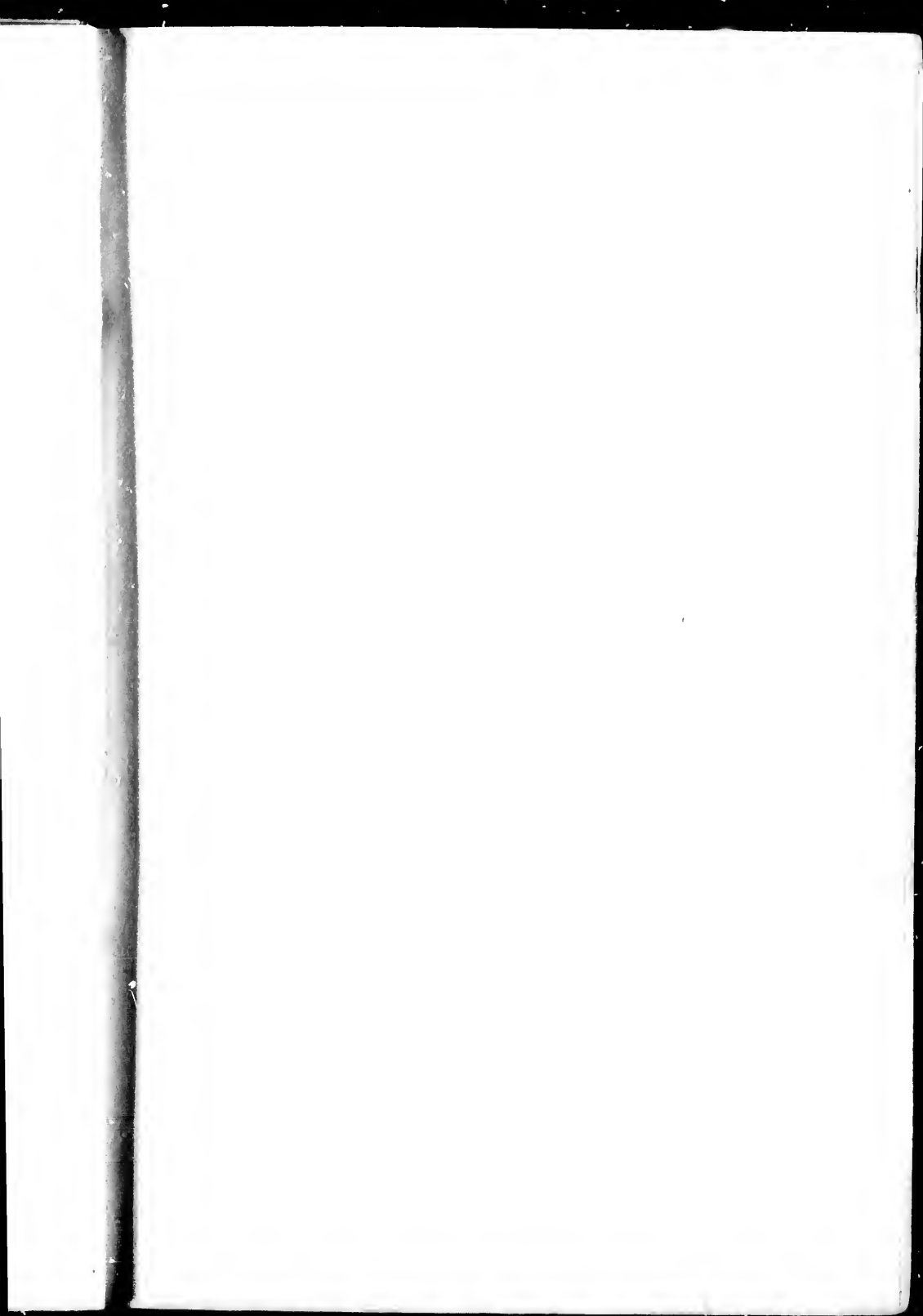
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PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION.







“I rayther think I'm the 'appiest man of us two” (p. 14).



PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION,
AND OTHER TALES.

BY

J. JACKSON WRAY,

*Author of "Nestleton Magna," "Matthew Mellowden," "Chronicles of Capstan
Cabin," "Peter Pengely," "A Man Every Inch of Him," &c.*

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PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION.

CHAPTER I.

THE "GANGER'S" MESSAGE.

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"Pshaw! I don't believe a word of it. Paul Meggitt has too much good sense to be made a fool of by any such sanctimonious nonsense as that."

"So I thought. So everybody will think who knows him. But it's true, for all that. Who was it who said nothing was so likely as the impossible? I tell you it's a fact that Paul Meggitt—of all people in the world—goes to the Methodist conventicle, and engages with that psalm-singing, hymn-howling, collection-making fraternity in the contemptible extravagances peculiar to their tribe."

"Well, I suppose you *know*, or you would

scarcely say so ; for to put the clever, genial, high-spirited Paul Meggitt and the Methody meeting into combination could never have entered any sane man's head, unless there had been some basis of fact to put it there. Well, well, wonders never cease ! All I can say is, there's another good man gone wrong. It's to be hoped he will soon come to his senses again."

"Nay, nay, I'm afraid not. When men like him get a maggot in the brain, especially one of the fanatical breed, it's generally a big one, and isn't very easily extracted. I wonder what his proud and fashionable wife has to say about it ? It will be a bitter pill for her to swallow, *I'll* warrant."

"Ha, ha ! She never will swallow it, in my opinion ; and who can blame her ? The belle of Breconsfield can't afford to be extinguished in that fashion. By-the-bye, are you going to the county ball next week ?"

"Yes, I think so. And I shall endeavour to secure the hand of that lady for a partner, and so find out how she takes to the new *régime*. Good morning."

Hereupon Gerard Berkeley, of Berkeley Hall, and Colonel Fawcett, of "The Chase," went their several ways: the former to ponder on the startling information he had received, the latter to carry the news of Paul Meggitt's delusion to his aristocratic comrades at the Berkeley Club.

Paul Meggitt, or, to give him his full and legitimate honours, Paul Meggitt, Esq., C.E., was a civil engineer of quite remarkable genius and equally remarkable fame, who had won both wealth and honour as one of the foremost men in his profession, not only in England, but the Continent to boot.

The large and thriving manufacturing town of Breconsfield was indebted to his skill for the magnificent system of waterworks which, defiant of the greatest natural obstacles, brought an abundant and unfailing supply of limpid water to the grateful citizens, who were loud and generous, too, in their gratitude and praise. More than one or two gigantic undertakings abroad he had brought to a successful conclusion, and it was said that at least one foreign decoration had been pinned on his

breast by royal hands in appreciation of his services.

Paul Meggitt was a tall, handsome, well-shaped man, of some forty years of age, and had married, some years before the events here narrated, the only daughter of a county magnate, Aubrey Aubrey, Esq., M.P., J.P., and the popular Master of the Berkeley hounds. Two sweet little girls had been born to him, and in his beautiful suburban mansion, and with his beautiful wife and children, and eke his extensive fame and fortune, he was looked upon as fortune's favourite, was held in high and general esteem, and appeared likely enough to take both high rank and office, and whatever else the partial goddess was supposed to have the power to bestow.

All at once Paul Meggitt surprised the whole community by an entire change of front. He sold his hunters, parted with a promising racer, which was said to be a sure thing for "the Derby," and by many other astounding actions he showed that his tastes, habits, and associates were all subjected to a total alteration. Once the life of the club, the most

accomplished billiard player in the town, the soul of fashionable socialities, the "jolly fellow" of the aristocratic circle, the darling of the ladies, he suddenly sheered off, veered round, and "extinguished himself" by becoming a "religious man"—a process made thoroughly and hopelessly complete when he joined himself to the "people called Methodists."

So remarkable an event demands clear and explicit explanation, and that, as far as I can supply it, shall be at once forthcoming.

Paul Meggitt's mother, many years before he, her youngest born, made his appearance on the "stage of life," had been led by the fame of John Wesley to hear that rousing apostle proclaim the evangelic message with which he was unquestionably inspired. Again, again, and again she drank in the words of life which fell in such convincing fashion from that good man's lips. She never joined the "United Societies" which his genius and piety called into being, chiefly because of family hindrances and distance from any such religious centre, but she lived and died a thoroughly godly woman. Although she went to heaven during

Paul's childhood, she lived and prayed and laboured long enough to sow the good seed in the mind of her boy, and to leave him that legacy of untold value which consists in a mother's love, a mother's teaching, example, and prayers. The good seed remained hidden, and to all appearance dead, until that crisis of his history came of which I write, and which adds one other to the countless tokens of the imperishable value of the influence exerted by godly mothers.

Paul Meggitt was engaged in the construction of one of the very first railways ever formed in this country, and as he was a perfect devotee to his profession he personally superintended some of the most dangerous and difficult excavating and tunnelling operations. By this means he had become acquainted with an old "ganger," or foreman, whose steady character and good judgment had secured him the post of superintending a body of picked men, who were employed on the most critical and important parts of the work.

Bartholomew Hodgson, as the old man

was called—though he was generally known as "Old Thol"—was a shrewd and godly Christian, a Methodist of many years' standing, and unusually intelligent withal. With him Paul Meggitt used to love to talk, and would of set purpose draw the old man into conversation on religious subjects; and such was the quaint sincerity of the ganger that Paul was influenced, interested, amused, and affected to a degree that surprised himself. He never left "Old Thol" on such occasions without being led to think of his mother, whose similarly godly witness came back to his memory with redoubled force.

"O, Maister Meggitt!" said the old man one day, "there's nowt like religion, even for this world. God's favour's better than 'good fortun', as folks call it, though there can't be real good fortune if the Lord isn't in it. Them that's 'appy in the love of God needn't much mind for onything else." Then looking in the face of his listener, he said, as he lifted his hat from his wrinkled and weather-worn brow and passed his hand through his scant grey locks, smiling all the while in perfect

confidence as to the result of his challenge, "Maister Meggitt, I rayther think I'm the 'appiest man of us two, though you've gotten all the youth, an' strength, an' money, an' honour, an' I've gotten nowt but my Saviour."

"That I don't doubt for a moment, Thol," said Paul Meggit; "and at times I feel as though I would gladly change places with you."

"Aye, but you see, sir," said Thol, with a meaning twinkle of the eye, "if the change was to be just as things are I wouldn't swop. If you were to get religion, I mebbe might; but *then* you needn't care to change, you see, for Jesus Christ can make us happy and contented both with money an' without. True comfort dwells i' the heart, an' is quite independent as to whether the purse be empty or full. The love o' God i' Jesus Christ—*that's* true riches; an' bless the Lord, it belongs to me!"

Paul Meggitt turned away, acknowledging to himself that he did not know what "that" was, and more than ever coveting the rich endowment. On the following day Paul had

occasion to give Old Thol some special directions in connection with a difficult piece of work in hand. The old man seemed unusually quiet, and his countenance was more serious than was its wont. As Paul finished his instructions and was turning away, the old man lifted his hat respectfully, fixed his honest grey eyes on the engineer, and said—

“Maister Meggitt, don't be angry wi' me. But don't you think it's time that you knew something o' what we were talkin' about yesterday? It seems a bit of a liberty for me to talk to you i' this way, but somehow, this morning I feel that I must say to you 'Time is short, Maister Meggitt, time is short.' Give your heart to God. The blood of Christ was shed for you, an' He wants you to be saved. I laid awake half the night thinkin' about you, an' it seemed borne in upo' my mind that I must speak out for my Saviour's sake. Excuse an old man, sir, that's so much beneath you, for makin' so free, but I've a message for you, I feel I have. The blessed Saviour has need o' you. He can rejoice your heart, an' He wants you

to rejoice other folks's. Then when you come to die—an' 'time is short, Maister Meggitt, time is short'—you'll get the victory, an' that'll be best of all. Yes, Maister Meggitt," said the old man with quite unusual energy, laying his big rough hand on his heart, "the peace of God, such as I have, will make dyin' a happy business. God bless you, sir! God bless you! and the time is short!"

"I daresay you are right, Thol. Good morning," said Paul Meggitt with a constrained smile, to show the old man that he was not angry—constrained, for the well-aimed arrow, shot with almost tearful earnestness, had gone home, and the engineer was not at all in a smiling mood. He repaired to another part of the excavations, solemnly pondering on Old Thol's testimony, a testimony which in a few hours was to be endorsed with awful emphasis and all-convincing force.

CHAPTER II.

PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION.

ONLY a few brief hours after the conversation I have recorded Paul Meggitt was conversing with the contractor for the works, scarcely able, even with the aid of pressing business, to drive the old ganger's appeal from his thoughts, when a navy came running up in great excitement, and said, addressing the engineer and the contractor at the same time—

“Maister Meggitt! Maister Fowler! The big cuttin's fallen in, an' Thol Hodgson's gang's underneath!”

Alarmed and horrified, the engineer bade all the men to follow, and strode off at a rapid pace to the scene of the accident. There he found that an extensive landslip had occurred, and that the opening into the cutting was

fairly blocked up. Whether the unfortunate men were under it or on the other side of it he could not tell, but at once a band of men were set to work with shovel and pickaxe to remove the fallen *débris*, and then Paul and another gang proceeded to the other end of the cutting, where the opening was narrower and incomplete. The shouts of living men were heard, and making their way between the rough earthbanks, they saw one man, not materially hurt, struggling hard to free himself from the clay in which his lower limbs were embedded. Another man was surrounded nearly to the shoulders by a weight of soil, and almost close to the side, against which the fallen mass had pinned him, was the grey head and aged features of Old Thol. A stone had caught him on the forehead, making a wound from which the blood was trickling, and his face wore a look of severe suffering. The men set to work with a will to rescue the hapless prisoners. As soon as Old Thol saw the engine a feeble smile lit up his face, and pointing with his one free arm to the other men, he intimated

that their first efforts should be directed to their relief. Taking a small flask from his pocket containing a little brandy, Paul Meggitt climbed over the heap of earth and lifted it to the old man's lips. Wiping the blood from his aged face with his handkerchief, he said—

“My poor old friend! Do you think you are very seriously hurt?”

“Yes, sir, I'm crushed. It'il soon be over,” said Thol, faintly. “But don't call me 'poor.' In a little while I shall be with Jesus!” and the pallid face of the dying Christian was lighted up with a glow that told of perfect peace.

Having hastened to the other workman, who seemed to be in almost equal straits, Paul administered the stimulant to him, and asked him the same question.

“I'm afraid I'm badly hurt, sir,” said the poor fellow. “Tell 'em to dig away.”

The clayey soil was very stubborn and very heavy, but the desperate efforts of willing hands soon freed him and his less weighted companion, and they were speedily placed in

the care of the doctor, who had been promptly summoned, and who pronounced them not to be in serious peril of their lives.

With Old Thol the case was different. He had been violently forced against the firm breast of the cutting, and had received fatal injuries. It was long, too, before they could extricate him from his terrible prison, and Paul Meggitt, pale, trembling, agitated to the soul, could only stay by him, give him stimulants, and relieve his position as best he might.

“Maister Meggitt,” said the old man, speaking with great difficulty, “God told me to give you that message this morning. You see the time *is* short. I’m going to Him—going home! Shall I tell Him that His message was received? Oh, Maister! will you let me die with the new joy of savin’ a soul? I want you to promise me two things.” Here he spoke with low, intermittent gasps. “*Will* you—make the—heart—of a—dying—old man—glad?”

“Yes, God knows I will!” exclaimed Paul, deeply stirred. “Tell me what it is.”

"Give—your—heart—to—God. Try—to—bring—my poor lad—to Jesus."

Here he laid his one unprisoned hand—growing cold, terribly cold—on the hand of the engineer, and fixed an eager look upon his face.

"Oh, Maister, Maister! Promise me—quick!"

Paul Meggitt took the old man's hand in both his own, and as the tears flowed freely down his cheeks he said, solemnly—

"Yes, Thol; as God is my witness, I will."

The old ganger smiled serenely, and lifted his dimming eyes heavenward, saying—

"My God, I thank Thee! Lord, help him to do both! Thou wilt; *I know it!* Praise the Lord! I'm going! Jesus, dear Saviour, I come!"

The grey head drooped upon his breast, and Old Thol had gone home.

Paul Meggitt remained until the body of the old man was extricated from his earthly prison, and having ascertained that the rest of the men were safe, he accompanied the corpse of the aged ganger, saw it laid upon

the bed, and spoke a few words of condolence to the old man's son and daughter-in-law, with whom he had resided.

"Dick," said he to the former, "amongst your father's last words was a loving thought for you. Both you and I must be better men for this, that we may be quite as ready to go when the time comes. God help us both!" So saying, he retired, and sought his lodgings at the village inn.

For a long time Paul Meggitt sat by the fire, lost in deep and painful but salutary thought. His mind wandered back to his childhood—to the days when he stood by his mother's knee and listened to the old, old story of the Cross as he heard it from his mother's lips; to the days when that mother had knelt by his side and prayed that he might live to be a godly Christian, a good soldier of the Lord Jesus. He called to mind the solemn scene when, laid upon her dying bed, she fondly stroked the hair of her little son, and in faint and failing words, tremulous with weakness and tender love, besought him to love his Saviour, and, using

the very words of Old Thol, to "give his heart to God." He remembered how she had prayed, as only a mother may, that in the mysterious future of his after life, when his mother's presence had passed away for ever, he might be kept and guided in the paths of righteousness and peace, and that the orphan's life might be blessed and moulded by his mother's God.

Then he called up the course of his personal history since the day he had shed boyish and genuine tears by his mother's grave. How he had thriven and prospered, how good his mother's God had been to him, how his way had been wondrously opened, so that name, and fame, and wealth, and honour, had come to him, and how in it all, and after all, his mother's God was not his God. He had been proud and ambitious, had followed the lure both of pleasure and fame, and in the very perfection of ingratitude had ignored and forgotten the Author of his prosperity and the Redeemer of his soul.

Then his mind reverted to Old Thol, and his manifold entreaties, and prayers, and

counsels for his own salvation—the intense and inspired appeal which immediately preceded the catastrophe which sent the ripe old saint to heaven—that marvellous death scene in which grace and glory triumphed over death in its most distressingly painful form; all came back to him with overpowering force. Old Thol's dying request rung in his ears like a direct mandate from heaven, and with melted, hungry, determined soul he repeated his solemn promise, "Yes Thol, as God is my witness, I will," and dropping on his knees by the table, he bowed his head upon his clasped hands, and bursting into tears of genuine penitence, he

"Groaned the sinner's only plea,
'God be merciful to me.'"

Meanwhile Doctor Selwood, whom Paul had requested to call and inform him how the two "navvies" were progressing, drew near to fulfil his mission, and give a hopeful account of their condition. Doctor Selwood was a man about the age of Paul, a scholar

and a gentleman, and best of all, had learnt of Him who was meek and lowly, and had taken on his willing soul the silken yoke of his Saviour's love. He was the principal prop and stay of the little Methodist church in the village in which he resided, and was beloved and honoured as a ministering angel, who had a mission alike to the bodies and souls of those who sought his aid.

Passing upstairs to Paul Meggitt's door, Doctor Selwood tapped gently, and found it ajar, so that it opened at his touch. He heard a deep and genuine groan of trouble, followed by the ardent prayer long ago successful, when the poor publican, justified and happy, bounded from the temple. "God be merciful to me a sinner," fell upon his ear, and peering in, he found Paul Meggitt on his knees.

What could he do—he who knew so well the God of mercy and the sinner's need? He entered and laid his hands on the shoulders of the kneeling penitent, saying "Mr. Meggitt, from my own experience let me tell you that 'mercy' is sure to follow that prayer," and

kneeling by his side, he joined his pleadings with the prayers of the convicted sinner, and powerfully appealed to the throne of Grace.

“Come and talk with me a little,” said the Doctor kindly; and obedient as a child Paul Meggitt rose, and never dreaming of apology or shame, sensible that a kindred spirit had come, as Philip came to the Ethiopian nobleman to show him the way, he drew a chair to the fire, pointed his guest to it, and taking his own seat he said, “Doctor Selwood, I want to find my Saviour!”

“Mr. Meggitt,” said the Doctor, with a smile of boundless confidence, “The Saviour’s come to find you! This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” And beginning at the same Scripture, he preached to him Jesus.

Paul Meggitt was ripe for pardon. He hungered and thirsted for God, and so the answer came. A new light beamed in his eye; a new glow irradiated his features; a

new peace fell like heaven's dew upon the grass, into his longing soul.

"Doctor Selwood," said he, rising to his feet and taking him by the hand, "I've found Him! Jesus, my Saviour and my God!"

Again the two men knelt together. Their praises mingled with the praises of rejoicing angels, for Paul Meggitt had "given his heart to God."

CHAPTER III.

THE SQUIRE'S OPINION.

PAUL MEGGITT'S conversion was indeed a new creation. A soldier of the line, trying to describe his conversion and the results of it in a Methodist class meeting, found himself at a loss for words to make his witness sufficiently emphatic. At length he paused for a moment; an illustration from the daily round of soldier life came into his mind, and he said, "Friends it was a case of 'Right about face,' and no mistake." So it was with Paul Meggitt. The potent words of old Thol Hodgson had fairly gripped his conscience; the dormant influence of his godly mother's life and teaching sprung up, touched by God's finger, into such a vigorous resurrection that he felt an unutterable yearning after pardoning peace. His was the agonising to

enter in, which the Saviour urged, but on which sadly too little stress is laid in these days of prophesying smooth things; the consequences were therefore equally striking, alike in their intensity and the immediateness of their manifestation.

He became the topic of general conversation; even the local paper made a dainty and halting reference to his change of front in a way which showed as clearly as could be that the writer did not care to commit himself too fully either in the direction of praise or blame. The sporting world felt itself personally aggrieved by the withdrawal of the candidate for Derby honours, on which it had pinned its faith. According to its natural bent, it spent half a scoff upon the purist who had turned his back on the good old English sport, and in strain of high morality condemned that kind of religion that backed out of its engagements. Paul's friends and acquaintances in the upper circles of Breconsfield society were, in turn, unbelieving, astonished, indignant, and spiteful, and rumours were speedily forth-

coming that there was something behind it all not much to his credit that would be sure to come out by-and-by.

Words of sympathy and letters of condolence were spoken and written to his high-spirited wife, with many well-meant proffers of assistance, calculated to bring her erring and demented husband to some sense of his sin against society, and against that venerable Mother Church on which he had turned his heretic back. In it all and through it all, Paul Meggitt held on the even tenor of his way, paying not one jot of heed either to condemnations or calumnies, ordering his profession, himself, and, as far as might be, his household after him, in strict accordance with the dictates of the new conscience implanted in him by the Holy Spirit of God. He did not scruple to confess his Lord wherever he went, and the mean red-brick conventicle where the Methodists worshipped had no more regular or devout attendant at love-feast, preaching, class, or prayer meeting, than the celebrated engineer whose name and fame had spread through all

the land. No lowly Methodist peasant was more willing than he to give a reason for the hope that was in him, or in more simple diction to testify what "the Lord had done for his soul."

Paul Meggitt's sorest trial and his heaviest cross were laid on him by "those of his own household." In his case, the Saviour's declaration of the result of His mission had been forcibly fulfilled; for the "wife was set against the husband" in unmistakable antagonism. He found, as everybody will find whose religion has real power in it, and whose Christian principles control the life, that those who will live godly must suffer persecution; and in his case the persecution was painfully embittered, because its chiefest agent was his most loved and "familiar friend." His proud and pleasure-loving wife, whose personal beauty, striking tact, aristocratic birth, and social talents had conspired to make her a leader in the *haut monde*, was wounded to the quick with a sense of humiliation. She felt that she had lost caste by reason of her husband's

unaccountable "delusion," and she writhed under the unwelcome calamity with a passionate sense of personal indignity.

In vain Paul sought by redoubled kindness, and unfaltering patience with her imperious temper, to bring her round, at any rate, to a politic even though unsympathetic acceptance of the inevitable. In vain he declared that he would not unduly seek to restrain her from following the bent of her own inclinations. In vain he urged her that, for the children's sake, she should, at least outwardly, desist from recrimination and contempt. She declared that the insult to her pride, the slight on her family, the scorn of her superiors, and the coolness of her equals, consequent on his mad conduct, made living with him an impossibility; and more than once she intimated that she should take the children and seek the shelter of her father's roof.

Paul Meggitt dearly loved his wife, with a love that was almost worship—*was* worship until "all that sets up itself in the temple of God and is worshipped" was overthrown,

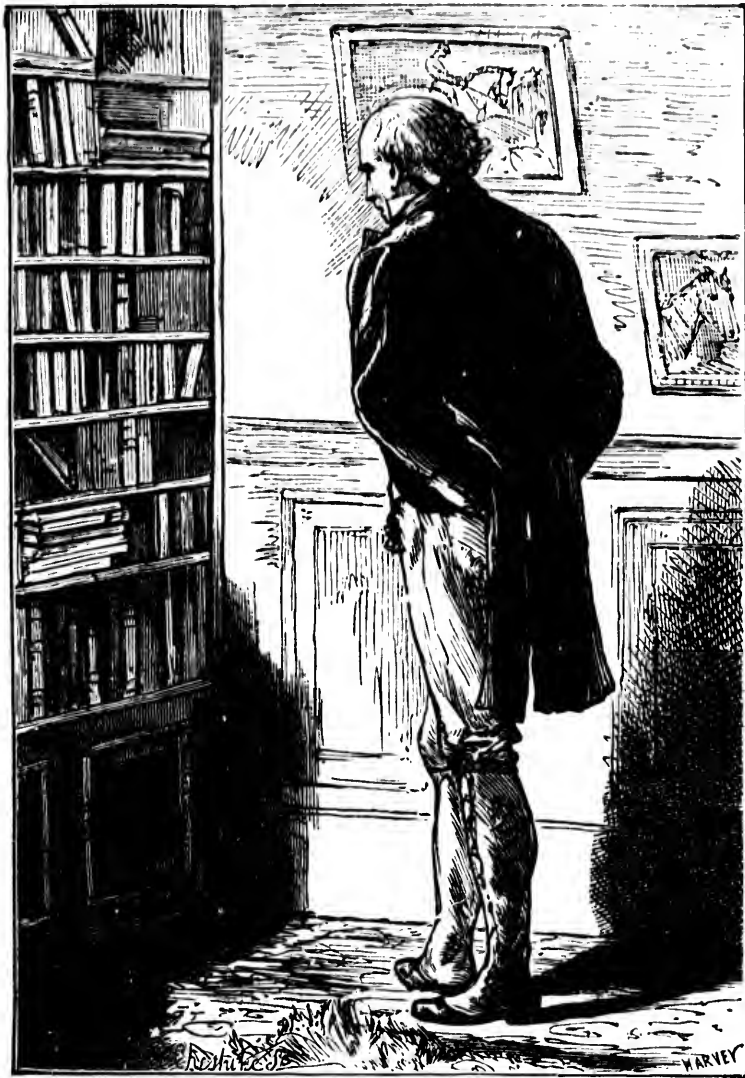
cast out by the "expulsive power of a new affection." This made the chronic strife, the angry denunciations, the passionate tears all the worse to bear. His home was very miserable, and but for the sustaining power of his new-found faith in Jesus, it must have fairly borne him down. Indeed, there were times when he felt it would be wiser to submit to the force of circumstances; he felt inclined to argue that he might maintain his religion if he broke away from the "despised people called Methodists," and that by so doing he might hit upon a happy compromise which would restore to him the love of his wife and the comfort of his home. But whenever he sought counsel of God upon his knees, the inspired word came on mind and memory with a persistent force that would not be gainsaid. "If any man love father or mother or wife or children more than me, he is not worthy of me." So for his soul's, his Saviour's, and his duty's sake, Paul Meggitt held bravely on his way, redoubled his attempts to conciliate his exasperated wife, but remained firm in the decision he had come

to when God spoke peace to his soul. "This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God."

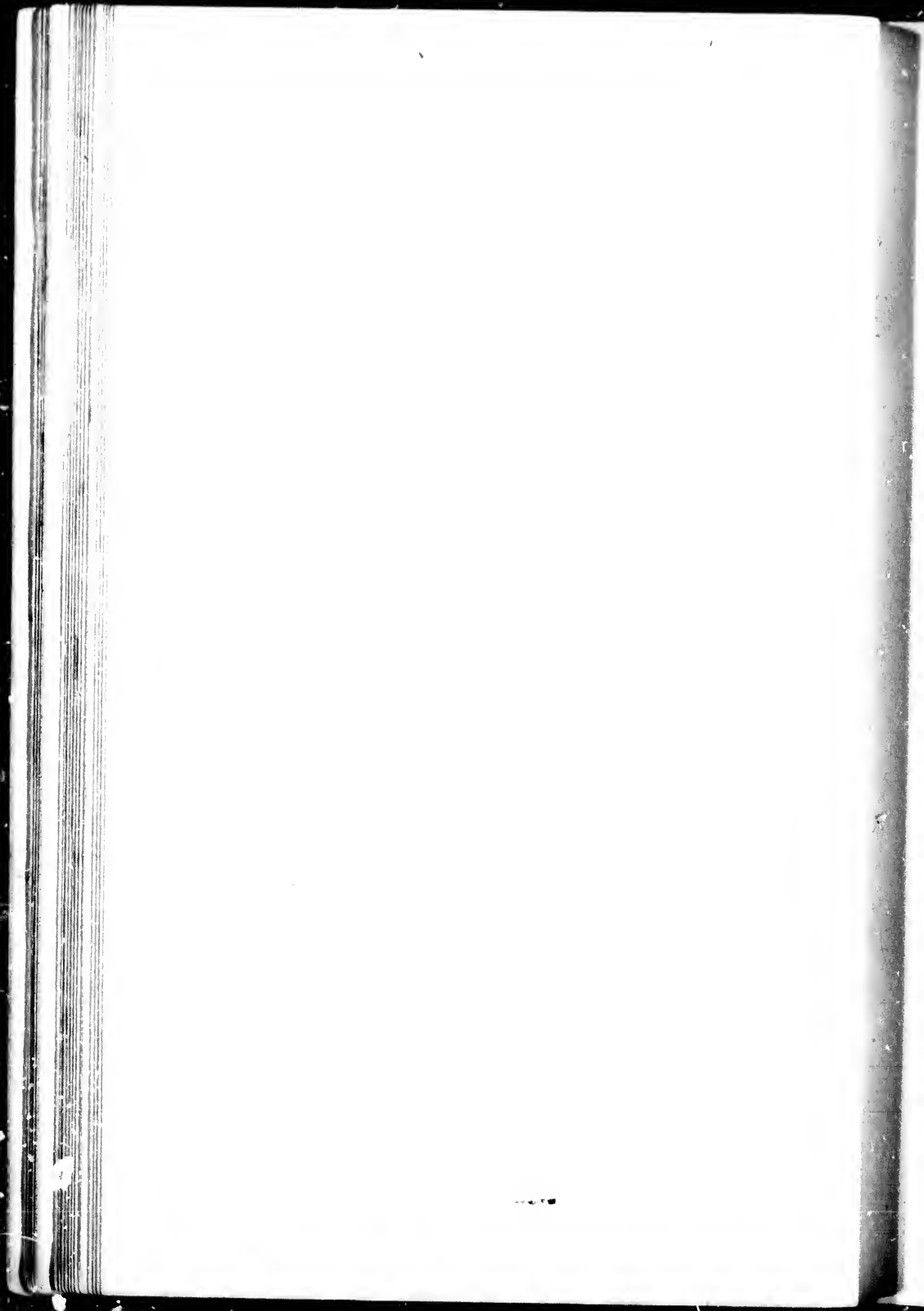
A few weeks of the kind of experience I have here described was quite sufficient to bring matters to a crisis. Mrs. Meggitt was aided and abetted in her radical and determined opposition by her father, who regarded religion as the sole business of the clergyman, and dismissed the whole subject from his own mind by the all-inclusive argument that he "hated cant." Squire Aubrey was, above all things, a Nimrod, and would have ostracised the closest friend he had, if he had dared to slight the red cloth jacket, or speak disparagingly of the hunter's horn.

"The fellow's crazed," quoth he, as he paced to and fro across the floor of his "library," whose walls were almost covered, not with books, for the old squire's best friend could scarcely have called him a literary character, but with pictures of hunting scenes, and the portraits of favourite horses and hounds.

This shall have brought aided opposition, and own that above have if he tucket, nter's as he f his vered, best m a s of ource



“‘The fellow’s crazed,’ quoth he” (p. 31).



Mrs. Meggitt had just been pouring out her griefs into his sympathetic ear. The bluff squire could not bear to see his Kate, the most accomplished huntress in the country-side, in tears.

“Never mind, Kate! Sooner than put up with the confounded psalm-singing kill-joy any longer, you shall come home again. Leave him to talk through his nose and turn up his eyes among ‘his dear brethren and sisters.’ There’s no ‘meeting’ so good as a hunting ‘meet,’ and all the psalms in the world haven’t got as much music in ‘em as a good round ringing ‘Tallyho!’”

Mrs. Meggitt’s mother, a tall and somewhat stately old lady, did not exactly fall in with this method of dealing with the Gordian knot. The old squire looked at the matter quite from a man’s standpoint; she from a woman’s, and that led her to look at the consequences to Kate herself, and to the children who called her mother. In her heart she had as little sympathy with Paul Meggitt’s delusion as either her daughter or her husband, but she could not hide from

herself the fact of her daughter's love for the offending Paul, and the effect that a separation would have on the headstrong wife when the first surges of pride and passion had passed by. She put a question to Kate that was a good deal more easily asked than answered.

"Kate," quoth she, "how long do you think you could bear to stay away from him if you did come?"

Kate's pride instantly suggested "For ever!" as the answer she should give, and the foolish words had nearly got through her lips. But her love for her clever and manly husband stopped them short, and a still small voice whispered to her heart, "A fortnight would be hard to bear." So she fenced the question, woman-like, and refused to look that alternative at all fairly in the face.

"Oh, but mother, we need not trouble ourselves about that. I should quite expect to see my gentleman here within a day or two. It is only by extreme measures that he can be brought to see his folly. And,"

continued she, proudly, "I'll let him see that I can be as firm as he."

Mrs. Meggitt felt inclined to say that Kate's "extreme measures" were likely to show *her* folly. She did not wish, however, to appear unwilling to receive her, and did, perhaps, entertain a hope that Paul's puritanical epidemic might be driven off, so she answered never a word.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WIFE'S FLIGHT.

It is possible that matters might have been managed better than they eventually were, and Kate Meggitt might have been saved from committing a grand mistake, but for the officious and mischievous interference of sympathetic and "good-natured" friends.

Gerard Berkeley, of Berkeley Hall, was taken by his wife to see "that poor dear Mrs. Meggitt," on the ground that it was only showing a Christian spirit to go to her in her trouble—which, being interpreted, meant, to support her in her rebellion against her husband's wishes. Mrs. Meggitt was at home, and with her was a younger sister of Paul, who had come, at Paul's request, to aid in softening his wife's antipathies, for Kate always had a special liking for her; and more especially to take charge of the two growing

girls, who saw and heard far more of the differences between their parents than was at all to their advantage.

Emily Meggitt was an amiable and sweet-tempered young lady, who had long since found the "pearl of great price" which her mother had prized so dearly. She had a low, quiet, and persuasive voice, which, as Shakspeare says, is "an excellent thing in woman," and she possessed a still greater excellence, not too common in either sex, of preserving a judicious silence under circumstances when silence is a very difficult virtue to practise.

Mr. Berkeley and his lively lady were ushered into the drawing-room, and as both of them were charged to the very lips with material for talk on the all-absorbing topic of Paul Meggitt's delusion, it was not very long before the subject was fairly broached.

"What a strange thing it is that Mr. Meggitt should have turned round so suddenly! and in such a queer direction, too! I'm sure, if he wanted to be really religious, nobody would have hindered him, and he might have done it without making such a

difference, or making himself and those that belong to him so very ridiculous. Of course, dear Mrs. Meggitt, you could never so far forget yourself as to go to a Methodist meeting-house. If he only knew what *everybody* says about him, it would certainly stop him from going so recklessly down to ruin. And then, you see, it isn't simply himself that we have to consider. Just think what a very awkward position he puts *you* into! I declare, it is *so* provoking! And just when you were getting where you ought to be—at the very head of Breconsfield society!”

So said Mrs. Berkeley, whose tongue, once fairly wound up for action, was not either soon or easily to be reduced to stillness again. As she proceeded she waxed more and more indignant, and also more and more compassionate, until sheer breathlessness compelled a pause. Finally she got rid of the following subtle commixture of vinegar and gall:—

“You don't know how sorry we are for you, dear Kate” (for these were bosom friends who spoke). “I assure you, I and Gerard hardly ever have you out of our minds. To

think that you, of all people, should be subjected to such a very distressing experience! And to think that Paul Meggitt, whom everybody admired and respected *for your sake*, should do such a very low-lived and compromising thing, demeaning you as much as he demeans himself! For, as I said to Mrs. Crawford the other day, 'A husband takes his wife with him, whether he goes up or down.' And Mrs. Crawford said, 'Ah, my dear, you are quite right. Poor thing, I'm sorry for her. What a trial it must be!'"

Now all this was gall and wormwood to Kate Meggitt. The idea of being an object of pity and commiseration was dreadfully revolting to her proud and haughty spirit; and that Mrs. Crawford, of all people, a tattling old dowager whom she greatly detested, should dare to speak of her in tones of compassion aroused her ire and vexation to the very boiling point.

By-and-by Mr. Berkeley took up the parable, and with arched eyebrows and extended hands poured out his soul within him. He drew such a picture of Paul's loss of

prestige and position in social, club, and civic life that Kate was half beside herself with mortified pride. He wound up his strongly-worded diatribe with the all-important question—

“Mrs. Meggitt, what *do* you mean to do?”

“Do,” said the foolish wife, unable to restrain her vexation, “I mean to go home to Aubrey Hall again, and leave him to do as he likes. If he has no more regard for me than to treat me in this shameful, cruel, and disgraceful way, the best thing we can do is to live apart.”

Her “friendly” guests approved of her decision, complimented her on her “spirit,” and added, with a spirit worthy of Mephistopheles, that they were quite sure *that* would bring him to his senses if anything would, “For everybody knew,” they said, “that Paul Meggitt loved her more dearly than his own life.”

Mrs. Meggitt caught at this idea as the true solution of the difficulty. She settled it in her own mind that it would be a capital stroke of policy; and, as soon as her visitors

were dismissed, she set about carrying it into execution. Paul was absent on duty at the new railway on which Old Thol had lost his life; so, gathering a few articles of attire together—for she argued that her absence would be sure to be only temporary—she ordered the carriage, and took the youngest child, and was driven that very day to Aubrey Park, as her father's residence was called. The eldest girl, now ten or twelve years of age, she knew could not be divorced, except by force, from her father's side.

Kate's father received his daughter with a loud laugh of satisfaction.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said he, "Master Puritan Paul will soon hark back to the old covert again when he knows it's a case of 'gone away.' He'll pretty soon pick up the scent, I'll warrant; but if he shows himself here, he'll have to bark to another tune before he comes on a 'find.'"

The old hunter's metaphors generally smacked of the national sport.

"Never mind, lassie," he continued, "you are safe enough here, and here you shall stay

till my lord picks up his senses again, and acts like a reasonable mortal."

Thus Squire Aubrey endorsed the action of his daughter. Her mother shook her head, but acquiesced; and nothing remained but to send the following letter by the next post, so that Paul might receive it immediately on his return:—

"MY DEAR HUSBAND (carefully underlined).—

"I am no able any longer to bear the shame and disgrace which I have suffered through your shocking want of consideration of my wishes and feelings; and as I am quite sure there is *no hope* of our *mutual happiness* unless you give up your wicked and *unkind* conduct, I have come to my father's house for protection and *peace*. I do *fervently hope* that you will see how *cruel* you have been to *your wife*, and that you will come and give me the assurance that you will give up all your new-fangled and degrading notions. Then I will *gladly* come back again, and be nicer and *'more* loving than ever. Believe me, *my dear husband*, to be your *heart-broken* but *loving* and faithful wife,
"KATE MEGGITT."

The letter was despatched, and then the foolish and mistaken wife waited, in a turmoil of hope and fear, for the coming of her repentant and submissive husband, whom in her inmost heart she doted on with a love which was almost idolatrous in its strength.

CHAPTER V.

THE GANGER'S SON.

WHILE he was engaged on that portion of the new railway where old Thol Hodgson was fatally hurt, Paul Meggitt, remembering his promise to the dying man, paid a visit to Dick Hodgson, who resided in the village hard by, where Paul had temporary and occasional lodgings. He found Dick's wife in tears, paying little heed to two or three squalling children, who, for the nonce, had evidently some griefs of their own, which, however, were of small account compared with the chronic sorrow that oppressed their mother.

"Well, Mrs. Hodgson," said Paul cheerily, "what's amiss this morning, and where's your husband?"

"He's down at the Black Swan, sir, that's where he is, and that's what's amiss;

for," said she, as the tears burst forth afresh, "he's oftener there than anywhere else. God forgive me for sayin' so, but it's true."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Paul, gravely enough. "Why, I thought he had turned over a fresh leaf ever since his father's death. He promised me that he would give up the drink, and try to live a better life."

The poor woman shook her head as she replied, "And so he did, sir. For nearly a month I don't believe he ever tasted liquor. He went to chapel with me on Sundays, and sat and played with the children o' nights; and I thought I was going to be the happiest woman in Hessleby, for when he is in his sober senses there isn't a better husband or father living than our Dick." Here, again, sobs and tears checked her speech as she thought of the happiness and peace which might reign in their humble dwelling but for the home-blasting influence of strong drink.

"I'm very sorry," said Paul, sympathetically. "How did he come to make so sad a slip as to go back to drinking again?"

"Why, sir, you see Dick's an Odd Fellow,

and three weeks since they had their club dinner at the Black Swan, as they always have; and as he had gotten to pay for his share whether he ate it or no, he said as how he might as well go; but he said he would have nothing to drink, unless it might be a bottle o' gingerbeer, or something of that sort. He meant well enough," she continued earnestly, her wifely love and loyalty coming to the front to make the best terms for him that they could, "but his old comrades got round him and over him; an' being on the spot, the smell of the drink was more than he could stand. He came home tipsy, and nearly every day since then my Dick has been at the Black Swan; an' it's all over now, an' there's nothing but the workhouse for my bairns an' me." Dropping down on the nearest chair, the long-suffering woman covered her face with her apron in a perfect spasm of despair.

It was somewhat early in the day, and Paul Meggitt resolved to go at once to the Black Swan and see if it were possible to persuade the weak-willed Dick to leave his

loon companions and attend to his little business, which as a wheelwright and carpenter he had got together, but which was fast going from him on account of his insobriety and consequent inattention.

Dick Hodgson had not as yet lost his faculties by the day's debauch, nor utterly drowned the voice of conscience by intoxicating potations. He yielded, though unwillingly, to the entreaties of his father's friend; and though silent and glum enough, he accompanied Paul to the home he was wrecking, and to the wife and children who were the sufferers by his sin. In kindly and most earnest tones Paul reasoned with the poor victim of England's chiefest vice, and so wrought upon him that by the time they had reached the cottage door Dick's better manhood prevailed; he owned his sin, and solemnly promised amendment. His wife, who had dried her tears, met him with a wise and wifely welcome. Paul prayed with them as those pray who daily commune with God, and when he was taking his departure, Dick said—

“ Good-bye, sir, and thank you. I know

I'm a poor weak fool, as well as a wicked sinner; but I'll try, sir—God help me! I'll try again! But promise one thing, sir—for my wife's sake, for my father's sake—you'll not turn your back on me, but be patient with me, and keep on trying to get me right."

"That I will, Dick. But for your own sake, you must try with all your heart; and if you ask God's blessing on it, you are certain to succeed."

Hereupon Dick Hodgson went off to his bench, not only to handle plane and chisel, but to wrestle in mighty battle with the devil, whose keen-edged weapon was the revived longing for strong drink. This had been called to life by the stupid and utterly indefensible custom which connects the social economies of a Friendly Society with the public-house.

Paul Meggitt repaired to the inn where the coach stopped, and made his way to Breconsfield, and the home where so sad a blow awaited him as that which was detailed in the last chapter. Dick Hodgson's parting

words lingered in his ears—"Be patient with me, and keep on trying to get me right."

Little did he think how necessary it would be to exercise the same virtue, and abide by the same plan, in order to bring back his own wife to the hearth and heart and home she had rendered desolate by her ill-advised flight to her father's house.

He was met in the hall of his spacious and well-appointed mansion, not as he had always been before, by his queenly and much-loved Kate, but by his own sister, whose greeting had such a peculiar pathos in it that Paul at once jumped to the conclusion that something was wrong.

"Is Kate ill? How are the children?" he said wistfully.

"All are well, dear Paul, I believe," said Emily; "but there's a letter in the dining-room you had better see at once."

In a few minutes more the seal was broken, the secret out, and Paul Meggitt knew himself to be a wifeless and dishonoured man. The blow was heavy, and for some time he could but lay his head upon his hands, in a per-

fect tumult of distress, saying never a word. His eldest daughter, a dark-featured, large-eyed, thoughtful girl of some twelve summers old, came and lifted up his head, kissed him again and again, as her ready tears flowed like rain, saying—

“Poor papa! dear papa! Mamma and Clara are gone away, but your little Gertie won't leave you; and by-and-by they'll come back again. I know they will; I have been praying to God ever since they went away that He would bring them back again, and He says He will, for I hear Him in my dreams!” But despite her hopeful prophecies, Gertie was glad and fain to creep in on her father's bosom and relieve her pent-up feelings in a perfect passion of tears.

Then came on Paul Meggitt another and a different mood. He was wroth, fiercely wroth, with the proud and self-willed wife who had distressed, not only her faithful husband, but her innocent and suffering child. He kissed his little daughter again and again on every feature of her face, and then placing her aside, he walked quickly to and fro along the

floor of the dining-room, a prey to indignation, anger, wounded love, and bitter grief.

“Hard, faithless, reckless, cruel!” such were some of the adjectives which Paul Meggitt flung silently at his absent wife, as he re-pondered over the terrible letter which was burnt in upon his brain. His face was pale, his heart throbbed fitfully, and then the hot blood mounted swiftly to his brow, and he said to himself—

“Let her go! Let her go for ever! She can never more be wife of mine!” Then his strong love for the wife of his heart came forth to stop the rash and vengeful words, and the last words of Dick Hodgson, which had greatly impressed him, came with the strength of a revelation, “Be patient with me, and keep on trying to get me right.” Then the “still small voice,” to which he had latterly paid a loyal heed, spoke to him of duty, held up before him the Cross so patiently borne and so long for his sake, who had so long denied his Lord, and then came another revulsion as he looked into the tearful, wistful face of his darling Gertie.

"Lord forgive me," said he, "Lord help me! Show me what to do?"

"That's it, papa!" said Gertie, inserting her hand in his hot and trembling palm. "Aunt Emily says that if we will but ask Him, God will show us all the way."

Called to himself, and with an eye to his surroundings, Paul Meggitt braced up his courage, resolved to carry his burden bravely, and take time to think.

CHAPTER VI.

ABRAHAM HALLIDAY'S COUNSEL.

AT the tea-table that evening, the three who gathered around it took their meal almost in silence and in dumb show, for the sorrow that had fallen on them had stolen alike their appetite and voice. Then Emily set herself with infinite tact and winsome ways to cheer the drooping spirit of the child. Gertie's delicate sympathies and loving nature were sore shaken by a calamity which was none the less shocking in that it involved a mystery that she could not understand. Paul Meggitt made his way up a bye street and into an alley to the humble and, so far as elevation was concerned, the unattractive little chapel in which he was now accustomed to meet his Lord.

It was Paul's usual class-night, and unlike too many of his rank and order in these days, he loved and valued that well-tried means of grace, and felt that there, if

anywhere, he was likely to gain a word in season to guide and comfort him in his hour of sore distress. At the outset of his new career he had attached himself to a class which was conducted by a poor but eminently shrewd and godly man, a carpenter by trade, whose name was Abraham Halliday. The old man's grammar was faulty, and the letter *h* was subjected to much ill treatment—here rejected and there emphatically inserted in a fashion both arbitrary and odd. But Abraham had, nevertheless, the root of the matter within him, and was more than usually learned in all the learning which the Great Teacher imparts to those who learn of Him.

Abraham Halliday was tall in stature, somewhat thin and lank in shape, with long hair, lighter than his years would have betokened, and which was brushed well back from a forehead endowed, according to phrenology, with a development indicative of intellectual faculties above the common. His face was clean shaven, was generally pervaded with a sort of calm content, and was

lighted up with a pair of bright grey eyes. These were so expressive as to form a kind of running comment alike upon the related experiences of his members and his own unflinching testimony of the goodness and the grace of God.

According to his established custom, Abraham prefaced the commoner occupations of the class meeting by reading a short passage of Scripture and expounding it in his own quaint and forceful way. On this occasion he read the eleventh Psalm. "How, say ye to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain?'" "Poor David," said Abraham, "he had a hard time of it just then in Saul's palace. The king was bad-tempered an' jealous, an' the devil drove him clean out of his senses at times. An' he always seemed to make David his butt, and more than once or twice the young fellow's life was in danger. That javelin of his was always over handy, and it was within an inch of pinning the lad to the wall. So his friends said, 'Flee, David, flee! Spread your wings! Get away into the mountains! Your life's not worth a

minute's purchase.' I should like to know if he would have been any better off if he *had* gone to the mountain. He had no business there. His post o' duty was with Saul, to try to sing the devil out of him, and play his common sense back with his harp. I've a notion that being where we ought to be, an' doin' what we ought to do, is the safest spot an' the safest deed for everybody. God's Providence put David there, and Saul's javelin will stick i' th' wall whatever sort of aim Saul may throw it with."

"The Lord's throne is in the heavens. The Lord is in His holy temple." "As if David would say, 'When you ask me to run away, you've forgotten that. The Lord hasn't gone, and so long as I know where to find Him, I'll trust Him. No, no, I shan't go. Here he's put me, an' here I'll stay!' An' it was a good thing he did, for Saul never hurt him. The Lord delivered him, and the crown was his when the time came. Depend on it, my friends, the way o' duty's the way o' safety. Stick to it. Javelins may be thrown at us, but they can't hit us; an'

all the while 'His countenance doth behold the upright,' an' that's the warmest, brightest, cheeriest sunshine that the soul can bask in. Let us make 'Faith and Fidelity' our motto. Then we may sing even while the 'wicked bend their bow,' and the foundations seem to rock :—

'Under the shadow of Thy throne
Still may we dwell secure ;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.'

As for me, that's how I feel. My prayer is, 'Lord keep me *right*, an' help me to do *right*.' Then I needn't either flee or run, for I have God's temple to dwell in, an' His throne to live under."

Paul's statement of his experience that evening was not particularly jubilant, and the unbidden tear would fall in spite of him, as he told of the deep waters through which he was passing.

"Deep waters, truly," quoth Abraham, when Paul had finished. "But just as every stream and river runs in the channel God marks out for 'em, so the 'deep waters' wouldn't have flowed your way if the Lord

didn't see that they would carry you nearer to the sea of His infinite love. Besides, He maybe means 'em to run so that they shall carry them you love into the same great ocean of peace; and you won't mind a bit of dashing and tossing and struggling if the Lord's just using a freshet o' trouble to carry a whole family to the 'sea o' glass mingled wi' fire.' And don't forget, Brother Meggitt, that He can still the troubled waters or dry 'em up, or split 'em in two, so that you can go over dry shod, or lift you suddenly on to the dry rock of deliverance. The Lord's ways are not our ways, but they are the right ways, and be sure o' this, that—

'Waves cannot bury,
And floods cannot drown
The trustful believer
He takes for His own.'

I'll tell you what it is, Maister Meggitt, while you're in the waters stretch your hands an' lift your heart to Him, an' your feet 'll feel the bottom, an' you shall walk safely to the steadfast shore."

After this and much other encouraging

counsel, Paul Meggitt went home refreshed and strengthened, purposing, by the grace of God, to bear and forbear, to do his duty, to trust in God, and hope for the best. For some time, however, sorrowful days were appointed him; the waters deepened, and the floods surged still more fiercely. His precious Gertie, the darling of her father's heart, fell sick even unto death. A merciless fever seized on the young and somewhat ailing child, and despite all that cost and care could do, laid an unrelaxing hold upon her life, and the physician spake in whispers which were ominous in their meaning to the sore, sad heart of Paul Meggitt. He wrote at once, as soon as the danger was seen to be near and real, to his absent wife.

"MY DEAREST KATE,—

"For my own sake and yours, I would to God that you would come home again. My heart asks it, longs for it, aches for it; but now most specially for darling Gertie's sake. I implore you to come instantly. The dear child is stricken down by fever, and I have ten thousand fears that it is for her life. Dr. Armitage has little hope to give us. Oh, wife and mother! come to the aid of husband and child!

"Your true and faithful husband,

"PAUL MEGGITT."

Mrs. Meggitt had just come in from a long ride over the breezy Breconsfield Downs, when her mother put the solemn message into her hands. Dazed and sick at heart she read the words in her mother's hearing, and mourned the day when, in unwifely and unmotherly self-will, she went away from her husband's hearth.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE GATHERED FLOWER.

No sooner had Mrs. Meggitt received her husband's strong appeal than she made all possible haste to the bedside of her eldest born. The irascible and stubborn old squire ventured his opinion that it was all a hoax, and that her "Methody husband" was only scheming to compass her return. Her mother, however, supported her daughter in her intention, and, sooth to say, Kate cordially agreed with her that such a letter could only have been prompted by sad reality. So much her own heart told her, and her preparations were made accordingly. The old gentleman, however, would not suffer her to make her home-going a final return. He declared that if she yielded in that fashion, all she had already done to bring her errant husband to his senses would be lost, and

roundly declared that if she did not "hold her own" he himself would "wash his hands of her" and her husband too. Distracted by contending counsels and dread oppression caused by the solemn missive she had received, Kate Meggitt left her personal belongings behind her, and little Clara, too, for prudential reasons, and in a few moments was on the way to Breconsfield to take her place beside her dying child.

* * * * *

"Auntie," said the feeble voice of the suffering child, "I wish papa wouldn't look so sad. *I'm* not sad, except for him. I am going to heaven to live with Jesus and His angels, and this poor aching head will never ache any more."

Aunt Emily's hand was laid upon Gertie's burning brow, and the hot tears would fall upon the pillow in spite of all her efforts to keep them back for the sake of the sweet treasure toward whom she had acted all a mother's part.

The sufferer had borne her sickness with an uncomplaining cheerfulness, and as the

fatal fever laid ever a firmer hold upon her life, the godly teachings of her loving nurse were more and more rewarded by the clear, sweet evidences of grace and goodness which told how near the lamb was hastening to be folded in the Saviour's breast.

"Then you see, auntie, now that I'm so ill, mamma is sure to come back again—don't you think so? Then papa will be happy again. That'll be a good thing to die for, won't it?" and here she lifted up her heavy eyes to Emily Meggitt's face with a smile that was all submission and glad content.

"There, you must not talk any more," said auntie softly; "you are not going to die, I hope, darling. You must try to sleep; that will help you to get better." But the words had not much hope in them, and they were sadly belied by her tearful face.

"Auntie, dear! when first I fell sick I did want to get better more than you can think, and I prayed to Jesus so hard, and asked Him to make me well again. But as I grew worse, I didn't seem to want it so

much. When the doctor came yesterday and felt my pulse, and looked at my tongue and into my eyes, and sighed before he smiled, I knew that I should never be well any more. In a minute—yes, less than a minute—I thought, Jesus wants me and I want to go. Then I cried a little bit, for I thought, 'Poor papa, what *will* he do without me?' and something whispered to me, 'Mamma will come to comfort him.' And so she will. God will send her, and she and Pa and Clara will be happy again, and I shall be in heaven. And so don't cry, auntie," she continued, tenderly stroking her hand, "Jesus knows best what to do." Here the dying child, spent and weary, turned her head and dosed awhile, and Aunt Emily sat in silence by her, and watched and wept and prayed. Then came in Paul Meggitt from the library, in which he sat and prayed and pondered the live-long day, except at such times as he came with stealthy step to look upon his treasure, and to watch in company until the pent-up feeling would gush forth, and then he retreated

to his sombre solitude and sat alone with God. No words of mine can tell the fierceness of that furnace in which he was being tested to the core. But for the strength of soul borne in upon him on his knees, his big, loving heart must have sundered in the strife.

It was toward evening when Kate Meggitt arrived, and her husband was sitting wrapped in the gathering dusk beside his sad and desolate hearth. She had gone round the house, lifted the latch of the door of the servants' hall, and then quietly made her way to the library. Turning the handle of the door gently, she slipped within, and saw her husband seated with his arms stretched upon the table, and his head laid thereon, and heard the groans which told of the awful struggle of his soul.

"Paul!" said she, trembling with a nameless fear, half of guilt and half of dread, "Paul! how is Gertie?"

He lifted his haggard features, so changed that she started at the sight, fixed fierce eyes on her, and said—

“Dying! O God! and with no mother near.”

Crushed, silenced, half unawares, she turned and fled up the stairs into her own room, dashed off her hat and cloak, and then sick and like to faint, she stepped into the chamber where her first-born lay waiting—waiting for the Good Shepherd to take her to His fold. She stepped noiselessly and unperceived to the foot of the bed. Gertie, weak and rapidly growing weaker, lay waiting for the end. Aunt Emily was bending over her with one hand beneath her pillow, and with the other holding the poor pale hand of her dying charge.

“Auntie,” said the child, “Tell mamma to love papa’s Jesus and mine. Tell her to comfort papa, who will miss me so much. *Dear* papa! and *dear* auntie Emily, too,” said she, with a smile that might well repay her tender nurse for all her love and care.

Unable to restrain herself, forgetful of the imprudence of so sudden a surprise, Kate Meggitt slid forward, sank on her knees, and kissing the disengaged hand of her dying

child, like one who sues undeserved favour, she sobbed—

“Oh, Gertie dear, say *dear* mamma, too!”

For a moment or two the beclouded mind of the little invalid failed to read the situation, and the half-demented mother could not but feel how she had shut herself out from the contracting horizon of her daughter's love and hope.

“Mamma! yes, *dear* mamma! Oh, how glad I am you've come! Dear papa has been so sad. I knew you'd come. Jesus told me so, and I've brought you back to Pa! And it makes me glad to die!”

Paul Meggitt entered. His eye rested on the changing countenance of his beloved child. Death was written on every feature. He bent over her, and she said, “Kiss me, papa.” He touched her lips with his. “Kiss—*dear*—mamma! Good-bye! Jesus—has—*come*.” And through smiling lips the death-sigh fluttered faintly forth, and the sweet soul, soaring heavenward, left only the beautiful clay behind.

Aunt Emily hid her face in the pillow and sobbed in silence. Paul Meggitt stood with folded arms, gazing with dry, dazed eyes on the rifled casket from which the gem was gone, his face working and twitching with a spasm of grief that found no outlet. The mother, stunned and remorseful, touched the little lifeless hands with hot lips, and slid down upon the ground as if she thought her husband might well strike her down; and then, as if she had forfeited all right to be there, she went unnoticed from the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HUSBAND'S WRATH.

It is simply impossible to describe the concentrated burden of grief and despair which crushed the unhappy wife and mother as she crept from the room in which the fragile and broken lily lay.

“Gertie, my darling Gertie,” she murmured through hot and parched lips. Then rising without the door, she clasped her hands over the heart that almost burst its cell by an insupportable spasm of agony and remorse. She stood for a few brief moments irresolute—a few brief moments into which were compressed a full retrospect, a fierce scorching conception of the unalleviated present, a dumb, dazed outlook on a dead, rayless future—and groaned within herself, “My burden is greater than I can bear.”

Not yet; for the strong agony of her

noble husband rose up before her, and the great love she bore him enabled her to understand and feel the unsyllabled distress that lay like ice upon his heart.

“Oh, Paul, Paul!” she murmured. “I have lost you and my child for ever!”

For ever! Should she be able to retain her reason? The words sounded like a dirge, and hope lay buried with a great stone upon it, and she knew of no hand that could roll that stone away. “Dying! O God! and with no mother near!” The terrible words rung in Kate Meggitt's ear like a knell that tolled for the death of love. Her husband's hard and haggard face, as the words were uttered, rose up before her, monitory as Banquo's ghost. With tottering and uncertain steps she sought her room, took up her hat and cloak, and retreated down the stairs with an ill-defined and half-compulsory idea of going out, anywhere, anywhere from the presence of the husband she had so grievously wronged.

There was a light in the drawing-room, and just as Kate Meggitt was passing the

door with hat and cloak in her hand, a tall and winsome-looking lady came forward. But when the stranger saw, not Emily Meggitt, as she expected, but the mistress of the house, she started back in evident surprise—an act which, all unintentionally, confirmed the stricken woman in the morbid feeling that had seized upon her, that she had lost all right to be in her husband's house.

“I beg your pardon,” said Mrs. Stanhope, as the visitor was called. “I did not know that you were at home. I called to see how darling Gertie is, and whether I could watch a little, while Miss Meggitt snatched a little rest.” Again, however unwittingly, she aimed a blow at the remorseful woman, who could but think how even a stranger had been more near and ready to help than she.

Mrs. Stanhope was a godly Christian lady with whose many virtues Paul and his sister had become acquainted at the humble sanctuary they had been accustomed to attend. She was the wife of an influential Breconsfield solicitor, and was greatly loved and honoured in all the religious circles of that

thriving town for her diligent services in every department of evangelic labour, for the "alms-deeds which she did," and for the sweet gentleness, which was a distinguishing feature of her character. Kate Meggitt had long known her in a distant sort of fashion; but she was not one of her "set," and, indeed, was far too intimately connected with the "psalm singers" for her to wish to make of her an acquaintance, much less a friend. But just now poor Kate had neither pride nor prejudice, and as if at once aware that she was in the presence of sympathy and goodness, she flung herself on the shoulder of the visitor and wailed out—

"Oh, Mrs. Stanhope! Gertie's dead! and my husband is bitter against me! What *shall* I do?" Thick and fast came the relieving tears, and still again came the wild unanswered cry, "What shall I do?"

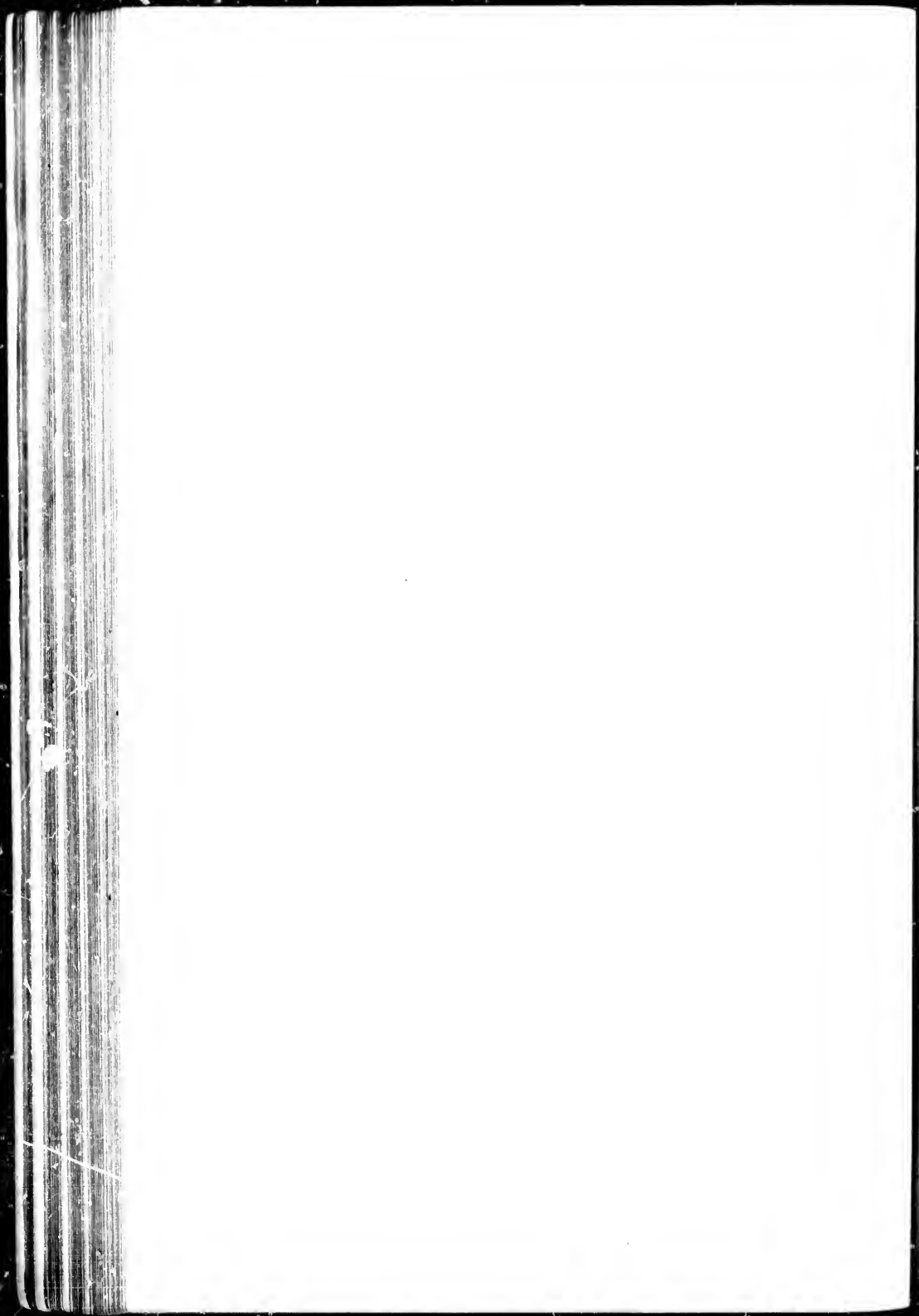
Mrs. Stanhope strove to soothe her grief, and by judicious questioning arrived at a fair understanding of the pitiful case as it

stood. By-and-by she heard the library door shut sharply to, and knew that Paul Meggitt, half beside himself in turbulence of spirit, had shut himself in to indulge unrestrained in grievous thought, and, as she more than half suspected, in anger against his wife and rebellion against God.

Then Emily Meggitt came, and, true to her noble nature, read and pitied the haggard-looking woman who had come home in time for nothing but to see her darling die. She gently sought to disengage the hat and cloak from her sister's hand, but this she firmly resisted, declaring that she could not, dared not, dwell beneath that roof unless her husband should bid her stay. Mrs. Stanhope resolved to end the difficulty. She went to the library, slowly opened the door, and saw the tall well-built form of Paul Meggitt leaning against the book-shelves, with his head upon his arms, and heaving sigh after sigh, which was still more a groan than a sigh, more a protest than a prayer. She went forward, laid her hand upon his shoulder, saying—



“Leaning against the bookshelves” (p. 74).



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“Mr. Meggitt, can't you take this grief to God?”

The strong man, strong in that sharp paroxysm of unbelief, almost rudely withdrew from the gentle touch, and turning fiercely round, said hoarsely—

“No. There is no God!”

“Paul Meggitt,” said she solemnly, “Beware! Your darling Gertie has gone to God, and on the very bosom of her Saviour might well weep to hear your wicked words. I come to tell you that your wife ——”

“Wife!” said he, in concentrated scorn, stamping his foot upon the floor in savage wrath. “I have no wife!”

Hereupon the gentle lady stood aghast and silenced, drew backward toward the door. She paused a moment, and then said—

“Oh, my friend! my heart bleeds for you, but you are sinning with a high hand. I go to pray for you; Mrs. Meggitt is going home with me. When you want to find your God again, come to your loving, weeping, stricken wife, you will find Him by her side.”

So saying, she retired. The sisters knew

as soon as she appeared how vain had been her errand. Mrs. Stanhope spoke in hopeful tones of Paul's certain return to love and duty when the stunning blow had passed a little, and so pressed her kindly hospitality on Mrs. Meggitt, that urged thereto by the gentle Emily, she consented to go with her to her home. But first the godly lady knelt between the sorrowing sisters, and, as one who knows from holy custom how to talk with God, pleaded for them and the stricken man who nursed his grief alone, the balm and blessing of the long-suffering Friend and Father "who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust."

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CHAPTER IX.

A VAIN ERRAND.

IT is scarcely too much to say that Paul Meggitt was, for the time being, scarcely responsible for his actions. His naturally proud and self-assertive temperament, combined with a depth of tenderness and a strength of affection of surpassing intensity, made the ordeal through which he was now passing a furnace seven times hotter than it would have been to ordinary men. His big heart ached even to agony for the loss of his darling Gertie, and he writhed under the bitter sense of the shame which had fallen on him by reason of his wife's ill-judged and cruel conduct. His deep manly love for his "peerless Kate" had been wounded to the very core; and withal a rush of temptation, applied with truly Satanic subtlety at the very moment when his sorrow had reached its climax, and in

the very form likeliest to shake him from his moral centre, made his soul to heave in passionate rebellion against Providence, whom he tacitly charged with being unrighteous in His acts, partial in His dealings, and cruel in His decrees. Thus and thus passed the slow hours of that awful first night of death; overhead there lay the withered blossom, nipped by the wind's unkindly blast, but having still the nameless beauty which only death can give to only such a victim—the rifled casket from which hard fate had stolen the jewel dearer than his life. The stricken father paced the floor with restless tramp, wrestling with such an agony of grief and such throes of doubt and desperation, that he was all but thrown off his balance, and must have been completely vanquished but for the patient care and goodness of his God.

The grey light of the morning glimmered faintly into the darkened room, throwing grim and ghostly shadows round it, when again the door was softly opened, and lifting his haggard face, he saw that his sister Emily,

darling Gertie's loving, gentle, and unwearied nurse, was standing, half in fear and half in doubt as to how her intrusion would be received. To her whose hand had held his Gertie's as she passed away, and whose tears had fallen on the waxen cheek, he could not but give greeting. A poor, dead smile, infinitely more pitiful to see than iron sternness or coursing tears could be, touched her to the quick, and stepping forward she laid her hand gently on his shoulder and said—

“My brother!”

That was the way God sent the first instalment of the promised balm. How simple the two words look in print! But spoken as she spoke them, with the whole of her sister heart on her tongue-tip, and that home-voice with true pathos in it, sending his mind on the instant to happy childhood and his mother's knee—all that can't be printed. Have my readers heard the mellow words when the heart was sore? Through Paul Meggitt's frame there ran a quiver, as when the demon was about to be dislodged in answer to a weeping father's cry and a loving Christ's command.

“My brother! I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and see! thy Saviour has dear Gertie in His arms.”

Paul lifted his head again suddenly and with widely-opened eyes, as if he expected verily to see his darling. The morning light had brightened, and his eyes fell on a large oil painting on the wall. There, though Emily had no such reference, he saw the Good Shepherd with a lamb at rest upon His bosom. It was a glimpse into heaven.

“O Christ! O merciful Christ! I thank Thee.”

So said Paul Meggitt, with a long, deep sigh that told of life restored. The dread, cold death-clutch of despair, which had all but strangled faith, relaxed; and, falling on his knees, as the fountains of the great deep were being broken up, he wept and prayed and wept like a repentant child. Then, like David, he “washed and changed his apparel, and ate bread, for he said I shall go to her, though she return not to me.” Now he could visit the draped and silent chamber where his darling lay, and look, and weep,

and kiss the clay-cold cheek, and feel that but the casket was under the power of death, and *that* only until the "adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body," while his bright gem was gleaming with unclouded lustre among the numbered jewels of his Lord.

With the return of faith and faith's submission, and the soothing, softening influence of a sense of Divine tenderness, came also as with the rush, the consciousness of his hard treatment of his repentant wife. Emily had not as yet felt at liberty to introduce that subject, fearing, probably, that he was hardly ready to cope with it; and he strongly felt that he must first of all confess his fault to her to whom he had done an awful wrong in adding to the bitterness of her own distress. So dismissing the breakfast, which he had not patience to touch, he went to the stables, had his horse saddled while he stood, and without saying a word rode off to Squire Aubrey's stately mansion, to seek an interview with and bring home again the wife whom he loved as his own soul.

Strange to say, the blow his bereavement

had dealt him, the fearful nervous tension to which he had been subjected, and the rapid and glad revulsion of feeling which was consequent on his sister's timely words, had driven from his memory all recollection of Mrs. Stanhope's parting words, and the thought that Kate was safely housed with that kind Christian lady never entered his mind. Urged on by an impatience that could not be restrained, he spurred his horse into a swift gallop, much to the wonder of those whom he passed by, and in a little while pulled up his panting steed at Aubrey Hall. His loud, excited, and persistent application to the bell brought the staid and wondering old butler to the door.

"Well, Rowley, is Mrs. Meggitt within?" asked Paul, as, without waiting for an answer, he strode toward the dining-room.

"N—n—no, sir!" stammered Rowley, half beside himself with surprise, for he knew that that lady had gone home in haste after receiving the summons to the bedside of her dying daughter. "N—n—no, sir! Mrs. Meggitt isn't here!"

“Isn't here?” shouted Paul, seized with an awful fear that in a fit of desperation she had flung her life away. “Then, my God! where is she? Tell me this instant!” and laying hold of the old man's arm, he shook him as though he had secreted her and was unwilling to disclose her hiding-place. By this time the old squire, followed by Mrs. Aubrey, appeared upon the scene, the latter pale with a nameless dread, the former red with an indignant anger, that saw nothing but the Puritanical Methodist who had behaved in scurvy fashion to his high-spirited daughter.

“What's this?” said the irate squire. “What have you done with my girl?”

Paul Meggitt's face had turned ashy pale; he had read the awful yearning that lined the mother's face, and felt that it confirmed his own forebodings. Laying his hand upon her arm, he said, in broken terms that couldn't be mistaken—

“Oh, mother! mother! mother! God help me! Where's my wife?”

The wail of sorrow struck the old man

dumb. He could not be angry in presence of such a sorrow, such an evidence of love, too, for the darling of his heart. Mrs. Aubrey told of Kate's departure on the arrival of her husband's letter, and of the grief she had made no effort to conceal. "And she has not returned here, Paul. Oh, my son," said the old lady, falling on his neck and kissing him, "go and find her; for without your love she will die!"

"That will I, mother, or die too!" said Paul, scarce knowing what he said.

At that moment a little hand was thrust into his, and turning to look, Paul saw the upturned face of little Clara.

"Papa, dear papa! I want to come home to mamma and you. Mamma's gone home; I know she has. Will you take me with you? Mamma's at home, and I want to go."

Again it appeared to Paul that the Lord had sent him a message, and at home he would hope that he should find the lost one. Promising her that she should soon come home, Paul kissed his child, and mounting in hot haste, returned to Breconsfield as fleetly as he had come.

CHAPTER X.

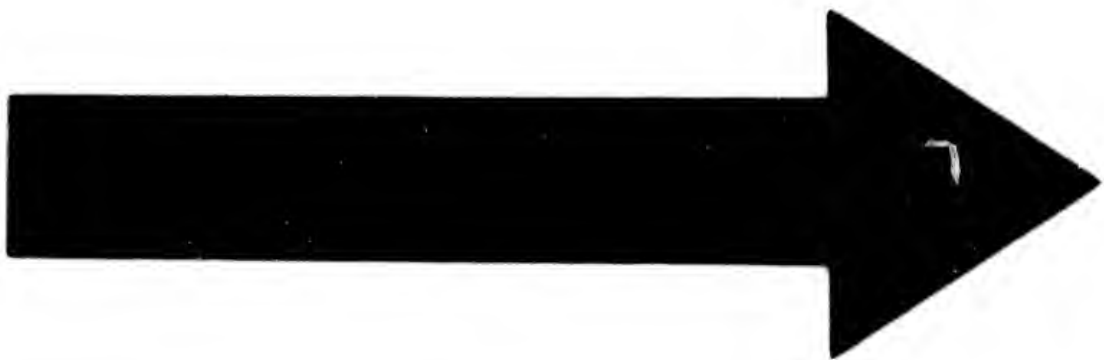
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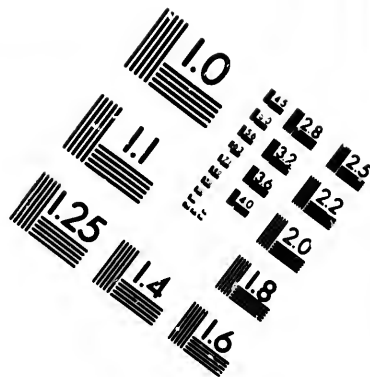
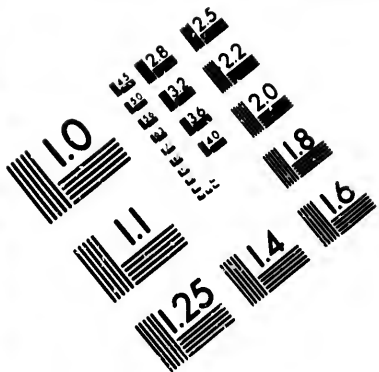
ONCE more Paul Meggitt galloped along the green lanes and on the open highway which lay between Aubrey Park and his own suburban home. Again the rapid speed of his half-jaded horse excited the wonder and curiosity of those whom he passed by ; little recked he either of landscape or spectator, possessed as he was by the all-absorbing anxiety as to the whereabouts of his distracted wife. Reining up at his own door, he leaped from his tired steed, and left it to find its own way to "his master's crib," and in a moment stood at the foot of the staircase, where he met his sister Emily just descending.

"Is Kate here?" he inquired.

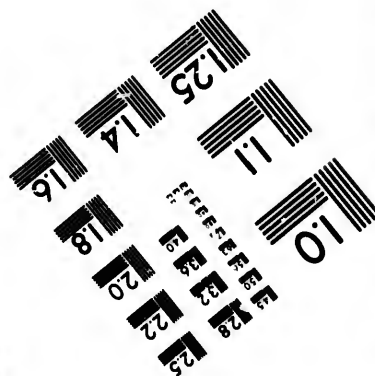
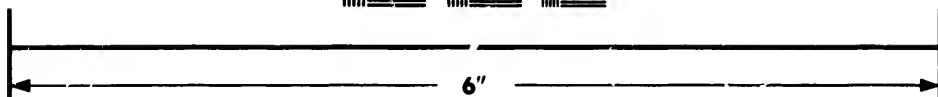
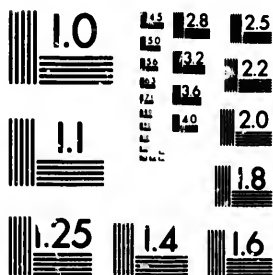
Emily looked at him silently and searchingly, and placing her fingers gently on his arm, replied by asking him another question.

"Paul, do you ask in love or anger?"





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"Anger! God help me! Yes, anger toward myself and love to Kate. Oh, my wife, whither are you gone?"

"Brother, you will find her up-stairs. She saw you riding by Mrs. Stanhope's window, and she came to see darling Gertie, and there she sits, moaning, tearless in the bitterness of her grief, gazing on her dead darling, with none to comfort her."

Before she had finished Paul had turned away. Up the stairs went he three steps at a time, and in a moment stood within the sacred chamber in presence of his wife—and child.

Kate was kneeling by the bed, her elbows on the coverlet and her head between her hands, her hair dishevelled, and her eye, preternaturally large, fixed with a stony, distraught kind of gaze upon her child. Without a moment's pause, Paul knelt by his wife, took her by the hand, flung his arm around her, and drew her to his heart.

"Kiss me, Kate! Dear wife, forgive me, for Gertie's sake!"

"Paul! And do you, can you forgive me? If you cannot I shall die. For Gertie's sake?"

Her whole soul appealed to him out of those burning eyes, and she quivered in every nerve as one who is about to hear her fate.

“For *your* sake, Kate! for my own sake! Light of my life! The awful cloud has gone!”

Then in mercy the revulsion came. Kate Meggitt's face was first as pale as the beautiful clay which once was Gertie, then came the flush of recovered life, and flinging herself on her husband's neck, relief came in fast-falling tears.

They stood, those two—the wife who had erred so grievously, the husband who had judged so hardly—stood by their first-born; the lips that kissed in turn the dead met, and sealed the sweet re-union, and both of them knew that now and ever they were *one!*

* * * *

Darling Gertie was laid in the quiet churchyard of the little suburban church which stood hard by the home she had brightened for a few short summers. Quiet, staid, and wondrously altered, Kate Meggitt, with Clara by her side, made constant visits to the grave.

Altered, Kate Meggitt certainly was: so much so that Colonel Fawcett and Gerard Berkeley openly declared that she had committed social suicide, and was fast following her deluded husband down the steps of dire disgrace. "They wouldn't wonder," they said, "if she soon turned Methodist herself;" and sighing over, "Poor Kate Meggitt," mourned over her as one dead. It was not so, however. Kate had simply bowed to the omnipotent influence of real and genuine love, quickened and intensified by the force of a tender affection for her departed child. Of true religion, heartfelt godliness, she as yet knew nothing, though the quiet influence of her godly husband and his sister was gradually leading her to grope after God, more than half unknowingly, if haply she might find Him. There yet remained an ordeal severe and keen through which she was called to pass ere her heart was taken captive, and made to bow in loving willing-hood beneath the yoke of Christ.

Her father, more glad and thankful than he cared to own now that his Kate's domestic wounds were healed, did not further

interfere, but noted her gradual toning down in silence. He felt half inclined to murmur at her unresisting submission to, or tacit coincidence with, her husband's "Puritanic" tastes. He could not help thinking that it was a thousand pities that the "Belle of Breconsfield" should vacate her throne, and, eschewing balls and fashionable gatherings, should become a demure "keeper at home;" but she seemed so happy, and matters as a whole were so comfortable, that he grumbled to himself and made no sign.

Mrs. Aubrey, ever since her son-in-law did so distinctly wear his heart upon his sleeve, when he feared that he had lost "his Kate," warmed toward him more and more, and looked with placid contentment on Kat's resolve to seek his pleasure and conform to his desires.

As for Paul Meggitt, however, he scrupulously avoided bringing any pressure to bear upon his wife—he escorted her to church as a matter of course—nor ever once sought to persuade her to accompany him to the lowly sanctuary where he found food and peace and

comfort to his soul. Had he done so she would probably have yielded, but he was resolved to leave her quite unfettered, to do his loving duty to her, and pray and wait and hope for the time when he and she should be "partners of like precious faith."

Nothing could surpass the tender and delicate fashion in which he sought to forestall her every need and prevent her every desire. Profoundly fearful of rousing a possibly strong though dormant opposition to his Methodistic proclivities, and his definite and unalterable religious practices, his touching devotion disarmed antagonism if it existed, and all the while the words of the Apostle were in his ears and on his heart, and gave his whole life a richer value and intenser glow. "What knowest thou, O man, if thou shouldst save thy wife!"

So the days and weeks rolled by, and although as yet Kate Meggitt was mystified, and altogether unable to gauge or sympathise with the strange peculiarities of her husband's notions of Christian modes and meanings, at any rate opposition to them or vexation on

account of them had been scorched out of existence by the fiery trial she had undergone. Let it be remembered that her whole training, all the tenor of example, precept, and experience from the cradle to the bridal, and at least a dozen years subsequent to that, had tended in the directest fashion to condemn and condemn the kind of thing that Paul now favoured, as a low and fanatical parody on religion. Then it will scarcely be matter of wonder that, even in the strong light of her late experiences, she could not in this respect see eye to eye with the husband she loved more dearly than her own soul.

CHAPTER XI.

A SECRET VISIT.

FOR a few weeks matters in Paul Meggitt's household continued in much the same fashion as that recorded in the last chapter. Little Clara had returned home, and on their one remaining darling Paul lavished the strong affection of which, probably, their now sainted Gertie had hitherto had a larger share. Not that the surviving daughter was anything other than a bright, loving, intelligent child, but that his lost treasure was a counterpart of himself, and in a thousand nameless ways had crept into the innermost recesses of her father's heart. Kate Meggitt was unquestionably an altered woman. Her love for her noble and manly husband, always in reality strong and true, seemed to be stronger and truer for the severe discipline she had undergone. Deeply contented to be back again,

and to feel herself the sole unquestioned empress of his soul, she submitted, not only without show of resistance, but without desire of resistance, to the peculiar religious views and habits of her husband, though these were still to her mind a lowering and unworthy abdication of social position, and the outcome of a needless fanaticism that was largely guilty of heresy and schism. On the Sunday mornings she wended her way, with little Clara at her side, to the neighbouring church, and engaged with all conventional propriety in the solemn and beautiful, though somewhat formal, services there conducted. Occasionally Paul would accompany her, and having the inward key to the marvellous beauties of the noble liturgy, he managed to turn the service to good spiritual account. Even the most bigoted of the Episcopalian enemies of Methodism cannot charge those schismatics with any serious objection to the mode of worship common to the National Church, or with any strong unwillingness to engage therein. Still, Paul could not there obtain the spiritual aliment on which his soul had learned to

feed, and in the afternoon he was glad to go to the humbler Methodist conventicle, and join in the freer, more spontaneous worship of the members of his own religious community, most of whom he knew to be partners with him of like precious faith. Sometimes little Clara, at her own request, was permitted to accompany him, and she did not scruple to affirm, with childish simplicity, that there, though not at church, she did not "fall asleep the whole time."

"Mamma," she would say on her return, "they don't *read* the prayers at the chapel, but the clergyman shuts his eyes and prays out of his own mouth. Sometimes the people say 'Amen,' and sometimes they don't. But when they do, I feel as though I should like to say 'Amen' too."

Such and similar discourse, coupled with her increasing admiration and reverence for her husband's heightened character, led Kate to entertain an unspoken and half unacknowledged desire to go and witness for herself the order of proceedings in the socially tabooed meeting-house, into which, or into any of its

congeners, she had never set foot in her life.

Taking advantage of the softening influence of their late terrible bereavement, Paul had inaugurated the observance of family prayer simultaneously with Kate's return, and on these occasions she was oftentimes stirred to the soul with a sense of spiritual mysteries of which she had small conception, and in which she had no share. Paul never intimated so much as a desire that she should accompany him to chapel, nor other than in general terms spoke on the subjects that were nearest and dearest to his soul. The fact is, he was possessed of a groundless but deeply-seated fear that to broach such topics would be to imperil the new-found union and harmony which, in God's good providence, now lighted up his home. He little knew that his handsome and high-spirited wife was dimly seeking for the Lord; and had he but given her the opportunity, she would have cast her failing prejudices, her father's counsel, and the influence of aristocratic but unsympathetic friends to

the winds; would have bowed her head in earnest worship under the lowly roof of the unpretending temple where her husband often found joy and rest to his waiting soul.

One evening in the early winter Paul Meggitt had, as usual, gone to his class-meeting—a service which he ever regarded as one of his highest privileges, and from which he was never absent but at the imperative call of professional duty. His wife, who knew his custom, and had often wondered as to the peculiar character of this means of grace, determined, in the spirit of a female Nicodemus, to pay a secret visit to the little sanctuary, and inform herself as to what a class-meeting was really like.

Wrapping herself in a long and somewhat voluminous waterproof cloak—for the night was damp and foggy—and donning a bonnet of an unusually sober and unassertive kind, she made her way to the Methodist chapel.

Like most similar buildings of equal antiquity, it stood back from the main street, and was approached by a narrow passage or

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"Stole into a neighbouring high-backed pew" (p. 97).

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alley, which she was enabled to traverse without observation. As she passed within the outer door the strains of the opening hymn died away, and softly opening an inner door, she stole into a neighbouring high-backed pew, and heard the old carpenter, who was Paul Meggitt's class-leader, uttering a quaint and earnest prayer. There were but two lights burning in the building, which was almost entirely wrapped in gloom: the one was in the large square "singing pew" under the pulpit, where the members of the class were gathered, shrouded from view by crimson curtains hung on the brass rods which surmounted three sides of the pew; the other, fortunately for Kate's secrecy, was by the opposite door, and was lighted simply to show the way. To Kate the whole place seemed very cold, very naked and bare, about the last place in the world which she would choose for worship, and as much unlike the pretty little church where Gertie was buried as it is possible to conceive. Her heart sank at the thought of coming there in clear daylight, and as she listened to the broad

dialect and ungrammatical sentences of the praying carpenter her heart sank more and more.

Nevertheless, she soon discovered that there was something to be said on the other side. The aged leader was evidently talking with God; and she could not but bow with something of awe and reverence as he pleaded the Divine promise that where two or three were gathered together there He would be in the midst of them, "and that to bless them. Thou art here, Lord, for Thou art everywhere;

' But, oh! Thyself reveal.
Now, Lord, let every bounding heart
Thy mighty comfort feel.'

Thou wast with Joseph i' prison, wi' David i' the tabernacle, wi' Daniel i' the den, wi' the disciples i' the supper-room, wi' Paul an' Silas i' the jail; Thou hast been with our fathers when they worshipped; be with us. Come, Lord, and fill us with Thy presence." Now and then a subdued and earnest "Amen, Lord!" "Glory be to God!" or similar ejaculation, was interpolated by the kneeling few. This was altogether new to Kate's experi-

ence; yet she was bound to own to herself that they seemed to "chime in" fitly with the old man's prayers, and had no jarring effect upon her unaccustomed ear. As he proceeded to relate his own religious experience, she felt herself to be listening to something so utterly foreign to her experience, and so entirely beyond her comprehension, that she was more than half inclined to fancy she was an unlicensed witness of the mysterious ritual of some secret society, and began to wonder what she should do if the watchword were demanded of her as she passed out.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him," said old Abraham Halliday. "Brethren, I know that secret; I hear tonight the gracious whisper, and the blessed Lord speaks peace to mysoul. Gladness is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Yes, an' it's bringin' a rich harvest o' peace an' pardonin' love. Bless the Lord! my barns is filled wi' plenty, an' my presses burst out wi' new wine. If I held my peace the very stones would cry out shame on me.

But I won't, for the Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad. Jesus is mine an' I am His, an' I mean to trust Him till He calls me to go up higher. Praise the Lord!"

The subsequent proceedings, as witnessed by Kate Meggitt from her secret hiding-place, must be related in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER XII.

KATE MEGGITT'S ADVENTURE.

ABRAHAM HALLIDAY, as the aged class leader was called, went on to call on each member by name, and each in turn spake of his or her individual experience in the Divine life, of the trials or triumphs they had met with during the week, and to each he dealt out words of counsel, comfort, encouragement, or caution as the case might be. By-and-by Sister Stanhope's name was mentioned, and Kate Meggitt bent forward to listen to what that amiable and Christian lady, who had given her shelter in the dark day of her bereavement and estrangement from her husband, might say in reply.

“The love of God in Christ Jesus,” said Mrs. Stanhope, “is my strength and my stay; and although I am not without seasons of doubt and depression, and know what sore

temptations mean, I have a clear, firm trust in the atoning blood. I know myself to be a child of God, and am safely and peacefully resting in His 'everlasting arms of love.' I am at present greatly interested in the spiritual welfare of one who has passed through a great fight of affliction—one who is very dear to one of our number—and I do not cease, night or day, to plead with my Heavenly Father that in His mercy He will bring her to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus."

"That's right, Sister Stanhope," said old Halliday. "Mention her by name on your knees at the throne o' grace. Remember the importunate widow and the man that wanted to borrow the loaves. The Lord's bound to hear, an' praise His name, He's bound to answer. She'll be forced to bend at the Cross. Cry aloud, an' spare not, an' the Lord 'll mark her for His own."

Kate was strongly inclined to believe that she herself was the friend referred to, and she felt her heart go pit-a-pat so turbulently that she could almost hear it beat.

"Bend at the Cross!" "Mark her for

His own!" What *did* it mean? Whatever amount of trepidation and disturbance this indirect reference had caused her, however, was as naught compared with the surge of feeling that followed when the old man called out in a clear, loud tone—

"Now, Brother Meggitt, tell us how the Lord is leading you."

The manly accents of her husband's voice fell on her ear, half silencing her heart-beat as he spoke of his unflinching trust in and his peaceful repose on the merits and faithfulness of the Saviour of his soul.

"I know whom I have believed," said he. "Amid all the cares and anxieties of life I have an inward peace that the world can neither give nor take away. I am crucified with Christ, and I thank my God that I am also risen with Him. I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the glorious Guest is more precious to me than I can tell. My heart's fond desire, my own supreme anxiety, next to a closer walk with God, is the salvation of those who are dearer to me than anything else under heaven. To see my wife

at the feet of Jesus, to know that she was sharer in the joy of His salvation, to join with her in training my precious child to know and love her parents' God and Saviour: these are good gifts of God for which"—and here his voice trembled with emotion—"I would freely barter all I have in the world beside."

"God Almighty bless her and save her!" said old Halliday, with deep feeling. "And so He will, for——"

Kate felt as though she must repeat the prayer aloud. She dared not trust herself to stay a moment longer, but swiftly gliding from the pew, heedless as to the noise of doors or footfall, she passed out into the passage, and from thence into the street, and sped rapidly home, the subject of thoughts and feelings that defy description. Hastily doffing her cloak and bonnet, she entered the room where little Clara lay sweetly sleeping. Bending over her, she repeated, "To join with her in training our precious child to know and love her parents' God and Saviour," and kneeling by the bed, she sighed, "O, be my Saviour!"

And the angels smiled to see, and said,
"Behold, she prayeth!"

Scarcely had Paul Meggitt returned from the class-meeting than a telegram was brought in. A portion of the line on which he had been engaged had fallen in by reason of a treacherous quicksand which he had hoped was rendered secure, and his presence was required instantly on the spot. With his accustomed vigour of character, he resolved at once to take the night mail, so as to be on the scene of action at an early hour in the morning.

Kate was mightily disappointed. She had been conning over her lesson, resolved to make a clean breast of it, and to tell her husband all that was within her heart. But now there was no time to do it.

Paul swallowed a hasty supper, donned his great coat, skipped up-stairs three steps at a time to give little Clara a parting kiss, and then, standing in the hall, held up his wife's chin to bestow the like on her.

"Paul," said she, peering into his face,

with a tell-tale blush upon her cheek, "do you love me?"

"Love you, my precious wife? Aye! dearer than my life."

"Is there anything you—you would like me to do? Anything—anything that you are afraid I shouldn't like?"

"No, my sweet," said Paul, altogether ignorant of the drift of her inquiry, "only that you must not love me too dearly, and when there is any danger of that I'll let you know. God bless you, Kate; God Almighty bless you!" and with one last embrace they parted.

Poor Kate was not contented somehow. She would like to have had her secret out; but she must wait now, however impatiently, for his return. "God Almighty bless you!"—the very words of old Halliday. "And He will!"—she mentally finished his sentence, and there and then she felt the first influences of that faith which, though but as a grain of mustard-seed, can work heavenly wonders in the soul.

Away sped Paul Meggitt along the iron

road behind the iron horse, at the rate of forty miles an hour, towards the place of the accident and the home of the younger Hodgson, of whom he had seen and thought but little lately, owing to the shadow and the grief which had darkened his own home. As he lay back in the first-class compartment in which he travelled, his mind reverted to his wife and to the odd question she had put to him at parting. In a moment the truth broke in on him. "She wants her Saviour," he said aloud, and straightway falling on his knees, he prayed, and praised, and pleaded; for where can Omnipresent and Omniscient love not hearken? Then he rose with a heart full of hope and glad content.

Two days passed by, and on the following morning Kate received a letter full of loving fervour, in which Paul hinted at the thought borne in on him by her words, and concluding thus: "Oh, Kate! am I right? To see you at the feet of Jesus I would barter all I have in the world, aye, life itself!" Her tears fell thick upon the precious docu-

ment, and the slow hours of the day passed by as she waited for his coming, when she might tell him all her heart, and say, "Paul, show me the way to Jesus."

At nightfall the housemaid appeared at her door.

"If you please, ma'am, Davis, Mr. Meggitt's clerk, has brought this. He is waiting in the breakfast-room."

She retired. In a few moments a loud shriek rang through the house, and Davis rushed into the room to find Mrs. Meggitt lying on the sofa in a dead faint, and the ill-omened letter lying beside her on the floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. STANHOPE'S MISSION.

It was long before Kate Meggitt recovered from her swoon. In great fear, the housekeeper had sent for a doctor, and he, too, was almost at his wits' end, so unavailing were his efforts to bring her back to consciousness and life. At last she opened her eyes, and threw a startled glance around her. "Paul, my husband!" she cried, and another fit of strong hysteria succeeded. Vigorous restoratives were applied, and when at length, weak and exhausted, she became aware of her surroundings, she heard the housekeeper suggest that her mamma should be sent for. Kate shook her head. The doctor bent his ear to listen.

"Send for Mrs. Stanhope," she whispered—so fully had the genial Christian lady won upon her sympathy and heart; so unwilling,

too, was she to alarm her parents with the knowledge of a double blow.

She felt strangely helpless, and as if an icy grasp was on heart and brain, but the thought of her husband was the sorest pain of all. The doctor, who evidently feared the consequences, gave special directions to the housekeeper, and repeatedly urged the necessity of the utmost care and quiet. He was immediately relieved when Mrs. Stanhope made her appearance. She had not been in the room two minutes before he saw how fit she was for such a crisis as this. There are some women that seem born for the delicate and difficult work of tending invalids. Mrs. Stanhope was one of these. Gentle and noiseless as a fairy, filling the room with an atmosphere of rest, she was soon enabled to soothe her patient and inspire hope.

“Mrs. Stanhope,” said Kate, “please to read the letter through to yourself, and tell me what is really the worst it says.”

She did so, and then replied cheerfully—
“Why, my dear, it says that you may soon expect to see Mr. Meggitt home again, alive

and well. He has had an accident; but let me read the letter, and you will see that it is not nearly so bad as you feared."

It was from Dr. Selwood, whose timely aid and guidance had so much to do with Paul Meggitt's conversion many months before. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR MRS. MEGGITT,—

"I trust you will not permit yourself to be unnecessarily alarmed at the intelligence I send you; for though I have to inform you that Mr. Meggitt has been injured by the falling of an iron girder, which was resting insecurely on a buttress of the new railway bridge at this place, I beg to assure you that there is nothing to fear, and that in a little while he will be able, I trust, to tell you that what might have been a sad accident has been attended with no seriously lasting results. You may expect another communication in the morning, when I hope to send you still more encouraging news. He sends you and his little Clara his dear love, and begs of you not to distress yourself, for, he says, if you do he shall come home at once and scold you for making much out of little. He is now going on well.

"Believe me, yours faithfully,

"EDWIN SELWOOD."

"There, you see," said Mrs. Stanhope, although she herself felt a little dubious as to whether or not the whole truth had been told, "all you have to do is to hope for the

best. 'There is nothing to fear,' and 'still more encouraging news' is to be expected. The best way in which you can serve your husband is to take care of yourself, and pluck up spirit for his sake, and to pray for his speedy and safe return."

"But why does not Dr. Selwood tell me more? He does not say *what* has happened; and oh! I fear that my husband, my noble husband, is severely hurt, or perhaps they are not able to tell how much he is hurt, and I shall hear—— O my God! spare me that!" and again the stricken wife appeared to be lapsing into hysterical grief.

"Mrs. Meggitt," said her sympathising friend, laying a gentle hand upon her brow, and speaking in tones of reassuring confidence, "believe me, He *will* spare you that, and out of this trouble good will come both to you and to him."

"Oh, Mrs. Stanhope!" said Kate, sobbing, "I did and do so love him and need him, for I was trying to find my way to his Saviour. He wrote home after he went away. He found out somehow what I wanted to

say to him, and he said, 'To see you at the feet of Jesus I would barter all I have in the world, aye, even life itself!' Mrs. Stanhope, Mrs. Stanhope, it wasn't needed that his life should be given. I was coming to Jesus. I am coming. Tell me, God won't require his life to save me, will He? Oh, what can I do?" and kneeling by her side, she eagerly waited for her reply.

"Indeed," said Mrs. Stanhope, rejoiced at this discovery of Kate's inmost aspirations, "indeed, my dear, I do not doubt that you will have the privilege of telling Mr. Meggitt on his return what you wished to tell him when he went, and you and he, I'm sure of it, will rejoice together."

"Oh, how you comfort me, dear friend! Might we — could we — will you kneel and help me to pray for it? Tell Him," she continued, in childish simplicity, "that I had made up my mind, feeling wrong and guilty and miserable, to 'bend at the Cross,' as the old man said, and Paul need not die."

Mrs. Stanhope, touched to the heart by

this simple appeal, knelt with her, and prayed in earnest and powerful strains for Paul's recovery, and that the peace and joy of pardoning love and trustful reliance might be given to his sorrowing wife.

When she arose from her knees, Kate Meggitt said, "He hears! I think He hears! O long-forgotten, long-rejected Saviour, 'mark me for Thine own!' Mrs. Stanhope, I will go in the morning to my Paul. It will bring him back to life and health to tell him that his Saviour is mine. Mine! But *is* He? Oh, how shall I know that I do not deceive myself? What shall I do to make Him mine?"

Here Mrs. Stanhope was on firm, well-known, and familiar ground. Like Philip with the Ethiopian nobleman, she preached to her "Jesus," lifted the Cross before her eyes, and explained the happy venture of a simple faith.

"My dear," said she, "Jesus says, 'Come unto Me and I *will* give you rest.' You have come, are coming, with all your heart. Do you believe He *will*? His love for you

made Him die for you; and, living again, He loves and pleads for you. Tell Him that you believe. Tell Him that you are leaning on Him. Will He let you fall?"

"Oh, no, no! a thousand times, no!" said Kate, earnestly; "I *trust too hard* for that! I've nothing else, *want* nothing else, *need* nothing else! My Saviour! yes, mine!" and covering her face with her two hands, Kate Meggitt sobbed and wept in very joy of rest, and there and then, while her husband lay sore wounded and helpless a hundred miles away, thinking and mourning and praying for his wife, she entered into liberty, and though he, poor, noble fellow, did not know it, *was* partaker of like precious faith.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOCTOR SELWOOD'S HERESY.

AT the little country town of Hessleby, where old Thol Hodgson used to reside, and where his unstable and unsatisfactory son, Dick, was at present living, in the old-fashioned and cosy "head inn," the "Devonshire Arms," Paul Meggitt lay wounded and helpless, and by his side sat his true and skilful friend, Dr. Selwood, who spent all the time he could spare from his other patients, night and day, in aiding the restoration to bodily health of him to whom he had so largely helped to bring spiritual healing in the day of his penitential pain. The falling girder, whose insecurity arose from the treacherous quicksands previously mentioned, gave way as Paul was walking over it. He fell from a considerable height, and the iron beam followed him, falling in such a fashion that

while one end was forced some distance into the soft and yielding soil the other end still leaned against the wall. Not only was he terribly shaken by the fall, but his arm was broken by the descending mass, which pinned him to the ground. Though he was stunned by the fall, his head was uninjured, and his usual strength of nerve and power of will came to his aid, and he was enabled to give clear directions to the workmen as to the steps to be taken for his extrication. While this was being done, his thoughts went back to the day when, not far from the spot, Thol Hodgson was imprisoned by the landslip, from which he "took," as Bunyan has it, "the nearest way to his Father's house." "In a little while I shall be with Jesus." That was what Thol said when the summons came; and with a smile of joyous confidence and peace, that no bruised body or broken limb could stifle, Paul thought, "And if my time has come, I shall soon be with Him too." Then came the thought of his darling Gertie, and the probability of his greeting her by-and-by on "the sun-bright shore,"

and he marvelled how death, stingless and transformed, could be welcomed as an angel from heaven—thanks to Him whose “own right arm,” for all our dying race, “hath gotten him the victory.” Thought, swift at any time, is swifter still in moments such as these, and forthwith Paul’s were off and away to Breconsfield and his precious Kate. “God bless my wife! How *will* she bear it? How will it affect her new-born longing for Christ?” All at once he felt an overwhelming desire to live. “Father! if it be Thy will, for my wife’s sake, body and soul, let me live!” Prayers of that sort, offered in that spirit, and in the strength of faith that never questions that the response will be right and good, whatever it may be, soon gets its answer, and in that moment Paul Meggitt knew that he had received a gift from God.

Dr. Selwood by this time had arrived, provided with a conveyance to take his wounded friend to his apartments at the inn, and he marvelled to find his patient with a gleam in his eye and a bright expression on

his face that neither pain nor disfigurement, dirt nor bruise, could hide.

"All right, doctor," said Paul, as they tenderly lifted him from his prison-house, seeing the look of alarm on Selwood's face. "All right; I shall pull through this with your help and the blessing of God."

Then followed the reaction, the setting of the broken limb, and the clear consciousness that he was likely to have a series of troublesome days and wearisome nights appointed to him. With it all, however, and in it all, was the settled conviction of ultimate recovery, as well as the current support and comfort supplied from the conscious love and presence of his Lord. A second communication was forwarded, at his request, to Kate, but as that missive was speeding its way to Breconsfield, Kate Meggitt was speeding, as fast as an express train could carry her, to Hessleby, to take her place by her husband's side.

* * * * *

"Thank you, old fellow, thank you," said Paul to Dr. Selwood, who had just been

“fixing” him up for the day: an office that he could not suffer the nurse to perform, lest she should disarrange the splinters, for the fracture was a compound one, and in a difficult place to manage. Paul felt such a sense of comfort and refreshment that he couldn't help saying, “Selwood, you are a splendid nurse: better than any woman.”

“*Any* woman, eh? That's rather a sweeping assertion,” said the doctor, laughing; “and you may be grateful that there isn't a representative of the sex here to hear you, or you might get what a good many of the sisterhood are a little too anxious to give, as though they had too much of it—which is a long way from being true, by the way—and that is, ‘a bit of their mind.’”

“That's a slander, you incorrigible old bachelor! And I wish there *was* a woman here to——”

Paul's wish was cut short by a tap at the door. The doctor went, and received from the housemaid a whispered message, and by-and-by returned to Paul's bedside.

“Now then, Mr. M., you wish there was

a woman here, you say, to do some savage thing to me, and yet you say I'm better than *any* woman. Now that looks like a contradiction. I mean you to answer me some questions categorically. First: Do you hold me better than *any* woman, without exception? Second: If you wish that a woman were here, what woman do you wish for?"

"Selwood, you jewel! my wife's come! Fetch her up this minute, or I'll go myself!"

"Exactly; just as I thought," said the doctor, laughing. "You're as big a bond-slave as any other of the Benedictine brotherhood. How I pity you!"

"Get out, and look sharp!" said Paul, making a feint to rise.

"Lie still! lie still! anything for a quiet life."

As he passed out of the room Kate Meggitt passed in, pale-faced but cheerful, and gave and got such a greeting as my readers can well imagine for themselves; or if they cannot, could not understand, however fully it might be described.

Seated by her husband's side, her hand in his, Kate was perfectly content. She knew it, felt it, wondered at it. True, he was severely hurt and ill. True, her sweet Clara, their one remaining household gem, was absent. True, they were over a hundred miles from their own home—dearest spot in the world to her. Still, she was calmly, peacefully content; blessed with a sense of completeness, and consequent restfulness, such as she had never known before. Why was this? How had it come to her? Let the uninitiated stranger to the saving "secret of the Lord" doubt it as he may; she *felt* that her noble Paul, so manly and so good, and herself, so faulty and so feeble—so *she* thought of herself—were one in the bonds of a sweeter, holier, and more enduring tie than even the true love of their espousals: the love of their Saviour, their Father, and their God. As yet he scarcely knew it, and yet the force and subtlety of the "virtue" which had gone out of Jesus into them drew answering sparks, and telegraphed from soul to soul.

“Kate, my darling,” said Paul, “do you know my life is being spared for your sake? I could have given it freely if it had been best for you. I thought my leaving you might keep you back from the Saviour: for that was what your question meant when I left home, wasn't it, sweetheart?” And Paul's pulse half suspended its beating in his anxiety for the answer.

“Paul, your wife has found her husband's Saviour! Do you remember the words in your letter: ‘To see you at the feet of Jesus I would barter all I have in the world, aye, life itself?’” Rising to her feet, she flung her arms around him, and as the happy tears fell upon his face she said, “I'm there, Paul! My faith, my love, my hope, my soul rests on the Rock of Ages cleft for me! Oh, husband mine, how hard, and proud, and wicked I was! How cruel, and passionate, and guilty before God and you! How ignorant, and conceited, and unjust! Paul, I hate myself more than tongue can tell. I have been doing that for a long time, and I felt that God couldn't and wouldn't pardon

a sinner like me. Then I went by stealth one night to the chapel, when your class was meeting, and I heard old Halliday, and Mrs. Stanhope, and yourself, and I ran home, because if I hadn't I must have shouted right out, I was so miserable. I went home and upstairs to little Clara's room, and I prayed by her bed, and I think God heard me, for I was comforted. Then I went downstairs, resolved to tell you all about it. But that telegram came, and I couldn't get my secret out before you left; then came the news that you were hurt, and I said, he will give his life for me: he said so; and I told God I didn't need you *to*, for I was coming to Jesus as fast as I could find the way. Then Mrs. Stanhope came, and I was so shocked and ill; and may God bless her, she showed me the way, and I did 'bend at the Cross,' as old Halliday said; and oh, Paul, my darling, I *do* know that Jesus is my Saviour, my very own!"

It may be safely said that sweeter music than this had never fallen upon Paul Meggitt's ear, and as he lay quiescent, with

his wife's heart throbbing on his own, he listened and thanked God with a glad heart, while the muscles of his face worked and quivered with deep feeling, and when at length the welcome story was finished, he kissed her on either cheek, saying, "My peerless Kate! Crippled and battered as I am just now, I am the happiest man in all England. *Now* I shall recover. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

Slowly, but surely, thanks to God's goodness, Dr. Selwood's skill, and the magic of Kate's presence, Paul Meggitt did recover. For some length of time he was confined to his chamber, but was eventually able to sit in an easy-chair by the window, looking out on the quiet High Street. One day, as he was sitting there, he saw a man crossing the road with a white apron folded round his waist. He reeled and staggered in his devious walk, and as he drew nearer Paul was shocked to recognise, bloated with intemperance, the well-remembered features of Dick Hodgson, the erring, weak-willed, but well-meaning son of good Old Thol.

“Kate, my dear,” said Paul, calling his wife to see the melancholy sight, “I promised old Thol Hodgson that I would try to bring the poor lad to Jesus. Will you help me?”

“Yes,” said Kate, with true missionary zeal; “yes, that I will, with all my heart.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE OLD STORY.

No sooner was Paul Meggitt so far recovered as to be able to walk, either with the stick or the aid of Kate's ever-ready arm, than he determined to visit the carpenter's shop, where Dick Hodgson *ought* to be engaged in daily labour, but from which, alas! he was often absent, through the potent attractions of the public-house and of the boon companions with whom he spent so large a portion of his earnings and his time. As I have previously stated, the succession of trying circumstances through which Paul himself had been called to pass had very largely driven the thought of Old Thol's erratic son out of his mind. His own never-to-be-cancelled debt, however, to the good old man who had led him to Jesus, as well as his earnest desire, for his Master's sake, to pluck this brand

from the burning, would never have permitted him to give up the idea of doing all that in him lay to rescue the poor drunkard from his perilous course, and to enable him to conquer his besetting sin.

As he hobbled along the green lane which led to Dick's homestead, by the aid of his stick—for he had wisely determined to go alone in the first instance—the remembrance of Dick's own touching appeal came perceptibly to his mind.

"Promise me one thing," he had said: "for my wife's sake, for my father's sake, you'll not turn your back on me, but be patient with me, and keep on trying to get me right."

"God being my helper, so I will to the very end," said Paul to himself, and all the way along he lifted up his heart to God, and sought for light and guidance that he might bring the wandering sheep back to the Good Shepherd's fold. Arriving at the little shop which abutted on the carpenter's cottage, he was much disappointed to find that its owner was not there. In the centre

of the shop the nave of a new wheel, with the rough spokes just driven in, was lying, and on it and round it lay the tools with which the carpenter had been engaged, but of the workman himself there was no sign.

Paul was regretting that he had not first called at the "Black Swan," the place where, in all probability, Dick was then carousing, when a woman's voice fell upon his ear.

"I tell you you shan't come near him! Go back to your chums! By the time you come reeling home the boy 'll be dead, an' then you may bury him and me together, for all that I care!"

Here followed some loud sobs, intermixed with the half-articulated expostulations of a man's voice, rendered thick and husky with beer.

"Come, come, Hannah! Don't be s' hard 'n a poor chap. Poor li'l' Dick! His father loves him, an' ——"

Here the voice was lost in a sudden murmur, and Paul Meggitt, feeling certain that his "lost sheep" was in the cottage,

made his way to the door. Three dirty-faced and squalid children were sitting or crawling over the equally dirty floor, one of them engaged in dragging a dilapidated chair, which was doing duty as a cart, another in transferring the grime of a saucepan to his already sufficiently dingy pinafore, and the third and youngest was squalling over his mother's absence, with a knuckle in either eye. The kitchen itself was in a state of woe-begone confusion, and the whole scene was eminently suggestive of a drunkard's home. Paul heard the sobs of the weeping woman upstairs, and his heart sank within him as he thought into what deeper depths the son of the old "ganger" had fallen under the thrice-accursed demon of strong drink. Again there were the sounds of a struggle, and at once he resolved to go upstairs and learn what was amiss.

When he reached the landing he found a bedroom door open, and straightway a sad and miserable spectacle met his gaze. On a humble bed on one side of the chamber lay a sharp, bright-eyed little fellow, that

Paul remembered to have seen before—but not as now, for the ravages of a severe fever had almost reduced him to a skeleton; his face was as pale as death, while a troublesome cough was spending the ebbing strength that still lingered in the feeble frame.

By the bedside stood the worn and weary mother, poorly clad, untidy, and with dishevelled hair, with a face almost as worn and weary as that of her ailing child.

With hands extended towards her husband, who was evidently almost incapable under the influence of drink, she was bent on preventing his approach to the bed, and just as Paul entered she was saying, in tones of mingled anger and despair, "Go away, you drunken sot, and let him die in peace!"

Paul slightly stumbled in crossing the threshold, and the noise he made caused both Dick and his wife to turn their eyes on him.

"Oh, M—Mr. M—Meggitt," said Dick, dropping intoxicated tears, and whining in

maudlin tones, "poor li'l Dick's dying, an' she won't le' me come near him!"

Paul laid his hand on the man's shoulder. Had he been possessed of his normal strength, he could easily have forced him from the room; but under existing circumstances this he could not do, and so he said—

"Look here, Dick, I want you to come downstairs with me; I've something particular to say to you. Come along."

"Cert'n'gly, Mis Meggitt. Anything, 'li do anything for you, for old father's sake." And so saying, he made his difficult and devious way downstairs.

Paul stepped to the bedside, took the child's hot, fevered little hand in his, and addressed the weeping mother, who had sunk upon a chair, and sat sobbing behind her apron in unrestrained grief.

"I'm very sorry for you, Mrs. Hodgson. Poor little fellow! Has he been long ill?"

Thus kindly invited, and being sure of a sympathetic hearing, the poor woman began, with voluble tongue and high-toned voice, to tell him of little Dick's long-continued

battle between life and death; of her husband's increasing passion for drink, which was fast bringing misery and ruin on them all; of his sudden but fewer spurts after reformation and sobriety; of debt and difficulty; of bad language and cruel deeds; and of all the sad entail of misery which comes to human hearts and households in the wake of that hideous traffic, which is legalised, fostered, and protected above all others by a purblind and selfish Legislature, largely composed of men who have a direct financial interest in its maintenance and extension.

Paul sought to give her words of cheer; gave her, too, something from his purse to purchase, as he said, nourishing food for little Dick; told her that Mrs. Meggitt would come and help her; and having directed her to the One sure source of help and comfort in the day of sorrow, he left her, saying—

“Keep up your spirits, Mrs. Hodgson. I'm likely to be here for some time, thanks to my accident and the works on the rail-

way. I promised your husband's father that I would never rest until his son was brought back to the Saviour, and I mean to do it. You must help me all you can, and, by God's blessing, we shall succeed."

"God in heaven bless you, sir!" said Hannah, as she followed him to the stair-head. "There isn't a better husband in the world than my Dick when he's steady; but that's so seldom now that I've given up hoping. But, God help us, I'll try again."

Paul proceeded to the kitchen to find the delinquent husband, but in vain; he went into the shop, with no better success; he searched the whole premises, and was at length compelled to come to the conclusion that Dick, who, doubtless, had reasons enough for avoiding an unpleasant interview, had, with the cunning peculiar to his kind, quietly vanished, so as to get beyond the reach of his true friend, who was sure to bring him face to face with his broken vows. Disappointed, depressed, sad at heart, and weary withal with his prolonged exertions, Paul

returned to his lodgings, and found rest, comfort, and courage in converse with his wife, happy in the thought that in her, through the wondrous grace of God, he had a helpmeet and a fellow-worker in that divinest of all missions, the seeking and the saving of them that are lost.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

WHEN Kate Meggitt heard from her husband's lips the whole sad story about the Hodgsons from beginning to end, she said—

“I'll go by-and-by and see what I can do to help Hannah Hodgson and her sick boy. I'm afraid I'm not of much use,” she continued, with a bright blush. “I've done very little of that sort of work in my lifetime, but that's all the more reason why I should begin now; and, at any rate, I can tell her of Him who can help her better than I.”

Paul looked on her whom he used to call his “proud and peerless wife,” and as he thought of the wondrous change which had come over the brilliant and haughty “belle of Breconsfield, the queen of fashion,

and the most fastidious devotee of birth and breeding," a change which sent her, for the Master's sake, to stand by the side of a poor, down-trodden, unattractive woman, amid squalor and poverty, that she might lift up the fallen and bring cheer to the hopeless, he felt that to him she was more beautiful and queenly than ever; and as he kissed her brow he could not help saying:—"God bless my glorious wife! Kate, of all the bonds that can bind human hearts together, the strongest, sweetest, richest, is that of true mutual love, sanctified, purified, intensified by a common love to Christ."

Her answer was a smile of perfect satisfaction and of perfect rest.

Paul's strength had been seriously overtasked by his morning's visit and the influence the sad sight had exercised upon his shaken nerves, so that, much to his regret, he was not able to follow up his pursuit of that wandering sheep, Dick Hodgson, until the night's repose should recruit his exhausted strength. Towards

evening, however, Kate Meggitt, laden with a small basket of grapes, jellies, and other grateful delicacies for the sick child, made her way to the carpenter's cottage, and in true sisterly fashion won the confidence of the struggling and dispirited wife.

Hannah, aroused and cheered by Paul's hopeful talk, and in expectation of the lady's visit, had done her best to put the house to rights, had tidied up her kitchen, administered extensive and sorely-needed ablutions to the bairns, and done her meagre best to make poor little Dick's surroundings shapely and comfortable. She had turned her own sadly scanty wardrobe to the best account; and though at best it was that painful sight, a drunkard's home, it was by many degrees an improvement on the state of things which Paul had witnessed a few hours before.

Kate Meggitt took the ailing child upon her knee, wrapped him in the blanket, and soothed him and refreshed him with her kindly stores, and now and then dropped a furtive tear as she remembered her own

sad absence from Gertie's dying bed. She prayed to God that He would accept this small offering of motherly sympathy and aid towards another gasping, suffering little one, whom she nursed and comforted for Gertie's sake.

"I think he is a little better now," said Mrs. Meggitt to Hannah, as the evening wore away.

"Aye, ma'am! that he is," said Hannah, "thanks to you. He does not seem like the same child he was before you came. It's nothing short of magic."

And indeed it was surprising. Little Dick had mustered a few faint smiles for the kind lady's behoof, and even gone so far as to intrust her with the important secret of the whereabouts of a certain wooden dragoon, which, for fear of his younger brother's filching fingers, he had hidden beneath his pillow; and when the kind lady promised him a whole regiment of soldiers on the morrow, he ventured the opinion that such a circumstance would make him well off-hand.

Meanwhile, Dick Hodgson, convicted, conscience-stricken, and ashamed, even in his beery state, and quite averse to holding converse with Paul Meggitt, had wandered off over stile and footpath into the fields, and finding a shady corner there, had laid himself upon the grass and gone to sleep. It was undoubtedly the most sensible thing that he could do. Hour after hour he slept until the noxious fumes were dissipated, and when at sunset he picked himself up, and recalled his scattered senses, he was sober and sorrowful, thinking of his sinful folly, thinking of his child, and wondering if, as his wife had intimated, he was really dying; thinking also of his sly retreat from an interview with that true but candid friend, Paul Meggitt, to whom he had solemnly avowed amendment and reform.

Dick Hodgson was heartily ashamed of himself, and as he made his way homeward in the red light of the setting sun he walked with bended head and shame-faced look, afraid to meet his angry wife, afraid to know the truth which might meet him

at home. His surprise may therefore be imagined when he found so great a change for the better in the general look of things in-doors, the brighter and tidier appearance of his long-suffering wife, the greeting smile upon the face of little Dick, and especially the tall and handsome-looking lady, who, unbonneted and unshawled, was seated by the bed administering globules, in the shape of grapes, to the young invalid aforesaid.

Had he been left to his own devices, Dick Hodgson would have backed out from the chamber without "With your leave," or "By your leave," but Kate Meggitt accosted him with a gracious smile.

"Good evening, Mr. Hodgson. I don't suppose you know me, so I may as well introduce myself as Mrs. Meggitt, who has been appointed sick nurse to Master Dick here. Do you know I'm inclined to flatter myself that I've done him some good, too, already. Just come and tell me what you think of him."

"Yes, ma'am; no, ma'am; that is, I'm very much obliged, ma'am. I—I——"

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Meggitt, laughing, and coming quickly to his relief, "you've no need to be obliged to me. The fact is, I like it, and I'm coming again to-morrow."

"With some soldiers!" interposed little Dick, though it may be doubted whether his father grasped his meaning.

"But I can tell you," continued Kate, "how you can oblige *me*, and that is by kindly going as far as the hotel. Yours is rather a long, dark lane, and I should like somebody by who can take care of me."

This was said amid a perfect volley of radiant smiles, which fairly took Dick Hodgson captive, and, hat in hand, he stood ready to conduct her northward as far as John O'Groat's, or westward to Land's End, if her fancy lay in that direction. In a few moments the oddly-assorted pair were treading the devious lane that led into the town, and Kate at once took up the conversation.

"Thank God, Mr. Hodgson, little Dick is better. By God's blessing, I think we shall bring him round; and isn't it a mercy

that we can always go and ask Him to help us in all our needs? I have been praying for your little boy, and for your dear wife too. Bless her! she has a deal of trouble and worry, poor thing; and you musn't be angry, but I could not help praying for you too. And do you know, I felt all the time as though God was listening. Isn't that nice? You see, we are such poor, helpless things, that if God's love doesn't take care of us and help us, we are almost sure to go wrong. Don't you think so?"

Dick's answers to such remarks and questions, as they went along, were chiefly in monosyllables, but they were always respectful, and now and then very honest and hearty.

When they arrived at last in sight of the hotel, Kate dismissed her conductor, and—tell it not in Breconsfield; publish it not in the ears of Gerard Berkeley, of Berkeley Hall, or of Colonel Fawcett, of "The Chase," or of any other quondam worshipper of the "belle of Breconsfield"—Kate shook hands with the drunken carpenter, and sent him home

more heartily ashamed of himself, more hungry after goodness and purity, more honestly resolute to burst the bonds that bound him, than he had been for many a day.

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CHAPTER XVII.

DICK HODGSON'S CONTRITION.

WHEN Dick Hodgson, as I have said, left Mrs. Meggitt, whom he had escorted from his cottage to the town, he turned homeward again, the subject of thoughts and feelings that it would be difficult to analyse, not yet fully himself after the numerous potations in which he had indulged; for though his long sleep in the fields had made him sober, he was still nervous and unhinged. He was so astounded by the turn things had taken, and so thoroughly conscience-stricken and ashamed, that he felt as though he must follow the good Samaritan, who was yet in sight, and own himself with tears to be undeserving of all further thought or care. While he stood irresolute, Kate Meggitt disappeared within the portals of the inn where she and Paul were staying, and the repentant and contrite Dick

heaved a sigh of self-discontent, and hastened home. Hannah, like a wise woman, greeted him with a smile of welcome, and at once extinguished all his fears of encountering one of those storms of upbraiding which had lately become so sadly common, and which, however useless, were sufficiently well deserved.

Hannah herself was as tidy and as spruce as her very limited wardrobe, thanks to the publicans, would permit, and the house bore cheerful evidence of the pains she had bestowed on it. The children were in bed, except his eldest son, a fine lad of twelve or fourteen years of age; he was seated upstairs by the bedside of his sick and sleeping brother, reading that marvellous story of Robinson Crusoe, the wonder and delight of juveniles.

Dick's look was full of self-condemnation, and he hung his head in a way that told how little he had to say for himself, and how much he felt his suffering wife had a right to say if she were so minded. But Hannah was not so minded. The words of counsel and cheer she had heard from Paul Meggitt, and the

still more soothing and hope-enkindling influence of Kate, had given her a spirit of patience, and imbued her with such a spirit of resolve that she was determined at once to do all that in her lay to wean her weak-willed husband from his besetting sin by her own behaviour, and by making, as far as she could, a counter attraction to the public-house, of their own home. She had managed to cook a scrap of meat, had provided a little bread and cheese, and had placed by it a small tankard of beer, thinking that he had better take a little at home than too much abroad.

"Now, Dick," quoth she, "you must be hungry. Sit you down and have a bit o' supper."

"Nay, not I," said Dick. "Let them eat suppers who've earned 'em, an' let them as is fools enough to waste their time an' their brass go without."

"Oh, but I've gone an' made it o' purpose, and I feel that I can eat a bit myself, but I waited till you came back, so as we might have it together. Come along!" and so

saying, Hannah placed him a chair, and sat down, ready to begin.

Heaving a sigh, which to Hannah's anxious ear had a good deal of minor music in it, Dick took his seat. As is usual with toppers, he was dreadfully thirsty, and taking up the tankard, he lifted it to his lips, when he encountered the smell of beer. Uttering an exclamation of surprise, and poising it for one moment, he looked at his wife.

"Hannah," said he, "will you have it? It'll maybe do you good. You look fagged, my lass."

"No," said Hannah, "I'm all right, and I'd rather have a cup o' tea."

"Then here goes!" said Dick, firmly, and going to the door he opened it, and threw the beer far out upon the garden path.

Poets have sung of the attractive sounds of "rippling rills" and "tinkling drops," but these were discords compared with the music of the splash that fell on Hannah's ears as the spilt beer fell upon the ground.

"Thank God," she whispered to herself,

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“Then here goes!” said Dick firmly” (p 148).

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and turned her head away, to hide the tears that she felt creeping down her cheeks.

Dick returned to his seat in silence, and without a word his wife poured out a cup of tea and placed it by his side.

"What a fine, kind gentleman, Mr. Meggitt is, Dick," said Hannah, after a while.

"He's a nobleman, an' a prince, an' a king!" said Dick, putting down his cup with a thump, that endangered its existence, and never stopping to think how rarely the three dignities go together.

"An' Mrs. Meggitt," continued Hannah, "*is* a nice lady. I never saw ought like her!"

"She's an angel!" said Dick, emphatically. "An' I'm a stupid idiot, and an unconscionable villain into the bargain. Hannah, my lass," and here his voice faltered a little, "give us a kiss, and don't say a word."

Hannah did as she was told in both respects, and so the breach was healed with that sanction, and Hannah deftly turned the subject of conversation into a more general channel.

A king and an angel! And both names won so easily and conferred so gratefully. Would that those who equally deserve them were a thousand-fold as many more as they are! Then would it go hard with the reign of selfishness, sin, and misery! Then would Christ's Millennium cease to appear so far off!

"How's little Dick to-night, think you, Hannah?" said Dick, by-and-by.

"O, better, thank God! a lot better. He's been sleeping beautiful for many an hour. He'll pull through with God's blessing, I really think!"

"God grant it!" said Dick earnestly. "There, I've no right even to mention His name." And again our poor penitent spoke with some tremor in his voice.

"Nay, don't say that, my lad!" said his wife softly, laying her hand on his arm. "I've been thinking since Mrs. Meggitt was here, how nice it would be if we had prayers at night, as we used to have when your dear old father was alive!"

"My father! Bless him! What would he say if he knew that——" And poor Dick,

unable any longer to restrain himself, laid his arms upon the table and his head upon his arms, and wept in blessed though bitter agony of soul. Is there in all God's wide world a source of tears so bitter and so agonizing as the licensed curse that blights so many homes, blasts so many hopes, and breaks so many hearts?

That night the long-neglected Bible, thumbed and worn by constant use in the days of godly old Thol Hodgson, was brought out; Willie was called down from his watch upstairs, and once again was heard, beneath the lowly roof, the voice of God and the voice of prayer. Dick's petitions were very short and very simple, the Lord's Prayer forming its major part, but all the Divine conditions were fulfilled, and so, as ever, the answer came. Willie rose from his knees, kissed his mother, paused a moment, as if scarcely daring the unfamiliar deed, and then lightly pressing his lips to his father's cheek, retired to bed, little knowing how much the venture had done to confirm the courage and establish the purpose of his father's heart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DANGEROUS ATTACK.

FOR some few days following, Kate Meggitt and her husband visited the carpenter's cottage, and were greatly delighted to find definite and continuous evidence of the change which had come over Dick Hodgson and his household. Dick had seldom much to say on these occasions, but that little showed his knowledge alike of his own weakness, and the true source of strength. His wife, however, was by no means so reticent, and out of a full heart, with smiling face and tearful eye, she told of the blessed and delightful change which had made all things new.

"There isn't a finer fellow, a kinder father, or a better husband in all England than my Dick," said she; "O, may God help it to

last!" And each visitor in turn echoed the prayer with an unspoken Amen!

A few days afterwards Paul Meggitt and his wife returned to Breconsfield, the former fast hastening towards thoroughly re-established health. With Kate, however, it was far otherwise. For some days she had been oppressed with a languor for which she could not account, and which increased to such an extent that Paul called in Dr. Selwood. That authority looked at the matter somewhat gravely, and advised her instant return home. Little Clara was delighted to welcome her mamma back to Breconsfield, and Paul and she had a long programme of re-union to go through, which led Kate to express her doubts as to whether she had not room to be jealous of an unfair division of endearments. Scarcely had they got fairly settled down in the old home routine than Kate was taken ill, and when the physician was sent for, he enquired in serious tones where she had been, and what she had been doing. When the story was told—

"Very well, madam," said the doctor,

who, like some others of the more elevated and influential of his kind, was not remarkable for his *suaviter in modo*, though like them, too, there was plenty of the *fortiter in re* when it came to be required; "very well, madam, the youngster you have kindly nursed has been kind enough to give you the fever by way of reward!" And at once he directed that she should stay in her room, and submit as patiently as might be to the ordeal through which she would have to pass.

It was too true. Kate Meggitt had caught the fever, and in her case it was soon evident that it had taken a very dangerous and malignant type. It developed with remarkable rapidity, and in a little while she became delirious, and a great shadow fell upon Paul Meggitt's heart and home. He was almost distracted. A great whole-hearted love like his was sure to make him suffer even more than the stricken darling of his soul. Nothing could induce him to leave her side. Night and day, with pale face and sore heart, and a premonition that

weighed him down like lead, he held his post and suffered more and more. As soon as the startling reality was understood, he had sent for his sister Emily, and she, with the olden wisdom, deftness, and strength of will, set about her work, and became virtually mistress of the situation. Kate, tossed with fever, racked with pain, was, nevertheless, in agony for her husband—the pulse and sum and substance of her life. She strove to cheer him, uttered words expressive of a hope she could not feel, and in all, and through all, was enabled to tell of her sure and abounding joy in Christ, and to succour him with the encouragement and comforts of the genuine religion that they had both possessed. With the fitful and apparently unreasonable self-will which is often developed by disease, she became offended with her medical attendant, and nothing would serve but that Dr. Selwood should be sent for to take her case in hand. At once Paul telegraphed for his friend and brother, and was well repaid by the undisguised satisfaction with which the fever-

worn patient welcomed him. *He* could talk to her of the Saviour. *He* could pray as well as prescribe, and Kate, even when delirious, seemed to find strength and self-command in obedience to his soothing words and ways.

But Dr. Selwood, like the physician previously called in, had little hope to give, and felt thankful in his heart that his patient had no death-bed preparations to make—her life already being hid with Christ in God. He did not do more than barely hope for her recovery, and his spirit sank within him for the all but demented husband, who sat with dazed eyes and haggard face, looking at the hollow and sunken features of her who was to him dearer than his own soul. Who shall describe the strain, the tension, the agony of suspense, as the crisis neared, came, passed, and left the dear and beautiful patient like a stranded wreck, after a resistless and destructive storm? Life there was, but such a frail, fluttering waning thing, that even the practised eye of Dr. Selwood saw no sign of it. Once, amid a hush deep as

death, and as awful, she opened her eyes, met those of her husband, smiled, and whispered, "Jesus! Peace! Dear Paul!"

Dr. Selwood laid his hand on Paul's arm, and would have drawn him from the room. Paul resisted, when the doctor, as by an inspiration, whispered, "For her life!"

"Aye, to the grave!" groaned Paul, and followed like a child.

Returning, Dr. Selwood succeeded in administering a slight stimulus, well seconded by Emily, whom the doctor declared to be "born on purpose," and so, for the present at least, the destroyer was driven back, and Kate Meggitt lived, and that was all.

Yonder, in the room where Gertie died, Paul Meggitt kneels and prays for his wife; pleads and wrestles with his God for power, if needs be to say—oh, wondrous power!—"Thy will be done."

Through the slow day, and through the slower night, the conflict waged by love, and prayer, and skill, and tireless nursing against a weakness and prostration, only one remove from death, was continued. At length hope

dawned! There it was in the doctor's eye! There it was in the doctor's face! There it was! And it stayed and grew, and Kate was conscious, able to speak, to smile, to say, "Thank you," and to say also, "Where's Paul?" That question came to be asked so often that Paul was admitted to answer it, and the answer was another tonic, another purchase on life—another loosening of that iron grip of death which yet was all but fatal in its grasp.

During the long and trying period of time which intervened between the first turn towards recovery and convalescence, Paul was compelled, by stress of important engagements and responsibilities, to visit a distant portion of the kingdom, and was detained, despite his efforts to avoid it, for some length of time. Daily bulletins, however, were sent to him, and Kate never failed to assure him of the perfect peace she felt in the joy of that salvation which was the strength of her heart and her portion for ever. That watchful and untiring nurse, "Sister Emily," used to sit almost continually by her side, reading or

conversing, and sometimes sketching, at which art she was an adept, for the invalid's comfort and good cheer.

"Emily," said Kate, one day, after she had been unusually anxious as to her semi-toilet, "I want you to take my portrait and send it to Paul. I'm sure I'm looking sufficiently improved in health to warrant your flattering me a little bit, and I know it will do him a world of good."

Nothing loth, Emily set to work, and soon provided a life-sketch, which was forwarded to the anxious husband without delay.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE WRESTLER'S VICTORY.

WHILE yet the clever, but, so far as look of health was concerned, the somewhat flattering sketch of Kate Meggitt was on its way to her absent and anxious husband, the fair invalid, from some unexplained and, probably unexplainable cause, suffered suddenly a serious relapse. It had been a hard, slow, and desperately-fought struggle which had beaten back the grim destroyer Death, and now it appeared as though all the ground which had been gained was more than lost, and once more the darling of Paul Meggitt's soul lay consciously hovering betwixt two worlds. Dr. Selwood, at his wit's end with anxiety and baffled pains, betrayed by look and tone to sister Emily's eye and ear that this time he had no hope of wresting his precious patient from the power of the grave.

Meanwhile, Paul had received the portrait, had thanked God upon his knees, and with tears, for the cheery tone and hopeful words of the letter which accompanied it; and, on the strength of these, he travelled further afield in connection with his professional engagements, and for some days cut off the possibility of communication with Breconsfield, in consequence of an important and imperative call to Vienna, where a vast and costly engineering enterprise was in hand.

“I think you'll lose the battle this time, dear friend,” said Kate to Dr. Selwood, after a prostrating swoon. “But,” said she, with a smile, “your defeat will prove a wonderful victory to me.”

Dr. Selwood looked inquiringly, as though he scarcely understood the reference.

So she smiled again, and whispered as an angel might—

“‘Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ But for darling Clara and my glorious Paul, I should fervently desire to depart and be with

Christ. But, oh, my friend, they do pull hard! And I did so want to do a little work for my Saviour. Now and then in my fitful dreaming I catch a glimpse of Him, and of my sweet Gertie, too; and, oh, doctor! no angel in heaven can look more bright and fair than she."

A special messenger was dispatched to Aubrey Park to fetch, at her request, her father and mother, to whom she desired to give a loving and filial farewell. A message was sent to recall her husband to her side, but that, as we have seen, had to travel circuitously to the continent before its errand could be accomplished.

The old squire and the grief-stricken mother were speedily present in the hushed and darkened chamber where their daughter lay waiting for the end. Once had they been summoned aforetime to catch the dying whispers of their darling, and had heard her triumphant testimony of abounding hope and joy; and both father and mother had breathed in melted wonder the atmosphere which was redolent of the air of heaven. And when

their precious Kate was given back to them even from within the gates, as it seemed, they had returned home, silently, but surely and earnestly, sighing for the possession of so rich a gift from God as Kate had so evidently received.

“Margaret,” the old squire had said to his wife, “the Methodists have given to our Kate something that’s gloriously worth having, and that I, at any rate, know sadly too little about.”

And then the old man sighed an unsyllabled desire, and was not far from the kingdom of God. And then the grateful mother, melted into tenderness of spirit by the prospect of her girl’s recovery, sighed, too, conscious of her lack of that precious “something,” and replied—

“Dying or living, George, Kate is richer than her parents. Would to God that I knew what she knows, and felt what she feels!”

And now the aged pair are again present, the shadow of death is again upon them, and again they hear the sweet and saving

evangel from the lips of their hearts' idol, as she is gliding amid light and love towards the gates ajar.

"Mother, mine," she said, as she felt that mother's tears falling hot upon her own wan cheek, "this is no place for tears! See, I cannot do ought else than smile. Had this hour come to me months ago, when my mind was dark, and my heart hard and proud, I should have wept, too, for then death was a fearsome and an awful thing. But I have found my Saviour — I have seen Him dying on the cross for *me!* Now I see Him living, leading me to His side in heaven. Father," she continued, taking the old squire's hand, as he bent his grey head to catch her feeble whisper, "the way is by the cross of Jesus. You and mamma will both go there and follow me, won't you?"

Sobbing and gasping, the old man said, "Yes, my lassie! my sweet, noble lassie! God will help us to find the way."

"Yes, that He will. I've asked Him, oh, so often! and He says He will."

Here Dr. Selwood intervened, and his unremitting assistant, sister Emily, brought a little refreshment, and then the exhausted patient sank to slumber with the words, "A little while, till Paul comes," on her lips.

The next morning dawned, and found Kate Meggitt still on the border-line, living, but spent and feeble, waiting, waiting with well-trimmed lamp and wedding garment donned until the bridegroom should appear. Taking advantage of a slight revival of strength, she asked for Clara.

When the fair-haired little prattler was lifted on the bed, her mamma drew her face down to hers and kissed her, and then said—

"Darling Clara, mamma is going to Jesus and to sister Gertie. Little Clara will be good, and some day she'll come too."

"No, not of a long while," said little innocence, for what should she know of death? "Somebody must stop with poor papa. I wish you would stop too. I wants

you both. I think papa will die if you go. He will be here directly, and he won't let you go."

When that last sentence was being uttered, Paul Meggitt, half beside himself with grief and fear, was speeding along as fast as express train—which, despite the name, seemed to him to play the laggard—could carry him to the side of his beloved wife. With him, in the solitude of the compartment, was another Traveller, "whom still he held, but could not see." Him he "would not let go," that, haply, he might retain on earth the peerless treasure of his life.

"I *will* say—O God, I *do* say, 'Thy will be done!' Lord pity me! *I will* give my Kate to Thee! But oh, in mercy, give her back again! Spare her! my ewe lamb! my soul! my life!"

So pleaded and wrestled Paul Meggitt all through the waning day, all through the gloomy night, through which the engine plunged and snorted, as it bore him to the spot where the angel Azrael waited with half-lifted wings to bear his treasure

into the shrouded mystery of the far unseen.

As the grey light of earliest dawn gleamed faintly into the compartment, it fell on Paul's spent and agonised spirit like the glint of an angel's wing. He lay prostrate on the cushions, haggard, tearless, all but beaten in the contest. Putting his hot face against the cool glass, he peered into the lessening dark, and saw a star, the morning star, shining down from the blue lift, and shooting lances of golden light athwart the mist; while away yonder in the distant east a blush-red tinge upon the hill-tops told of the coming of the day. "Let me go, for the day breaketh," said the Man with whom he had wrestled through the live-long night. "I will not let Thee go, except thou bless me!" shouted Paul Meggitt aloud, lifting imploring hands to heaven. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." In that moment his name was Israel, and the name of the place was Penuel.

Right, little Clara! By means of prayer and faith, which can remove mountains, can

turn back the dial ten degrees, and blunt the darts of death, papa will be there directly, and "he will not let her die."

By-and-by a cab drove up the streets of Breconsfield in hot haste, and stopped before the door where death and life had fought an unmatched duel. Paul Meggitt was met at the door by Dr. Selwood.

"How's my wife?" said Paul, with all his heart upon his lips.

"Sleeping like an infant for the last six hours," said his friend. "I am perplexed and astounded! It may be that she will live!"

"She WILL!" said Paul, and staggering into the drawing-room, he sank swooning on the sofa like one bereft of life.

Not all at once did swift recovery come to Paul Meggitt's wife; but the tide had turned, the ebb had ceased, and slowly but surely the tide of life flowed in.

Her marvellous recovery brought Messrs. Berkeley, Fawcett, and many another sympathetic and congratulating visitor, each of whom heard from her own lips, from her

husband's and her parents', that which went far to stagger their prejudices, and convince them that Paul Meggitt's delusion, in which his godly wife had stooped to share, was a grand reality, and a precious gift of God.

No words can describe the hallowed feeling and the holy glow of that thanksgiving service, when Paul Meggitt and his "glorious Kate," with little Clara, and the old squire and his weeping wife, Dr. Selwood and invaluable sister Emily, met together in the humble Methodist sanctuary, while the officiating minister offered praises to Almighty God for the miracle of healing, which loosened many a tongue and unstopped the fount of many an eye that long-to-be-remembered day.

Paul Meggitt's household speedily resumed its accustomed routine of quiet and happy order. Both he and his wife were richer in grace, and happier than ever in the bonds of sanctified love.

Dr. Selwood returned home laden with thanks and blessings, and bearing with him, what he may be supposed to have valued

even more highly than these, the heart of sister Emily, which, at his strong request, had been committed to his keeping, and which could scarcely have had a worthier custodian; nor could he have had a richer treasure over which to keep watch and ward.

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CHAPTER XX.

AT SANDY COVE.

IN the home of Dick Hodgson there continued, for an unusual length of time, the proofs and tokens of Dick's reformation. Wife and children, house, garden, and shop, each had their own story to tell in the vast improvement they showed on the sad state of things which obtained in the dark and sorrowful days before Kate Meggitt brought help and hope to the bedside of fever-stricken little Dick. Hannah Hodgson was a new and different woman, and from early morn to dewy eve, by cheery voice and snatch of song, made evident the happy *régime* under which it had become her lot to live.

But of all demons, the liquor devil is the most difficult to exorcise. He lies, beneath strong pressure of will and effort,

latent and quiescent; keeps the peace so long that observers, and even the possessed say, "he is expelled," when lo! some sudden temptation is presented, some peculiar combination of circumstances favourable to the evil spirit's quick uprising, causes it to start into a burst of giant life and vigour, and to re-assert a fatal and destructive sway. A few miles from the place where Dick Hodgson resided, there was a farm, whose occupant had a high opinion of Dick Hodgson's surpassing ability in that part of his handicraft which had to do with the construction and repairs of such farming machinery as drills, threshing, winnowing, and other machines. It was not unusual for Dick to walk there with a bag of tools; and, after putting to rights some lever, cog-wheel, shaft, or frame, to return in the evening to his own home. One day, in the late autumnal season, when the days were waxing short, and abundant mist and fog oft made them shorter still, Dick was summoned to the farm on an errand of this nature; and very much against his will—for,

being sober, work pressed upon him more than he could manage—he had to shoulder his tools and obey the call. He took with him, to aid him in carrying the tools and doing the work, his eldest son, a fine, smart lad, of some twelve or fourteen years of age, whom he was just putting to the bench, that he might learn his father's trade. As I have said, Dick was put out by the awkward claim for his help, and the damp, raw, unpleasant kind of weather did not at all mend his temper. He strode away at a pace which kept poor Willie trudging along at a continuous trot, and, as was not unlikely under such circumstances, he was often a good way behind. Then cross-grained Dick would shout a stern command to "look sharp," and on more than one occasion threatened him in strong but indefinite terms as to what he would do to him by-and-by; all which Dick had bitter reason eventually to regret.

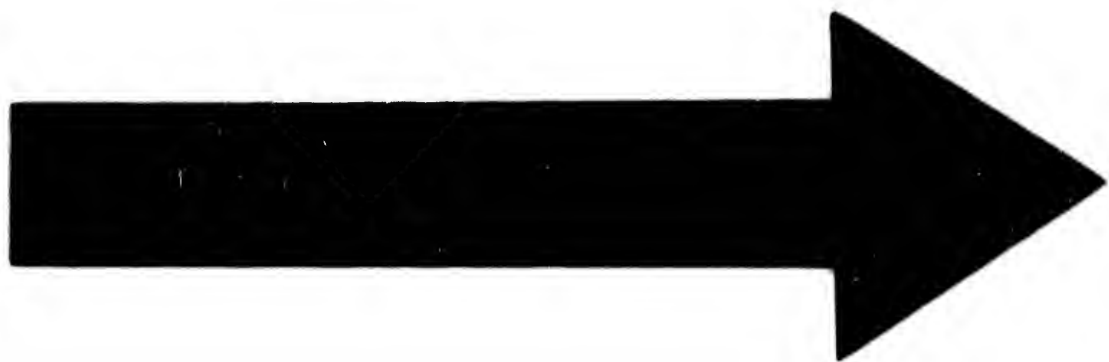
The way to Sandy Cove Grange, as the farm was called, lay around the borders of a long creek, or "reach," of the sea, extend-

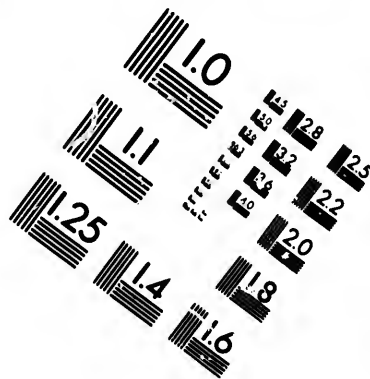
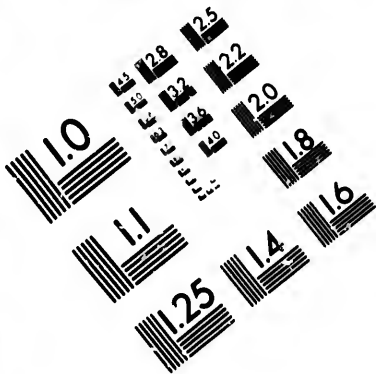
ing some three or four miles inland, and being some three-quarters of a mile across. At a certain state of the tide it was perfectly safe to cross the sands if a little care were exercised in avoiding some well-defined spots of a quicksand character, and much time and labour was saved in reaching the Grange on the other side. Dick's angry mood was a good deal intensified when he found that the tide would not permit him to cross; so, to economise time and trouble, and with even more rapid strides and throwing even louder objurgations at his laggard son, he rounded the cove, and set to work to repair some injury to the threshing-machine, whose operations had stopped perforce till he should mend the damage.

It is not to be wondered at that things went wrong all the day. It is marvellous how loss of temper seems to breed a succession of mishaps. By the time the work was finished, Dick was dreadfully weary, unhinged, and out of sorts. After he and his son had had their tea, he was called into the parlour to speak with the farmer con-

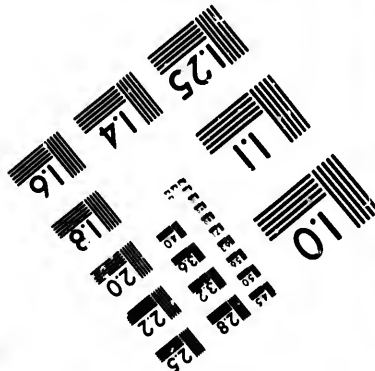
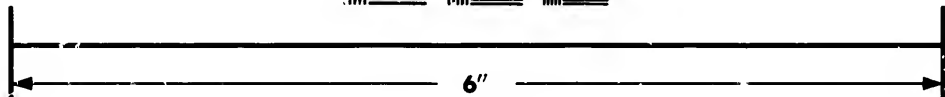
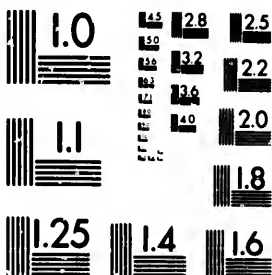
cerning a new waggon which was needed. There and then poor Dick was "over persuaded" by that criminal and insensate "kindness" which makes hospitality a prime agent in doing the devil's work, to take some strong liquors "just to keep the fog out, and help him home." The awakened longing was not easily satisfied, and even the stupid farmer discovered at last that it was wise to restore the bottles to the cupboard, lest Dick's chances of finding his way home were lost altogether.

When father and son began their homeward journey, night had gathered round; and although here and there one of the brighter stars showed through the gathering mists, the way even for a sober man was not easy to find. Wisdom would have chosen the longer path round the creek, but that tedious business had been gone through once that day already, and Dick's access of Dutch courage determined him to "try the sands." The night air seemed to increase the effect of the potations upon his muddled brain, and as he wandered deviously here and





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there, he lost all notion of his proper bearings, and was as completely lost as though he were in the centre of Sahara, with neither compass nor guide. Darker grew the night, denser gathered the mists, and poor Willie was separated from his reeling father, though in all probability but little was lost by that. In vain the youth shouted "Father!" and in vain he sought to extricate himself from the apparently endless region of sand on which he wandered round and round.

Meanwhile Dick Hodgson himself succeeded, after much difficulty, and growing momentarily more and more incapable, in getting across the creek, and reeled homewards, maundering about Willie, and even treating him in his absence to a little harsh language, because he kept such a long way behind. At length, as he pursued his devious way homeward, he reeled against a policeman, who had heard his violent language towards Willie while they were outward bound; and in answer to that sharp official's inquiries as to what had become of the lad, he had no answer other than an obfuscated

and murmured statement that he had "lost the young beggar in Sandy Cove."

While the constable was yet overhauling the half-unconscious Dick, another policeman whose beat dove-tailed with his own, and who had also overheard the angry and loud-voiced threatenings of his son, arrived upon the scene. The two compared notes, and with the peculiar bias of their kind, they jumped to the conclusion that the lad had been unfairly dealt with, and that Dick had made for himself a "pretty kettle of fish," as they emphatically described it.

Dick received the suggestion with a burst of wrath, and straightway became pugilistic and otherwise disrespectful to the law and its representatives; and as he was evidently "drunk and incapable," as well as open to strong suspicions of something worse, he was hauled to the nearest lock-up, and immured within four stone walls until the fumes of liquor evaporated, and such time as before "his better self could answer for himself."

No words of mine can describe his feelings the next morning when, sobered and

saddened, he pondered on his foolish conduct, and wondered, with an awful sinking at the heart, as to what had become of Willie. It was some time before he could realise the fact that he was suspected of having been the means of his son's death in the dangerous Sandy Cove.

When his position was made clear, and he perceived to the full the straits into which his sad lapse had brought him, he threw himself on the mean prison bed and wept aloud.

So the suspicions of his wrathful captors were increased, and he was told to be careful of his speech, for whatever he said "might be used in evidence against him."

Poor Dick! he was being sorely punished for his fault. He received permission to send for Paul Meggitt, who, he fondly hoped, would help him out of the net in which he was enmeshed; and then, almost broken-hearted with fear for Willie's safety, he watched and waited the result.

Paul Meggitt, true to his promise to Old Thol, and impelled by the earnest entreaties

of Kate, responded to his call at once. He arrived at the police-station in the early morning. Dick, sick in body and sick at heart, was in bed.

No sooner did his faithful friend enter his prison, than Dick, in an agony of shame, turned his face to the wall; and Paul Meggitt sank upon a seat, and sorrowfully pondered on the pass to which the drink-fiend had brought the poor fellow at his side.

CHAPTER XXI.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

WHILE Dick Hodgson was reeling homeward under the influence of Farmer Oxley's too bounteous allowance of whiskey, poor Willie was vainly trying to find an exit from the apparently endless wastes of Sandy Cove. The thick mist, which had dropped down like a curtain, blotted the very stars from his view, and in his vain efforts to find his way, the tired lad kept tramping round and round, or striking off at a tangent in sheer desperation; but utterly unable to escape from the maze in which he wandered with ever-lessening strength and ever-increasing fear. At length, in one of his sudden and aimless veerings, he pursued his course until he heard the soft wash of the advancing tide, and in another moment his foot splashed in the water, which sounded ominously deep. Willie now began to be seriously afraid, and

retreating from the spot, walked rapidly in the opposite direction. Alas! the same monotonous and monitory ripple was heard in front of him, and again he stepped into the cruel flood, which was rapidly encircling him with the bonds of death. The poor boy's blood ran cold with terror; a full consciousness of his terrible danger flashed on him all at once, and the plaintive and pitiful tones in which he cried out "Father! Father!" might have almost made the mist to tremble, and lift in very sympathy. But the cry was vain. His father at that moment was vainly struggling with the two policemen, and heard no echo of the fear-scream of his entrapped and helpless boy. By-and-by the rising tide compassed him about. He could feel it flowing over his cold and weary feet. Then he shouted for help, shouted with might and main; but there was none to hear, nor any to answer except here and there a startled sea-gull, whose useless response was but a shrill, discordant cry. He tried to move, but felt as though he had been fastened to the ground. Higher rose

the cruel flood; his limbs trembled; he felt sick and faint; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; and only by a desperate effort could he shout his horror and alarm. It was a shout—wild, worthless, woe-begone; and all the while the mighty waters rose, and fell, and heaved in broadening billows, which threatened to lift him from his feet, wrap him in their dread embrace, and bear him to an ocean grave. He prayed, poor lad, for heaven's kind help, called on his mother far away, laughed in half-demented ecstasy of terror; then a sweeping wave lifted and overthrew him, and with one last, long shriek of despair, he fell into the conquering flood!

But although the startled sea-fowl and the splash of the waves were all the voices the hapless boy had heard in answer to his pitiful cry for aid, he had been heard, and answered, too, by voices that were borne to leeward and failed to reach him. Lying at anchor in the seaward portion of the bay was a coasting collier ship, the *Sprightly Nancy*, whose captain, a brown old salt of

sixty, had heard the lad's despairing call; heard was it also by his wife, who sailed with him, and by his son, who formed a third of his limited crew.

"What in the world's that?" said old Joe Marling, for such was the captain's name. Again the awful cry was borne upon the breeze.

"It's some poor laddie lost on the sands!" said his wife Betsy. "Oh, Joe! can't you help him?"

"I can try," said the old seaman. "Here, Jack! leud a hand!" And in a few minutes father and son had lowered a boat, and rowing through the mist, they rapidly made their way in the direction from which the sound appeared to come.

"Heart up, laddie!" shouted Joe; "call again!"

It was just then that poor Willie's final scream was uttered. It seemed to come from under the bow of the boat, and the next instant something bumped against the side. Joe dipped his hand at hazard into the sea, and caught the drowning lad. He was in-

stantly hauled into the boat, and placed face downward athwart the seat.

“Row for his life, Jack!” said the honest tar, and pulling with a will, a double pull for the sake of a life in peril, they speedily reached the *Sprightly Nancy*. Betsy proceeded at once to use simple but sensible means, only too rarely understood, to restore the ebbing life, and bring back consciousness to the youth, who, to all seeming, was beyond the reach of recovery. By-and-by there was a fluttering at the heart, the slightest tinge of colour appeared upon the clay-cold cheek; two or three rapid sobs succeeded, and then a long-drawn sigh, which filled the kindly souls with hope, and led them to redouble their exertions to wrest the youthful victim from the grasp of death. At length their labour of love received its due reward; Willie gazed with widely-opened but lack-lustre eyes, murmured “Mother!” and heaving a series of deep-drawn sighs, began to breathe as one who has been all but worsted, yet still a conqueror, in the strife.

“Now, then,” said Betsy, with a sigh of

satisfaction and relief, "let us thank God for sparing the laddie's life. He's some poor mother's bairn, an' the Lord's merciful to her, an' good to us that we've saved him from a grave i' the sea."

The three knelt round the rude cabin bed on which they had laid him, and Betsy, who was evidently the priestess of the floating ark, uttered a simple but earnest and praiseful prayer to God.

Soon afterwards the anchor was lifted, and taking advantage of the turn of the tide, the *Sprightly Nancy* pursued her voyage to the port whither she was bound. All through the night Betsy kept watch and ward by Willie's side, supplying food and stimulant to restore the strength which had all but gone for ever. It was not until the next day, however, that Willie's laggard brain fairly grasped the consciousness of his great deliverance, and understood where he was and how he came there. He seemed as though he had suddenly awoke out of sleep, and sitting up in bed he uttered an exclamation of surprise, putting his hand to his brow in

dazed uncertainty as to his surroundings. Jack had been quietly sitting by his side, uniting the two occupations of watching the patient and smoking a short pipe, which, like a good many other foolish simpletons, he would have been a good deal better without. Both Betsy and Joe were soon there, the former with some warm modicum of comfort ready in her hand, the latter to look his satisfaction across the shoulders of his buxom wife. As soon as he was able, Willie told his hospitable and kindly hosts who he was, and how he came to be lost in the fog on the sands of Sandy Cove; but when he attempted to describe his later experiences on that eventful night, the awful memory was too much for him.

“Nay, never mind, laddie,” interposed Betsy, “thank God you’re saved, and when we get to Fairmouth we’ll write an’ let your mother know that you’re safe and sound. Aye, but won’t she be thankful to hear of her bairn again.” And here the dear old woman could not restrain a tear or two of prospective sympathy.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STARTLING EPISODE.

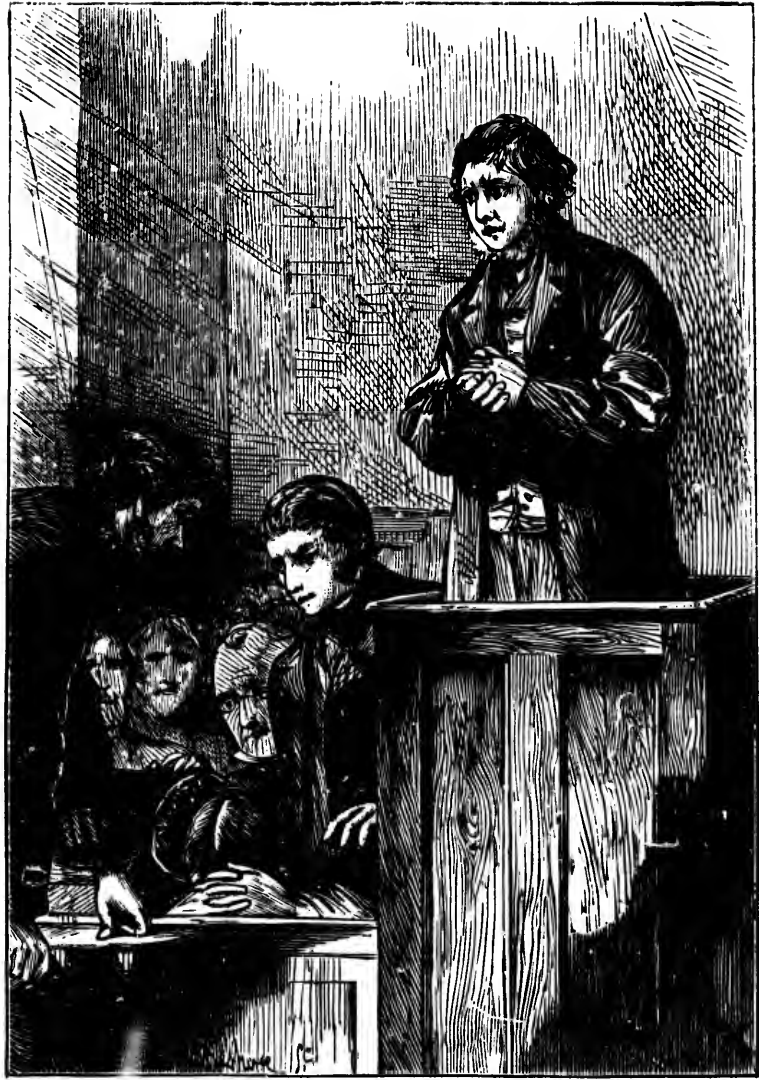
MEANWHILE, as we have already intimated, Dick Hodgson was enduring the double torture of remorse for his own conduct and of bitter fear for the safety of his son, in the police cell. Paul Meggitt had heard the story of the fatal crossing of the sands with a sinking heart, and had gone to Sandy Cove in hopeless quest of the poor lost lad. Dick's wife had also been made acquainted with her husband's ill-fortune, and Dick himself had sent a loving and repentant message to her. Strange to say, the news of her husband's sad lapse into insobriety did not, on this occasion, affect her as heretofore. She had had proof positive that he was honestly and bravely bent on redeeming himself from his self-inflicted curse, and every word of his

brief message told of honest sorrow and penitent regret.


“Never mind,” quoth Hannah to herself, “I can hardly expect that so great a change could come suddenly once for all. He’ll come all right yet, I’m sure he will,” and straightway, like a sensible woman, she retired to her chamber, and shutting herself in with her God, pleaded for the erring Dick as only a wife or a mother may. No reference was made to Willie, but that awoke no fears in her breast: he might have been retained at the farm, or, which was quite as likely, he might be remaining near, under Mr. Meggitt’s direction, to be employed as circumstances might direct. All the impression she received concerning Dick’s incarceration was, that his intemperance had been the cause of it, and that he would be sure to turn up, having paid his fine, in the course of the day. But when Dick was remanded by reason of all lack of information respecting Willie, Hannah became alarmed, and on the following day made her way to the magistrate’s court, and arrived just in time to see Dick brought in by the

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“ ‘ She asks for Willie ’ ” (p. 189).



clever policeman, and placed at the bar. She did not permit her husband to see her, but stood waiting, listening in a corner, until the set time for making herself known should come. But when she heard the magistrates ask whether the policeman had found any trace of the lost boy, and heard also that officer's prompt reply in the negative, with a volunteered opinion that he was drowned in Sandy Cove, poor Hannah's self-control was gone in a moment, and with a mother's cry, "Oh, Willie! my Willie!" she rushed forward to her husband's side, and asked him for her boy. The magistrates could not misread either the tone in which she spoke, or the agonised look upon her face; and despite the informal method of her approach to the magisterial presence, no rebuke was given.

Dick Hodgson, already rendered half crazy by the awful tempest of remorse and dread that raged in his own soul, seemed temporarily to be deprived of sense by this sudden and startling episode. He looked at his wife, and then at the magistrates, to whom he said—

"She asks for Willie! For God's sake,

gentlemen, tell me what to say!" and then hiding his face in his hands, poor Dick wept and sobbed like a child.

"Say, I'm here, father!" said none other than Willie himself, who, with Paul Meggitt by his side, had entered the court just in time to hear his father's hopeless words.

On his way homeward from the station on the Fairmouth line, nearest to his home, Willie had met with an acquaintance, who informed him of his father's position. Turning his steps at once in that direction, he met with Paul Meggitt, just returning from his fruitless quest at Sandy Cove, and so he, too, had entered just at the time when Willie was most wanted. In a moment his mother had an arm around his neck, and a hand smoothing back his hair, while she kept raining kisses on his brow—a picture that made even magisterial eyes to become dim with tears. Willie's sudden and palpable resurrection was nothing less than an inspiration of new life to poor Dick. He turned to the magistrates and said,—

"Thank God, gentlemen, Willie's safe!

Now for your sentence. I deserve it richly. But let me kiss my lad."

A few whispered words on the Bench, a question or two asked of, and answered by Paul Meggitt, who paid the usual five shillings for his repentant ward, and then Dick was free—free to go homeward with his wife and son. Paul Meggitt accompanied them, and in the little cottage that night a scene occurred which will never leave the memory of those who witnessed it. Despite the universal satisfaction and delight consequent on Willie's safe return, there was an oppressive sense of silence and restraint on the little company, for Dick Hodgson was moody and miserable, and the more Hannah sought by cheery word and thoughtful deed to lift the cloud from her husband's brow, the more darkly it seemed to settle down. At length Paul Meggitt rose with an intimation that he must return to the inn. Then up rose Dick Hodgson, and standing before the retreating guest, he said, in hard, dry tones, accompanied by a look from eyes that were bloodshot with pent-up feelings—

“Maister Meggitt, do you think there's a wickeder or more miserable wretch in all God's wide world than me? I'm neither fit to live nor die! and the best thing that could happen either to Hannah or the bairns would be for me to hang myself in the saw-pit; and that's what it'll come to, and the sooner the better. God's tired of *me*, and no wonder, for I'm tired of myself.”

And here the poor fellow stretched his arms abroad, allowing them to collapse to his sides, his head sunk into his shoulders, his whole frame seemed to shrink into a huddled heap; the man was crushed with a very mountain of remorseful despair.

“Oh, nonsense, Dick,” said Paul, cheerfully, laying his hand on the poor fellow's shoulder. “We all fail sometimes, but God is very patient and merciful. All you've got to do is to try again. Face it like a man. You'll win the victory yet.”

“Never, never, never!” groaned Dick, between his set teeth. “I *have* tried, over and over and over again, and this is always what comes of it. The devil is as sure of

me as if he had me. Nay, I tell you, he *has* me, and there's nought left for me but to go to my own place."

Words cannot describe the hopeless tone, or the despairing motions, with which these words were said. It was a wail out of an all but broken heart.

"Dick, Dick!" said Hannah, seizing him by the arm as though to prevent an act of suicide there and then, "dear Dick! don't talk like that! I know you've been trying with all your heart; and when I heard what had happened this time, I said to myself, 'Never mind, he's trying hard, and he'll win yet;' and you *will*, Dick. I prayed for you, and I knew it while I prayed."

Dick looked in wonder at his fond and faithful Hannah, and heaved a relenting sigh as he said, "My poor, patient, and forgiving wife!"

"Neither so patient nor so forgiving as Jesus is, dear husband," said Hannah. "Let Mr. Meggitt pray with us before he goes; it'll do you good."

Paul took him by the hand. "Dick,"

said he, "will you pray for yourself? Think a minute. The God of your sainted father is all you want. The dying Saviour, in whom he trusted, bore your sins, too. The Holy Spirit, who strengthened his heart, can bring *you* off more than conqueror, as He did him, and you and he shall triumph together. Let us pray."

Paul Meggitt prayed as one inspired. He had, and felt he had, power with God to prevail. Silently and tearfully Hannah, too, lifted up her heart to God.

By-and-by Dick Hodgson groaned aloud, and then breaking into penitential prayer, he cried for mercy.

"O God, pity the biggest sinner in the world! *Can* I be saved? *Wilt* Thou save? *I will* be saved!"

Now Paul Meggitt ceased his petitions, knelt by the side of the convicted sinner, whose paroxysms were tremendous, and pointed him to the Lamb of God 'that taketh away the sins of the world. At times it appeared as though he was on the very verge of pardon; then would come an access of

gloom as dark as if despair had settled on his soul. Of all the devils that possess the human soul, it may be said of that which held despotic sway in Dick Hodgson's, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Twice he leaped to his feet shouting, "It's no use! It's no use, I'm sold to the devil!" With matchless patience, skill, and faith, Paul continued to plead and counsel and cheer. At length he repeated the lines—

"Kindled His relentings are,
 Me He now delights to spare,
 Cries, 'How shall I give thee up?'
 Lets the lifted thunder drop,
 There for *thee* the Saviour stands,
 Shows His wounds and spreads His hands."

Dick Hodgson leaped to his feet, exclaiming, "For *me* the Saviour stands!

'God is love, I know, I feel!
 Jesus weeps and loves me still!'"

The awful horror of thick darkness vanished in a moment, and poor Dick Hodgson found peace and pardon through faith in his father's God. Paul Meggitt had fulfilled his promise to old Thol Hodgson, when in dying

words the patriarch had said, "Bring my lad to Jesus."

Great peace brooded over Dick's hearthstone that night. Hannah was half beside herself with joy; Dick sat by her side clothed in his right mind; while Paul Meggitt, whose warm heart, aglow with holy exercise, could defy the nipping night wind to chill it, repaired to the inn, pondering as he gazed upon the stars and beyond them on the words, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

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CHAPTER XXIII.

GERARD BERKELEY'S WITNESS.

IT was with a wonderfully contented and thankful heart that Paul Meggitt returned to Breconsfield, and with no less of gratification and gratitude did his darling Kate hear of the blessed outcome of Dick Hodgson's season of tribulation and distress. They both felt that now the erratic carpenter had become possessed of the "saving strength of grace divine," there was a well-based hope that his reformation would be thoroughly wrought out, and that the besetting sin by which he had been so often overthrown would now be vanquished for evermore. Let the ardent temperance philanthropists, who are working so bravely and so well to induce the hapless drunkard to sign the pledge of abstinence, strive with equal force and rigour to bring each

recovered inebriate to the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Then is there more abounding guarantee that the moral cure shall be complete and enduring, while blessings of the richest kind are insured to the recovered one, such as mere abstinence is powerless to supply.

Not many days after Paul's return, he received a special message from Squire Aubrey, his father-in-law, requesting his presence at the Park as soon as possible. His favourite riding mare was quickly saddled and brought to the door, and as Paul urged the willing steed to its utmost pace, he could not help thinking of the sad and sorrowful season, not so many months ago, when he took the same journey at even a swifter speed, in search of the love and life of his heart, who had left the bedside of their dead darling in an agony of remorse and pain that may never be described. Again, as aforetime, the staid old butler met him at the door, with alarm written on his countenance.

"Well, Rowley," said Paul, "I hope

nothing is the matter. Are your master and mistress well?"

"O, yes, sir," said Rowley, "they are both well, sir, leastways, as well as can be expected after such a sad affair."

"Sad affair?" said Paul, "what's that, Rowley?"

"Why, sir, Squire Berkeley was brought here yesterday. His horse threw him while he was hunting, and then fell upon him, and I'm afraid he's mortally injured. The master and Colonel Fawcett had him brought here as being the nearest place. The doctor's been here ever since, sir, but he does not think there is any hope of recovery."

At this moment old Squire Aubrey himself appeared at the foot of the hall staircase, and coming forward to greet his son-in-law, he said—

"That's right, Meggitt, I'm glad you've come so promptly. Poor Gerard Berkeley is lying up-stairs sadly crushed and with no hope of recovery. I could not help sending for you, *for I thought you could perhaps put him into the way of dying with a heart*

as light as Kate's was when she thought it was all over with her."

Thus deeply and lastingly had his daughter's happy witness for Jesus, on what everybody thought was the bed of death, laid hold of the old man's soul. With an unsyllabled prayer for divine grace and guidance, Paul followed Mr. Aubrey into the darkened chamber where the once light-hearted and buoyant Berkeley lay groaning in the last extremity of pain.

"My dear Gerard," said Paul, taking the hand of the stricken huntsman and addressing him in the old familiar fashion of the time when they were friends together, and before Paul Meggitt's 'delusion' had parted them, to travel henceforth widely different ways, "My dear Gerard, I'm afraid you are very ill."

"Meggitt, my boy!" said Berkeley with a sad and forlorn attempt at a smile, "It's all over with Gerard Berkeley. You've just come in time to be 'in at the death!'"

Paul lifted up his heart to God that he might be able to lead his quondam and

hapless companion to the Divine source of the new life, apart from which the outlook was dark indeed. While he was pondering to himself as to how he should best commence his mission, Berkeley said,

“I have been thinking ever since I lay here, and heard the doctor’s hopeless verdict as to my condition, of the marvellous story my wife told me of Mrs. Meggitt’s wonderful peace and pleasure when she lay as she thought a-dying. I don’t mind telling you that I have long looked both on you and her as a couple of fools; but as I lie here, I’m thinking that it is myself that is deluded, and that I, not you, am the fool.” The way was now sufficiently open, and out of a full heart and with abounding liberty of speech, Paul followed the example of Philip with the Ethiopian nobleman, and preached unto him Jesus. The dying man was a good listener and a willing learner, but it was long, very long, before any glimpse of light dawned upon his mind. Pride and prejudice, the love of the world, and an unrestrained pursuit of pleasure, had so long

held sway, that he groped in weary blindness after Gospel truth, and declared at length, in a spirit half of unbelief and half of despair, that it was no use pursuing the subject any further--"he had made his bed, and must lie on it as the fates might direct." Then Mrs. Berkeley, who had been summoned to her husband's side, but whose excess of genuine grief had necessitated her gentle expulsion from the chamber, was re-admitted; and impressed with the memories of Kate Meggitt's exultant victory, added her plea to Paul's, that the hapless man would plead for mercy and pardon at the cross. All through the long sad night hours Gerard Berkeley moaned and sighed and turned in restless fear and dread upon his pillow, and just as the dawning light was battling with the dark, and paling the rays of the glimmering lamp, Paul Meggitt read the mellow words of limitless mercy that have been echoing down the ages, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

"Are you coming, Gerard? Jesus won't cast you out!"

"*I am come!*" said the dying man, with wondrous fervour. "I won't *be* cast out! Oh, Saviour, pity a poor dying wretch who knows nothing, and take me in! Ellen," said he, turning to his wife, "He hears! I'm saved! Paul, forgive me. Tell Fawcett it's no delusion! Squire, God bless you! Find it out. Oh, Nell, Nell! my wife!" said he, as he grasped her hand, "meet me in——."

In that moment Gerard Berkeley of Berkeley Hall *went in!* and the watchers by his bed knew as clearly as if an angel spake, that the freed soul had spread its wings and entered into rest.

"Colonel," said Paul Meggitt to the aristocratic owner of "The Chase," a few days after Gerard Berkeley's funeral, "your old friend and chum gave me a message for you; just before he died. He said, as he went away to heaven, 'Tell Fawcett it's no delusion;' and, excuse me, Colonel, but I think he *knew*."

"'Pon my word, Meggitt," said Colonel Fawcett, grasping Paul's hand, his eyes the

while glistening with deep feeling, "to tell you the truth, I don't believe it is."

Amongst all the *élite* of Breconsfield society nobody's aid and sympathy were so welcome or profitable or precious to Gerard Berkeley's sorrowing widow as Kate Meggitt's. Rich in the possession of the pearl of great price, and gifted with an unusual degree of that winsome persuasiveness which ensures success in the great Master's business, Paul Meggitt's "glorious wife" was enabled to administer real comfort, and what was better still, clear evangelic guidance to the bereaved mourner. A new nine days' wonder absorbed the momentary attention of the Breconsfield aristocracy when the wealthy and still attractive Mrs. Berkeley, of Berkeley Hall, was known to have cast in her lot with the despised people called "Methodists," and to accompany Kate Meggitt to the obscure and humble little conventicle where unauthorised and unconsecrated gossellers broke to a few of the humbler citizens the bread of life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“IT’S NO DELUSION!”

PAUL MEGGITT surely and steadily won his way to the brightest esteem and regard of his fellow-townsmen. There was no really patriotic, philanthropic, or commendable civic movement to which he did not lend a vigorous helping hand; and it was patent, even to the most bigoted observer, that his bold and open religious consistency not only did not detract from, but largely added to, his character and value as a public man. By an unanimous vote he was elected to fill the office of Mayor of Breconsfield, and was installed in that honourable office amid the unmingled plaudits of his fellow-citizens. Unlike some half-souled Methodists who have been elevated to the civic chair or other municipal or social dignity, Paul Meggitt did not

prove recreant to the church to which he owed so large a moral debt. The superintendent minister was appointed as his chaplain, and much to the wonderment of many, the chagrin of some, and the satisfaction of more, the mace was borne in state to the Methodist Chapel. The bulk of the Corporation accompanied the Mayor to the humble sanctuary, in which his chief pastor preached a sermon and collected liberal gifts for the hospital which had been established in the town.

During Paul Meggitt's year of office two notable events transpired, both of which gave rise to much public interest and excitement. He passed through the usual ordeal and probation needful to make him a full-fledged local preacher, and his wife presented him with a son and heir; which latter circumstance led to the presentation of the customary silver cradle and an address, embodying the heartfelt congratulations of his fellow-counsellors and fellow-citizens, together with their best wishes for the abounding prosperity of their illustrious townsman and his house.

In response to such an evidence of universal esteem and confidence, the Mayor gave a banquet, at which, among many other unaccustomed guests, and occupying a seat of honour at his right hand, was the shrewd and godly carpenter, Abraham Halliday, who, as Paul’s class leader, had many a time and oft sustained and comforted him in the “dark and cloudy day.” I have not space to reproduce Paul Meggitt’s speech on that interesting occasion, but in rebuke of the time-serving moral cowardice which too often marks the conduct of half-hearted Methodists, who happen to be temporarily the favourites of fortune, I give one quotation, which I myself was privileged to hear. “Gentlemen,” quoth his worship, “no man can value more than I the expression of the good opinion of my fellow-citizens, which placed me in the proud position of Mayor of Breconsfield; and no pains shall be wanting on my part to give practical evidence of my sense of the honour by doing all that is within my power to serve the common interests of my fellow-citizens; but

I am bound to declare that the honour of being appointed as a lay preacher of the glorious gospel of my Lord and Master, is to me an honour and a privilege which I rate far higher than any other which has been conferred upon me. I owe my peace of mind, my sense of the Divine favour, and my hope of heaven, to Methodism, and as long as I live I hope to declare to others the simple and glorious evangel which has brought untold blessing to me and mine."

In the course of the evening, old Abraham Halliday was called upon. Doubtless there were many present on that occasion who greatly wondered how and why the honest carpenter had come to be an honoured guest at such a board, and others who were looking out for ludicrous slips of speech and clownishness of manners, and who were quite prepared to extract a good deal of amusement from the old man's words and ways. The right worshipful the Mayor, however, had no fears of results. He was too well acquainted with Abraham's shrewd wit and strong good sense for that, and felt quite

persuaded that the genuine ring of what was almost sure to be a little plain and godly talk, would win a patient hearing and a good deal of after pondering, too. Nor was he disappointed; Abraham rose to his feet, and looking with a certain degree of bashfulness around the assembled company, he said—

“Well, Mr. Mayor, or, may be, I should say ‘Your Worship,’ though I never could understand why ‘worship’ should ever be given to a poor mortal, for you know, Mr. Meggitt, that a mayor’s robe, with a gold chain to help it, can’t make you ought else but that. Honours and riches are all very well in their way, an’ if them that has ’em fears God and works righteousness they may be turned to a good and useful account; but without the riches of God’s grace, an’ the honours of God’s favour, they aren’t up to much even in this world, an’ when you come to leave it, they’re worth just nothing at all. This is a grand feast, no doubt, but me an’ the Mayor an’ the little band of believers that worships with us in my class,

are privileged to sit at a grander table and to banquet on richer food. We've come to-day to congratulate the Mayor on the birth of his son and heir, and I pray with all my heart that the bairn may live to be a great comfort to his parents and a great blessing to the church and to the world; an' its more than likely, for both its father and mother are children and heirs of God; an' God's promise is that His blessing shall be to them and their children after 'em, through many generations. I don't think I've anything more to say, only this, ladies and gentlemen, an' I hope it'll do instead of a 'toast,' as you call it, which is another thing I can't find any sense in,—

'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
'Tis religion can supply
Solid comfort when we die.'

Religion is no delusion. Let's get it and keep it, and live under the shadow of the Cross, an' then dwell for ever in the light of the Throne."

My brief narrative comes now to a close.

Paul Meggitt and his wife appeared from this time to have passed out of the region of storms, except, indeed, such minor gales of trial as were needed to remind them that the voyage was not yet over, and that watching and trusting are never out of place. Prosperity and peace followed them in their godly career of pious deeds and loving service in the church of their choice, and among the poor by whom they were surrounded. The old Squire and Mrs. Aubrey were oftener under their daughter’s roof than their own. They, too, had found the light; and the old gentleman found abounding pleasure in sitting with Clara on his knee, listening with almost childish interest to her talk about darling Gertie, as, with an occasional far-away look in her blue eyes, she told him of her sister’s home in the many mansions, and how she and papa, mamma, and the infant Paul were going to meet together some day in the Father’s house. Paul became almost as famous as a local preacher as he was as an engineer, which means much, for he rose not only to the front

rank, but to the front place in that rank among the members of his profession. Far and near his pulpit services were in request, and right along the years until his hair was white as the driven snow, and ripe old age demanded the suspension of his labours, he diligently and successfully told the story of the Cross. Dick Hodgson became quite a pillar of the church at Hessleby, and his wife Hannah and their numerous family were never again disturbed and distressed by the evil spirit which had worked them so much damage, but which was now expelled for evermore. By reason of the fact that Dr. Selwood and Emily, now happily one, resided in the same place, Paul and Kate were often able to visit their former *protégés*, and it was a high day to Dick and his household when their sterling and faithful friends in need visited their lowly roof. In the thriving town of Breconsfield, Paul and Kate Meggitt wielded an ever-growing influence for good, and all ranks and classes had abundant occasion to thank God for PAUL MEGGITT'S DELUSION.

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HOW RALPH SMALLWOOD KILLED A GHOST.

WHAT Cornishman does not know Penmarris Churchtown? It stands on the top of a high hill, whence, by a mere turn of the head, you can see the waters of the Bristol Channel on the one side and of the English Channel on the other. Its square old church tower is quite a notable landmark, anxiously looked for from the deck of many an outward-bound ship.

The ancient churchyard is bordered on the west by a row of equally aged elms, which have managed to hold their own against the rude attacks of blustering Boreas, though, as you may believe, they have a hard time of it up there, "when the stormy winds do blow." Just round to the south is an old stone residence, which used to be the parsonage until the vicar sought a more sheltered spot, half way down the hill. It is now occupied by a

widow lady called Trefusis, her son Alfred, and her two daughters Beatrice and Grace. This hopeful heir of little else than a good name, strong sense, and a good constitution, was a fine young fellow about one-and-twenty years of age.

Churchtown itself consists of one street running north and south, and of a little additional patch of houses, which looked as though it had slid somewhat down the hill, and showed a dilapidated appearance in consequence. Nearly in the centre of the town was the smithy, in which a brawny son of Vulcan, Ralph Smallwood by name, used to swing the hammer on the ringing anvil at such times as he was neither Sunday-keeping, eating, sleeping, nor drunk. I am sorry to say that this latter was very often the case, and that Ralph Smallwood was in the habit of slaking his thirst almost as often as he slaked his iron in the stone-trough, which stood at the end of his smithy hearth. In all other respects, Ralph was a very decent and respectable kind of fellow. Alfred Trefusis had tried hard to reclaim the stalwart blacksmith from his intemperate habits, and to induce him to give up his visits to the *Red Lion*,

whose rampant image was no bad illustration of the mischief making business carried on inside. Though his well-meant efforts were only partially successful, the burly blacksmith held him in very high esteem.

One Christmas Eve, or rather a few hours before the evening fell, Ralph Smallwood was sent for to a farmhouse some two miles' distance, in order to repair certain pipes which had burst through the severity of the frost. As he passed along by the low churchyard wall, under the row of aged elms, he met Alfred Trefusis, who was just returning from a long and weary walk over the snow from Carlyon Castle, whither he had been on an errand for the bank, in which he held a responsible position. He had received payment of a sum of three hundred and fifty pounds; and in consideration of the long and difficult journey, and of the nearness of Christmas Day, he had been told by his employers, that, instead of returning to Penruth, where the bank was situated, he might carry it home, and bring it with him on his return to duty after the great Christmas festival was over.

“Hallo, Ralph! here's weather!” said Al-

fred, speaking through his muffler, which was coated with ice ; for he had walked through a biting [wind, in which his breath congealed almost as soon as it left his lungs. " Whither are you bound ? Experience teaches wisdom ; and I advise you to keep near the smithy fire. The frost is enough to bite one's head off."

" A merry Christmas to you, Master Alfred ! Depend upon it, I shouldn't go sprawling over the downs to-day if it could be helped ; but needs must when a certain party drives, you know. Farmer Truscott's boiler pipes are burst, an' I must go and put 'em to rights for Christmas day."

" Well, well," said Alfred, " I wish you safely back again, and a merry Christmas and a happy new year. Ralph," said he, taking his hand, " your Christmas will be all the merrier, and your new year all the happier, both to you and yours, if you would give up the beer. I would freely give a month's salary to see you a sober man and a steady Christian."

" I believe you, Mr. Alfred," said Ralph warmly ; " I haven't gone wrong since you spoke to me a fortnight since. an' I never mean to make a fool of myself again."

“ May God help you, Ralph. Do seek for that help for yourself.”

So saying they separated ; Ralph Smallwood outwards to Farmer Truscott’s, Alfred Trefusis homewards to the old parsonage, his mother’s welcome, and his sisters’ smiles. A sudden thought struck Alfred, and turning back, he shouted, “ Hi ! Ralph ! ”

The blacksmith retraced his steps amid the now rapidly descending snow.

“ I’m within a stone’s throw of home,” said Alfred. “ You’ll find it’s a bitter blast over the moor. Take my muffler, and wrap it well round your neck,”

By this time he had divested himself of his woollen comforter and forced it into Smallwood’s half-unwilling hand. Prudently diving into his inner pockets, his benumbed fingers managed to extract his pocket handkerchief ; then regirding his coat around him, he held the silken substitute to his mouth, and hastened home, pretty well powdered over by the flakes of fast-falling snow.

Little Dick Smallwood, a sharp-looking little fellow of ten, with two or three playmates, were busily engaged in the front of the house,

in rolling a snowball, which as yet had not attained to large dimensions, but to judge by their eager toil and evident enjoyment, was likely to assume a very bulky shape indeed. Alfred was much amused to note the ardour of their toil, and flinging them a cheery word entered his mother's house. It was not until the shades of evening had gathered round that Alfred remembered the costly parcel which he held in trust. He at once proceeded to satisfy himself that all was right; what was his astonishment and distress to find it gone! Uttering a cry of surprise, he announced to the startled household his tremendous loss. He knew that the pocket-book in which the notes were folded was in his possession not long before he met with Ralph Smallwood, and he felt convinced that the transfer of the muffler and the extraction of his handkerchief had led to the sad calamity which had befallen him.

Hastily donning his great coat, taking with him a lighted lantern, and accompanied by the younger members of the now saddened circle, Alfred commenced what he feared must be a vain and hopeless search. Retracing his steps slowly and wistfully to the spot where he met

Ralph Smallwood, he poked with hand and foot among the snow through all the region round about, and at last, disheartened and distressed, he returned home, heedless of the sympathetic condolences of his companions. He then visited the home of the blacksmith, and had little Dick Smallwood summoned out of his beauty sleep with the hope that he perhaps had seen it during their frolic in the snow. All in vain; and his last hope lay in the burly blacksmith, who might, somehow or other, have received it with the muffler, whose lengthy dimensions had been enfolded round his waist. Ralph, however, had not yet returned from Farmer Truscott's, so Alfred turned his steps to the old parsonage with a heavy heart. His mother was a godly woman, and she hastened to comfort her son, bade him put his trust in Providence, and made earnest prayer at the family altar for God's helping and delivering care.

We must now turn our attention to Ralph Smallwood, whose workmanlike abilities were performing wonders on Farmer Truscott's broken pipes. That bluff and hearty tiller of the soil was greatly pleased with the black-

smith's ready response to his urgent call. His usual freehandedness was increased by the "festive season;" and so, as soon as Ralph arrived, he mixed for him a potent glass of spirits, to brace him for his work after his weary trudge across the moorland and the snow. After the lapse of a few hours, refreshment was again forthcoming, consisting of bread and meat, and another too-bountiful jorum from the decanter. When the work was finished, at a very late hour, a third supply of the treacherous liquor was appropriated by the too-willing smith; and then when he was ready to start on his homeward track, and Alfred's muffler was wrapped around his throat, a final glass was offered by the thoughtless farmer, and as eagerly swallowed by poor forgetful Ralph. Once outside the farmgate, Ralph posted off with somewhat devious gait towards Penmarris. The farther he went, the warmer grew his blood and the stronger grew the influence of the spirits he had drunk. Nearing the aged elms, through which the wind was moaning with a weird and uncanny sound, Ralph found himself disturbed by depressing memories and fancies of midnight spirits and

churchyard ghosts. He cast a wistful eye around him, as he plunged under the shadow of the trees, which, snow-laden, loomed like giant spectres through the gloom. The clock in the grim church tower boomed out the midnight hour in doleful knell which oppressed him more and more. He started at every sound, and every now and again looked round with furtive glance; when lo! just at the corner of the churchyard wall, where the row of trees ended, he saw a sight which curdled his blood and made his hair stand on end. There, standing dread and ghastly and white, by the churchyard wall, sheeted and spectral, was a veritable spirit, whose awful presence filled his soul with fear. With a sudden reaction, caused by the Dutch courage inspired from Farmer Truscott's decanter, our poor Ralph braced himself for action! Marching boldly up to the grim and ghastly goblin, Ralph shouted, "Who are you?" and in a moment he aimed at it a couple of blows—one, two, direct from the shoulder! A dreadful chill, as of contact with the unearthly, froze his veins, a cold, clammy vapour made him shiver as he stood, and with a low, crepitating moan the ghost faded from his view!

"I've killed a ghost! I've killed a ghost!" shouted Ralph, as he took to his legs and hastened to the protection of his wife and the shelter of his home. He poured into the ears of his anxious spouse the story of the murderous deed; but she, poor woman, paid small attention to what she took to be the maunderings of drunkenness, and took painful notice of his sad indulgence in what had been so long the bane and sorrow of their home.

Next morning Ralph Smallwood was regaled by his hopeful son Dick with the story of the glorious fun which he and his young comrades had had on the previous afternoon, in the rolling of a huge snowball; and the construction of a snow man on that bulky sphere. Of this, however, Ralph took little notice; all his sympathies were enlisted on behalf of Alfred Trefusis, with whose serious loss his wife had made him acquainted. Conscious that he should lose ground in the estimation of that youth if last night's lapse should come to his ears, he longed to do something to retrieve his position.

"I'll find that pocket-book," said he, "if it's above ground." Here he brought his hand down on the table like one who meant it, and

hastened off, with Dick by his side, to set about the search. As they neared the churchyard wall, little Dick said,—

“O, father, come and see the snow-man we made yesterday. I don’t think you could have made a better yourself. It’s just round the corner.”

Led by the eager boy, Ralph turned aside to look at the amateur model, and Dick brought him to the very spot where he had fought the fatal duel with the ghost.

“Why, it’s gone!” said Dick, in accents of dismay; “somebody’s gone and been an’ knocked it down.”

A light broke in on Ralph’s understanding, and he stood gazing, quite ashamed of his folly, on the remains of his ghostly victim. Musing over his voluntary separation from his wits, he began kicking to pieces the globular basis on which the hapless ghost had been pedestalled in pride. As the fragments flew hither and thither, a snow-clad something of firmer substance met his foot. Stooping down, he laid hold of—*the lost pocket-book!* With a shout of delight he held it up to Dick’s astonished gaze. It was evident that the monster snow-

ball had rolled over the missing treasure, which had become embedded in its bulk, and of course each additional rolling over had hid it more deeply in its frosty bed.

I need not tell with what willing and rapid feet the triumphant blacksmith made his way to the old Parsonage, nor with what joy and gladness the recovered prize was welcomed by Alfred Trefusis and his grateful mother, nor the warm and heartfelt thanks which greeted Ralph, who was proud to hear them, and his son, who was as proud as he.

Of course in detailing the events which led to the discovery of the pocket-book, Ralph had to acknowledge his fault as to Farmer Truscott's whisky; this he did with a very ingenuous blush, which augured well for his state of mind. Alfred Trefusis shook him by the hand, and said,—

“Ralph, if you *will*, you can knock that *spirit* over just as completely as you killed the ghost. Hit out, my friend, and ask God to help you, and you will find that bank-notes and something better will come to you when the victory is gained. Will you, Ralph?”

“By God's help I will!” said Ralph; and

by God's help he did, and he and his happy wife and children are as happy always as Alfred Trefusis was on that Christmas morning when Ralph Smallwood came, pocket-book in hand, to tell him "how he had killed a ghost!"

THE SLAVE AND THE SHARK.

ONCE upon a time a merchant vessel was laid at anchor in the harbour of St. Eustace, an island in the West Indies. She had brought a cargo of goods manufactured at Manchester and Birmingham, had received a freight of sugar and coffee, of ginger and other spices, and was ready to weigh anchor and to proceed on her homeward voyage. It was a beautiful spot; the blue waters of the bay flashed back the brightness of an unclouded sun; the lofty hills, sloping downward to the sea, were clothed with a wealth of tropical timber, such as logwood and mahogany, as also with tall and elegant palm trees, the graceful plantain, and the broad banana. Plantations of coffee-plants and sugar-cane gave variety to the landscape, while the valleys and mountain gorges were bright with the splendour of the gayest flowers. The small seaport, with its neat, white houses

of painted timber, whose verandahs were adorned with the creepers, climbers, and flowering plants peculiar to the climate, were interspersed with the rude but picturesque huts of the negroes, and all combined to form a picture of unusual beauty. It was a place,—

‘ Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile ;’

for these were the days of slavery, and the island of St. Eustace, not being British territory, was still the land of cruelty and bondage.

The good ship *Triton*, as I have said, was ready for her homeward trip, and the captain was just about to give orders to weigh anchor, when the report of a pistol was heard, followed by a scream of pain. The attention of all the sailors on deck was instantly directed to the shore, and a very exciting scene met their view. A negro lad, about sixteen years of age, was running under the shadow of the mangrove trees towards a little creek which intervened between him and the town. A short distance behind him there followed a white man on a small mountain pony. His suit of striped linen, and his broad straw hat, denoted either the

owner or the overseer of a plantation. He was urging his pony to its utmost speed, and the crew on board the *Triton* could hear his commands, mingled with oaths and curses, as he called upon the fugitive to stop. The slave, however, though almost exhausted, struggled hard, and at length leaped into the creek, and struck boldly out for the ship on which the English flag was flying on the breeze. His sudden dip into the clear, cold water added new vigour to his tired limbs, and he speedily covered half the distance between the shore and the haven of freedom, which he sought to win. He evidently knew that the deck of the British ship, like British ground, could only be trodden by the free!

The whole ship's crew, including the old negro cook, were standing at the vessel's side, watching with great excitement the lad's bold dash for liberty.

"Well done, Sambo!" "Cheer up, mess-mate!" "Hurrah, young'un!" and similar exclamations broke from the lips of the eager tars, and the negro cook quivered from head to foot with anxiety for his dusky brother. His eyes flashed, with out-stretched hands he

leaned over the bulwarks and excitedly and eagerly shouted,—

“Come 'long, boss! dat's de way to do it! an' dis is de spot for you.” Meanwhile, the pursuer, by the aid of his fleet and willing steed, had reached the little quay, and obtaining instant aid, continued the chase in a boat. The hirelings pulled with a will, and speedily gained on the now exhausted negro, who was yet some distance from that land of Canaan, the shadow of the English flag.

A loud cry suddenly broke from the lips of the terrified cook.

“A shark! a shark!” he shouted, as he pointed to a dark object in the water, swiftly approaching the spot where the hapless slave was struggling for dear life. A cry of horror broke from every eager watcher, and the captain, whose enthusiastic interest had held him speechless, stripped off his jacket, and seizing a large knife from the hands of the cook, who had brought it from the caboose on the first alarm, plunged into the sea and struck boldly out to do battle with the finny monster, that the poor runaway might accomplish his escape.

It was a foolish thing to do, and the chances

were all against him ; but he had inherited the impulsive blood of the stout Norsemen of north-eastern England, and with more courage than caution he threw himself into the very jaws of death. The shark was compelled to turn its attention from its purposed victim, and showing its treble row of sharp, serrated teeth, approached with open mouth to wreak its vengeance on the captain. At the very moment when the rescued slave was being hauled up the vessel's side, Black Pompey, the cook, seized with a sudden inspiration, ran to the caboose, fetched an enormous leg of fresh pork, and flung the dainty dish into the sea between the now repentant captain and the shark. The former understood the ruse in a moment, and just as the monster turned up his white belly to seize the nearest prize, the captain swiftly turned, and reached the boat which had been lowered to aid him, at the same time that the slave-hunter and his crew floated beneath the *Triton's* bows.

No sooner was the headstrong skipper safe on deck again, than the rejoicing crew waved their caps, and sent up a true British cheer, which made the welkin ring. There stood the

captain, dripping with the salt water bath, which had cooled his excited blood, the centre of an admiring crowd; at his feet knelt the poor fugitive, panting and exhausted, with the blood oozing from a flesh wound in his arm, made by his pursuer's pistol bullet; and before him stood the wrathful owner, with angry and determined mien, waiting to claim his living chattel and bear him back again to bondage.

"O, Massa Captain!" said the negro, "you no send me back! Him kill me! Buckra man steal me, whip me, kill me!" And again, clasping the captain's knees, he implored mercy and protection.

"Wall," said the slave-hunter, who was evidently an importation from the States, "I guess it's about time this bit o' play was finished. Come, you black rascal!" and here he laid his hands on the trembling negro.

In a moment the captain laid his strong hand on *him*.

"Avast there, you land-lubber!" said he, giving him a push that sent him reeling over the deck. "Poor Quashy is under my protection, and the King of England's! All the world and his wife shan't touch him while that

flag floats over him, this deck stands under him, and my name's Charlie Hold-him-fast!"

The gleam of joy which passed over the negro's face, the scowl of baffled and vindictive hate which lowered over the features of the defeated owner, the fire of resolve which shot from the captain's eyes, and the glow of satisfaction imprinted on the faces of the delighted tars, made a scene never to be forgotten. The crestfallen tyrant was ordered out of the ship, and Black Pompey, in the ecstasy of victory, gave him a parting shot as his boat glided off from beneath the *Triton's* bows.

"Dere, you big, white rascal, I've a good mind to set the shark on ye, on'y one shark won't eat anudder. I would like for swop yer for dat leg o' pork, an' would gib massa shark onion trimmings into de bargain! Yah! yah! yah!"

The jolly tars now weighed anchor with a will, and the good ship *Triton* was soon bounding over the billows, as if it knew that it bore on board the bounding heart of the rescued victim who was no more a slave.

The captain and his crew treated the negro lad with great kindness, and Black Pompey,

who had picked up a smattering of education, turned the caboose into a school, and instructed him in the rudiments of cooking and reading. Quaco, as the negro was called, attached himself in deepest love and gratitude to his deliverer. He was docile, intelligent, and handy; and the captain, who sought to do his duty as a Christian man, made Quaco acquainted with the blessed gospel of that Saviour who gives a greater freedom, the freedom of the soul from sin. The bonds thus knit between the rescuer and the rescued continued, to my knowledge, for many years, and, if they are both living, doubtless continue to this day.

DICK SIMMONS, THE GENEROUS SAILOR.

WHEN I was the skipper of the good ship *Madeline*, as fine a bark as ever wore bunting, and as taut and trim as a nobleman's yacht, I had a young sailor in the crew called Jack Simmons. He was a smart, handy youngster. His diligence in duty and his sunny temper made him a favourite with all on board, from captain to cabin-boy. Poor Dick had neither father nor mother, nor indeed any relation in the world that he knew of. He often used to say that he was nothing but a derelict, or a bit of flotsam tossed like a chip on the sea of life. He had managed to pick up a smattering of education, and was just the sort of lad to run straight, and win credit and character wherever he might be.

Well, what I'm going to tell you happened many years ago, in the days when the stage-

coach had not been run off the road by the steam-engine. The *Madeline* had just come home from a long voyage, and Dick, with a big lump of pay money, "boarded the Portsmouth Coach," as he said, "to make a land voyage to London." It was early on a dark November morning, and he was hardly able to see his companion passengers on "the deck of the lumbering barge."

Presently he perceived that his next neighbour was either very ill or in great trouble, by the sighs and sobs which broke from her. At last a heavy jolt of the coach drew a faint shriek from her, and threw her against Dick's shoulder.

"Avast there!" said he; "take care how you steer, or we may roll over, d'ye see. Lean against me and welcome; we shall soon make some port or other, and a glass of warm grog 'll cheer your heart."

"You are very kind," said a feeble voice; "I am indeed little able to bear the motion, much less the jolting, but I shall be better by-and-by."

"Aye, aye," said Dick; "I hope so. We shall get into smooth water after sailing a few

more knots, and then we'll steer clear of the stones."

No answer was returned, and a dead silence continued until they came to the first stage for changing horses. On the appearance of a light, Dick turned to look at his neighbour, and saw a young and sickly-looking woman, who seemed too feeble to sit upright.

"Anchors and handspikes! Poor soul!" said Dick in surprise. "You seem to want ballast. It'll never do to steer this course. Why don't you tack into the cabin?"

"Because—because it's not convenient," she replied. "Besides, I have more air here."

"Aye, aye. But a few such squalls as we have had may throw you overboard. It's not steady enough for you on the upper deck."

Dick called for some grog and biscuits, and jumped down to look through the window of the coach. "Hey!" he called to the sickly woman; "here's plenty of sea-room here. Come down into the state cabin. Steersman!" said he to the coachman; "clear the gangway, an' let's hoist the poor lass into this berth."

"No objection in life, master," said coachee; "but you knows outside an' inside's different."

"Stow that," said Dick, rattling his gold and silver; "I'll pay the difference between steerage and cabin fare."

Vainly did the young woman protest against accepting the benevolent offer, declaring that she should "manage very well."

"Look 'ee, my lass," said Dick; "you're on a slippery fore-castle; you ain't got your sea legs, an' maybe you'll be overboard in the dark an' founder before a life-buoy can be cast off. I mean to put you safe under hatches, out of the way of squalls and foul weather."

At last the poor woman tearfully and gratefully consented, nor did she reject the biscuits, though the grog was more than she could manage.

With a warm "God bless you!" ringing in his ears, Dick mounted to his seat again, and the journey was continued until they stopped at an inn to dine. Here he handed out his weakly fellow-passenger with great care and good manners, and then offered the same assistance to three ladies who were in the coach. The first two, with a toss of the head, rejected the hand so politely proffered, and muttering something about people "keeping

their places," swept proudly into the inn. Dick looked after them a moment and murmured: "Too much canvas there; more bunting than ballast. Should'nt wonder at a capsize." The third passenger was a very pleasant and comely old lady, who was evidently much interested in the sailor's proceedings. She readily accepted the proffered hand; and was aided in her exit from the coach.

Passing into the inn, Dick ordered refreshment for his almost helpless charge.

"Bring anything you've got, steward," said he to the waiter; "I'll pay the piper."

Some warm port wine, a fresh egg, and some bread and butter were set before the thankful invalid.

"Cheer up, my lass," said Dick; "you and I'll sail in company through this voyage; an' I'll lay a belaying pin to the captain's sextant that we'll weather the storm."

The old lady heard and saw all, with a glow of high satisfaction on her face, and followed Dick out of the room.

"I admire your humanity, my friend," said she. "Are you an entire stranger to that poor girl?"

"Never saw her in my life before," quoth Dick; "but when there's a ship among the breakers, whatever name she has, whatever sort of figure-head she carries, or whatever flag she sails under, out goes the life-boat; and it shall never be said that Dick Simmons was so mean a lubber as not to take an oar."

"Simmons! Richard Simmons! did you say?" said the lady in a startled tone.

"No, ma'am; not exactly that. *Dick Simmons* is the measure on't; that's in the log, and will be until 'A.B. seaman' is rubbed out for 'mate.'"

"May I ask where you were born?" said the lady.

"Somewheres foreign, I reckon," said Dick; "but I hail from Beachy Head, where the *Oberon* went down in a storm, which washed me ashore with bare life, and too young even to know my own name, which was marked on my clothes."

"Simmons! Richard! *Oberon*! Then you must be my brother Richard's son!"

"Why, what must be must be, ma'am; but it's all fog to me, with a murky sky, the compass lost, an' the binnacle lamp blown out.

All I knows is, that I was picked up like a wet mop by an honest old salt by Beachy Head. He was a fisherman, and he fished me up, and his wife, good soul! was all the mother ever I knew. When the old man died, I was flung on the world, or rather on the sea; for I took to the water like a duck, and in it and on it I've been swimming ever since."

The old lady gripped his rough hand as she said, "My heart warmed to you from the first. I can see my brother Richard in every line of your face. He and his wife and little child sailed from the West Indies in the *Oberon*. It was believed that all were lost in that ill-fated ship. Thank God! that one Simmons is spared, and that I have found what I have been longing for for more than twenty years."

Under these new circumstances the journey was continued. Both Dick and his newly-found relative tended the poor invalid all the way to town, and nothing could exceed the poor woman's joy when she heard that her trying journey had led to such a pleasant discovery.

Dick handed his ward over to the care of waiting friends, and then, linking his arm in

that of his newly-found aunt, the happy pair went home—his home as well as hers. The declining years of the old lady were gladdened by the love and care of her noble nephew. At her death Dick inherited her fortune, and used it as generously as he used his sailor's pay-money when he made that famous "voyage" on the London Coach. Many a weary heart and dreary life were lightened and brightened by the cheering words and generous aid of Richard Simmons.

THE PIPING BULLFINCH.

“WHATEVER shall I do?” said old Andrew Austin, as he sat with his hands on his knees by his cottage hearth. Andrew was by trade a tailor, and though he was growing old, and his hair was getting thin and white, he had managed to earn his bread with his needle up to the very time when this story opens. He was exceedingly poor, and just now he was in sad trouble. He had for some time been busily engaged in making clothing for a family who were about to emigrate to Australia, and with the money he was to receive he hoped to pay his rent, which had fallen sadly behind through sickness and hard times.

When he took the work home the man promised to call and pay him in a few days; but instead of that, he and his family went away, and were soon out at sea, leaving poor Andrew without a farthing. The agent for the little

cottage he lived in had called again and again for the rent, and at length he gave Andrew notice that if it was not paid within a week, he should sell the old man's little stock of furniture by auction and pay himself. Poor Andrew had done his best to get work, but all in vain, and being honest as the day, he would not borrow, because he did not see how he was to pay it back again.

The last day of the week of grace had dawned, and Andrew, after a sleepless night, was seated by the fire with part of a loaf of bread upon the table at his side; but he could not eat, and sat crumbling a piece of bread, saying, "Whatever shall I do?" Perhaps that very day his roof would no longer shelter him, and he should be cast out into the cold, unpitying street, without a friend and without a home! The old man rose from his seat, took down a well-worn family Bible from the shelf, opened its sacred pages, then knelt upon the floor, and leaning his white head on it, began to pray.

Andrew knew how to pray. For many long years he had trusted in his Saviour, and had cast all his cares upon the poor man's God. He poured all his griefs into the ear of his

heavenly Friend, and asked Him for His Divine help and pity. Rising from his knees, he sat down to find comfort from the Word of God, and finding that he had been laying his white head on the seventy-second psalm, he read,—

*For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*

A bright smile lit up the old man's face as he said, "Yea, Lord; for thy mercy endureth for ever."

He resolved to seek the agent and ask for a little more time, fully assured that God would make a way for his escape. No sooner had he opened the door, than a little bird flew past him and perched upon the mantelshelf, on which it hopped to and fro, chirping all the while as if delighted with its new quarters. Closing the door again, the old man watched the movements of the bird with childish interest. By-and-by his feathered visitor perched upon the table and began to help himself to the crumbs which the old man had made of his rejected breakfast. Then he perched on the little mug, and helped himself to a drink or two of water.

Old Andrew saw that the bird was a beautiful piping bullfinch, and as he was wondering how it had managed to come there, Bully perched upon the open Bible, and straightway began to pipe in clear, exulting notes the Old Hundredth. Right through the tune went he, whistling the mellow melody, until the little room was filled with music, and old Andrew smiled through his tears with wonder and delight.

By-and-by Bully started again, and piped a bar or two of the same tune, stopped, then repeated them, until the godly tailor seemed to think the bird wanted an accompaniment! And so the next time the bullfinch made a beginning, Andrew struck up too.

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,”

sang the tailor; the bullfinch whistled ditto until the verse was finished. The old man felt at that moment utterly independent of money, agents, rent, or anything else, and conscious of nothing but a sweet sense of assurance that might be best expressed in the words of David, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”

The bullfinch, satisfied with this performance, now perched upon a shelf by the wall, and began preening his feathers as one quite at home. Unwilling to lose so sweet a guest, Andrew opened the door quickly, and, passing out, closed it again as quickly, leaving the little songster to complete his toilet in private. Away went the old tailor, with a heart as light as his pocket, but a good deal richer, and sought the house of the agent, to ask for a little longer space in which to raise his rent. That officer, either being in an unusually good temper, or gathering hope of ultimate payment from Andrew's happy countenance and hopeful tones, gave him another week; and then the old man turned homeward, humming to himself:—

“The birds without barn or storehouse are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread;
His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
As long as 'tis written, 'The Lord will provide!'”

As he was trudging along, Andrew was addressed by a servant in livery, whom he recognised at once as the footman of Lady Armistead, a wealthy and godly old lady, who lived at Basford Hall, about a mile and a half

away from the village in which the tailor resided.

“Good morning, Andrew,” said the servant, who seemed to be an old acquaintance; “you seem to be in good spirits to-day.~ One would think you’d swallowed Lady Armistead’s bullfinch, you sing so well.”

“Lady Armistead’s bullfinch!” said Andrew, in surprise.

“Yes; it’s been missing these two days. I think I shall go home now, for it’s no use seeking it any more. Her ladyship’s in a fine way, for the bird was a great favourite, and a regular topper at whistling.”

“Well, well,” said Andrew, “I have not swallowed the bullfinch; but, upon my word, I think I have swallowed its spirit, for I’ve been as happy and lightsome as a bird ever since I heard it sing.”

“Heard it sing?” said footman John. “Why, where could you have heard it sing? For until it flew away while its cage was being cleaned, it was not out of her ladyship’s *boudoir*; and I reckon you don’t often go there.”

“No, no, John; the bird came to my *bood-*

wah, as you call it; and for the matter of that, it's there now, as you shall see for yourself, if you'll come with me."

"Aye, man," said the footman, "but that's good news. The sight of her pet bird again will make her ladyship jump for joy."

As the two continued their walk to the cottage, Andrew told his companion the whole story of his troubles, and how he prayed, and what God said to him out of His Book, and how the bullfinch came and cheered his heart; and how he had just been to the agent's, and had got another week to "turn round in." "And look you here, John Morris, my rent 'll be ready when it's wanted, as sure as my name's Andrew; for that bird was sent by my heavenly Father, and it brought me His message on it's beautiful wing, 'for His mercy endureth for ever.' "

John listened with glistening eyes and a heart that sent a choking to the throat in sympathy, and by this time they had arrived at the cottage door. While Andrew was extracting the key from his pocket, "Hark!" said the footman; "listen to that!" And sure enough Bully was having a good time of

it all to himself, trilling out from his throbbing breast the glorious old praiseful tune of—

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”

Neither of the listeners stirred a step. Old Andrew stood with his key presented at the keyhole like a pistol, but did not insert it, lest he should break the spell, until the dying cadence told him that the song was finished. The precious prize was speedily captured and borne off, followed by the tailor's blessing, to its luxurious home in Lady Armistead's *boudoir*. Her ladyship's joy was unbounded; and when the eager footman told the story of its brief residence under the tailor's roof, her ladyship laughed and cried in turns, and bade him hasten and fetch old Andrew to her presence. The godly peeress and the pious peasant were soon standing upon equal ground, while they interchanged experiences of their heavenly Father's love. The bullfinch, meanwhile, was hopping to and fro in its gilded cage, as though he had a personal interest in all that was going on. The money for the rent was soon forthcoming from her ladyship's bountiful purse, and more too. Andrew was told that money

and work and food enough and to spare were his for the future at Basford Hall.

“God bless your ladyship,” said Andrew, with a grateful heart. Stirred by his earnest tones, Bully struck up his favourite tune; Andrew joined in the song,—

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”

Her ladyship smiled in sympathy.

“Yes, yes,” said Andrew; “for His mercy endureth for ever. Praise the Lord, His mercy endureth for ever!”

PUNCTUAL PETER.

THAT was a dark day in the cottage of Widow M'Owan when her good man was carried to the grave, and she and her orphan bairn were left to fight the battle of life as best they could. The good woman sat in her lonely house, with her little son, a fine braw fellow of nine summers, standing by her knee, and wept bitterly.

“ Dinna greet, mither,” said the lad, “ diinna greet sae ; fayther’s gone to live wi’ Jesus, and he telled us we wasna to fret about him, for he was gaun to be happy wi’ angels in heaven. He put his hand o’ my head an’ said, ‘ Dinna greet, bonny bairn ; but be a good lad to yer mither, for she’ll hae naebody else but thee the noo.’ Kiss me, mither, an’ I’ll be your ain wee Peter, an’ I’ll be a good lad, as fayther said.”

The widow listened, and was comforted ; and hugging the bright boy to her heart, said,—

“God bless my bairn! We naena muckle frens, but we hae ane anither; an’ noo that the dear fayther’s gone,”—here a fresh burst of sobs checked her voice,—“God ’ll help us baith.”

“Aye, an’ I’ll help you, mither,” said Peter, stoutly, and every tone of his voice had the ring of a big, strong heart in it. Peter was a tall, fine lad, and might well have been taken for two or three years older than he really was.

Nothing would serve him but he must go to work; and as Widow M’Owan had to earn her bread, it was needful that the lad should begin betimes and pick up a little, at any rate, towards his own subsistence.

One day Peter came running home, and tossing up his cap for joy, he said,—

“Mither, Mr. Dalkeith says he’ll tak me for his errand lad, an’ he’ll gie me saxpence a day, an’ my dinner, and anither saxpence o’ Saturday nicht if I be a gude lad. An’ *I will*, mither!” shouted Peter, as he flung up his cap to the roof-tree and threw himself into his mother’s arms, and laughed and cried, like the big-hearted boy that he was.

So to Mr. Dalkeith, the druggist, went Peter

on the following Monday morning, at seven o'clock, according to orders. On his way he noticed an elderly man taking down the shutters of his shop, who bade the bright-looking lad a cheery "good morning," which Peter as cheerily returned. His foot was on the step of Mr. Dalkeith's shop just as the big clock of St. Dunstan's Church began to boom out the hour of seven; and Mr. Dalkeith, who was standing in the doorway, said with a smile,—

"Good morning, Peter; I'm glad that you and the old church clock agree so well together." Then laying his hand on the lad's shoulder, he said, "Mark me, my boy; keep friends with the church clock. That steeple's haunted. There's a spirit which lives in that old clock chamber. I know the queer old geni well. I looked up in his face a few minutes since and asked old *Tempus Fugit* to look after my new errand boy, and help me to make a man of him. Peter, my boy, *keep friends with the clock.*"

Peter could hardly understand all the good druggist's meaning; still, he had an inkling of it, and went about the duties of the day resolved to bear it in mind. On his return home

in the evening, he told his mother what Mr. Dalkeith had said. His mother listened with a smile, and said,—

“Varra gude, my bairn, varra gude. He just means that you should aye keep the time. Many folks are aye in a hurry and aye behint; an’ the puir, feckless chieles are allus ower late, an’ go blundering through the world with nae siller i’ the purse an’ nae wit i’ the pow.”

The good woman taught her boy in the evenings, so far as her own scanty education would permit, and Peter went every day to the shop just in time to hear the chimes and the loud boom of the old church clock. Mr. Dalkeith would often say, “Well, Peter, what does the clock say this morning?” And Peter would answer with a smile, “It says, ‘Dalkeith’s boy’s in time again!’”

“Right, Peter,” the master would respond, “that’s right. Always keep friends with the clock.”

So the days and months rolled on until Peter was taken as an apprentice by his kindly master, who greatly approved of the boy’s punctuality and diligence. Now, the old gentleman whom Peter saw on his first morning’s walk to

the shop was as regular as clock-work, and every morning, as Peter passed, he saw him pulling down his shutters, so as to have his place opened by seven o'clock. Kindly "good mornings" were interchanged every day, until at last Mr. Campbell, as the gentleman was called, took quite a liking to the tall, promising lad who came and went so constantly and so exactly up to time.

"I wonder who he is?" said he, as he sat rubbing some jewellery, for he was a watch-maker and jeweller, in his shop one day. "Whoever he is, there is the making of a man in him. He goes tick, tick, like a chronometer. I pull down my shutters and say good morning, he puts up his pleasant face, and says, 'Good morning, Sir,' and as soon as the blue shine of the bottles in the druggist's window falls upon his cap, boom goes St. Dunstan's clock, One, two, three, four, five, six, seven! That lad's a brick, and I must have a little talk with him."

One day, as Peter was passing Mr. Campbell's shop door, one of his master's shopmen met him, and said, with a sneer, "Well, Mr. Punky, you're a sneaking little monkey;" for

he and the other fellows in Mr. Dalkeith's employ were jealous of the lad who had won their master's favour, and who was praised and rewarded while they were scolded and condemned; then with a loud laugh at his own wit, the shopman passed on.

Mr. Campbell, who had heard the remark, was out of the shop in a moment, and beckoning Peter, said,—

“Excuse me, Master Punky, you pass my shop so regularly, that I feel I should like to make your acquaintance.”

“My name is not Punky,” said Peter, blushing; “it's Peter McOwan, Sir, and I'm an apprentice with Mr. Dalkeith the druggist.”

“Not Punky? Then I beg your pardon, but I thought I heard the young man who has just passed call you by that name.”

“O,” said Peter, with a deeper blush, “that's a nickname the fellows in our shop give me; but,” said he with a laugh, “I dinna mind it.”

“Punky, Punky! Why, whatever does it mean?” said the jeweller.

“Why,” quoth Peter, looking into Mr. Campbell's face with an open and ingenuous smile, “I always try to be in the shop exactly

at the time, an' so they began by calling me Punctual Peter; but I suppose they thought it was ower long, an' so they've cut it short to 'Punky.'" And neither Peter nor his hearer could help laughing as he said it.

In the course of conversation the kindly old man extracted from the youth all the history of his father's death, his mother's hard struggle for home and bread, and how he was trying to earn a livelihood, and hoped by-and-by to keep his mother, so that she should not have to work any more. Mr. Campbell then shook him warmly by the hand, and making him promise to give him a call now and then, bade him "good evening."

"Punky," said Mr. Campbell to himself, as he sat in his snug little sitting-room, all alone, except for a favourite cat, which was perched upon his knee, for he was an old bachelor; "yes, Punky's the boy for *my* money!" The old man rubbed his hands and stroked his cat, and smiled as though he had got hold of a bright idea.

On the following Sunday evening, just as the little clock in the widow's kitchen was striking *seven*, while Peter and his mother

were reading a Bible lesson, there was a knock at the door. When Peter went to open it, a man put a small package in his hand, and saying "*Tempus Fugit* has sent this," away he went without another word. The packet was instantly opened, and two small parcels appeared; on the one was written, "For Punky," and the other, "For Punky's mother." When her paper was unwrapped, lo! ten golden sovereigns gleamed and smiled at them, as if they knew how welcome they were to the poor toiling widow. Punky's parcel contained a beautiful little silver watch, the hands of which were at *seven* o'clock or near it, and the little thing went tick, tick, ticking away as who should say, "Punctual Peter's the boy for me!" Peter and his mother exchanged glances of speechless surprise.

"Well, this *is* a go!" said Peter at length. "Who *can* have sent them. *Tempus Fugit* makes it look like Mr. Dalkeith's, and Punky makes it look like Mr. Campbell's doing, an' yet I can't understand why either of 'em should hae done it."

The fact was, that Mr. Campbell had gone to Mr. Dalkeith to make inquiry as to the charac-

ter of our punctual hero, and their conversation had resulted in a united resolve to send these presents to the widow and her son.

We must not make our story too long. Peter continued to retain and deepen the esteem in which he was held by his master; he rose from one grade to another, until he became the confidential manager of Mr. Dalkeith's establishment, and when he was able to take "the dear mither" away from her poor cottage and hard toil, and place her in his own home, surrounded with every comfort, his satisfaction was complete. Old Mr. Campbell spent much of his leisure time in Peter's house, and had no greater delight than to welcome the thrifty son and the happy widow into his cosy back parlour.

At length the old man died, and left the whole of his savings and stock-in-trade, amounting to some thousands of pounds, to "Peter M'Owan, my young friend 'Punky.'" At the foot of his will were these words,—“He who best knows the value of time, will give the best account of it in eternity.” The only condition attached to the bequest was that Peter should visit the old man's grave at *seven*

o'clock in the morning on the anniversary of his death.

Twenty years afterwards Peter became the mayor of his native city, having also received the honour of knighthood for his services in the cause of philanthropy. He took for his crest a sun-dial, with the shadow at the figure *seven*, and the motto *Tempus Fugit*. On the Sunday after Sir Peter M'Owan was chosen mayor, he went to morning service at St. Dunstan's Church, his "dear auld mither" hanging on his arm. Just as they passed into the porch, the old clock chimed out its hourly burden.

"Mother," said Peter, "do you know what the chimes are saying? Hark!—'Punky, God is good to you.'"

"Aye," said the grey-haired matron, looking into his face with a proud and happy smile; "hark, again! 'Good to Punky's mither, too.'"

THE LITTLE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

JOHNNY MARSDEN was a poor little sweep. In the days of which we speak, the wretched little "climbing boys," as they were called, were sorely abused by hard and cruel masters, and were forced to creep up the dark chimneys, and through long narrow flues, choked with soot, and crooked into the bargain. The poor things were not seldom unable to get down again, and after bruising themselves with the rough bricks and mortar, had to be dug out by pulling down the chimney, and often they were dead before they could be reached.

Those sad days are over now, and if a man were to send a poor little child up a chimney in that way, he would be sent to prison.

Well, Johnny Marsden was a poor little sweep, who had neither father nor mother, and had been bound apprentice by the parish overseers to a chimney sweep, a hard and

wicked fellow, called Joe Hardman, but more commonly known as "Black Joe."

Johnny could just remember his mother, who used to teach him to pray and to love truth and honesty. He could remember kneeling by her lap, putting his hands together, and saying,—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child ;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee. Amen."

And as he used to retire to his bed of straw, in his ragged and sooty clothes, and fling his poor little tired limbs, sore and bruised with climbing, on that rough resting-place, he always repeated the same verse, and then, weeping for his dear mother who had loved him so, he sobbed himself to sleep.

Joe Hardman had two other boys, bigger than Johnny, who had been with him a long time, and he had taught them, whenever they were engaged in chimney-sweeping, to creep up and down the chimneys of the various rooms, and to steal anything of value on which they could safely lay their hands.

This they brought to their master, who gave

them a few pence as a reward, and often many blows when they came home empty handed. Poor Johnny was cuffed and beaten and pinched and always half-starved because he would not steal, and he often wished that he could lie down somewhere and die. The other lads, set on by their brutal master, used to show him their money, or the pies, tarts, or sweetmeats they had bought, and offered to share them with him if he would do as they did.

The little orphan continued to refuse; so they laughed and sneered, called him a coward, a little parson, and kicked him off the straw. In this way, what with the master's cruelty in the day time, and the lads' persecution at night, Johnny had a harder time of it than any negro slave. He still continued, however, to repeat his little prayer every night,—

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,”

but he felt as though he must steal something, or they would surely kill him outright.

One day he was sweeping a large chimney in the house of a great nobleman, and on coming down again, he made a mistake, turning down a wrong flue; and through an empty

fire-place he crept into an elegant room, which, to Johnny's astonished eyes, looked like a picture in a fairy tale.

The carpet and the furniture, the curtains, the pictures, the glittering ornaments, were all of the richest colours, and little Johnny stood with staring eyes, astounded at the wonders of beauty and value that met his gaze. On a little table there lay a costly gold watch, with sparkling diamonds, and a fine gold chain and other trinkets.

Johnny knew that these were worth a great deal of money. He had seen just the same kind of things laid in blue velvet cushions in the jewellers' windows, and the thought came into his mind, that if he had these he could get a great deal of money for them, and that he need not then, he thought, starve or hunger any more. Then he remembered that if he had them he could never sell them, for people would know that they had been stolen. Then a thought arose, "If I take them to my master, he will not beat me any more, the lads will give me a place on the straw, and I shall get some money to spend as they do."

In his excitement his eyes gleamed, and he

took up the precious treasure, saying aloud, "Yes, I'll take it." Then he laid it down, saying, "What! and be a thief? Yet nobody sees me! Yes, God sees me! My mother sees me! I can't be a thief! I could not say my prayers any more. Oh, what shall I do? I'll kneel and pray just now." Down the little fellow went, by the side of the table, with the glittering watch and trinkets just before him, and clasping his hands, he prayed:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee. Amen."

Now the tears were flowing down his sooty cheeks, making dull, white lines there, and rising from his knees, he said, "*No; I can't be a thief. I'll die first.*" So saying he hastened back to the chimney, and at last found himself at the place from which he had started. His work was done, and victorious little Johnny went his way back to blows and kicks and curses, and his miserable couch of dirty straw.

He had hardly reached Joe Hardman's house before a knock was heard at the door, and a finely-dressed footman with powdered hair was

asking for the little boy who had just been sweeping one of Lord Asperton's chimneys. Johnny was called to the door. "You are to go with me," said the footman. Our poor little hero was half frightened out of his wits, and he wondered what the big man with the gold band on his hat and the silver buttons on his coat was going to do with him.

Arrived at Asperton House, Johnny was ushered into the presence of a grandly-dressed but pleasant-looking lady who smiled on him as she said, "My little fellow, why didn't you take the watch to-day?" Poor Johnny fell on his knees, and began to ask her pardon. "Nay, nay," said my lady; "I heard every word that you said, and I am so glad that you resisted the temptation. But what made you think of stealing it?"

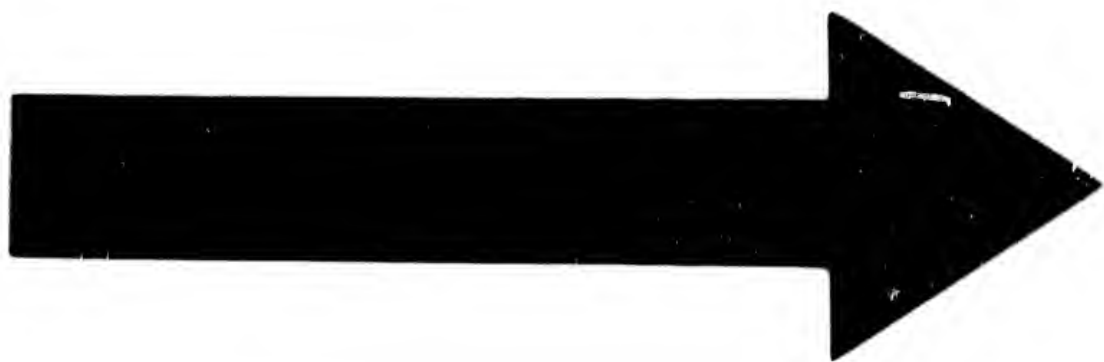
Johnny told my lady the story of his sorrows, of his ill-usage, his ill-treatment from the boys, his mother's death, and all his sad and artless little story. My lady wept over the poor little waif and stray, and asked herself if she could have remained honest under such a temptation. "My good lad," said she, "you shall never go back again. I'll see to that."

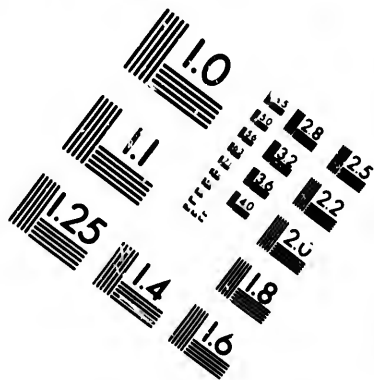
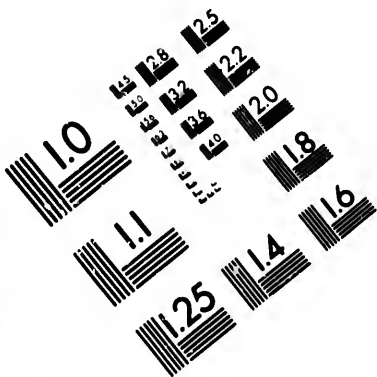
Johnny's apprenticeship was cancelled. My lady sent him to school and afterwards to college. He grew up to be a good man, and studied for the Church. When he was twenty-five years of age, his fair patroness presented him with the living of Asperton, in the county of York, and when the young vicar was installed, she gave him the very watch he had once for a moment thought to steal, and on the inside was engraved,—

“Presented to the REV. JOHN MARSDEN, on his becoming a minister of the Gospel of that ‘Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,’ who ‘looked upon a little child.’ From his sincere friend, F. ASPERTON.

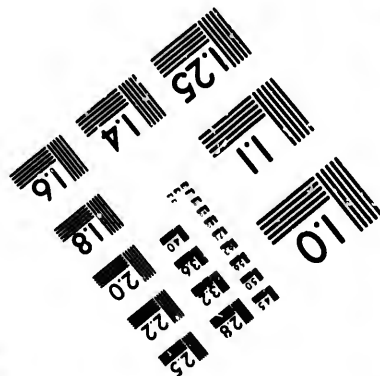
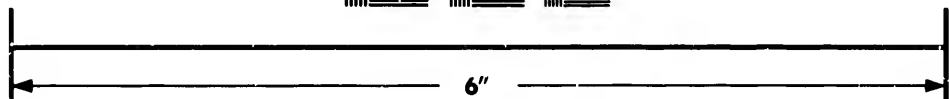
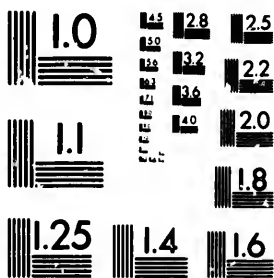
Our old friend Johnny treasured the gift all his days, and for many a long and happy year he preached a simple Gospel to his loving flock. Whenever he visited the poor, the tempted, and the tried, he urged them to go direct to Jesus for help and comfort, for, said he,—

“I called upon the Lord in my trouble, and He heard my cry.”





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SAVED FROM A TIGER.

"BERTIE, it's too warm to play any longer. I shall go and lie on the sofa a little while, to rest."

"It *is* hot," said Bertie, fanning himself with his straw hat, and looking as red as a peony. "I think I'll go too. Perhaps papa and mamma will come home while we're asleep. Wouldn't it be nice for us to wake and find them here."

So Bertie and Jessie left the verandah where they had been playing under the broad shadow of the lime trees, and retired to a large room on the ground floor. There was a large, old-fashioned sofa there, on which the two children threw themselves, and, tired by the tropical and oppressive heat, they soon fell fast asleep.

Bertie and his little sister Jessie were the only children of the Rev. Henry Churchill, a missionary who had gone to India to preach

the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor heathen, who worship gods of wood and stone. The house in which the missionary and his family resided was a long, low bungalow, on the outside of an inland town, and in the near neighbourhood of a large Indian jungle, which stretched away nobody knows how far into the country.

The missionary's wife, who had been in delicate health, had been sent away to a more healthy place among the mountains to get restored, and Mr. Churchill had gone to fetch her home again. They were expected to return on the very day that Bertie and his sister had so tired themselves with play that they were glad to get out of the heat and take a nap upon the parlour sofa.

I want you to step in and have a look at the two children as they lie "wrapped in slumbers deep," for you would have to go a long way before you came upon a prettier picture. Bertie, who is a fine little fellow just turned seven years old, lies with his dark, curly head upon the sofa cushion; and by his side lies Jessie, a sweet little child of five summers. Her bright flaxen hair is thrust back in tangled

locks from her brow; her head is pillowed on her brother's arm, and her own little, white, dimpled arm is thrown lovingly around his neck. There they lie, like two rose-buds on one stem, two "sleeping beauties" on one couch.

The tall windows, which open like doors, and reach from top to bottom of the room, are thrown wide apart, and the gentle breeze which is stirring the bananas, waving the branches of the tamarinds, and bending the feathers of the palm, blows freely in, so that they can sleep in quiet comfort, and we hope they will awake refreshed. As we pass out from our visit of inspection, a tall, dark-skinned native servant, dressed in white, and with a sort of coloured turban on his head, looks in, and seeing the two children fast asleep, he noiselessly withdraws.

While Mr. and Mrs. Churchill were driving over the hills, anxious to see their darlings, and dear mamma, who had not seen them for a month, was thinking how she would hug them to her heart and half devour them with kisses,—while the two children were fast asleep in each other's arms, a huge Bengal tiger,

fierce and hungry, came prowling around for prey. He sniffed at the open window, and smelt the children; then softly, silently, stealthily like a cat, the savage animal entered the room, and crouching a little distance from the sofa, fixed his blazing eyes on the two sweet little ones, who lay peacefully slumbering there. If they were to move ever so little, those horrid fangs and cruel claws would in a moment have been buried in their tender flesh.

By-and-by a gust of wind blew in and stirred something on the opposite side of the room. The tiger turned his head to look in that direction, and in a large mirror which stood in the corner he saw what seemed to be another tiger glaring fiercely at him. He arched his back and showed his teeth, and lashed his enormous tail to and fro in anger. The tiger in the mirror did just the same; so, with a growl of wrath, the big brute dashed at his enemy and shattered the glass into a thousand pieces! Astonished, cowed, and frightened, the tiger turned round, bounded like lightning through the window and made off into the jungle. Awakened by the noise,

the startled children leaped from the sofa with a scream of fear, and stood looking in wonder at the shivered glass, which lay scattered on the floor!

“My darlings! my precious darlings! are you hurt?” shouted their mamma, as she sprang through the open window, hugged them to her heart, and half smothered them with kisses, laughing and crying all the while in hysterical excitement. She and her husband had arrived just in time to see the tiger spring out of the room and bound into the bush; and hearing the scream of the children, she had run in, expecting to see them bathed in blood.

“We didn’t break the big looking-glass, mamma,” said Bertie, simply, lifting his tearful eyes into mamma’s face, while startled Jessie pillowed her fair head and sobbed in her mamma’s lap.

“No, my treasures, the looking-glass has saved your lives,” and again she folded them to her breast. Then papa, who had come in for his share of loving welcome, told them of the tiger. “And now,” said he, “we must give God thanks for saving our darlings from such dreadful peril. They knelt upon the

floor, before the ruins of the shattered mirror, and gave to heaven as warm an offering of praise and prayer as ever rose from grateful hearts.

Bertie and Jessie have now grown up to man and womanhood, and have happy homes of their own; but on the nineteenth day of June in every year they still meet their white-headed father (their mother has gone to heaven long ago), and thankfully talk over again the story of the tiger and the looking-glass.

BEN THE BOOTBLACK.

DR. PASCAL, the president of Clevedon College, was sitting one day in his study, when he heard a low, timid knock at the door. "Come in," said he; and immediately there stood in the doorway a poor lad, about sixteen years of age. Very rough and uncouth in appearance was the boy; dressed in coarse homespun, with thick, clumsy shoes on his feet, and an old battered hat on his head, surmounting a shock of dark, uncombed hair. His eyes were quick and sparkling, and his face wore a look of deep anxiety.

"If you please, Sir," said the little rustic, "I'd like to pick up a bit o' larnin'."

"Very good," said the worthy doctor, with a smile; "but what brings you here?"

"Why," said the lad, "I heerd you kep' a college here, an' I thought if I worked a spell

for you, you would help me now and again to get a bit o' schooling."

"Nay," said Doctor Pascal, "we have nothing for you to do. Where's your father and mother?"

"I ain't ne'er a one," said the boy, as a cloud lowered over his face; "both are died, an' my mother wanted me to get a bit o' eddication."

"Why, you see," said the doctor, both amused and interested, "we have nothing here for you to do. All the situations are filled up."

"Aye," said the lad; "but I can do a mony things. I can cut wood an' carry it; I can bring water to the kitchen; I can black yer boots; I can sweep." At each new statement of his abilities for labour, he grew more earnest and emphatic, and stretched his neck forward to catch a word of hope.

"My poor boy," said the doctor, shaking his head, "I'm afraid that——"

"I don't keer how hard I work, Sir," cried the lad in a deprecating tone. "Sun-up to sun-down I'll be at it, if I can only pick up just a bit o' schoolin'. I want to make sum-

mat o' myself. I want—I want——” And the poor fellow panted with eagerness to define the yearnings of his mind. His lips quivered, and a big tear rolled down either cheek, and Dr. Pascal's sympathies were thoroughly aroused. Still, it was an awkward matter, and how to help him he did not see.

“I'm sure,” said he kindly, “I should like to help you, but I really cannot see the way.”

“Oh, Sir, try,” said the lad, taking a step forward. “I can live on half nothing, an' I can do a sight o' work. I can help the maids; I can run errands. O, do, do, do, Sir, give me a chance!”

The doctor was in a quandary, and to get time for thought, bent his head over his papers and began to write. Ben, for so the boy was called, read that as the sign of dismissal. He stood silent a moment, holding by the handle of the door. He heaved a sigh from the bottom of his heart; and as the doctor glanced at him, he saw the lad fingering his poor old hat confusedly with one hand, with the other he brushed the rapidly-flowing tears from his eyes. Making a rough, ungainly bow, he put his foot over the threshold, and was about to go.

“ Stop,” said the president ; “ I’m going to try.”

The old hat fell on the floor ; the lad clapped his rough, brown hands together ; and then, without a word, burst into a loud sobbing of pent-up and excited joy.

Ben Barnard was installed as assistant boot-black in Clevedon College. Nothing could surpass the diligence and willingness with which he went about his work. In his spare moments he was always getting first one student and then another to help him in his studies ; and Dr. Pascal himself found a real pleasure in giving instruction to the eager boy.

Ultimately Ben was entered as a student in the university ; and under these new and more favourable conditions he soon went to the front rank, and took the leading honours of the college, which was proud to have his name upon its roll.

Five and twenty years after, a magnificent church was built in a certain Western city. At its consecration it was thronged by an immense crowd, who listened with death-like stillness to one of the most learned and eloquent ministers America ever produced. In

the pulpit, seated behind him, was an old and venerable-looking man, who listened to the orator with a full, glad smile upon his face. At the close of the sermon, the preacher said, "I want Dr. Pascal to speak to you. I want Dr. Pascal to give his blessing to me here before God and you. I want to give my public thanks to Dr. Pascal for his kindness to the poor little bootblack of Clevedon College."

That preacher was the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Barnard, the president of Clevedon College, in the place of the grand old man who aided him to get a "bit o' larnin'" in the years long gone by.

THE BEACON FIRE.

WIDOW GRANT lived in a hollow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in Virginia. It was a wild and lonely place, but the railway found it out, as it finds every other place, and began to wind its way, with its great engines and trucks and carriages, among the hills and ravines of that mountainous region. The poor woman had a small cabin and a few acres of land. There she cultivated herself, with the aid of her three little girls, who were all loving, honest, and handy. In the summer time they picked berries of various kinds, and walked three miles to the nearest railway station to sell them or to send them on to the nearest market.

Now one of the conductors on the road often met the three girls, tugging away, tired and weary, with their heavy baskets on their heads, and being a kind and amiable man, he spoke to them pleasantly, and not seldom, pitying

their tired limbs, would take them on his cars and set them down near their own cabin door. Of course such a thing as a ride on the rail was a great treat, but the conductor's unvarying kindness to them was a greater still. The good mother heard their praises as they spoke of him, until she, as was very natural, was as grateful and as pleased as they were.

Sometimes the children picked a basketful of ripe berries on purpose for him, and sometimes the mother sent him a little fruit out of her own garden. He showed his good taste and good feeling by taking the gifts, though he always managed, somehow, to give them something in return. So matters went on for some time, and the conductor was regarded quite as an old friend, though the poor widow had never even seen him.

The winter of 1854 was very cold in that part of Virginia, and the snow was nearly three feet deep even on the mountains. One night it suddenly became very warm, the snows rapidly melted, and at the same time there came down torrents of rain, so that the valleys were almost filled with water. The night was pitch dark, and the train, as usual, was wind-

ing its way along the mountain slopes and across the gorges, and the conductor was in his place in the car, quite unconcerned, because he knew that the railway was laid all along upon solid rock.

At midnight, amid the dash of the rain and the roar of the mountain streams, he heard a sharp whistle from the engine. He sprang to the brakes, and the wheels skidded on the iron plates amid the flashing sparks they made, and in a little while the train was stopped. The conductor seized his lantern, and made his way in front, where he saw a sight such as he will never, never forget if he live for a hundred years. A large, bright fire of pine logs was burning right upon the track, flashing its light along the gleaming rails, and then showing an awful gulf! A huge gap had been rent in the mountain by the tremendous rush of melted snow, and it seemed to the wondering guard as he gazed down the awful abyss as though eternity itself was spread before him. A few minutes more, and death and destruction would have come to him and all the precious lives the cars contained!

There by the pine fire stood Widow Grant

and her three children, wet to the skin, and their meagre garments and loosened hair tossed by the wind and rain. As soon as the girls saw the conductor, they ran and clasped his knees, and sobbing with joy, the eldest said,

“O, Mr. Sharland, thank God we stopped you in time!”

Then the dear mother stepped forward and took his hand, saying,—

“O, Sir, I would have lost my life before one hair of your head should have been hurt! O, how I prayed that we might stop the train! My God, I thank thee!”

You see, Widow Grant and her children had heard the awful sound of the falling rock, which shook the ground like an earthquake. She felt sure that it had torn the railway down, and nothing would do but she must go and see. Then straw and logs were carried by herself and her three little maidens, to make a fire which should warn of danger. So they toiled and trembled, and prayed that they might save their friend. The conductor fell upon his knees, and thanked God for the wonderful deliverance, and called for blessings on the poor widow and her children. The engi-

neer, fireman, and brakemen stood by, with tears streaming down their weather-beaten cheeks. When the conductor told the passengers of their marvellous escape, they seemed as though they could not do enough for the courageous woman and her brave little girls; more than five hundred dollars was collected for the widow on the spot. Afterwards the railway company built her a new house near the railway, and gave her and her children a life pass over the road. "So you see," said the conductor, who told the story, "a little kindness which cost me nothing, saved my life and my train from destruction."

THE BURNT BOOKS.

IN the city of New York there lived a tradesman whose name was Henniker. He was prosperous in business, though at the time of which I speak his resources were small and his stock was very limited in extent. He was an exceedingly charitable man, and whatever time he could spare from his business as a bookseller, he employed in visiting the sick and poor. Many a poor body was aided by his open purse, comforted by his cheery words, and aided by his counsel and his prayers.

Through the influence of a friend in Scotland he was made the American agent for the sale of the celebrated *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, which had just been published; an extensive and expensive work, which soon rose to very great popularity, and had a remarkably rapid sale. A large consignment of the costly volumes were sent over to him, and these were laid in a large room just over his store.

One day a poor fellow entered his shop, meanly and even shabbily attired, and bearing on his face evident traces of suffering and weakness.

“Can you give me a job?” said he; “will you give me something to do?”

There was such a look and a tone of entreaty connected with the question, that Mr. Henniker was very sorry to have to say,—

“No, my good fellow. There is nothing about my place but what I and my assistant can manage. Besides, you look as though you have not much strength for work.”

The man’s eyes filled with tears as he said, “Well, I’m not equal to hard work; but would to God that I could find a little to do, to buy bread!”

The kind-hearted bookseller, as usual, melted with pity, began to cast about and see if he couldn’t *make* a little work, so that the man who did not beg might earn an honest loaf.

“Follow me,” said he, suddenly; and so saying, he led him up to the room above where the volumes of the *Encyclopædia* were lying in confused piles upon the floor. “There!” said he; “you can pile these volumes up neatly in

rows. It will give you a little money for bread, as you say."

The poor fellow thanked him heartily, and at once went down on his knees and set about his work. It took him a long time to do, and when it was finished, Mr. Henniker gave him two dollars, and sent him away rejoicing.

A few days afterwards, a fire broke out on the bookseller's premises, and his entire stock upstairs and down was utterly destroyed. He had taken the wise precaution to insure the shop and the stock, but the loss he suffered in connection with the *Encyclopædias* was so large, that the insurance office disputed his claim, and refused to pay. This was so serious a blow, that Mr. Henniker was reduced to very great straits indeed, and absolute bankruptcy stared him in the face.

During these days of trouble, he went about his visits among the sick and poor as usual; for though he had nothing to give them in the way of money, his godly counsel and cheery comfort were gratefully received; and though his own heart was sore, he smoothed many a dying pillow and poured the balm of religion into many a penitent heart.

One day he visited a poor man, who was lying on a bed of sickness. After he had spoken to him a little while, the man said,—

“Why, you are the gentleman who kindly gave me the job of piling up those big books.”

Mr. Henniker told him of the trouble that had come upon him, and eagerly asked him if he had any recollection of the number of books he had handled.

“Yes,” said the man; “I can tell you exactly,” and at once he produced a piece of coarse paper on which he had marked down the number of rows he had piled and the number of volumes in each row.

The precious paper and the evidence of the sick man were at once laid before the insurance company, and Mr. Henniker’s demand was forthwith paid in full, and all his troubles passed away like a morning cloud.

As soon as the man recovered, he found employment and prosperity through the influence of the grateful bookseller, who had given him work to get him bread.

A LEAP FOR LIFE.

It's twenty years or more since my story happened, but the entire business is as clearly scored upon my memory as though it were yesterday. The good ship *Hector*, with Captain Anerley for skipper, was as fine a man o' war as could be found in the navy. She was a tremendous big vessel, an' carried sixty-four guns; but she was as easy to handle as a lady's fan, and when forging through the waters she made her ten knots an hour, and with so little heeling and yawing that you might have played a game of billiards on her upper deck.

Well, the *Hector* was stationed in the Mediterranean, and at the time I'm telling of was anchored off the port of Algiers. Captain Anerley was a topping sailor, an' as good a commander as ever wore epaulettes. But he was a cool sort of a chap; a bit haughty like, and he didn't seem as though anything could

make him show a bit o' feeling. He mostly looked so high and mighty, and had such a stand-offish way with him, that we used to call him "old Stiff-back." But he was upright and down-right, all courage, from the heel of his boot to the peak of his cap; and all the crew had a solid respect for him, and were proud of him into the bargain.

Well, d' ye see? the captain had a son on board; a fine, sharp, bright-eyed little customer, about eight or nine years old. He wasn't old enough to be rated, but he was dressed like a little midshipman, an' used to mess with the middies an' share their cabin and drill. Captain Anerley didn't seem to take any more notice of Master Arthur than of anybody else; we used to think the skipper was too proud to care for him; any way, he never showed it. Master Arthur was as active as a squirrel and as mischievous as a monkey. He used to climb about the ship, and mount the ladders, an' swing from one rope to another, as if he was a Barbary monkey born and bred. One day, when the sea was as smooth as a mill-pond, and the sky was as blue as a sailor's jacket, and not a capful of wind was to

be had for whistling, the men were sitting or lolling under any shelter they could find, for the sun was as hot as a bo's'un's temper. The middies were having a game of "setting suppers," as they called it, daring each other to do all sorts of tricks and climb to all sorts of places; now swinging in the mizen chains, now swarming along the bowsprit, now mounting to the cross-trees; an' that young pickle, Master Arthur, small as he was, was more daring than the rest.

At first the men watched their antics and laughed at their jokes, and then most of them left the lads to themselves. By-and-by, however, one of the youngsters sang out, "O, look at Master Arthur!" There was terror in his tones, and in a second a hundred eyes were fixed on the little fellow as he mounted the last splice of the mainmast, right away up in the sky, where it wasn't much thicker than a mop handle and not so stout as a handspike! It made me dizzy to look at him; not one of us dare utter a word, for fear of startling him, an' we expected to see him fall any moment, a dead and mangled mummy on the deck!

The lad still mounted higher, until at last

he stood bolt upright on the little block, which was just big enough for his feet, and looked for all the world like a tailor's button with the needle sticking through, while Master Arthur himself looked as small as a little wooden soldier atop of a weathercock! The first lieutenant had a face as white as a sheet, and going on the tip of his toes, as if he was afraid of shaking the mast with his steps, he made his way to the captain's cabin, and told him the dreadful news. The captain said never a word; but when he came out his face was stern and his mouth set, his cheeks were deadly white, and his lips as bloodless as a stone. Standing where he could get a good view of the lad, who was still on the narrow ledge, with his hands on the point of the mast, the captain called out,—

“Arthur!”

“Yes, papa!” said the lad, who was now aware of his danger.

“Do you see this pistol?” said he, pointing it directly at him.

“Yes, papa.”

“Well, as sure as I live, I'll shoot you, if you do not jump overboard! One. *Two*. **THREE!**”

In an instant the boy sprang from the bending mast and dropped like a shot into the sea. Half-a-dozen blue jackets were stripped off in a twinkling, and the plucky fellows swam to the spot where he went down. Down deep enough he had gone, and some seconds passed before he appeared on the surface. He was then seized, and borne in triumph to the ship. When he reached the deck, and stood dripping before his father's stern, white face, the crew stood breathless, wondering what would come next. The captain stooped and kissed him, and the men set up a ringing cheer until he disappeared down the gangway. The boy was none the worse for his big jump, but when the captain appeared on the deck next morning, we all saw that his dark hair was thickly streaked with white, and then we knew what the father had felt when he made his son take that desperate "leap for life."

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