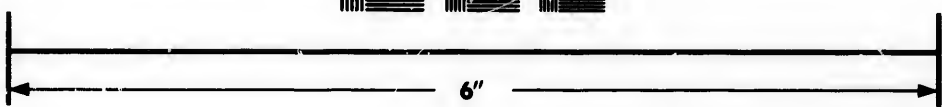
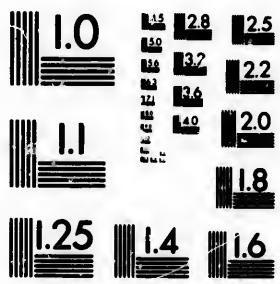


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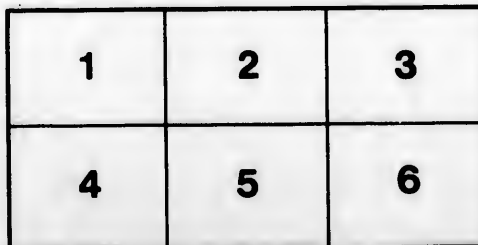
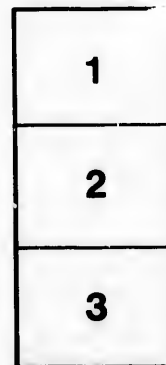
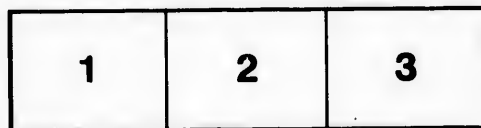
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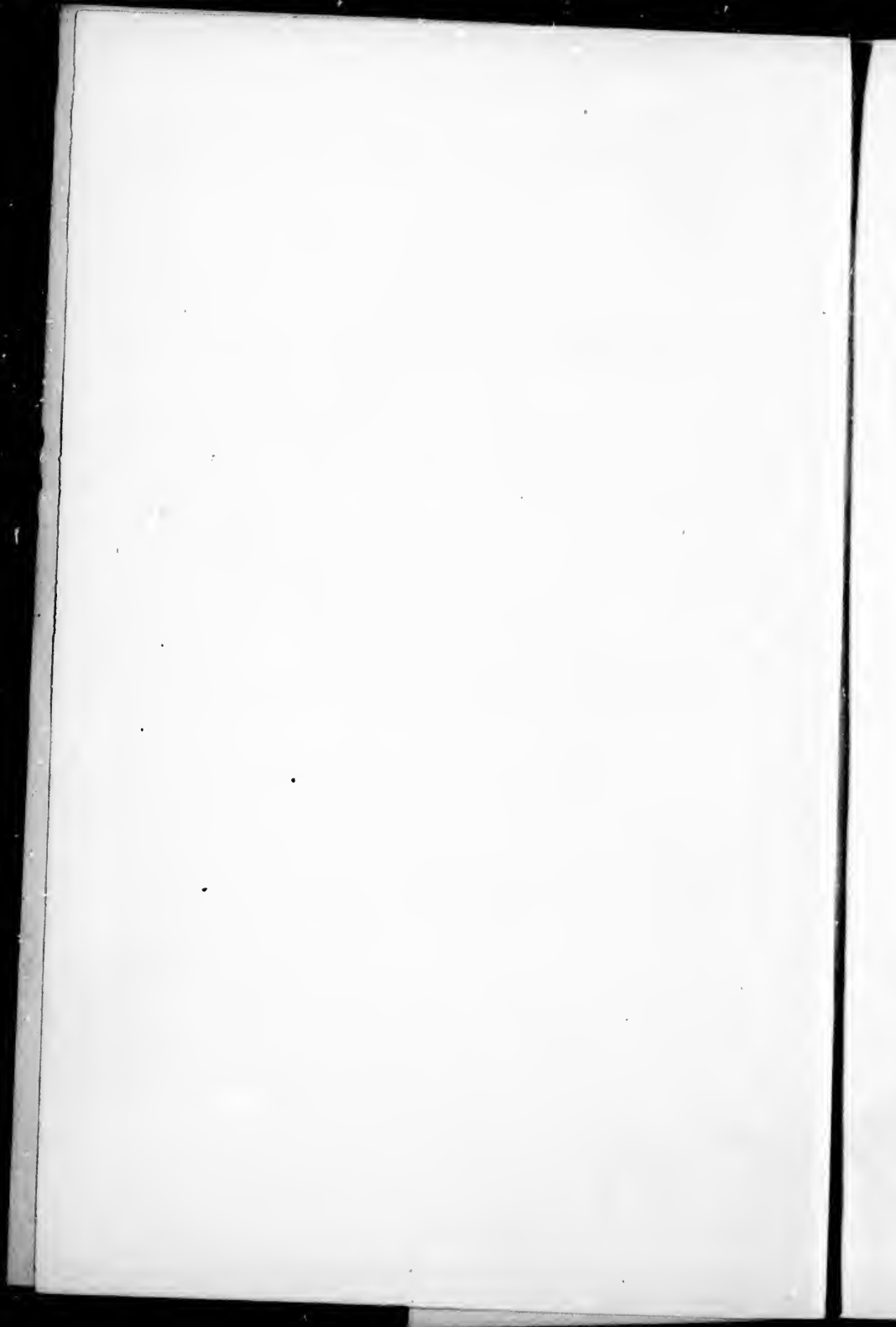
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# SOWING AND REAPING

OR,

RECORDS OF THE ELLISSON FAMILY.

BY

MRS. J. C. YULE.

INTRODUCTION BY

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., F.R.S.C.

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WILLIAM BRIGGS.

MONTREAL: C. W. COATES.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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**I** HAVE much pleasure in complying with the request of my esteemed friend, the accomplished authoress of this book, in writing a brief introduction thereto. Not that I think that it needs any introduction. I believe that the book will make its way by its own merits without any aid of mine. Its story is so interesting, the subject is so important, the style is so attractive, and the spirit which it breathes will be so salutary in its effects upon the mental tastes and moral character of those who shall read it, that I anticipate for it a very widely extended sphere of influence.

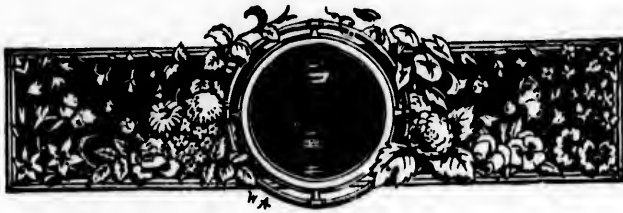
**T**his is unquestionably a book with a purpose. The interests of temperance and religion are kept constantly in view. The book strikingly illustrates the Scripture motto on which its teachings are based—"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Moreover, this is no air-drawn picture of the fancy. Its chief incidents, I am informed, are, alas, too true. The traits of character of the



principal actors are drawn from life ; and the aim of the book has been to keep strictly within not only the possible but the actual, without the least exaggeration.

The lessons of a book of narrative interest, which gives as this book does, vivid impressions of the scenes described and characters portrayed, are much more forcibly fixed upon the mind than those conveyed by a book of didactic counsel. I, therefore, heartily commend this volume for Sunday-school and family use, with the prayer that, by the blessing of God, its important teachings may be so indelibly engraved upon their hearts, that they sow not to the wind lest they reap the whirlwind.

W. H. WITHROW.



# SOWING AND REAPING;

OR,

RECORDS OF THE ELLISSON FAMILY.

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## CHAPTER I.

“He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”



WHAT can those bells be ringing for, Inez? They have been sounding for the last half-hour constantly, reminding me of Poe's

“ . . . mellow wedding bells—  
Golden bells!

What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!”

“And so they are wedding bells, Annie; have you not heard—of course you must have—that Colonel Ellisson and Miss Chapman are married this morning?”

“Colonel Ellisson and Miss Chapman! Why, Inez, you amaze me! It is only three or four months since Miss Chapman came to Weston an utter stranger. Surely she and Hugh Ellisson are not making such a precipitate marriage as this?”

"Of course they are; and those are their wedding chimes! Why, Annie, how long does it take you sober Vermont folk to make up a match, that you open your eyes so wide at this that has dragged its tedious progress through three or four almost interminable months? A wearisome time that, I assure you, for us Western people to take in consummating so trifling an affair as a marriage! Love at first sight, marriage at second, and divorce in a fortnight—that is the pace at which we travel!"

"O Inez, you exaggerate, surely! You cannot mean me to understand that such things are common?"

"My dear cousin, I really do not always mean quite all I say; yet I assure you my irony is not so very far at fault in this matter. We are a fast-moving folk in this prairie land of ours; and in nothing, perhaps, faster than in marrying and unmarried."

"Miss Chapman is very little known in these parts, I think."

"Never even heard of until last summer, when Mrs. Stevens invited her home with her from Saratoga, where they had completed a ten-days' acquaintance. Shortly after their arrival, Mrs. S. gave a party in honor of her dear, particular friend; she and Colonel Ellisson met then for the first time; and the result is, as you are already made aware, that they are married to-day!"

"She is very pretty, Inez—is she wealthy?"

"So report says. Weston gossip has already informed the world that she is an orphan, sisterless and brotherless, and heiress to half a million! She is certainly very stylish, and that means wealthy, does it not, little cousin?"

"Not in the West, Inez, if I may judge by what I have observed. A stylish lady, using the words in their popular sense, *may* be very rich, and she *may* be carrying all she is worth upon her person."

"You observe us Western people rather too closely, cousin Annie. Some of us live within our means just as carefully as you Green-mountain people!"

"Yes, Inez, I make honorable exception of your dear

mother and yourself. I find, however, that you *are* exceptions to a very general rule. But what is the matter with Miss Leeds?"

"Miss Leeds?—oh, yes, our little dressmaker! We are so accustomed to calling her Amy, I did not think of whom you were speaking. What of her, Annie? I did not observe her."

"Why, a minute ago I noticed she was deathly pale, and her hands were shaking as though she had the ague. In a few seconds she dropped her work and slipped out of the room—I wonder if she is ill."

"Oh, no, I think not. She took her breakfast at home, of course—she always does—but she seemed all right when she came. She is such a quiet mouse, I never thought of her being in the room. But there!—I recollect now—why, Annie, I used to hear it hinted years ago that she was engaged to Hugh Ellison! I remember about the time her father died it was quite a matter of gossip; but after Hugh returned to West Point, I heard very little more about it. He has been away so long, and his marriage is so sudden, that I did not once think of her—indeed I did not notice that she was here. Probably we have been wringing the life-blood out of her soft little heart with our idle chatter. I am *very* sorry!"

"Shall I run after her, and try to comfort her?"

"Why no, Annie; you could not make a greater blunder! Miss Leeds is as proud as she is reserved; and would resent your well-meant sympathy. Though she lives by her needle, we haven't a prouder-spirited lady in Weston. If, as I conjecture, she is vexing herself about this marriage, of course, she will choose to be alone; if not, she will very soon be back. I hope she'll not go and break her silly heart about Hugh Ellison!"

"Why do you say 'silly,' Inez? As I view it, it is a very serious matter to have the expectations of years cut off in this summary manner."

"Well, yes—it is a little hard, no doubt. But it depends upon quite a number of things whether or

not it is the most sensible thing a woman can do to break her heart over a trial of this sort. I think, for example, Miss Leeds' wisest course will be to shake off dull care, and go on her way rejoicing!"

"You are a very heartless girl, Inez!"

"On the contrary, my dear, I am supposed not only to have a heart, but a very large one. I am speaking now of what I know. Amy Leeds has a right to congratulate herself, if she was ever engaged to Colonel Ellisson, that she is so no longer. He is not worthy of her!"

"What do you mean, Inez?"

"Simply what I say; that, with all his wealth, little Amy Leeds is fortunate in losing him. He is a worldly man in every sense of the word—addicted to gaiety, to strong drink, to worldly amusements, and consequently could never make her happy."

"I do not quite comprehend you, Inez. Many women marry men with all the objectionable traits you credit Colonel Ellisson with, and yet are happy with them. What is there in Miss Leeds that constitutes her case such an exceptional one?"

"This one fact, Annie, since you press me so closely for an explanation. Miss Leeds is a Christian—at least, *professes* to be such—and that, if real, sets her and Colonel Ellisson as wide apart—how wide?—furnish me with a suitable comparison, will you?"

"Inez! Inez! —"

"Why, Annie, cousin there are tears in your eyes!—how have I wounded you?"

"Inez, there is one who is as much to me as Colonel Ellisson ever was to Miss Leeds, who is not a Christian! I have thought the question all over, and studied the Bible; and I don't think I will be doing wrong to follow my own heart in this matter. Still your words distress me. I hope I want to do right."

"Well, dear, I did not suppose my words were having any sharp edge for you; but they are spoken now, and I do not know that I regret saying them. It is a question every Christian woman must settle before

God for herself. But I would urge you to read and ponder well these words—I think I can repeat them, for I have reasons away back in the past for remembering them, which, sometime, if you like to hear, I will give you—‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?—and what communion hath light with darkness?—and what concord hath Christ with Belial?—or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?—and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For YE are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.’ There, dear! is a long quotation for you; and by the time you have studied and pondered, and wept over, and prayed over those five awful questions as much as your cousin Inez has, perhaps, Annie—well, the question will look to be a pretty solemn one to you!”

“Oh! I knew it—I knew it all along, but I wilfully put it from me! I knew my hopes were built on the sand, and that they would slip from under my feet some day; but I clung to them and hoped still. O father—father!—you were wiser than I. You told me how it would end; but I thought you prejudiced and unkind; and my heart even cherished undutiful feelings towards you—and you *so* faithful to me! In spite of your entreaties, in spite of the cruel neglect of these many weary years and the almost positive knowledge that he had utterly forsaken me, I have clung to him madly; and, notwithstanding all I have seen of his utter disregard of me since his return, I was not prepared for this!”

The speaker stood at the window of a little attic room, to which she had fled to hide herself from the observation of the two cousins whose conversation she could endure no longer. Startled by the sound of her own voice, as she repeated with a half wail—“Oh, I was not prepared for this!”—she looked quickly

around, but finding herself alone, she cast herself upon the floor, and pressing her beating temples close between her hands lay quite still and tearless, while the chime of the marriage bells floated around her, and filled all the air with their sweet melody.

At length they ceased, and she rose and stood before her mirror. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes dry, and there was in her face a look that seemed to startle her, for she turned away from the glass, and as she did so her eyes rested upon a Bible that was lying before her on the table.

She did not open it, but, with an impatient gesture, turned from it a moment; then, snatching it up, she as suddenly laid it down again, and walked to the window.

"How strangely those words came to me last night!" she exclaimed at length, turning to the table and again picking up the book; "Yes, here they are: 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.' Ah, to-day I see it all clearly; God has interposed to save me from my own madness!"

"*God has interposed!*" echoed a mocking voice deep in her own soul, "how dare you say that, Amy Leeds?—as though He should give a thought to one like you—so careless of His service, so neglectful of His word, so buried in worldliness! How dare you apply that scripture to yourself? 'the lot of the righteous.' You righteous, forsooth, you! How long is it since you were setting up your clay idol, and worshipping it in the place of God? How many years have you been building your hopes upon this man, looking and longing for an opportunity to hasten like a silly bird into the tempting snare, shutting your ears to reproof, and making yourself deaf to the remonstrances of your own conscience? How long since you read the Apostle's injunctions, and then, to shield yourself from the reproofs of your own heart, ran away to pore in secret over those old letters, and dream over hopes you have long known were baseless?"

"And now, when your butterfly has flitted away to another flower, when your idol has slipped from the hands that would never have relinquished their hold, had not that hold been broken by an irresistible fate, you solace yourself with the thought that it is because you are righteous that God has interfered!"

A terrified look came into the face of the suffering woman. The passionate idolatry of those eight almost wasted years of youthful vigor loomed up like a mountain between her soul and God, and seemed to hide His face forever from her; while the upbraiding voice in the depths of her own heart still cried out against her.

"Righteous! What hour of all those years has there been into which you have not brought this object of your vain worship? Count, if you can, the days, the weeks, the months you have lavished upon him; and then compare them with the paltry minutes you have devoted to God and His cause. What have you planned, what hoped for, what looked forward to, that has not included him? while the great consecration to which you pledged yourself before God in your baptism has been ignored, forgotten; and yet you dare think of yourself to-day *as righteous!*"

The poor girl groaned aloud, and dropping the book, fled to the farther corner of the room, and cowering down buried her face in her hands, while deep-drawn sobs attested the anguish that wrung her heart.

At length the sobs ceased, the heavy sighs became less frequent, and after an hour she rose, washed her face, brushed her hair, and quietly returned to her work. That hour to Amy Leeds *might* have been the beginning of a deeper, serener faith in God, a loftier purpose, and a holier walk than her life had previously known. It *might* have been the dawn of a day from which to date, not only through this life, but through eternity, with ever-increasing satisfaction. Many Christians have reached such a crisis, and from that hour risen to closer communion and fellowship with God; while others, failing to profit by the precious



lessons of chastisement, have drifted farther and farther from the sweet resting-place they might have found; and in the end looked back, not upon a life rich in patient, submissive service, but upon the arid waste of a fruitless and unprofitable existence.

## CHAPTER II.

AMY LEEDS was the only daughter of a Christian minister who, in the early days of Western emigration, had left his home in New England, and with his young wife had settled over a small church scattered over a sparsely peopled territory in the vicinity of one of the rapidly rising towns of the West.

Though earnest and devoted, and possessed of considerable culture, his income was always small, the people of his charge were poor, and changes, either by removal or death, so frequent, that the pastor, struggle as he might, had never possessed much beyond the commonest necessaries of life—a competence was something he never enjoyed, or even hoped for.

Little Amy grew up in her father's house a shy, thoughtful child, full of passionate longings for an education which poverty put forever beyond her reach, and aspirations for knowledge that were not likely ever to be gratified.

Her father taught her what he could; but the care of a small farm, in addition to his duties as a minister, left him very little time to bestow upon the education of his daughter whose four or five months' schooling out of the year was often broken in upon by the necessity there was for her help at home, and whose life, after the age of twelve or thirteen years, was passed in the almost unbroken monotony of household toil.

In the few pauses of work, and during the long evenings of winter, Amy studied diligently; and, by the time she was fifteen, she had pretty well exhausted the small stock of books that composed her father's

library, and having acquired a fair knowledge of reading and arithmetic, with a little grammar and geography, and some skill in penmanship, she was looked upon in the neighborhood as quite accomplished; and her parents congratulated themselves that her education was finished.

There was one book—the Bible—with which from her early childhood she had been acquainted. Under the careful training of her parents, she had been accustomed to the daily study of the Scriptures, and when comparatively a child gave evidence of having received these truths into her heart; and, being baptized by her father, she became a member of the church of which he was pastor.

When she was sixteen her mother, who had always been delicate, died suddenly, leaving in the pastor's home a baby boy, sickly and ailing, toward whom it now devolved upon Amy to act the part, at once, of sister and mother.

Four little brothers had one after another gladdened her humble home for a few brief weeks or months, and then the tiny hands had grown chill, and the waxen lids closed over the soft, bright eyes, and each in turn had been laid away among the flowers of the parsonage-garden. There they were, four smooth little graves at the foot of the garden, and at the head of each Amy had placed a rose-bush and a tuft of violets, and then gone back uncomplainingly to her brotherless and sisterless lot.

But one spring morning another baby brother was laid in her arms, and before she had time to kiss the little sleeping face a tearful cheek was laid against her own, and a voice whispered, "Come quickly, Amy, your mother wants you!"

"My darling, he is your own baby! Should it please God to spare him, bring him up to know and love the Saviour; make your poor father as happy as you can, and meet me by-and-by in Heaven!" Then the lips faltered, the eye-lids drooped, and Amy Leeds was motherless.

A year passed—a year of unwearied watchfulness and care—before either Mr. Leeds or his daughter could believe that the motherless baby was not destined to follow the other little ones to a premature grave. But when the little fellow actually began to walk, they grew hopeful, and set themselves resolutely to the important duty of providing him with a name.

“Give him your own name, father,” said Amy. “It is a nice name, and it would be pleasant to me to hear it again in the house as I used to before dear mother left us.”

“No, my daughter,” her father answered, sadly, “I prefer he should bear his mother’s name. It is a very dear name to me, and one I always hoped to revive in my own family. His name shall be Gordon.”

And so Gordon became the baby’s name from that day.

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“We are going to have new neighbors, Amy;” said the minister to his daughter a few weeks after, as he returned one evening from a pastoral visit among his people.

“Indeed, father!”

“Yes—a wealthy man from the East has bought the large tract of land between here and town, known as the ‘Wilson property,’ and which has been leased in small sections for the last thirty years. The new proprietor is coming here to settle, and I am indescribably grieved about it, as it is going to necessitate the removal of some seven or eight families of our people. It will nearly break up our little church.”

“But the leases are not out, are they, father?”

“No; but Mr. Ellisson, the new comer, offers to pay the tenants liberally if they will give him possession at once, and they have all agreed to his terms. He has selected the site for his mansion, and the work of building will commence at once. The whole matter has been arranged within a few days—I did not have a hint of it until this evening. It is going to break us up altogether; fully half of our membership will go!”

"And more than half our Sunday-school, father; what are we going to do?"

"It is very little we can do, I fear. If it were not for our farm, I would be inclined to pack up and go with our people. But the little boys and your mother, Amy, are all buried here on the place; and besides, if I should be taken from you before I could get another paid for, you and Gordon would be homeless. Perhaps, after all, I am not strong enough for the new country."

"No, father, you are not. Our farm will keep us comfortably now, and we must stay with the few of our people who will remain, and do what we can to keep our work moving on. Possibly Mr. and Mrs. Ellisson will be a help to us—I do hope they are Christian people."

"From what I hear, I think Mr. Ellisson is a very worldly man. It is not likely, even though he should prove otherwise, that he would have much sympathy with us who are all poor, hard-working people."

"All rich people are not proud, father; and though he should not have much interest in us himself, yet his family may be different. Possibly we may have some compensation for all we lose. I am trying to be hopeful, you see."

"Which is all very well in itself, doubtless, but in this case quite groundless; for he has no family except an invalid wife, an only son, and a throng of domestics. We can build no hope upon the Ellissons, Amy."

A few months sufficed to confirm the pastor's fears. His flock was scattered, the pretty white cottages that had dotted the broad acres of the "Wilson property" had been removed or pulled down, the boundaries of the different farms had disappeared, and a stately mansion, already known as "Prairie House," from amid its tasteful and elegant surroundings overlooked the beautiful domain that had once afforded homes for so many happy families.

“Can I assist you, Miss Leeds?”

Amy looked up from the useless baby-carriage in which she had been wheeling her little brother, and saw Hugh Ellisson standing near her. She was half a mile from home, and already the patter of rain-drops had commenced, when suddenly the frail axle of the little carriage snapped as she was hurrying with her precious charge to escape the shower, and the tiny vehicle became useless.

Seeing that it must, for the time being, be abandoned, she drew it to the roadside, took the cushions under one arm, and, clasping little Gordon closely with the other, was turning away when the young man addressed her.

Without waiting for her answer, he stretched his hands for the child, who, attracted by the handsome, smiling face, extended his little arms, and the next minute was clinging to the young man's neck.

“Here, take my arm, Miss Leeds; my umbrella is sufficient for us all,” and gladly accepting the proffered aid, Amy suffered herself to be hurried rapidly towards home.

As young Ellisson opened the parsonage door, and placed the child safely within, the shower burst with sudden violence upon them.

“Come in, Mr. Ellisson, till the shower is over,” said Amy, tossing her hat upon a table; and without waiting for a second bidding, he entered.

“A sudden shower, Mr. Ellisson!” said the pastor, emerging from his study, and shaking hands kindly with the young man, “Thanks for your timely escort of these young stragglers of mine! But where is the child's carriage, Amy?”

“It was unreasonable enough to break down, father, just as the shower began,” replied Amy, laughing at the recollection of her recent discomfiture: “and but for Mr. Ellisson's kindness, baby and I would have been well drenched!” Then, leaving her father to entertain their guest, she hastened out to prepare tea.

In a few minutes it was ready, and as the rain still

continued the young man accepted the urgent invitation of the pastor and his daughter to sit down with them.

Amy Leeds looked very sweet that evening as, with flushed cheeks and bashful eyes she presided at the table, dividing her time between the tea urn and her baby brother, and listening with pleased interest to the conversation of her father and their guest who, to her inexperienced mind, seemed far more than all she had ever before dreamt of manly grace and beauty.

Nor was young Ellisson unmindful of his pretty hostess, as the interest with which he listened to her few utterances and watched her tender, motherly ways with the child, abundantly testified.

Before the meal was over the rain had ceased, the setting sun shone forth with unwonted brilliancy, and as Amy bade her guest good-night, and saw him go away in the evening sunshine, it seemed to her, though why she could not tell, that the glory of her young life had gone with him, and that the world he left behind him had grown suddenly and strangely altered.

From that hour the young girl's life was never more the same as it had been. The acquaintance so casually begun did not end with that evening's interview; and in a few months the rich man's son had become an almost daily guest at the pastor's house.

The grave, thoughtful father would gladly have had it otherwise; for much as he admired the handsome, attractive youth, he saw much deeper beneath the surface than the dazzled eyes of his daughter could see; and he felt sure that young Ellisson was not the man to give lasting happiness to his child.

More than once he had been shocked by his flippant way of speaking of sacred things, and startled to detect upon his breath the smell of wine. At first he cautioned his daughter, then remonstrated, and finally entreated her to break off the dangerous intimacy, but in vain. Docile and compliant in most things, in this alone she steadily resisted his appeals, and quietly but

firmly met all his objections to such a marriage with the common, but sophistical arguments which the young Christian, bent upon marrying one who is not such, so readily learns.

Yes, she knew Hugh was not a Christian; but he respected religion, and had told her he esteemed her all the more highly for her piety. He was moral and upright, and she believed he would easily be induced to become a Christian.

As for wine, his father always used it on his table; and it would be strange indeed if the son should never touch it after having been brought up to see its use as little thought of as tea or coffee. But he would never become a victim of the habit of drink—it was quite impossible; for he had told her he did not care for it, and should not miss it, were he never to see it again.

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### CHAPTER III.

“My child,” replied Mr. Leeds, “you know very little indeed of the insidious nature of the habit of which you are speaking. Mr. Ellisson may as fully believe himself secure as you do, and as honestly intend to avoid the fatal habit of drunkenness as he appears to, and yet, right resolves and honest professions are no safeguard against the danger we are considering.

“Habits are formed little by little. No man ever became a drunkard at once; but by continued indulgence in drink many a man, who all along believed himself safe, and free to choose or refuse, has awakened at length to the humiliating consciousness that he was a slave—bound hand and foot by the demon with which he had been tampering.

“So long as a man continues to use wine he is feeding an appetite that is liable to become insatiable in its demands; he is in the broad road that leads to utter ruin; and no woman can safely trust her honor and happiness in his hands.”

"Many women have married moderate drinkers, father, and lived happy and respectable lives. After all, it is not the *use* of spirituous liquors that makes drunkards—it is their abuse."

"And what is it, Amy, but their *use*, that leads to their abuse? No man would abuse them—that is, according to your reasoning, become a drunkard—who had not first, in some way learned their use; and so long as we know by the painful examples constantly coming before us, that the vast majority of what we commonly call moderate drinkers ultimately become drunkards, is it Christian, is it wise, or prudent even, to place the honor and happiness of a life-time in such awful peril? Think of yourself, Amy, as a drunkard's wife!"

"I never expect, sir, to be a drunkard's wife, hence there is no call for me to paint such a disgusting picture!"

"But you expect to be Hugh Ellisson's wife?"

"Yes, father!"

"And he drinks, does he not?"

"As he has from his infancy—at his father's table."

"And with his father's guests?"

"Perhaps so."

"Do you not know he does, Amy?"

"He has told me that it is expected of him, and that he sometimes complies."

"Ah, that *sometimes*, my daughter!—it speaks of a dreadful possibility! He drinks at his father's table—drinks with his father's guests—and, I think, drinks with his young companions. I saw him only yesterday enter a saloon in Weston followed by two companions with whom he had been hunting."

"But you did not see him drink, father; and you have no right to jump at a conclusion in that way upon a bare suspicion!" exclaimed Amy hotly, and the bright young face grew scarlet with shame and indignation.

"No, my dear, I did not *see* him drink, himself, or treat his friends; but I'll tell you what I did see. As



I was passing the window of the saloon a few minutes after they entered, I saw the three young men seated at a table with bottles and glasses before them; and Ellisson was pouring liquor into one of the glasses. What was I to suppose?"

"Suppose nothing—nothing at all—until you see and know! Could he not be there?—could he not—painful as the thought is—be even giving it to others, and yet, not be drinking, himself? I hate suspicion!—it is unjust—it is cruel! You had no right to follow Hugh, and watch him, and fill your mind with suspicions concerning what you have no proof of!" and with angry impetuosity the young girl sprang to her feet, and would have left the room, but her father with an authoritative gesture motioned her sit down again, and she obeyed.

Some minutes of painful silence ensued, during which Mr. Leeds sat with his face shaded by his right hand and with his left pressed hard against his side, while his breathing was short and painfully laboured.

Amy did not notice him, but sat in silence opposite him, her elbows resting upon the table and her burning face covered with her hands, while hot tears trickled through the small fingers, and dropped unheeded upon the table.

Her father was the first to speak.

"Do not suppose, my child, that I have said these things to give you pain; and do not think so meanly of your father—whom, till to-night you have always treated with deference and affection—as to suppose him capable of acting the spy upon Hugh Ellisson or any other man.

"What I have seen, I could not well avoid seeing; you must draw your own inferences from the facts I have stated. I have already drawn mine, and I see no reason as yet for changing them. O my child!—I am haunted by the torturing dread that this poor youth is moving on, slowly, it may be, but none the less surely to the drunkard's doom—ruin in time, ruin in eternity.

"You are angry with me for my solicitude and for my plain speaking; but, my darling, were I less so, I should not deserve to be the father of such a daughter as you have been to me. O Amy! the time must never, never come when you can look back from the dreary desolation of a drunkard's home, and from the degradation that inevitably falls upon a drunkard's wife, and say, 'My father never warned me of this!' God grant that long before that dreadful day comes, I may be at rest beside your dear mother. I feel I shall not be very long with you. I foresee a day not very far distant when you will have to stand in the relation of sole parent to your only brother; and it is for him as well as for you that I fear. Do not interrupt me—I must say a word now that I do not expect ever to repeat, and it is this: Should I die, and in after years should you marry Hugh Ellisson, I warn—nay, I command you, never take my son to reside under his roof unless you know certainly, not only that spirituous liquors have been banished from his house, but that he himself has abandoned their use. I can trust my child to the orphan's God, with the wide world before him, but never to the guardianship of one who tampers with the demon of strong drink. I know you love your brother dearly, and, to the utmost of your ability, will act the part of a mother to him; but oh, Amy, as you love your mother's memory, as you value your father's blessing, keep my boy out of the path of this terrible temptation!"

When Mr. Leeds ceased speaking, his daughter came quickly to his side, and kneeling, hid her face in his bosom.

"Father—dear, dear father!" she sobbed at length, "do forgive my wicked, angry words, and forget them if you can. You will not leave me—I know you will not—and I will always be a good, obedient child. Say you forgive me!"

In a few gentle words her father reassured her, and, taking the burning cheeks between his hands, lifted the sweet young face to his own, and, kissing

her tenderly, dismissed her for the night; then, after a brief season of solitary prayer, he retired to his own room.

One month from that night, Amy was an orphan. Disease of the heart, which had long threatened her father's life, finished its work suddenly; and Amy and her little brother were left alone in the still, old house.

A few weeks after the funeral, with many protestations of unchanging faithfulness, Hugh Ellisson took leave of her, and returned to West Point, where two more years of study, to be followed by several years of military service, must elapse before they could expect to realize the fulfilment of their hopes.

With a resolute spirit Amy refused the pecuniary aid he pressed her to accept; and as soon as possible after his departure she rented the farm, and apprenticed herself to a dressmaker in the neighboring town. A kind neighbor consented to take care of Gordon during the day, and at evening Amy returned to the cottage, and till a late hour devoted herself to solitary study, or to necessary work.

Thus the weary months of her apprenticeship wore away, cheered only by Hugh's letters, and the cherished hopes that gilded her future with such wondrous brightness.

She wrote him always from her own home—from the quiet study where they two had spent so many hours after her father's death, never telling him of her days and nights of toil, but leaving him to suppose she was patiently wearing away the time till they should meet again in the care of her brother and the management of the house.

Those years—so she resolved—should be devoted to the accumulation of a fund for her brother's education when the day of their separation arrived. Gordon must be educated; and that, too, without any aid from the rich man who was to be his brother-in-law; he must owe everything to her, and her alone.

Thus day after day Amy toiled for the child, and devoted night after night to the culture of her mind, in order that so she might be fitted for the position that awaited her, and the society in which she expected to mingle. She knew that Hugh was keeping his engagement from the knowledge of his parents; so, cherishing her love as a sacred, secret treasure, she came and went unheeded by them, patiently waiting for the time when she should be made known to them, not as the village dressmaker, but as the bride of their only son.

And Amy meant, when that time came, to be able to meet those parents on equal terms in everything save wealth. She knew, without any special vanity to prompt the thought, that she had beauty; and she resolved that in culture, breeding, and what knowledge of the world could be gained by means of books and observation, she would not fall below the ordinary standards of good society.

Animated by this resolve, she studied, and observed, and copied all whom she considered suitable models, until those who had known her in her girlhood could hardly recognize in the fashionably dressed young woman who made their garments in such exquisite taste, and whose unexceptionable breeding won their admiration, the quiet, unobtrusive little maid of the parsonage.

And thus it came to pass that, while devoting herself so assiduously on the one hand to accumulating means for the education of her brother, and on the other to fitting herself to shine in the sphere to which she looked forward, Amy Leeds, the minister's daughter, whose Christian loyalty had been undoubted in other days, gradually forgot, or overlooked, the great life-purpose to which she once stood pledged before God, namely, His glory and His service; and herself, her brother, the man she loved, and the gay world towards which her dazzled eyes were turned, became insensibly the idols at whose shrine she offered her best days and her most earnest thoughts.

It is an easy matter for the young Christian to *wander*, but to *return* is a very different thing! It is not hard to diverge from the narrow pathway of religious duty; to let slip, one by one, the restraints which, in the beginning of his new life, seemed perfectly easy and consistent; but oh, the long, weary wandering, the hunger and the thirst, the cruel foe, the bitter rewards of sin,—these are the things that are hard!

The truant lamb that overleaps the boundaries of the safe enclosure may think the tender herbage of the valley beyond very harmless, very sweet; but before it is aware the fold is far away, the green valley is exchanged for the thorny waste, the gloom of unexpected night comes on, and the howl of the hungry wolf is heard instead of the gentle voice of the tender shepherd!

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#### CHAPTER IV.

HUGH ELLISSON'S studies were at length finished. He had won some distinction in scholarship, and was expected home in a few weeks, when unexpected trouble with the Indians of the South-west made it imperative that he should repair at once to the frontier, and thus several years more of weary waiting were likely to elapse before he and Amy could reasonably expect to meet.

His letters for some time had been neither frequent nor satisfactory; and now they only reached her at rare intervals, and at length they ceased altogether. But the true, brave heart that had trusted him so long still trusted on, framing one excuse after another to account for his long silence, and bearing uncomplainingly the slow torture of suspense and deferred hope.

At length it was rumored on all sides that he was coming home; and Amy's heart was in a flutter of expectation. Yes, she should see him again, and all would be explained—cleared up. Of course he had

never ceased to love her; but circumstances beyond his control had undoubtedly prevented him from writing to her; possibly, probably indeed, he had written, and his letters failed to reach her. How proud and glad he would be to find that during all the suspense and uncertainty of those years her faith in him had never failed. How surprised, too, he would be to find her so changed; to find, instead of the shy, bashful girl he left, an intelligent, self-reliant, beautiful woman of whom he would be proud! How eagerly he would urge on the preparations for a speedy marriage; and how proud she would be of her soldier-husband! Already she had hinted to her young brother, that possibly it might not be long before she should place him in a boarding-school; and had soothed his childish grief at the thought of being parted from her, by vague hints of a beautiful home, to which she should bring him to spend his holidays, and of the choice books and pictures with which she should entertain him.

It was late in autumn when Hugh reached home. His military services had been rewarded by various preferments, and the arrival of Major Ellisson was heralded in Weston and its vicinity as a marked event. The newspapers were full of him; his appearance, his movements, his prospects, and his warlike achievements were the theme of all tongues; and all Weston was in an agony of curiosity to behold him.

Amy Leeds remained close at home, hourly expecting to see him; but day after day dragged on, and still he did not come. At length, after a week of agonized suspense on her part, he came—as he said, “for old friendship’s sake—to pay her a bit of a call before he went away again.”

Hiding her mortification and her pain, Amy welcomed him with undisguised gladness; and she was rewarded with half-an-hour’s commonplace chat; a few stately compliments upon her improved appearance and manners; a patronizing present of a handful of silver to her brother, which she haughtily required

the child to return; and then, hastily remembering that he was to leave by an early train—having been unexpectedly summoned to return to his regiment—he bade her a light good-bye, and went his way as any ordinary acquaintance might; and Amy was left standing in the doorway of her childhood's home, with all the rose-coloring of hope suddenly dashed out of her life, and the gray, sober world of unadorned reality spread drearily before her.

In a few days Miss Leeds was again at her accustomed work—a little paler, a little more subdued than before, and with a reserve of manner that might be called haughtiness; but these were the only outward signs of the inward conflict through which she had passed.

She believed she had given up Hugh Ellisson—believed she had dashed her idol forever from its shrine—that she was prepared now to take up the burdens of a hopeless life, and bear them unaided and alone. She had not gone back to the simple faith of her girlhood for support and solace, had not laid the load of her deep heart-sorrow upon Christ, and taken His strength to support her weary, trembling footsteps. All this she might have done; and thus the whole current of her life have been changed.

But instead of this—turning from the wreck of her blighted hopes and crushed affections, she summoned resentment and pride to her aid; and resolved in the strength of these “to conquer fate,” as she bitterly termed the controlling power against which she was struggling.

Yes, she would be superior to this. She would live to show Major Ellisson that she was not so weak as to die for him. She would rise above disappointment, and trample under foot by the might of a resistless will the sorrow that had darkened her life. She would yet, by the force of an unyielding resolve, so rule her spirit, as in the end to be able to say, “*I have conquered; my will has given me the victory!*”

Miss Leeds was making no unusual mistake. When trial comes upon men through the agency of others, the too common way, even with Christians, is to meet it resentfully; and instead of referring it to the providence of God, who often permits it to come for wise and merciful ends—instead of seeking His strength, not only to bear, but to bring good out of it, they meet it in the spirit of defiance—defiance of those who have caused the trouble, and even of the trouble itself. This is, perhaps, the principal reason why sorrows and losses do people so little good. They will not see in them the loving hand of a kind Father, whose sole aim is to lead them from their idols to Himself; and thus it is that the rod has to fall again and again. Because God is pitiful and forbearing, He is constantly inviting, urging us even, to accept His strength in our weakness and need, to lean upon His arm, to trust His wisdom, to submit to His dealings. But if we persist in having our own way, in leaning unto our own understanding rather than His, He often gives us to eat abundantly of the bitter fruit of our self-confidence—to reap even as we sow.

Amy had not given up the object of her devotion, as for a long time she flattered herself she had. Gradually her thoughts went back to him. In spite of her pride, in spite of the stern self-rule she maintained before others, she still in secret clung to him.

He had never *formally* renounced his engagement; and from this as a starting point, she came in time to flatter herself that he still meant sometime to fulfil it; that his neglect of her must in some way be referable to his parents, to whom, probably, he had submitted the matter, and from them, doubtless, received settled opposition. The time would surely come when he would explain all; and sometime, when free to follow the promptings of his own heart, he would return to her.

For weary months she persisted in trembling hope in looking for letters from him; and when conscience uttered its not unfrequent protest, she silenced the unwelcome voice and still hoped on.



Thus the slow months dragged wearily away, when suddenly Weston was thrown into a ferment of excitement by the advent of a rich young lady from an Eastern city, and, a few weeks later, still more so by the unexpected arrival of Major—now Colonel—Ellisson.

But the proud, rich man never sought the abode of poor Amy Leeds. Several times she saw him as he dashed past her in his handsome carriage; but he never seemed to recognize her; and yet, notwithstanding all that, the evening twilight found her always listening in trembling hope for his coming step.

The sudden death of both his parents, which occurred soon after his return, gave her increased hope; but the rich pageantry of the costly funerals passed away, and still he came not. Hope was fast dying out of her tortured heart when the ringing of the marriage bells on that calm October morning sounded the death-knell of the last one, and sent her helpless and conscience-stricken to the feet of Him whose help she had so long forgotten to seek.

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Little was talked of, little thought of, in the bustling town of Weston for many days, but the marriage of Colonel Ellisson and Eva Chapman.

The village newspapers entered freely into the most trifling details of the wedding; the dresses of the bride and her attendants were described with critical exactness; and even the culinary mysteries of the wedding breakfast heralded with nauseating minuteness to all the readers of the weekly journals.

The newly married pair—their appearance, their plans, their prospects, and all their movements immediate and prospective, were turned over and over upon the tireless tongue of gossip who never seemed to be satiated with the delicious morsels; and long before her ardor had cooled, the objects of her protracted interest and concern had landed on the shores of the Old World, and were speeding on from city to city, intend-

ing, when tired of travel, to rest for a few months in Florence, and then return to their beautiful home in the West.

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## CHAPTER V.

MISS LEEDS was missed for months from the few select families whom she had been accustomed to serve.

Applicants invariably met the same reply—she would make no engagements during the winter—she was not quite strong, and felt the need of rest.

But when the spring came again, she returned quietly to her employment, a little slier, a little paler than formerly, but otherwise, outwardly, unchanged. Her great sorrow had passed over her, leaving ineffaceable traces upon her character, but producing less valuable spiritual results than might have been expected.

For a few weeks, indeed, she had turned eagerly to the source of true consolation for rest and peace, and had found all she sought. But when she began truly to realize how much she had lost during those years of worldly ambition and self-seeking, how responsibilities had accumulated while spirituality had declined; when she came to think of going back to the point in her religious life from which she had diverged so far, of lifting again the cross of obedience and self-sacrifice, of subjecting all her aims, affections and desires to the standard set up for her in God's Word, the task seemed altogether too great, her aspirations toward God and holiness too weak, her long-cherished craving for wealth, position, and worldly consequence too strong to be overcome. While she sometimes prayed in secret for strength to rise, she failed to put forth the effort requisite to ensure self-conquest, and carry on the persistent fight of faith, by which alone any Christian can attain to the conscious possession of the strength that may be his in Christ.

Another trouble, too, confronted her, of which, during those years of devotion to self and selfish aims, she had seldom given herself the trouble to think. The moral and religious training of her brother had been almost entirely neglected. For his worldly interests she had been unduly anxious. His manners and deportment she had most scrupulously guarded; but his spiritual nature had been like a neglected garden, and now she found it full of dispositions, tempers, and opinions that had grown too strong and deep-rooted for her hand either to remove or restrain.

Had she been careful to retain the influence over him which she possessed when he was three or four years old; had she, in patient, prayerful teaching, and in humble, devout example been to him what her own mother had been to her, how different might have been the result! But those precious years of impressible childhood, when, like a tender twig, the boyish nature might have been bent almost as she willed, were gone; the sapling had struck strong, deep roots; the once flexible trunk had grown stiff and unyielding, and too late, she woke to the bitter consciousness that her arm was too weak now to deal with the rank growths of evil that had sprung up in the sweet young life committed to her charge; and that only God could avert the consequences of her long, perhaps fatal, neglect.

Happy would it be if the experience of Amy Leeds were confined to herself. But, alas! there are thousands of mothers who every year waken from spiritual sloth to the same dreadful discovery!

Their little boys—the bright, imperishable jewels that God placed in their bosoms to keep bright and pure for Him, have imperceptibly grown away from them; while they have slept, the enemy has done his fatal work upon their sons; and when at length they waken, it is only to shed vain tears, and pour vain prayers over the blighted youth and ruined manhood, before whose first years God set such glorious possibilities.

The seed-time of childhood will not be lost. If mothers, if parents, do not improve it, there are dark, unseen foes that will. There are cruel tempters without and within that gloat with eager eyes over the young life. The seeds of ruin are dropping thick and fast around it and over it; and the harvest, if not of life, will be of death!

For a while after Colonel Ellisson's marriage, Amy felt that duty as well as self-respect demanded that she should leave the neighborhood, and go away to some distant town, and there endeavor, both for her own and her brother's sake, to begin life anew.

It would be much easier, so her judgment told her, in some other locality to forget the past, to bury her sorrow, and enter upon a life of dignified, womanly independence, than there, where she would often have to see a face it was now her duty and interest to forget at once and forever.

Besides, it would be much better for Gordon to start afresh, under new influences and among different associates, than remain longer among companions with whom he had already grown too intimate, and whose influence over him was daily becoming more and more objectionable.

But while reason, judgment, and conscience all said go, her heart still pleaded, ostensibly, for the old home, but really—as she would have seen, had her self-blindness been less—for the neighborhood of Colonel Ellisson, for the possibility of an occasional glimpse of his face, for the vague, undefined hope of sometimes hearing his voice.

She knew well there was madness in all this—nay, guilt; for was he not as truly lost to her as though death had set its icy barriers between them?

Sometimes she would struggle fiercely with her conscience; but she had too long tampered with that faithful monitor, too often silenced it with sophistries, or bribed it with well-meant promises never fulfilled, because made in vain confidence in her own strength, and destined to fail in the moment of temptation or

irresolution. So, at length, the farm, which could not be sold until Gordon was of age, was leased again for a term of years, the cottage was repaired, the flower-garden brightened up by the addition of a few choice plants and shrubs, a woman, recently widowed, and whose great want was a quiet home, was hired for a small consideration to take charge of the house; and thus the early summer found Gordon still at school in Weston, and Amy again pursuing her accustomed work, and relapsing into a dreamy sort of submission to what was inevitable.

There is, however, a kind of submission which is not acquiescence. Amy yielded to what she could not change; but deep in her heart lurked sentiments and feelings which she seldom now attempted to analyze; and which, had it been possible, would have reversed the whole history of those years.

Her submission was only the quiet waiting of the unconquered will that would, were the opportunity given, grasp its object in defiance of chastisement or rebuke, and cling to it with unyielding determination.

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Gordon was not what is commonly considered a "bad boy;" but he was fast developing those traits of character which ultimately determine a boy's right to be placed in that list.

Naturally warm-hearted and affectionate, and easily influenced by those he loved, he possessed, withal, a strong will; and from being generally more successful in school than the majority of boys in his classes, he had grown not a little conceited and self-important, and inclined to look upon himself as a better judge of what was proper for him to do than almost any one else was supposed to be.

Partly through having never known parental restraint, and partly from being so much separated from his sister, he had acquired notions of independence and the right to choose his own course, not easy always for his sister either to control or direct. While he loved her very dearly, he was still growing more and

more impatient of her authority, and was beginning to show unmistakably that he did not consider it quite a manly thing to obey a woman, or even to accept her advice unless it chanced to harmonize with his own wishes and plans.

When his sister went with him to church, he usually accompanied her cheerfully; but when she urged him, as she occasionally did, to attend Sunday-school, he very decidedly refused to go.

"I am not going there, Amy!" he said, one day, after she had been vainly striving to shake his resolution, "to say Bible verses among those little fellows!—I am getting rather too big!"—and Gordon looked down upon himself with the complacency of the boy who begins to feel himself far up toward the coveted dignity of manhood.

"If you had wanted me to go to Sunday-school and to like it, you should have got me used to it by taking me there when I was little, and letting me grow up into it like the fellows in Mr. Harvey's class. You couldn't get one of them to stay away from Sunday-school, if you'd hire him. Of course they like it—they've never known anything else!"

"But, Gordon, if you will only go, I will get you into Mr. Harvey's class, where the boys are all as big as you or bigger!"

"The very thing I don't intend to do, though! Wouldn't I make a fine show of myself? Why those fellows know the Bible from end to end, while I hardly know the difference between the Bible and the Almanac; and, for that matter, don't want to!"—and Master Gordon Leeds walked to the window with the air and manner of one who feels that he has quite outgrown the Bible and the necessity for Bible knowledge.

"O, Gordon, Gordon!" cried his sister, tears springing to her eyes, "what would our dear parents say if they could hear you speak in such an irreverent manner!"

"Well, they don't hear it, as it happens!" and

Gordon commenced whistling in the most placid unconcern.

"Gordon, dear! I cannot hear you talk in this way!" cried Amy coming to his side, and laying her hand upon his shoulder. "If you do not care for my feelings, you must, at least, treat the memory of your parents with respect. O, Gordon, if you ever become as good a man as dear papa, I shall have nothing higher to wish for you. It is, in part, I know, my fault that you know so little of the Bible; and I want you now to make amends by beginning at once to read and study it for yourself."

"I make amends for *your* fault, Amy! Well, that's cool! I guess you'll have to make amends for your own fault!—that's what we boys are expected to do at school!"—and, shaking his sister's hand from his shoulder, Gordon went on with his whistling, quite unconscious of the arrow with which he was piercing her heart.

A long pause in the conversation ensued, during which Amy walked to the mantel-piece, and leaning her arm upon it was weeping silently, less on account of her brother's words than the bitter self-upbraiding of her own heart.

"I'll tell you what it is, Amy," said Gordon at length, walking over to his sister's side, "I don't like either to go to church or to Sunday-school. Mr. Harvey just talks me stupid. I can't understand; and the first thing I know I am either nodding off to sleep, or else doing something that you punch me for; and as for Sunday-school, as I said before, I shan't—but, Amy, you are crying! What's the matter? Am I really so awfully bad? Oh, quit now! I'd rather you'd scold me fifty times over!" and seizing his pocket-handkerchief, he began vigorously brushing away his sister's tears. "There, now, if you won't cry, I'll make all the fires, and chop all the wood, and bring all the water, and by-and-by I shall be such a famous lawyer, or judge, or preacher, that you will be as proud as a duchess of your big, smart brother!"

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Amy laughed, as she always did, at Gordon's "funny speeches," as she called them, and Gordon, who was very proud of his ability to make his sister laugh, went away full of that secret consciousness of power over her, which had of late become usual with him whenever their wills came in conflict.

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## CHAPTER VI.

EARLY in autumn, Weston was thrown into another fever of excitement and curiosity by the return of Colonel Ellisson and his bride from their year's sojourn in the Old World; and all the particulars relating to them and their movements, that could be gathered up, were again spread before the eager public.

But notwithstanding all the newspaper patronage, and the fawning sycophancy of the few whose wealth or position placed them upon a footing of social equality with the Ellissons, they were little seen in Weston; and the winter passed with none of the brilliant parties at Prairie House that had been looked for, and with very few glimpses of either Colonel Ellisson or his young wife, except when he visited Weston on business, or dropped into the "Metropolitan" for lunch with a friend.

Miss Leeds had only seen his face twice as he passed her in his carriage, with no sign of recognition; and the long winter brought her many a heart-ache, not unmixed with envy, as reports reached her almost daily of Mrs. Ellisson's beauty and grace.

One bright evening, in the beginning of summer, as Amy was resting herself in her little parlor after a day of more than ordinary fatigue, she was startled by unusual sounds in the street, and before she could reach the window Gordon burst into the room.

"O Amy, Amy," he cried, "do come here! somebody's horses have ran away, and upset the carriage almost at our gate; and I guess there's a lady killed!"



Amy hastened to the scene of the disaster to find Mrs. Green, the housekeeper, already on the spot, vainly endeavoring to restore animation to the insensible lady who was lying by the roadside, while the terrified horses, with the remains of the broken vehicle flying at their heels, were already scarcely discernible in the distance.

Amy untied the lady's hat and loosened her garments, and was chafing her hands while Mrs. Green ran to the house for restoratives, when a quick step startled her, and looking up she saw Colonel Ellisson.

"Eva, Eva!" he cried, without noticing the white face of anguish that was lifted towards him, "Eva, my wife, speak to me!" but no voice replied, and with an exclamation of horror he looked round for aid.

"Amy, Miss Leeds, is this you?—pardon my rudeness!—is there no one who can go for a doctor—here, my boy, cannot you go?"

"Run, Gordon, dear!—but whom shall he bring, Colonel Ellisson?"

"Bring Doctor Eberley, my boy—bring him quickly, and you shall not lose your reward,"—and Gordon, seeming to fly rather than run, so great was his excitement and terror, was soon far on the way to Weston.

"Bring her into the house, Colonel Ellisson," said Amy, gathering up the scattered robes and cushions; and, lifting the prostrate form as though she had been a child, Colonel Ellisson followed.

Amy led the way to the "spare room," turned back the snowy cover of the bed, threw up the windows to admit the fresh evening air, and then her head grew giddy, her sight darkened, and she sank senseless at the feet of the man who for years had trampled upon her heart-strings, and whose sudden appearance under her own roof, together with the terrible excitement of the occasion, had proved too much for her strength.

Colonel Ellisson stooped to raise her, but Mrs. Green waived him back.

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woman; and lifting the slight form in her strong arms, she carried her to her room, and laid her on a couch. With little more ado than one would make undressing a sleeping baby, Mrs. Green disrobed her charge, and placing her in bed poured a few drops of something from a bottle, and as soon as Amy began to revive she placed a cup to her lips, exclaiming:

"Here, dearie, you drink this, and then go right to sleep; you're just tired out!"

Amy swallowed the draught quickly, and turning her white face wearily upon the pillow, was soon in a deep sleep.

Mrs. Green watched her closely for a few minutes, then brushing back the hair from her forehead, and smoothing and tucking up the quilts, she said softly to herself, as she paused to take another look:

"Poor little dearie! she's sound enough asleep now; and I do hope they won't turn the house upside down, and raise bedlam all night; for if they get her waked up, as like as not she won't sleep another wink; and if she don't, she'll be down sick to-morrow!" and, with an increased sense of responsibility, Mrs. Green hurried away to look after "the spoons and things."

"It's always best to keep on the safe side; there's no knowin' what folks might do!" she said softly, and with a satisfied air as she locked the last cupboard, and secured the kitchen against all intruders; and then hastened to see if there was anything she could do for Mrs. Ellisson.

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"What time is it, Phoebe?"

Amy had been awakened by the gentle opening of the door as Mrs. Green peeped in to see that she was all right, and starting up in bed with a confused sense of something unusual having taken place, she repeated the question in a louder tone.

"Now you lie right down again, and git a nice long rest," replied Mrs. Green, drawing the window-curtains close to keep out the early sunshine; "there ain't no need of your gitting up for hours yet!" and Amy

sank wearily back upon her pillow, and tried to recall her scattered thoughts.

"Stay, Phœbe," she cried, calling the woman back, "what is it?—why yes—the Ellissons—are they gone?—how came I here in bed?—did Mrs. Ellisson recover?"

"There, now! I knew just how 'twould be when you come to think of it! why in the world didn't you stay asleep an hour or two longer?" and Mrs. Green began vigorously tucking in the quilts again.

"No, no, Phœbe, this will not do, I must rise!" cried Amy, now recalling everything.

"Not just yet, Miss Amy, you ain't wanted. There's been trouble here all night; but she's a very little better now, and the doctor thinks mebbly she'll get round again if she has the best of care."

"O, Mrs. Green! here I've slept all night when I should have been caring for her! How came I here? I've no recollection of coming to my room last night."

"Of course you hain't, dearie!—how *could* you have, when you was in a dead faint? You just went down like a dead crectur right at Colonel Ellisson's feet. He was goin' to pick you up, but I wouldn't let him touch you. Thinks I, 'you've got trouble enough of your own without helpin' me in mine;' so I picked you up as though you had been a feather, and tucked you into bed, and when you come to a little I gave you a drop of perrygorric, to put you off to sleep. I knew there was goin' to be trouble enough in the house before morning, and I meant you shouldn't lose your night's rest for anybody. Now you lie still, and I'll be back in a minute or two—I've got something to show you that will do your eyes good!" and Mrs. Green slipped away with a noiseless step, leaving Amy anxious and wondering.

She had not long to wait, however, for in a few minutes the woman returned bringing in her arms a little white bundle which she laid carefully upon the pillow, and turning down a corner of the covering, displayed the face of a tiny, sleeping baby.

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"Now ain't that lovely, Miss Amy?" cried the woman, laying her fat palms together, and bending with a tender, motherly grace over the little sleeper; ain't it just lovely?—seems to me she's the perfect pictur' of my Caroline the first time I saw her pretty face! However, *she* didn't stay long to comfort me! I've got seven of 'em in heaven, dearie, just as pretty little creeturs as this, tho' they were mine! but laws mercy, child! what's the matter? are you goin' to faint away again?"

"No, no, Phœbe, I'm not going to faint!" and Amy took the baby tenderly in her arms, and gazed long and wistfully into the unconscious little face; then, handing it back to Mrs. Green, she said coldly, while her face grew almost rigid under the torturing pain that was gnawing at her heart:—

"Of course it is Mrs. Ellisson's baby; has she seen it, Phœbe?"

"Oh, dear, no! she's very low; but the doctor thinks she may possibly get round again. The Colonel was goin' to send right off, as soon as it got daylight, for a nurse; but I wouldn't hear a word of it. I've taken care of dozens of the little tots, and know exactly what to do for them; and besides, I don't want anybody in the house to wait on that ain't needed!"

"You are undertaking too great a charge, Phœbe!—however we will see by-and-by what arrangements can be made. Is Colonel Ellisson here yet?"

"Yes, Miss Amy; his wife dozed off awhile ago, and he's getting a bit of a nap on the sofa. So while the baby's asleep I'll run out and see about break'fast."

Amy sat long with folded hands and bowed head, battling with torturing thoughts, and struggling to nerve herself for the ordeal that was awaiting her.

But her conflict was not in the spirit of prayerful waiting upon God that it should have been. Prayer had been too long resorted to by her rather as a duty than as a pleasure, or from any special sense of need, and in seasons of distress rather than in those of per-

plexity and doubt, when, perhaps, almost more than in any other, special guidance and grace are needed.

At length, wearied with the conflict, she rose, dressed herself with scrupulous care, and proceeded to the dining-room, where she found breakfast already waiting; and calling her brother, they took their meal almost in silence.

"Lay the table carefully for Colonel Ellisson, Phœbe," said Amy, rising, "and I will sit with Mrs. Ellisson while he breakfasts. Then we will see what arrangements for the future can be made."

Colonel Ellisson rose as Amy entered the room, and half-extended his hand, but she only bowed, and without speaking walked to the bedside, where she stood for a few seconds looking down upon the white, sleeping face before her; then beckoning him to follow, she led the way into the adjoining room, and closed the door softly behind her.

"Colonel Ellisson," she said when they were alone, "I deeply regret the sad trouble that has come to you so suddenly, and beg that you will rest assured of receiving all the sympathy and aid in my power to give. All that my house affords is at your service until Mrs. Ellisson is able to be removed; and I trust you will make both yourself and her as comfortable as possible while you remain. But before we consider any plans, will you please walk out to breakfast; and without waiting for the thanks he was about to offer, she led the way to the breakfast-room.

"Mrs. Green will serve you," she said pointing to a seat at the table; "I will sit with Mrs. Ellisson in the meantime;" and turning quickly away, Amy hastened to the sick-room.

Mrs. Ellisson looked quickly up, as she entered the room, and her large brown eyes filled with tears as Amy said, softly: "I hope you are comfortable, Mrs. Ellisson?"

"More so than I could expect. I suppose I am speaking to Miss Leeds; Hughey—that is my husband

—has been telling me where I am, and that you fainted last night. Are you better?"

The voice was singularly sweet, and Amy felt her heart suddenly yearn toward the speaker. Obeying the almost irresistible impulse of the moment, she stooped and kissed the white, shapely hand that was resting on the counterpane.

"Yes, Mrs. Ellisson, I am better, and glad to see you so comfortable. Do not talk, however, it may weary you."

"Dear Miss Leeds, you are very kind! My husband told me he was sure you would not be angry with me for all the trouble I have made you. See, they have dressed me all in your nice things; and—and—do you know, dear—" and motioning Amy to stoop lower, she whispered softly, "do you know, they say I have a little baby—a wee, sweet, little girl! Wherever the nurse found clothes for it I don't know; but Hughey says she has it all dressed up so sweetly in a pretty white dress. I do want to see it—please bring it to me for a little minute!"

Amy's heart gave a painful throb as she remembered the little trunk full of pretty, unused linen that had been made by her own mother's hands for little forms that had needed it for only so brief a space.

"Oh, don't refuse me!" pleaded the lady, touching Amy's cheek with the tips of her white fingers, "let me see my own little baby just for a minute, please, do!"

Amy stepped quickly to Mrs. Green's room, lifted the still sleeping babe from its warm, little nest of pillows; and carrying it to its mother, laid it in her arms.

"Oh, my own baby!—my sweet, dear, pretty baby!—let me kiss it!"

Amy lifted the little face to its mother's lips, and she kissed it fondly. The babe, wakened by her caresses, began to cry.

"Now let me take it to its nurse," said Amy, gently removing the child, but she had scarcely reached the hall when Mrs. Green made her appearance.

"You hain't showed her that baby, have you?"

"Yes, I have, Phœbe, and it will do her no harm!"

Mrs. Green was about to enter a vigorous protest, but the sudden appearance of Colonel Ellisson prevented, and she hastened to quiet the babe, while he followed Amy into the parlor.

## CHAPTER VII.

"MISS LEEDS," said Colonel Ellisson, without taking the chair she placed for him, "I trust you will allow me to send for our own servants; and also employ special nurses for Mrs. Ellisson and the child. I cannot think of allowing either yourself or your house-keeper to be burdened."

"If you would permit me to suggest, Colonel Ellisson, I would advise that you secure a competent nurse for Mrs. Ellisson, and leave the child to Mrs. Green. She is experienced in the care of children, and will do well. I know of a suitable person who will gladly take her place in the house as long as she is needed; and these will be all the help we require. The house, as you are aware, is small, and will only accommodate a limited number.

"In the meantime you will please consider yourself free to come and go, or to stay constantly as you think best."

"Then, Miss Leeds, with your permission, I shall take upon myself the responsibility of providing for the house."

"Please act your pleasure in that matter," said Amy, a little stiffly, "in everything pertaining to yourself and Mrs. Ellison; at the same time, whatever my house affords is at your disposal, and you can command my own service at any moment."

Colonel Ellisson bit his lip. He was not prepared for this touch of hauteur in Amy. He had known her only as the gentle, compliant little maid of the parsonage, as artless and unsophisticated almost as a

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child; he suddenly woke to the consciousness that he was dealing with a proud, self-reliant woman who, though poor, was not to be patronized, nor yet outdone in those stately courtesies that bespeak good breeding. But Colonel Ellisson was in no position to reply. It only remained for him to respect her independence, and accept her kindness, with the best possible grace.

In a few hours everything was satisfactorily arranged. A competent nurse for Mrs. Ellisson was secured, the little parlor adjoining her room was turned into a general reception room for Colonel Ellisson, his friends, and the physician; and Mrs. Green, with the baby as her special charge, willingly resigned the kitchen to the new housekeeper.

When all was settled, Amy withdrew to her own room; and taking up a piece of unfinished work, was endeavoring to compose her thoughts and quiet the painful throbbing of her heart, when Mrs. Green suddenly appeared at the door.

"If you please, Miss Amy, can't you come in and try and quiet her down a little?"

"Mrs. Ellisson, do you mean, Phoebe?"

"Yes, Miss Amy, she's feverish, and, I guess, a little flighty like. She keeps asking for you, and I thought if you'd come, mebbe she get kinder quiet."

"Yes, I'll be there soon;" and Amy hastened to make her afternoon toilet which, in her weariness and despondency, she had neglected until an unusual hour.

"There," she said, mentally, when it was finished, surveying herself from head to foot, to be certain that none of the details had been omitted, "I think that will do. But what should I care, after all? Time was when I did all this for *his* sake. The belief that *he* might be pleased was sufficient motive for any effort—now I have no one to please but myself. She walked to the door, hesitated, turned back, and, opening a little box, selected a small red rose that had been purchased years before in deference to what she then knew was his taste, but which she had never worn, and, fastening



it among the rich braids of chestnut hair, loosely arranged round an elegant comb, purchased, also, expressly for his eye, with another gratified look at her own image, reflected in the mirror, she hurried away to the sick-room.

Self-deceived as ever, Amy did not allow herself to suppose for a moment that the desire even then to be pleasing in Colonel Ellisson's sight, had had anything to do with all this careful attention to the details of dress; but deep in her heart lurked still the unacknowledged motive, as the look of disappointment that crossed her face on entering the room, and seeing only the nurse and the physician there, abundantly testified.

"Did Mrs. Ellisson ask for me?" she inquired, turning to the nurse.

"Yes, Miss Leeds," replied the doctor, coming forward from a little table where he had been writing a prescription, "she has been feverish this afternoon, and is fretting for you. She says you will bring her her baby, an indulgence that is not safe for her at present; so, if you please, divert her mind from it if possible. She is in very imminent danger; and excitement of any kind may hasten the crisis which I am striving to avert."

"I shall see that you are obeyed, sir;" and entering the room, Amy softly approached the bed.

"Oh! you have come!" cried Mrs. Ellisson eagerly, her eyes bright and glittering; "how sweet you look!—won't you stay with me always? I keep thinking, somehow, you are my own, own sister; though, indeed, I never had a sister, and my mother died when I was no older than my own little baby. Oh, I have longed so, do you know, for a mother and a sister!—and *you* have no mother or sister either, so Hughey says. Won't you be my sister, and let me be yours, and stay with me always?"

"Yes, dear, I will; but you must try and not talk, it tires you very much."

"Well, kiss me then, and I'll be quiet. Oh, that's a dear!" she sighed, as Amy kissed her poor, parched

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lips, and turning her face upon the pillow, closed her eyes wearily. Amy walked to a window to hide the sudden tears that were raining from her eyes.

She knew not why, but those half delirious words awakened yearnings in her heart, of which, till that hour, she had been scarcely conscious.

"A mother!—a sister!"—thought Amy. "Oh, had not a greater, stronger love come so early, I might have felt that craving too! But all lesser longings and cravings have been swallowed up in that one strong passion of my life—and now, what is left me! O Eva—Eva Ellisson!—how gladly would I change places with you, if so I might realize, even though it were in death, that this cruel heart-hunger was appeased!"

Then, with a strong effort, Amy dried her tears; and seating herself by the bedside of the poor sufferer, watched with her long and patiently.

Sometimes the hot hands would cling to her own with a convulsive pressure; sometimes in her fitful slumbers she was tossing on the ocean; now she was toiling along the rugged Alpine passes; again, resting in Florence, or Naples; and again, gathering grapes among the vineyards of France.

But through all, her "*sister*" was a sharer in all her perils, and all her pleasures; and she would bend upon Amy's face looks of such unutterable affection as would bring tears to her eyes, and send her again and again to the window to weep unobserved.

And so the evening and the night wore on. Colonel Ellisson came and went, and came again; the physician sat till the night was far spent, watching the varying symptoms of the sufferer, and finally stretched himself upon a sofa for a little rest; Mrs. Green retired with the baby; the nurse dozed in her chair; and at length Colonel Ellisson and Amy were left alone by the bedside, listening to the delirious utterances of the sick wife, listening to the almost audible beating of their own hearts, till the long, slow dawn lighted up with ever-deepening splendors the eastern sky, and the

world grew brighter and brighter in the increasing glories of the day.

At length, just as the sun lifted his face above the level bosom of the prairie, Mrs. Ellisson opened her eyes, and in a full, strong voice, asked for her babe.

The doctor was at her side in a moment, and with anxious scrutiny scanned the flushed face and the bright, eager eyes, and carefully noted the hurried beating of the unsteady pulse.

"O, doctor!" she exclaimed, "I am so much better! I seem to be almost well—cannot I see my baby now?"

"I think you had better try and rest a little longer; here, take a few drops of this," but Mrs. Ellisson shook her head.

"No, doctor, please. I know it is intended to make me sleep, but I am quite comfortable and refreshed, and more sleep would do me no good. Miss Leeds, please ask nurse to bring baby to me, and then go and lie down. I am sure I have tired you all out—the doctor and all. But I think I shall be well very soon—indeed, I feel almost like sitting up now!"

The doctor hesitated a moment, then touching Colonel Ellisson's arm, the two left the room together.

"She seems greatly improved now, doctor; do you not think she is really better—out of danger?"

"So far from that, my dear sir, I am obliged to tell you she is in imminent danger; nay, I may as well tell the whole truth; she is dying!"

The strong man staggered to the window with a groan; then, clasping his hands over his eyes, he stood for several minutes like one stunned.

"It's a hard case, Ellisson!" said the doctor, at length, "but it's turning out as I feared from the first. I hoped for awhile yesterday that the danger might be averted, but there is no longer any room for hope. If you have anything to say to her, you must say it at once. Shall I tell her the true state of things?"

"Why, no, doctor; of what earthly use would it be? It would only frighten her!"

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"But you surely don't mean to allow her to go off without letting her know? I don't think it would be right."

"No, doctor, I shall not consent to it. She's all right for this world or any other. If she must die, she shall die in peace."

"Doctor—Colonel Ellisson—come here!—come quickly!"

It was Amy's voice that spoke, and in an instant they were at the bedside.

"I feel a change coming over me," said Mrs. Ellisson, looking from one to the other; "what does it mean? Doctor, can it be that I am—am dying?"

"Yes, Mrs. Ellisson," said the doctor, regardless of her husband's prohibition; "is your mind at rest?"

"At rest, at rest? Why no, doctor, I am not prepared to die! Hugh, Hugh! hold my hands, hold me back; I must not die now!"

"Eva, my wife, be composed. Death is only a change of physical condition; it will be over in a moment, and then you will be past all trouble. There is nothing to fear, Eva; be composed; you are all right."

"No, no; I am not right, Hugh; I feel, I know, I am not. Your philosophy may do to live by, but O, Hughey, it fails now! I have often and often been urged to come to Christ, but I have never done it; and now I am dying, and it is so sudden, so sudden! Oh! cannot some of you pray for me? doctor, will not you?"

But the doctor shook his head—he was not a man of prayer. How could he, who never prayed for himself, pray for another?

"Miss Leeds, dear Miss Leeds, you will pray for me! surely *you* will pray for me! I am unsaved, and I am dying!"

Amy looked helplessly at the doctor, but she did not kneel—how could she, who so seldom prayed alone, pray here and *his* eyes upon her?

"Why!" ejaculated Mrs. Green, who had entered

the room unobserved, "ain't any of you goin' to pray for her? I should think you'd *all* of you be on your knees—let me come to the poor child!" The tone was one of authority, and they all drew back in amazement.

"See here, you poor darlin'!" she cried, stooping over Mrs. Ellisson, tears rolling down her cheeks; "don't you know that Jesus died to save you—died to save all that come and cast themselves upon His mercy? Why, dearie, He died on the cross for you! just for you! and nobody that comes to Him will ever perish, of course, they won't! He won't cast out any that come to Him! He says so His own blessed self, and what He says He means.

"Think of the poor sick woman that only touched the hem of his garment, and she was saved! Think of the thief on the cross. He just said, '*Lord, remember me!*' and he was forgiven—even in his dying moments! Look to Him, dearie; look to Him with all your heart and soul; ask Him to save you, and He will, He must, He says He will, and He will—you needn't be a bit afraid!"

Mrs. Ellisson looked at her eagerly, greedily devouring every word that fell with breathless rapidity from the woman's lips.

"Pray for me, nurse! O pray for me, and I will pray for myself!"

"Yes, dearie, do!—ask Him—ask Him your own self! All that ask receive—He says they *shall* receive!"—and, dropping upon her knees, Mrs. Green, forgetful of everything but the overwhelming urgency of her plea, poured out her soul in a great cry for her who was passing unprepared into the presence of God.

When she rose to her feet, Mrs. Ellisson's eyes were closed, and her lips moved as if in silent prayer. Presently she opened her eyes, and asked for her child. It was brought, and she kissed it tenderly; then looking up pleadingly into the nurse's face, she whispered:

"Love my baby!—won't you love my baby always?"

"Yes, dearie! I'll love your baby as long as ever I live!"

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"Will you teach her to love Jesus?"

"Yes; I will, if God gives me the opportunity!"

"Thanks!—thanks! Hughey, Hughey! you will not neglect, as I have, to prepare to die, will you? Oh, promise me, dear, you will not!"

Colonel Ellisson stood pale and motionless for a moment, then, stooping, he kissed her tenderly, but he did not promise. She did not ask him again—she did not seem to notice that he had failed to do so; for her eyes had taken on the far-away-look of the dying, and in a few seconds the spirit of Eva Ellisson had passed away.

Whether the prayer of the nurse was answered—whether her own whispered petition was the prayer of faith or the cry of fear, none can say—none shall ever say till the judgment day reveals it—but whatever we may think of the possibility of being saved in the last moment of a wasted life, the awful risk of neglected opportunities remains the same. "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

SUNRISE found the inmates of Amy Leeds' cottage in consternation and tears. Sunset saw few traces throughout the quiet house of what had just transpired beneath its roof.

That room alone from which Mrs. Ellisson's spirit passed just as his beams were kindling earth into beauty and flushing the skies with glorious light, was dreary, dismantled, dark.

Wrapped in costly burial robes, and laid in a rich, dark casket, with her white hands folded upon her bosom, and her eyes closed to all the light and beauty of earth and skies, she had been borne to her darkened home, and laid in costly state in the richly furnished

drawing-room that had so lately been brightened by her beauty, and gladdened by her voice.

Weston had its sensation, but it was too awful to admit of noisy comment. Men spoke in subdued tones of the terrible event; and women looked with tearful eyes upon their household treasures, as a consciousness of the frail tenure by which everything earthly is held forced itself upon their thoughts, and for the time being would not be put away.

The cottage of Amy Leeds was set in order by other hands than hers. The moment the hearse left her door, bearing the remains of Mrs. Ellisson to her late home, Amy fled to her room, and was seen no more by the two women who, with almost noiseless steps, moved through the lonely dwelling, bringing order out of the confusion that prevailed, until all was done, and, but for the occasional plaint of the motherless babe, the house seemed fully restored to its usual quiet and repose.

But outward appearances often very inadequately represent things as they are. There are pain, and passion, and heart-aching, and disappointment frequently where the outward seeming is fairest and most peaceful; and thus it was that sunset hour in Amy's cottage.

Alone in her own room, she paced the floor in an agony of conflicting emotions which she neither sought to analyze nor to control. Past and present were each a chaos of disjointed fragments, among which thought ran riot and found no resting place; while the future—*her* future—now flashed rainbow glories before her daring, half-maddened gaze, and now blackened beneath the scowl of a fate more dreary than anything she beheld in retrospect.

But at length the night closed down again. The long twilight died out of the western sky, the stars came forth from their peaceful habitations, and with mild unchanging eyes looked down upon the changing, darkening earth. The full moon smiled as sweetly in the placid east as though her beams fell upon no

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death, no blight, no sorrow, and no sin; and Amy, wearied out in both body and mind, went and kissed her brother good-night, looked in for a moment upon the little babe asleep in its nurse's arms; and then, with no prayerful retrospect, and no cry for present grace or future guidance, she laid her head upon her pillow and was soon asleep.

Ah, those prayerless Christians!—they are neither few nor far between. They are found in countless homes, where anxious, fretted mothers easily persuade themselves, amid the toil and moil in which they pass their lives, that they have no time for prayer. They are found in the haunts of business, where men, who would be displeased were their Christianity called in question, find time to banter, and bicker, and calculate, and plan for some good bargain or some trifling advantage in trade, but who find, when the midnight hour is almost reached, and they are jaded, and worn, and dissatisfied with the day's results, that they have no time for family prayer, no heart for bedside prayer, and so drop into prayerless sleep, in a few hours to go forth again to prayerless toil.

Prayerless Christians! How they retard the progress of the cause they profess to love! How they hang as dead weights at the skirts of those who do pray! How they clog the wheels of religious progress! How they lie as stumbling-blocks in the highways of sin, while the infidel, the scorner, and the careless, stumble over them into hell!

How many sons of prayerless Christians are reeling down to death under the drunkard's curse! How many daughters of such parents are dancing the giddy reel of fashionable dissipation along the flowery path that ends in ruin!

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The funeral of Mrs. Ellisson came in due time. It was full of the pomp and parade of wealth—stately, solemn, impressive—and then the busy little world of Weston settled again into its old ways; the social machinery clacked on again noisily and glibly as ever;



and in a few months the idle and excitable were ready for any new sensation.

But in one house, at least, the events just narrated left enduring traces. Amy's cottage was no longer what it had been.

The pretty baby, little Hope, as her father had named her in honor of his own mother, under Mrs. Green's careful nursing, was growing rapidly, and each day winning a larger place in the hearts and affections of all.

From the day of her coming, a new light seemed to have sprung up in the life of Gordon; and he watched her growth and the development of her powers with untiring interest.

It was an entirely new experience to him having a baby in the house to watch, to tend, to carry in his arms; and as she grew old enough to notice him, and give evidence of reciprocal attachment, his delight knew no bounds.

Hope was not long learning to watch for his return from school, and flutter her little hands, and coo in bird-like gladness when, as was his daily custom, he prepared her for the afternoon ride in her little carriage.

Amy, too, felt the influence of the sweet baby. The icy chill, that had for years been settling around her heart, gave way in the sunshine of its smiles; and she often felt something like the old gladness of her vanished years coming over her, as she opened her heart to the little one, and felt the exhilarating effect of her brother's new-found happiness enlivening the wintry dreariness of her own life.

For several months after his wife's death, Colonel Ellisson came nearly every day to inquire after his child; and Amy, who had gradually laid aside her stateliness of manner, met him with a quiet reserve which but illy concealed the unalloyed pleasure his visits afforded her.

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"I am about to leave Weston for a few months, Miss Leeds," he said, one evening, after a longer stay than usual, "and I want a little talk with you in reference to my child.

"I do not like to take her from Mrs. Green, if it can be avoided; for I am certain it will be impossible to find any one that can fill her place. On the other hand, I can hardly ask you to let Mrs. Green go with the child, as I am sure you would feel it very hard to part with so honest and faithful a servant. Yet I know I am burdening you by leaving baby here so long. Will you please advise me in the matter?"

It was well for Amy that the light was so shaded away from her face that its rapid changes of color and expression were not noticed. She felt her breathing quick and painful, but she controlled her voice as she answered:

"I would not like to part with Mrs. Green; but if you prefer taking Hope away, Mrs. Green must go with her; it will never do to separate the child from its nurse."

"Do you then care so much for my baby, Amy? I have not deserved this."

Amy felt her heart throb violently. The old tone, the old address, the deep pathos of his voice! She clenched her hands hard as if to crush the pain; but in a moment her pride came to her aid, and she answered with cool politeness:

"I could not be a woman, and not feel for a motherless babe. If you choose to leave Hope with us, we shall be only too happy to have her remain; if not, I shall send Mrs. Green with her. They must not be parted."

"Thanks, Amy, thanks! I appreciate your kindness, and shall leave my child with a much lighter heart, since you give me permission to let her still remain with you.

"And now I have another favor to ask. Will you write me sometimes to let me know how she is getting along?"

It was well, while lacking that higher, better source of strength to which the tried spirit may always fly, and be safe, but to which Amy now so seldom resorted, that she had summoned her pride to her aid ; and very bravely it stood the shock.

"I cannot, Colonel Ellisson," she answered, firmly. "I should compromise my self-respect by doing so. But I will see that nurse faithfully attends to that duty. You shall receive regular information in regard to the child."

"You are right, Amy—quite right," Colonel Ellisson replied, after a moment's silence. "You have conceded far more than I had any right to expect. I have wronged you too deeply in the past ever to merit your confidence or esteem again ; and, therefore, I appreciate all the more deeply your noble forbearance and sisterly kindness, both to my family and myself. I will write in a few days, letting you know where I may be reached by letter. I shall probably see you again in a few months ; till then, farewell."

Colonel Ellisson bowed, but did not offer his hand ; the next moment the click of the little gate told her he was gone.

A giddy sensation came over her ; her breath came quick and gasping, and leaning back in her chair, the lights danced before her for a moment, then faded, and she heard no more till the clear voice of Mrs. Green brought her back again to recollection and consciousness.

"Why, child alive ! you must be dreadful tired when you can sleep here in your chair for a whole long hour, with all the windows and doors open, as you've done. Dear me ! how cold your hands be—they're just like lumps of ice. If you hain't caught your death o' cold this time, I'll miss my guess. Come right along to bed, this very minute," and hurrying her away, Mrs. Green would not leave her till she had seen her safe in bed ; then, after two or three vigorous tucks at the quilts, she bustled away to look after the baby, and Amy was left alone, with darkness around her and deeper darkness within.

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The light that had sometimes shot lurid gleams down the future of her clouded life seemed suddenly blotted out forever; and heaven seemed so far, far away that she had no heart to look toward it; so she only wept softly and silently until sleep came, and shut her up in sweet oblivion of sorrow.

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## CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days after Colonel Ellisson's departure, the express from Weston halted at Amy's door, and delivered two heavy parcels—one directed to Miss Leeds, and one to Master Gordon Leeds.

"Whatever can they be, Amy? And who could have sent them to us?" cried Gordon, his eyes big with wonder, for it was the first time in his history that such an event had occurred.

"If it was only Christmas or New Year's, we might fancy that old Santa Claus had been seized with a generous fit in our favor; but now, when holidays of that sort are half a year away, we can't suppose he has done it!"

"Well, Gordon, we shall soon see!" said his sister, cutting the cords that bound his parcel, too impatient, herself, to think of untying them, and removing the wrappings displayed a pile of books such as Gordon had never seen before, or ever, even in his highest flights of imagination, dreamt of possessing.

One after another he held them up to the light, examined the titles, admired the elegant bindings; and many were the exclamations of delight and boyish satisfaction as books of science, of natural history, of travels, romance and adventure, were examined and laid aside; while his sister, scarcely less delighted than he, looked on with smiles and congratulations.

When the last one had been examined and commented on, Amy turned to her own parcel with a trepidation she could not well conceal, for she felt

that such a gift could only come from one, and that one, Colonel Ellisson.

"Oh, books, books!" cried Gordon, as the wrappings were laid back, "and a letter, too!" he continued, as Amy lifted a sealed envelope, and glancing hurriedly at the address turned quickly away, saying, as she left the room:—

"You and Mrs. Green can look them over, while I go and read this note."

Amy closed the door of her room, and drawing a seat to the window laid the letter on her lap, and gazed long and intently at the superscription, while her hands were pressed hard over her heart, to still its tumultuous throbbing.

At length she grew more composed, and opening the letter read:

"Will Miss Leeds accept, for herself and her brother, the accompanying volumes, as a small token of the lasting esteem and gratitude of—

"HUGH ELLISSON."

And that was all. The tiny sheet dropped from her hand, and fluttered to the floor; and Amy's gaze wandered through the open window, far away over the green-bosomed prairie, while a look of unutterable sadness settled upon the pale, worn face. She looked so old, and tired, and hopeless—so changed in the few minutes since she stood at the table rejoicing in her brother's joy.

"Amy, Amy, do come here! You've got the loveliest lot of books you ever set eyes on!—green, and gold, and all sorts of beautiful bindings and pictures—do come and see them!"

It was Gordon's voice, and recollecting herself, Amy hastened to obey the summons.

It was indeed a beautiful and costly gift—the *crème de la crème* of the most popular authors in fiction, poetry and art, bound and embellished as if in utter disregard of expenditure; and Amy half forgot, while admiring the treasures spread before her, the bitter heart-ache with which she had returned to the room.

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"Who are they from, Amy?" Gordon asked several times before his sister was sufficiently disengaged to answer him.

"They are from Colonel Ellisson, Gordon, and he begs we will accept them 'as a small token of his lasting gratitude and esteem.'"

"Well, now, that's what I call decent!" said Gordon, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and surveying his beautiful present with dignified complacency. "I'd about concluded he found it easier to promise than perform!"

"What do you mean, Gordon?" said his sister, sharply.

"Why, don't you remember, that night he sent me for the doctor, he said, 'you shall not lose your reward?'"

"Shame, Gordon, shame! to think of *reward* for such an act!"

"Goodness, Amy! don't be so awfully down on a fellow! I shouldn't have thought of it, if he hadn't said so; but after I'd said a thing, I'd do it."

"There ain't a single religious book among 'em all!" said Mrs. Green, laying down the last one, with evident dissatisfaction; "nothing but novels, and poetry, and such like; good enough in their place, I suppose, but not a thing fit for Sunday reading. I do hanker for something to read Sundays. Since I can't go to meeting, like I used to, the days seem terribly long!"

"Why, Phœbe, there are religious books in the library that were papa's; why do you not read them?"

"Bless your heart! I've read the whole of 'em, and some of 'em twice over; seems to me he might have put in something of the kind, even though he don't believe in religion; for I do, and I hope you do; and they might have been a comfort to us both sometimes."

"You have no right to speak in that way, Phœbe! How do you know he does not believe in religion?"

"Don't I know, Miss Amy, that a man that can't say nothing to comfort his poor dyin' wife in her

trouble and terror, only to tell her she's all right when she knows she ain't; who can't even offer up a prayer for the poor pleadin' creetur who sees herself goin' unprepared into the eternal world, can't have much religion?"

"You're right there, Aunty!" said Gordon. "I tell you you wouldn't think the Colonel had any too much of it, if you'd heard how he didn't skip the hard words, one day, while talking to a fellow down at the Metropolitan. My! but didn't he give it to him?—though," added Gordon, apologetically, "I guess he was the least little bit mellow at the time."

"Gordon, how long is it since I told you I would not tolerate slang? Your memory does you poor service, I think!"

"I beg your pardon, Amy! but I thought 'mellow' sounded a little softer than 'tipsy;' next time, I'll say what I mean in plain English, and then you'll not scold me;" and Gordon fell to whistling, his usual resort when he saw his sister was displeased with him.

"Lay away your books for the present, Gordon, and go to your lessons. I do not think the present conversation is either very polite or very edifying!" and Amy commenced gathering up her own books, and removing them to her room.

Mrs. Green looked grieved and mortified, for she rightly judged that Amy's rebuke was pointed at herself even more than at Gordon. In her honest warmth she had dreamt of no disrespect to Miss Leeds; while, as regarded Colonel Ellisson, she had only uttered what she felt was true.

Gordon's chagrin vented itself in a good deal of pretty boisterous whistling while ranging his books in a showy procession on an old-fashioned case of drawers, that had, for years, done duty in the room in the double capacity of bureau and side-board; and long before his arrangements were complete, his sister had finished hers, wheeled the table to its place, set the chairs in order, and retired to the quiet of her own room.

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Amy threw herself into a chair, and covering her face with her hands, sat long absorbed in painfully disturbed thoughts.

Mrs. Green's comments upon Colonel Ellisson's religious character were a two-edged sword, cutting both ways.

If he, who made no pretensions to being religious, in the sense in which she had been taught to regard religion, was exposed to such reproach, what should be said of her who had never laid aside her profession; yet who, on that sorrowful occasion, had as signally failed as he to minister comfort or point out the way of life to one trembling on the verge of ruin, and crying in vain for help?

Every stricture passed upon him recoiled with double force upon herself; and turn it whichever way she would, she met a sting. But Gordon's words hurt her almost more than those of Mrs. Green. More than once she had suspected all that his remarks implied; but, with her old, blind obstinacy of heart, she had put away the ugly suspicion, or resorted to the worn-out apologies of by-gone years.

It was vain for her to ask herself, what was all this to her? why should she concern herself about him or his habits? That she *did* concern herself, she knew; *why* she concerned herself, was a question she did not attempt to answer.

Perhaps the most desperate and persistent—certainly the most fatal—dishonesty that people practise is practised upon themselves. They feel the writhings and misgivings of conscience, whose protest they cannot at times evade; but instead of sitting down face to face with this faithful monitor and letting it speak to them, they bribe it, or stupefy it, or silence it with sophistry, or utterly refuse to listen to it, until at length its unwelcome monitions cease; and that which was once so quick to perceive and so faithful to reprove, becomes, in the expressive language of Scripture, "seared with a hot iron."

Amy's meditations were suddenly interrupted by a



little tap at the door, and, in response to her call, Mrs. Green entered with the baby in her arms, and dropping into a chair in a doubtful and hesitating manner, said:

"I thought, dearie, I'd come and apologize for what I said a little while ago. I don't want you to feel hard towards me—I'm sure I didn't mean no offence to you—though, of course, you know as well as I do that what I said about Colonel Ellisson's not believing in religion is true; you ain't so short-sighted as not to see that, brought up as you have been with the Bible in your hands. But, however that may be, I needn't 'a set Gordon a-goin' by sayin' anything about it. I hope, Miss Amy, you'll overlook it, won't you?"

"O yes, Phœbe!" said Amy, wearily, and her lips quivered as she saw the grieved look of the honest-hearted woman. "Perhaps I spoke with unnecessary sharpness, but I think I am not quite myself to-night. Bring Hope to me, Phœbe, and think no more about it—I am not in the least offended."

As she spoke she stretched her hands towards the little one who, with a face radiant with smiles, sprang to her arms.

"Darling baby Hope!" cried Amy, pressing the child with sudden passion to her heart, and with a low, moaning cry that would not be repressed, she leaned her face upon that of the little one, and burst into a paroxysm of tears.

"Why, dearie, what's the matter? don't cry so! pray don't!" and Mrs. Green stood by her in trouble and alarm, while Amy's feelings, once beyond her control, burst forth in irrepressible sobs.

"Here, Phœbe, take her away," she said, at length, handing the frightened child back to its nurse, "and don't think anything about me. I am tired, possibly a little hysterical," and Mrs. Green went away to quiet the child, leaving Amy to regain her self-possession alone and unobserved.

An hour or so later, Amy stole out to bid Gordon good-night and kiss little Hope, now wrapt in rosy

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slumbers, and then went quietly away to seek repose for herself.

"She's as pale as a ghost—just as pale as any ghost!" soliloquised Mrs. Green, tucking up the baby for about the twentieth time during the last hour, "and now I know the cause of it. I've kind o' guessed it for a good while, but now it's perfectly plain."

"Anybody can see what them books are for;—widowers knows what they're about—let 'em alone for that! It'll be a bad thing for her, however! a bad thing for her if it ever is, and it will be, I'm next thing to certain of it! Dear me! if I was sure she was all right, I think I'd rather put her into her grave-clothes as I did poor Evy!" and Mrs. Green tucked up the baby again, turned up the light, read a chapter, and dropping upon her knees remained long in silence, unbroken save by now and then a deep-drawn sigh.

When she arose, her face was wet with tears. Stealing on tip-toe to Amy's room, she satisfied herself that the object of her solicitude was asleep, then returning, gave the baby a final tucking up, put out her light, and murmuring "Poor dear! poor dear!" composed herself for the night.

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## CHAPTER X.

AUTUMN and winter passed away; spring returned, and brought, as its closing days were deepening into summer, the birthday of little Hope. She was beginning to talk; and her nurse had taught her to say papa, as the sweetest surprise she could prepare for the heart of the father so long separated from his only child.

Amy had expected that that day would bring Colonel Ellisson, as his letters to Mrs. Green had hinted as much; but a telegram came instead, saying that unexpected business would detain him for several weeks.

But the weeks lengthened into months, and autumn,

with all her changeful loveliness, had again settled down upon the beautiful meadows of the west, when one evening as Gordon returned from school, he tossed a letter into his sister's lap, saying, as he did so:

"I guess it's from the Colonel. I'll bet he's coming to take Hope away! I only wish he'd stay away forever!"

"Gordon!" exclaimed his sister; but Gordon was too far away to hear the rebuke she was about to administer, and Amy glanced furtively at the letter, to satisfy herself if indeed it was, as Gordon had divined, from Colonel Ellisson.

It was the first time since he left, except when he sent the books, that he had addressed anything to her; and with trembling eagerness she broke the seal and read:

"AMY:—I expect to be in Weston in a few days, and then I am coming to ask you, as I did nearly twelve years ago, to be my wife. I make no apology for my unworthy treatment of you, for it was too unmanly to admit of the least extenuation. I make no professions of regard; for, having given the lie to past protestations, you can have no guaranty that I will be more truthful now. You know what I have been, and you have some idea of what I am now; and we are both old enough to choose in the light of sober reason. I have made my choice; should yours correspond to mine, as it did then, I should wish that our marriage take place immediately. Should it not, I shall honor your decision, and bow to it as just.

"Sincerely, "HUGH ELLISSON."

There are crises in most lives when the great joy or the great anguish must be met, and realized, and taken up as the soul's actual possession—*alone*.

Too sacred, or too awful for any human eye to witness or any human heart to share, the soul must wrestle with its agony, or open its most sacred, secret recesses to the unutterable joy, in solitude and secrecy.

And thus it was with Amy Leeds that night. For

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nearly twelve long years, through doubt, estrangement and utter loss she had clung to Hugh El'sson with the madness of unreasoning, idolizing devotion; and now he had only to stretch out his hand to her; and falsehood, neglect, abandonment, were alike forgotten. His faults, his vices, his inconsistency—the dangerous paths in which she must follow him, her father's warning protest, her early vows of fealty to Christ and Him alone, all faded before the overmastering joy of knowing that yet, after all, he would be irrevocably her own.

Is it too much to say that God sometimes gives men all they want in this life—feeds them to the full with the dainties they covet—that He sometimes makes the treasures they will not resign the chasteners of their hearts; and the possessions unblest by Him, the rod with which He often scourges His people back to repentance and humiliation before Him?

Happy they with whom God condescends so to deal! Better to return to Him, though with broken bones, than having gained all and enjoyed all, to hear Him say in the end, "he is joined to his idols; *let him alone!*"

Amy was seen no more till a late hour that evening, giving the one quiet answer to all—that she was busy, and did not wish to be disturbed.

"What can have come over her?" said Mrs. Green, when Amy refused to come to her tea; "I wonder if she's sick!"

"I guess not," said Gordon, tossing aside his slate, "I brought her a letter from Colonel Ellisson when I came from school, and it's likely she's answering it. I just hope, if he's coming to take Hope away, that the cars will run—"

"Don't wish no bad wishes, Gordy; 'taint right—they might come back on your own head some day! Besides, you hain't no right to say it's from him. You don't know nothing about it; and 'twouldn't be very nice for you to be telling such a thing as that to everybody!"

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"I've told nobody but you, and you aren't 'everybody!' You needn't tell me either that I don't know, for I do know. Do you suppose I can't tell a fellow's writing when I've seen it dozens and dozens of times? Think of the loads of letters I've brought you from him!"

"Well, never mind, Gordy, dear; 'taint for you nor me—particularly me—to be talkin' about Miss Amy's letters, and who they're from!"

"Perhaps not; but see here! Supposing he should come to take Hope away—what would you do?"

"Why, let him take her, of course, Gordy; she's his, not ours, you know. I always knew he'd take her away some day.

"She's more ours than his—we've had her ever since the day she was born! He's never done a thing for her only send money to pay for her clothes and things. He's been away for a year and more, and now coming to take her away from us! He don't love her half as well as we do—not half!"

"It's very likely he don't, Gordy; but that don't make no difference as to his rights. Of course, when he gets married again he'll want his baby, but it will e'en a'most break my heart when he takes her!"

"He isn't going to get married again, is he?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Gordy—most likely he will; most of 'em do."

"Most of whom?"

"Why, widowers, Gordy, of course!"

"He shan't take Hope away to give her to an old step-mother!" cried Gordon, fiercely.

"Don't be foolish, Gordy!—a man will do what he likes with his own, and 'taint for us to say yea or nay; but you'd better have your tea, and done with it. If Miss Amy ain't a comin', there's no need for you to go without;" and Gordon seated himself at the table in a very resentful humor. He had come to consider himself and Mrs. Green as the sole proprietors of Hope; and the thought of losing her seemed to him the greatest possible affliction. ●

But he was too much of a boy to dwell long on any prospective trouble; and in a few minutes his thoughts were occupied with other things.

“Phœbe, will you come to the study—I want a few minutes’ conversation with you.”

Colonel Ellisson had been about a week in Weston; and though he had paid but one visit to the cottage, Phœbe had made up her mind what to expect. Amy’s pre-occupied manner, her unwonted cheerfulness, taken in connection with sundry mysterious household arrangements, had a significance to the shrewd and sagacious woman that Amy had not suspected. But, with her habitual caution in regard to things she deemed private, she had quietly attended to her own affairs, neither asking questions nor seeming to notice any unusual movements.

“Phœbe,” said Amy, when they were alone, “I presume you will be a good deal surprised to learn that I expect to be married this evening to Colonel Ellisson. Our marriage will be strictly private—no one being present but ourselves and the officiating minister. You will please tell Norah; and yourselves and the baby will be ready so that there shall be no delay. We shall leave at once, to be absent for a few weeks; and I shall leave everything in your charge. I do so with the fullest confidence that everything will be as faithfully attended to in my absence as though I were present. I am sure I need not say ‘take good care of Gordon;’ and as for Hope, she is too much your own to make it needful that I say a word. We have settled upon nothing special for the future; you may, however, rest assured that you will not be separated from your baby, unless at your own choice. But Phœbe, you are weeping—are you not glad of my great happiness?”

“Don’t ask me no questions, dearie—pray don’t. I don’t want to say a single word to make your happiness any less, and especially at such a time as this; for it’s too late to say anything, if I felt it ever so much my

duty. Of course, I can't help wishin' he was a Christian—riches, nor nothing else, can't make up for the want of that, you know—but I hope it'll all turn out well—I'm sure I do!"

"I, too, wish Colonel Ellisson were a Christian, Phoebe; and I trust my influence over him may lead to that result. I have strong hopes that it may not be long before he becomes one."

"Have you, now! has he said anything encouraging?"

"No, Phoebe, I have had no religious conversation with him since his return."

"No?—well, I wish you had—it might 'a been a satisfaction to you in after years. I know what it is, dearie, to do just as you're adoin'; but then, I was a young, silly thing—only just turned seventeen—a mere child, you know. However, I *did* know better even then—'taint no use to say I didn't. I kept a sayin' to myself 'it'll all come right;' but it never did—no, never! Mother talked to me enough, dear knows! told me I was doin' evil in hopes good might come; but I was set in my own way, and I found out in the end that mother was right and I wrong—it most always turns out so!"

"Will you send Gordon to me, Phoebe?" said Amy, cutting short a conversation she felt she could endure no longer.

"Yes, I'll send him; and I'll see that everything is attended to. Don't you give yourself a bit of worry."

"What do you want of me, Amy? I'm in an awful old hurry about my lessons; examinations begin to-morrow, and—"

"Yes, I know, Gordon, and I shall only detain you a few minutes. I expect, dear, to be married to-night to Colonel Ellisson."

"No, Amy!"

"It is true, Gordon. I should have told you sooner, but it was definitely arranged only two days ago; though, of course, I have been expecting it for several weeks."

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"Well, if that's the case, of course we'll always have Hope; yes, I consent, Amy. Hurrah for the Pilgrim Fathers! Hurrah for the Constitution of the United States!" and Gordon proceeded to execute certain favorite gymnastics over the chairs and around the room, much to his own edification, and much to his sister's discomfort.

"Gordon, dear, don't be so boisterous, but listen to me. We expect to be married at eight o'clock; and as we wish to leave immediately after, it is necessary you should be ready before the hour, so that there be no delay. Do you hear what I say?"

"Oh, wait till after examinations, Amy; just think of the disgrace I'll be in if I fail, and let those Weston fellows take my prize away from me. Really, Amy, I don't think I can give time to this little affair of yours."

"Gordon, will you be serious while I speak to you? I am going to leave you for some time, and I want to say a few words to you that I cannot say this evening. Will you be a good boy, Gordon, and mind Mrs. Green, and attend to your studies, and—"

"Don't pile up the questions so, Amy; give me a chance to answer some of them, as you go along. Let's see: Will I be a good boy? Of course; I'm always that, as you know already; will I mind Mrs. Green? that's to be considered; will I stick to my studies? it's likely I may, Amy; anything else?"

"Gordon, you distress me very much. Promise me you will be a good boy, or I shall leave home very unhappy."

"Where are you going, Amy?"

"Did you hear what I asked you, Gordon?"

"Yes, Amy; but it's not certain that I shall approve of your going to the place you think of visiting. It makes a great difference—"

"Gordon, this trifling is very offensive to me; now listen, and do not speak at all. I wanted a good, serious talk with you; but, as usual, I see that I am not likely to get it. I expect you, in my absence, to



be obedient to Mrs. Green, and follow her advice; and be good and kind to Hope. When we return we shall decide upon some plan in reference to your future pursuits; in the meantime, be studious and attentive to all your duties. I shall write to you often, and shall expect you to send me nice long letters in return. Now kiss me, darling, and be a good boy, and remember all I have said."

Gordon gave the required kiss, seeing that any more trifling would seriously displease his sister, and with a demure face withdrew, pleased that he had, as usual, succeeded in not committing himself by any promises, and in laughing her out of much he knew she wished to say.

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## CHAPTER XI.

AMY'S little parlor looked very bright and attractive that night, with its cheerful lights, its tasteful decorations, wrought by her own hands, its pretty knots of bright autumn flowers effectively arranged among the snowy drapery of the windows, and hung in graceful festoons above the plain mantel-piece.

There was no attempt at finery or display. Even in her own attire Amy was severely plain; yet when she stood up beside the man who was so soon to be her husband, in that sweet simplicity of studied plainness, few would have regretted the absence of those embellishments which, while adding to the showiness, detract from the modest dignity which is at all times a woman's best and richest adorning.

She was very proud and happy when Colonel Ellison placed the massive wedding-ring upon her hand, and in a firm, clear voice uttered the irrevocable words which bound him to lasting fealty to her and her alone; and when, the marriage rite ended, he took his pretty babe from its nurse's arms, and placing it in hers whispered, as he kissed them both, "Love her, Amy, for my sake!" happy tears filled her eyes, and she answered firmly and proudly, "I will!"

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And Amy meant what she said. She had always loved little Hope for her own sake and for the sake of the young mother who, in her delirious wanderings, had clung to her hand, and called her "sister;" but when to all this was added the stronger motive—for *his* sake—she felt that from that moment the motherless little one was bound to her heart by a threefold tie, that could never be broken.

In a few minutes the carriage was at the door; hasty good-byes were exchanged; and Amy was borne rapidly away from her girlhood's home—away from the graves of her kindred, out into that world of wealth, fashion, and pomp, towards which her eyes had so long been turned, careless of all, heedless of all, save the happy present, whose halo of delight seemed gilding all her future with the glow of unimagined felicities.

Twelve! one! two! One by one the clocks of a great city had sent their reverberating call far over and beyond its towers, its temples, and its domes, while the intermingling sounds that for hours had gone up from its thronged streets and noisy thoroughfares had gradually been diminished as the night wore on, and silence had at length settled down upon the vast, unquiet sea of human life.

The bustle and confusion of a great hotel, the sounds of music, merriment and conversation, the echoes of many feet and of many voices, had slowly died away; and only now and then a far-off murmur of confused sounds came wandering up to the richly-furnished apartments where Amy still sat, weary and anxious, keeping her solitary vigil till her husband, sated with the amusements and dissipation of the club-room, should return to her.

It was the first time during the short two weeks of her married life that her husband had left her except for a few minutes at a time, and his prolonged stay was filling her with apprehension and dread.

She had seen, with increasing anxiety, that at all

his meals the costliest wines were set down for him, and many times he had urged her to partake with him. Nor had she always declined. Unwilling to disoblige him, and fearing by the constant protest of example to seem to reproach him, she had more than once allowed him to fill her glass; and, by sometimes tasting in deference to his wish, she had at once destroyed her power to utter any effective protest against his ruinous habit, and given—more plainly than she could have given it in words—her sanction to his course.

At length, just as the little clock on the marble mantel-piece uttered its sharp warning for three, the sound of footsteps was heard; and Amy saw down the now dimly-lighted passage two forms approaching, and it needed no second glance to assure her that the tall, strong man, who was leaning heavily upon his companion, was her husband.

A creeping faintness came over her, and she staggered to a sofa. The waiter opened the door, and, admitting Colonel Ellisson, closed it again and walked rapidly away, while the latter shuffled with unsteady steps across the room, and sank heavily upon the sofa beside his wife before he noticed her presence.

"Why Eva—ah. Amy, are you up yet—rather late, eh?—the boys were very entertaining—very!" he maundered thickly, with a stupid stare at the shrinking form and white face at his side. "Seems to me you look sick, little girl—hadn't you better go to bed?"

"Yes, dear," said Amy, suddenly summoning her fortitude to her aid, for she saw he must soon sink down in a drunken stupor, "come away at once; you are tired and sleepy, and I will help you to your room."

"No, I'm not in the least tired myself, Eva—ah, Amy; but I'll assist you!"—and giving her his hand, under the supposition that he was assisting her, he suffered her to lead him to his room and help him to bed, where almost instantly he sank into the stupor of inebriation.

And there he lay before her—her idolized husband—the strong, proud form upon which for a little while

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she had leaned so securely; the man for whom she would have sacrificed home, friends, even life itself—whose smile had sometimes seemed more to her than her hopes of heaven—*he* lay there before her, *drunk!* Alas! hers was no new experience—no new agony. Tens of thousands as loving and as devoted wives have felt it all, borne it all, not once alone, nor twice; but over and over again, while weary years of poverty, debasement and crime have dragged on in uncheered misery, until at last the sickening scene has closed in a death of degradation—not unfrequently of crime. With a low wail, Amy cast herself on the floor at her husband's bedside, and wept such tears as years of estrangement and faithfulness had never wrung from her; for at that moment the black portents of unimagined misery for herself, and of ruin—ruin of both body and soul for him, seemed scowling out upon her from that future which but a few hours before had seemed so full of bliss.

And thus, sometimes standing at his bedside, her face white and ghastly in the flickering gaslights, sometimes pacing the floor, and sometimes weeping in solitary anguish, while his heavy breathing smote upon her heart as the death-knell of her hopes, Amy saw the slow, sad hours drag on, saw the gray dawn creep over the slumbering city, saw the red autumnal sun climb the east, and send his fiery arrows into cottage and palace, and abroad over hill and dale, heard the increasing hum of life and activity rising again from the thronged streets beneath, until at length exhausted nature gave way, and she slept. How long she slept she knew not; it might have been minutes, and it might have been hours; but at length she was awakened by a hot hand laid upon her forehead, and opening her eyes, she saw her husband bending over her.

He did not speak, but his countenance showed that he realized all, felt all; and lifting the slight form in his arms as though she had been a babe, he sat down upon a sofa and wept.

Amy buried her face in his bosom ; she felt her own tears gathering under the heavy, swollen lids, but, with a woman's will, she crushed them back, and waited with enforced calmness till he should speak.

"Amy, my poor, patient little wife, why do you not speak to me ? tell me I am a brute, tell me you hate me : I think I could endure that better than this silence, which may mean all that and more, and yet which may mean only despair. To think that only two weeks after our marriage I should outrage your feelings as I have, that you should have been left to watch over my drunken stupor through hours and hours of solitary misery until you fell asleep from sheer exhaustion here, while I was slowly recovering from last night's indulgence. Look up, and reproach me as you like, but don't kill me with your silence."

"No, Hugh," said Amy, sitting up, and looking sadly in her husband's face, "were I ever so much inclined to be severe, the reproaches you have cast upon yourself would effectually silence mine. True, I was not looking for what occurred last night, and it has distressed me more than I can tell you ; but, since it has occurred, let me take this opportunity to urge you to go at once and sign the pledge of total abstinence, and thus interpose your truthfulness and your honor in the way of another such occurrence. I will go with you, and thus I, who have no habit formed, shall be able to help you to overcome yours."

"No, Amy, I cannot do that. My position, and my associations make it an impossibility ; nor is it at all necessary. There were several of our number present last night whom I had not seen for years ; and in the exhilaration of meeting old friends, I indulged a little too freely, that's all."

"But, Hugh, there can be nothing really worth considering, in the way of your signing a total-abstinence pledge, and then if you do so, you will always feel safe."

"Excuse me, Amy, but there is so much in the way that it is quite out of the question ; and, as I said before,

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it is not necessary. I can take care of myself well enough, and shall do so in the future—never fear;—indeed, I cannot see how it is I failed to do so last night. Why, Amy, it would never do for people in our position to be bound by a pledge of total abstinence! It would look as though we had utterly lost confidence in ourselves, and were willing to acknowledge the disgraceful fact to others. Try and forget this humiliating episode in your husband's history, and trust him for the future. I think he will be able to prove to you that he deserves it.

Alas, those well-meant but deceitful promises made in the vain confidence of a strength that is not in man! They have always failed in the hour of trial, and they always will. The soul needs a stronger anchor than any resolutions or purposes of its own; if it have it not, once out upon the wild sea of appetite and passion, it will drift on to ruin.

Doubtless Colonel Ellisson believed what he uttered. Thousands have said the same in all sincerity of purpose, who, in a little while, have sunk in utter helplessness beneath the power of an irresistible appetite. The indulgence they could regard as quite safe—the habit that, in the beginning, they could look upon as the merest trifle, has become at length an armed foe, in whose ever-tightening grasp they may have struggled for a time; but the struggle has been unequal, and defeat sure.

In the light of her husband's recovered smile, and in the soothing assurances he poured into her ears, Amy's fears subsided, her cheerfulness returned; and in a few days she could almost have smiled at the terrors she endured that night, so secure and safe she felt.

The wine-cup, which had so lately been a source of so much anxiety, gradually ceased to trouble her. She saw that her husband was able to drink—often to drink freely—and yet exhibit no injurious effects, and she found no difficulty in persuading herself it would always be the same; so easy is it to believe in the possibility of what we ardently desire.

With strange perverseness of judgment she even laid aside the strong resolution she formed that night when she first saw unmistakably the brutalizing effect of drink upon her husband, never again by her own example to seem to sanction his course; and, blindly accepting his assurance that it was due to their position to conform to social usage in regard to wine, again allowed herself to taste; thus, at once, destroying the influence for good she might have exerted over him, and yielding sinful conformity to a usage whose fatal tendency she well knew.

Thus are the poet's words too often verified in actual experience:

“Vice is a monster of such hideous mien  
That, to be hated, needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with its face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

“GOOD Society” in Weston was greatly scandalized by the marriage of Colonel Ellisson with Amy Leeds. “It was *such* a shame!” so it said, through one of its oracular mouth-pieces, “for a gentleman like him to stoop to a girl in her position—one who was obliged to earn her own living!”

Why, no respectable young man in Weston, who had any regard to social standing, would have stooped to such a marriage! a needle-woman—a mere country girl who had probably never been a dozen miles from the place where she was born! it was positively outrageous!

“Good Society” was inexpressibly shocked—disgusted even! it could never stoop to call on her—not it! and as to ever inviting her within the magic circle where it presided, the thing couldn't be thought of!

She would find herself cut by all who regarded their place in society; and it would be no more than what she ought to expect. She would soon be made to feel

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her anomalous position, and the experience would, doubtless, be anything but pleasant.

"Good Society" even dropped vague hints that it would not be long before Colonel Ellisson would so far regret the step he had taken as gladly to avail himself of the privilege of divorce, in order to set himself free from the consequences of his rashness, and secure a wife better suited to his exalted station.

It was really no wonder he had had a private marriage, and slipped away in the night! Why, there was not a soul in Weston that had even suspected his intention till he was married and gone! Doubtless he would stay away until the popular indignation had subsided a little; but return when he would, he would find that he could not impose a dressmaker upon it! and "Good Society's" aforesaid oracular mouth-piece elevated its aristocratic head in dignified scorn.

But when in about a month it came to be known that Colonel Ellisson and his bride had really returned, and, after spending a night at the "Metropolitan," had been driven to Mrs. Ellisson's late home, intending to take immediate possession of Prairie-House, "Good Society" became greatly exercised to obtain all available particulars in regard to the bride—her appearance—the degree of stylishness to which she had attained since becoming Mrs. Ellisson—and whether really, after all, it might not so far compromise matters as to call on her.

Amy was again at home. That month of absence had passed like a fairy dream darkened only by the black shadow of that one night which would, notwithstanding all the careless security she had come to feel, sometimes send a shiver of apprehension through her frame.

She was at home again; but how strangely things had changed in that short month! The low-roofed cottage had never before seemed so low—the door-way so narrow—the windows so scant—the apartments so small, and poor, and unfurnished.



She had looked upon luxury—had tasted its sweets; and the simple, rural charms of her girlhood's home were faded and dull—they had power to delight no longer.

But in Amy's heart were changes sadder and more to be regretted than those. She had looked upon the naked deformity of the vice her father had warned her of, and, the first horror once past, she had learned to regard it in its genteel beginnings, first, with tolerance, then, with complacency, and at length had dared to set unwary feet in the dangerous pathway her husband had long been treading.

Fashion, to which she had for years been a votary, had gained additional importance in her eyes; and in that short month it had become the shrine at which she lavished precious time and anxious thought which in the far-off years she would not have hesitated to say rightfully belonged to God and His service.

The flippant jest at sacred things, irreverent words that she would then have pronounced profane, these, carelessly uttered by lips beloved, had lost much of their odiousness, and when coupled with a lively witicism, could even elicit a smile; so easily are the soul's delicate perceptions of what is sacred, and holy, and pure, dulled by familiarity with the world's ways and acquaintance with its maxims.

Never too steadfast in her adherence to what she knew to be right, because it was right, nor too constant in her loyalty to principle for its own sake, Amy had rushed fearlessly into the fascinating scenes of worldly gaiety and frivolity where her husband had been only too willing to introduce her, and the first contact had chilled and blighted much that was still wearing somewhat of the freshness and bloom of her early faith.

Hope stretched her little arms eagerly towards the elegantly dressed lady who extended her jewelled hands to receive her, and who was henceforth to be her mother. Nurse Green gave her the cordial grasp of honest, homely welcome, and Gordon returned her

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sisterly kiss with a touch of shy reserve, as his quick eye took in at a glance her changed appearance.

"Well, little brother," said Colonel Ellisson, shaking Gordon warmly by the hand, "how are you? Why, you have done nothing but grow since I saw you! 'Pon my word, Amy, he'll soon be as tall as I am;" and laying an arm over the boy's shoulder, he drew him to his side, to compare their respective heights.

"It will be a few days yet," said Gordon, disengaging himself with a kind of bashful shrinking from such close contact with his new relative; "but I intend to be taller some day, if I have good luck."

"I think your luck will fail you, then," said his sister, laughing, "for you did not come of a tall race, and you see you are comparing yourself with a stately man;" and Amy looked proudly up at the handsome face that towered so far above her own.

Norah, who had been expecting her mistress, had done her best in preparing dinner, and the little dining-room certainly looked very inviting in the scrupulous cleanliness that everywhere prevailed, from the simple muslin curtains at the windows, and the dazzlingly white table-cloth that shone with the polish of its careful ironing, down to the newly scoured strip of floor that showed its honest face all around the little square of carpet that covered the centre of the room.

As Amy took her old seat at the head of the table, with Hope at her right hand, and the same bright little tea-urn before her that had done duty under her hand for so many years, her thoughts went swiftly back to that far-off summer day when Hugh Ellisson first sat down at that table, when her father occupied the place her husband now filled, and Gordon, a year-old baby, in the same little high chair, filled the seat now graced by Hope; and as old memories came back to her with a sudden rush, she bent her head to hide her emotion.

Colonel Ellisson noticed it, and rightly divined the cause.

"I see, Amy," he said, "you are running back in

thought to the time when we first sat here together. It is all very fresh to me, as doubtless it is to you. We are both older, and wiser, and, I believe, happier in some respects than we were then ;” and without waiting for the reply Amy was unable to give, he proceeded to serve out the simple viands that made up Norah’s “lovely dinner ;” and in a few minutes they were all engaged in pleasant chat, while doing ample justice to what had been prepared for them with such painstaking anxiety.

“I suppose,” said Colonel Ellisson, when dinner was over, settling himself comfortably in the chair Amy had placed for him before the fire that Norah had kindled in the parlor—“I suppose we had better be settling our domestic plans and getting away home as soon as possible—may I ask if you have any definite plans in reference to the cottage ?”

“Yes,” said Amy, seating herself upon an ottoman at her husband’s feet; “I have thought of having Thompson—the man who works on the farm—move in, and take charge of everything. His wife is careful and thrifty ; and the use of the house and the things I shall leave will be a boon to them after living so long in the poor little place they now occupy.”

“A good idea, Amy ; and what of Green and Norah ? You would like to take them with you, I presume.”

“Hope will need her nurse for a long time yet ; as for Norah, is there any place for her at Prairie House ?”

“I’m sure I don’t know—Hale looks after all such matters—but if there’s none you can easily make one ; take her for your own maid, Amy, she’s nice and quiet—just the one to suit you, I should think.

“Gordon will have a little longer walk to school than he has been used to ; but I suppose that will not matter—a smart walk night and morning will do him good.”

Amy’s heart gave a heavy throb, for she had not for a moment entertained the idea of taking Gordon to her new home. Her father’s protest against such a

step had recurred again and again to her mind as the time grew near for the matter to be decided.

She saw before her the two-fold difficulty of either disobeying her father's injunction, or else of devising some excuse for not taking him that would satisfy her brother on the one hand, and her husband on the other.

As regarded Gordon, she felt that she could not bring herself to admit to him that it was in view of Hugh's already well-known habit of drinking, that her father's prohibition had been made; and as regarded her husband, she felt it still more difficult to satisfy him without explanations which she had resolved never to make.

"What is it, Amy?" said Colonel Ellisson at length, noticing her hesitation, "you are not afraid the boy is going to be injured by the long walk are you?—if so, I will send him whenever the weather is unfavorable."

"Oh, no!" replied Amy, recollecting herself, "but I have thought that it might be better for Gordon to remain here, and board with Thompson. They have no children, and I know they will be glad to have him; and then I shall be near to look after him, you know."

"What an idea, Amy; to leave the boy here in this old, poky place; and we in that big house with oceans of room that we don't know what to do with! are you crazy?"

"But, dear, Gordon has never been used to any home but this; he will be very comfortable here; and as this place is to be his when he is of age, he will naturally feel a special interest in everything connected with it. He will, doubtless, be a little lonely at first, but he will soon be all right. I really think it will be best for him to remain here."

"Well, I don't, Amy. I have taken a liking to the boy, and I am resolved to have him home with me. I want to teach him the use of fire-arms, and how to walk like a soldier—give him a military air, Amy—your special admiration, you know. I expect to be at

home mostly this winter, and I want the youngster for company. But really, now, you look as though this was a matter of immense importance! Speak out, little girl, and make your trouble known!"

Colonel Ellisson drew his wife to his knee, and taking her face between his hands, burst into a hearty laugh at its doleful expression.

"Promise me, then, Hugh," said Amy, taking both his hands in hers, "that you will never allow the boy to drink wine. It was papa's abhorrence, and I—"

"Ha, ha!—now, really, Amy, is that the cause of your distress? Well, well—what a struggle you must have endured over this! I suppose, in imagination, you have seen Gordon dozens of times lying under the table in the enviable condition in which you saw a certain military chieftain of your acquaintance not long since. 'Pon my word, Amy, that is rich! Hallo, Gordon!" he continued, as Gordon entered with Hope perched upon his shoulder, "we are all going over to the big house in a couple of hours or so; so pack up your books, my boy, and be ready for the flitting."

"All right!" said Gordon, depositing Hope in his sister's arms, and the next minute he was rushing away to carry the news to Mrs. Green and Norah, whose united services he supposed himself fully entitled to in the responsible work of packing.

But Norah was busy; and Mrs. Green must needs hasten to Hope, who, disappointed at losing her ride on Gordon's shoulder, was wailing piteously over the affliction; and as Gordon did not feel quite free to summon his sister to his assistance, he was soon upsetting things generally in his own room, and turning Norah's orderly arrangements into the wildest confusion.

Amy found herself even less able to resist her husband's badinage than she had been her brother's; and without attempting to finish the sentence he had cut short, or to urge her request, she weakly yielded with a laugh, and withdrew to prepare Mrs. Green and Norah for their speedy change of residence, and indi-

cate to the latter the few things she wished to have removed to Prairie House.

In less time than Colonel Ellisson had named, his carriage was at the door; and himself and Amy, with Gordon, Hope, and her nurse, were driven rapidly away from the old parsonage home, leaving Norah behind to superintend all further matters connected with the removal.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

A FEW days sufficed for the settling of all the new relations at Prairie House, and for making the new mistress acquainted with the various details of the large establishment over which she was thenceforth to preside.

The elegant suite of rooms that had belonged to Colonel Ellisson's mother, and which were afterwards refurnished for the young mistress whose bright dream of earthly happiness was so soon cut short, had been kept shut up until within a few weeks, when they were again thrown open and fitted up anew for Amy's reception.

As she walked through the richly furnished apartments, and saw how much pains had been taken to make them bright and cheerful for her, she felt she had really nothing more to ask.

All that her heart had coveted during the weary years of Colonel Ellisson's estrangement was now hers: a luxurious home, the man of her choice, everything calculated to delight the eye and gratify the taste, *and she believed herself happy.*

But Amy had not been solicitous, in coming to her beautiful new home, to know that she was bringing with her the blessing of the Lord which alone maketh rich, and with which He addeth no sorrow. The treasures upon which her eyes had been fixed, with little or no concern whether or not her possessing them were in accordance with His will, had been bestowed—

she saw them spread before her in lavish profusion—and as she looked round upon them, and then up to the face of the man she had loved so madly, she believed that her happiness was as perfect as earth could make it.

And so, perhaps, it was. But the fountains of earthly happiness are very shallow. They may flash, and sparkle, and send forth many pleasant sounds; their waters may be cool and sweet, and very comforting, but it is only a part, and that the lowest part, of man's complex being that they can affect.

For the gratifying of his sensuous nature God has provided almost unlimited resources; the intellectual, too, may stretch its powers to the utmost, and yet find no lack; but, higher than all these, there is in man a spiritual nature that must find its gratification in something nobler than what appeals to either; or the soul will remain lone and unsatisfied, hungering ever for those spiritual joys that are found only in God, the Fountain and Source of all spiritual joy. And it is only when that nature has attained its true development—when it has come to see, and feel, and act in harmony with God—when, armed with the Divine sanctions of His law, it can sit supreme in its own domain, and bring the complex wants of the whole being into subordination to the Divine will, that any rational being can be truly called happy; and just here was Amy's great lack.

Into that higher department of her own nature she seldom looked. The habit of introspection—of taking God's lamp and walking with resolute step through all the soul's chambers; of dragging forth the culprit dispositions, tastes, desires and passions, and sitting in judgment upon them according to the light of that word, is really, what few who profess to be Christians do with any constancy—what many never even attempt.

If, under the wise, Christian guidance of pious parents, she ever commenced that work, she had long since abandoned it, as one that brought much pain

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and no pleasure; the wholesome fruits of self-knowledge cost too much, and the pursuit was consequently abandoned.

Possibly, were some wise Christian philosopher to arise, capable of tracing moral effects to their causes, and of thus explaining the manifest decline of spirituality and the increase of worldliness among professing Christians, he might find this to be one of the most efficient causes.

Not that it is well for the Christian always to be delving in the filth and pollution of his own heart; but it is needful, if he would manifest the life of Christ in his own life, that he should know what is there; that he should be both able and willing to search out and test the motives that underlie his actions, to grapple with every unholy fugitive, and drag it to the light; and never rest till his whole nature is subordinated to the will and the service of Christ.

As for Gordon, his new home was a region of wonders—a realm of unimagined delights. The rich carpets, the elegant furniture, the lavish ornaments, the library filled with choice books, the drawing-room with its beautiful paintings, and cabinets of rare and costly things, furnished him for many days with ever-varying delight.

Nor were the out-door attractions less bewildering. The gardens and grounds richly embellished, and kept with the most scrupulous care, the horses, the dogs and other domestic animals, of which he was naturally fond, each and all must receive special attention; and it was not for weeks that he could settle his mind to his usual habits of study.

The sudden change from a home of comparative poverty to one of such luxury, as might be imagined, was not, for a boy like Gordon, a favorable change; and this was very soon discoverable in his bearing and conversation.

His previously somewhat inflated ideas of personal



consequence underwent a rapid growth and expansion ; so much so, that they could not long fail to be noticed and commented upon by his school-fellows.

Boys are marvellously close and accurate observers in their way ; and those over whom Gordon had already secured a rather enviable pre-eminence by his superiority in scholarship, were not slow to make their rival feel the sting of their satire, and the discomfort of their envy.

But before the spring came round, they had all settled again pretty well into their old ways, with this difference, that Gordon, who for a little while had been the object of their undisguised envy, had, partly by his own force of character, and partly on account of his relationship to Colonel Ellisson, become a sort of umpire among them ; and was deferred to in proportion to the distance which his good fortune, as they esteemed it, had set between themselves and him ; all of which was very refreshing to Gordon, as it convinced him more and more that the estimate he was disposed to form of his own consequence must be a correct one.

Nor was this increased importance less manifest at home. His sister was no longer regarded as sole umpire in his affairs. Of course, he deferred to her far enough, in the main to avoid the reproofs he had for several years been able, by dint of teasing and evasion, to escape ; but, at the same time, if there was any one, above himself, whom he felt he could honor with that distinction without compromising his own dignity, it was Colonel Ellisson who fully answered to his highest ideal of perfection ; so much so that it soon became his favorite employment, in the solitude of his own room, systematically to practise the manner, carriage, bearing and speech of his distinguished model ; and with no doubtful success either, as the frequent jibes and taunts of his school-fellows amply testified.

The first meal Gordon took in Prairie House sufficed to open his eyes in regard to the use of wine at the table—a usage he had never seen before ; and from

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that hour it became one of his ideal felicities, to be able, without restraint, to imitate to the fullest extent the luxurious habits of his brother-in-law.

Though Colonel Ellisson had laughed at Amy's half-uttered request in regard to her brother, yet it was not lost upon him, and he had the consistency not to offer him wine; yet the apology he made for not doing so, the first evening they sat down together, as he filled his own glass, and politely offered one to Amy, did almost more to inflame the boy's ideas of the importance of the privilege than anything else could have done.

"Excuse me, Gordon!" he said, "if I do not offer you wine at present. It is thought a not very desirable habit for a boy to form; and besides, your sister prefers that you should do without it."

Gordon said nothing; but the conclusion he mentally reached was, that the time was not very remote when he would regulate his conduct by his own idea of what was best, rather than by his sister's idea.

"I suppose, Gordon, you have never learned to smoke yet?" said Colonel Ellisson, as he seated himself in the cozy little smoking room, to which Gordon had accompanied him when tea was over.

Gordon, with more shame than he usually experienced after neglecting some very important duty, acknowledged he had not.

"Oh, well," replied the Colonel, lighting his cigar, with what Gordon deemed the most inimitable grace, and puffing the blue smoke in curling wreaths around his head, "that is another of the habits that do boys no good—nor men either, for that matter; but it is one that men very generally acquire, more, perhaps, for the sociability of the thing, than for any natural liking they have for it;" and Gordon was straightway seized with an eager desire to acquire, as soon as possible, this eminently manly and social habit.

Accordingly, in a few days he had purchased a few trial cigars, and was doing his best to overcome his strong natural dislike to tobacco, as well as the deadly

sickness he underwent whenever he indulged in the pleasant recreation of smoking it.

He was careful, however, to discipline himself in the acquisition of this valuable accomplishment out of sight of his sister and also of Mrs. Green, whose sturdy rebukes he felt particularly unwilling to encounter; "she mixes up so much religion with them," he would often say to himself, while striving to escape her remonstrances.

In all his sickness and discomfort, however, which, like too many other aspirants for the same enviable attainment, Gordon was forced to endure without sympathy or succor, he was sustained by the thought that in a few months, at the very furthest, he would be able to surprise his brother-in-law by showing him that he could manage a cigar almost as well as himself; and this, Gordon felt, was about as high an accomplishment as could be acquired, unless, possibly, it might be the Colonel's graceful management of the wine-glass, which he daily watched with admiring envy.

Thus the winter passed over Prairie House; a winter eventful for very little in the outward aspect of things, yet one fraught with momentous consequences to at least two of its inmates—Amy and her brother.

The former, instead of rising to the measure of the responsibilities she had assumed, instead of striving in prayerful earnestness to cast around her husband and brother the restraints which a steadfast Christianity would have enabled her to cast, was weakly closing her eyes to the faults of the boy—faults which she had neglected to correct until they had grown too strong for her to grapple with—and, what was even more deplorable, was settling down to the moral level of her husband, instead of striving by the almost irresistible power of a prayerful life and a holy example to draw him up to what should have been her own.

The wine-cup was no longer a source of anxiety, since, as she believed, it was being successfully with-

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held from Gordon, except when its effect was observable upon her husband; and as such occasions were rare, and those effects slight, she came in a short time to regard the use of wine as one of those genteel customs that must necessarily be adopted by genteel people; and concerning which it was prudent to say very little.

The Sabbath, which she had been brought up to revere as a holy day, sacred to the worship and service of God, and which, during the years that had intervened between her father's death and her own marriage, she had observed with some show of regard for its sanctities, had no higher significance in Prairie House than simply that of being a day of rest from the ordinary avocations of the week.

Colonel Ellisson occupied the time in reading the papers, smoking, eating and sleeping, interspersed with a variety of social games with Gordon, whom he was especially anxious should become an expert player. And in this he was not disappointed, for before the spring came round he had the gratification of seeing his pupil nearly as expert in the use of the cards, dice, etc., as he was himself.

Amy, who at first felt a little inclined to object to this item in the list of Gordon's polite accomplishments, as usual suffered the protest to be laughed down; and in a short time she not only ceased to remonstrate, but allowed herself to look on with undisguised interest.

Church-going was out of the question, except as the appearance of some distinguished speaker at one of the more fashionable churches gave the affair more than usual interest; otherwise, the master of Prairie House never attended; and Gordon, whose inclinations set in the same direction, was overjoyed in having secured the sanction of such a high example for his own already established practice; and as Amy found it easier to yield than to resist, she made but a faint show of opposition.

The church, of which she had been so long a mem-

ber, had borne for many years with her neglect of its services and ordinances; but at length they gave up the hope of her return to duty and loyalty to her obligations; and after the usual disciplinary measures had failed to produce any satisfactory result, her name was sorrowfully erased from its records.

Thus, with real, though unexpressed satisfaction, Amy found herself in a position to adapt her conduct to her changed relations with less obvious inconsistency; while the protest of conscience, at times, in early youth, so sharp and decided, but which had for years been growing weaker, was now seldom raised; or, if it ever gave her a momentary discomfort, was easily silenced.

But with Mrs. Green whose piety wore a very different complexion, the results of a change of worldly surroundings were different.

It did not take her long to see the way both Mrs. Ellisson and Gordon were drifting, and she did not scruple to interpose in a respectful way her homely but earnest protest. The former bore with her for a while in a kindly spirit; but, at length, finding that she was likely to be persistent, signified in a way not to be misunderstood that she should tolerate no further interference.

Gordon, who was fond of Mrs. Green, partly for her kind motherly treatment of him, and partly because she had always encouraged his fondness for Hope, on the ground that "a liking for a baby don't do a boy a bit of harm," seldom resorted to anything worse, in trying to turn aside her appeals and remonstrances, than his favorite entertainment of whistling.

At length, with many a prophetic shake of the head, Mrs. Green gave up what she had come to feel was a fruitless course of opposition to the prevailing tendencies of the household; and devoted herself with greater zeal and earnestness to the welfare of her little charge, for whose religious training she felt herself bound by a most sacred promise.

On Sundays, while the other members of the house-

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hold were wasting the day in dissipating pursuits, she and little Hope were seldom found, except at meal-time, outside of the nursery; and with the dawning of the child's earliest ideas, she sought with prayerful earnestness to infuse into her mind notions of right and wrong, and thoughts of the Great God who is in all places, and who sees and knows all the thoughts and actions of His creatures.

Her own little ones had left her at a very early age—only one having attained to an entire year of mortal life—and so this sweet baby that had come to her by such a strange providence seemed given her to rear for God; and she inly vowed that, by His help, she would train her up for His love and service.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

“WESTON!” The word rang sharp and clear through the cars as the afternoon train, westward bound, swept gracefully into the station, and a score or more of persons were quickly on their feet; newspapers were crushed into pockets or other receptacles, or flung aside as of no further account, while portmanteaus and baskets were hurriedly gathered up, and in a few minutes the steps of the cars were thronged with men and women *eagerly peering* among the jostling crowd *gathered upon the platform*, to catch glimpses of *expected faces*.

Foremost *among them all* was a tall, gentlemanly man, with an *unmistakably military bearing*, and as his eye swept the *line of carriages drawn up at the station*, a cluster of *eager faces* and a flutter of little hands brought a smile of *recognition* to his face, and the next moment he was entering the carriage, amid the ringing of merry voices, and the *gleeful clapping of hands*.

Colonel Ellisson, for it was he, gave a hand to his wife, and stooping to the bright upturned faces, bestowed a greeting kiss upon each, shook hands with

a tall, ruddy-faced youth who, with a smile of undisguised pleasure was waiting till his turn should come, and then, signalling to the driver, the reins were drawn up, and they were whirled rapidly away.

"Home again!" exclaimed Colonel Ellisson as the carriage halted before the open door of Prairie House, and springing lightly out, he lifted wife and baby in his strong arms, and running gaily up the steps, called, "Come on, chicks!" and the children scrambled after, with shouts and peals of laughter, followed by Gordon, with a little one clinging to each hand, whose baby feet were scarcely able to keep pace with the older ones in the merry race after "papa."

Let us enter and survey the group as, an hour or two later, they are gathered in the parlor, talking over the various events that have transpired since they have been separated.

Six years have elapsed since Amy became mistress of Prairie House, and those six years, as we may see, have been fraught with many changes.

Hope's are not now the only little feet whose patter is heard in the house, for there are now no less than four little ones younger than she. This evening, as she stands quietly beside her father's chair, listening to his conversation, with that look of shy reserve in her large brown eyes, so like her own mother's, she seems, though not yet eight years old, quite a mature little woman; with her grave, intellectual face and dignified manner, in such marked contrast to the romping, boisterous little people who climb his knee, or ride "horseback" upon his foot, or play him "peek-a-boo" from behind the chairs.

Lee, the eldest, is the picture of his father—overflowing with health and animal life, a teasing, tiresome, restless boy, his father's pride, and, as may easily be seen, his mother's favorite.

Augusta and Eva are twin sisters, little more than three years old; but, even at this early age, giving evidence of being as dissimilar in character as they are in person.

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Augusta, who passes for the elder, bears a marked resemblance to both her parents, yet, withal, is singularly unlike either. To her father's broad forehead and massive head she adds her mother's blue eyes and delicately formed nose; but her mouth is of firmer, prouder type, and every line and curve indicates a strong will—a nature not likely to be easily ruled.

Eva is small, delicately formed and fair, with a broad, low brow, around which clusters a profusion of rich, auburn hair. Her face is peculiarly sweet and intellectual, and the large gray eyes have in them somewhat of that far-away spiritual look which hints at once of genius and of early death.

Jack, the youngest—a stranger to his father, having been born soon after the latter left home—is a terror to all the children except Hope, between whom and himself there seems to be a singular affinity of feeling, quite unaccountable upon any ground of similarity, either in appearance or disposition. Yet so it is; for in his most disagreeable moods he only needs Hope to make him gentle and compliant.

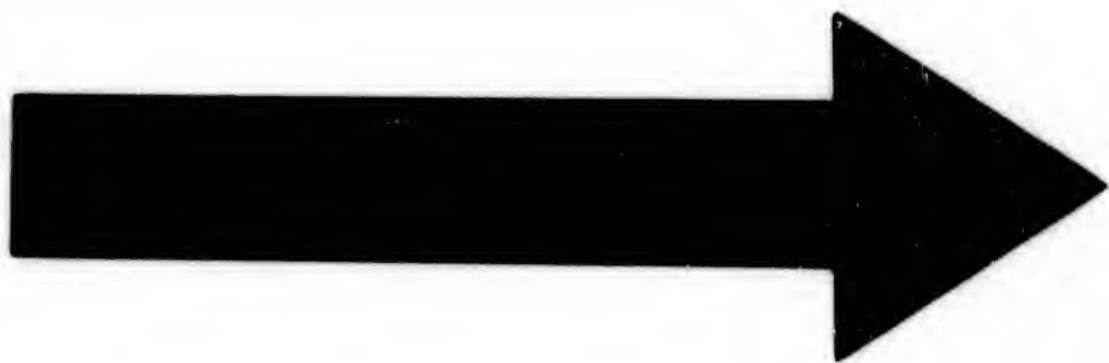
Jack is turbulent, exacting, never still day or night, except when exhausted nature is forced, in spite of itself as it were, to accept a brief interval of repose. Climbing, tumbling, roaring, or overflowing with irrepressible glee—nobody knows just what to do with Jack.

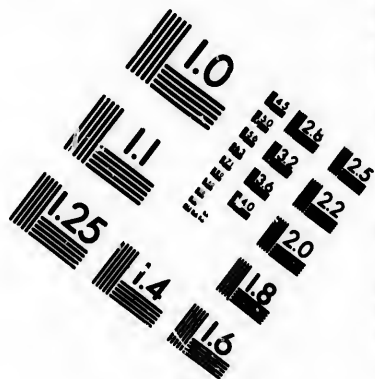
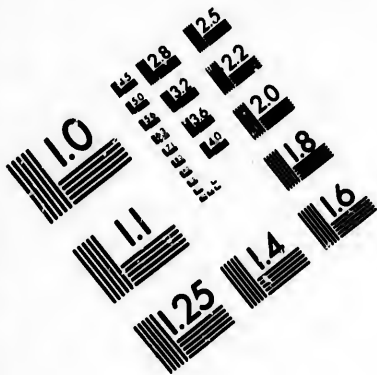
His father wrote home, when news first reached him of the child's birth, "His name must be John. As I have given to his brother the name of my model in military life, I shall give to this young gentleman the name of my domestic model, and call him after my father."

So the name of the baby is recorded John; but he is usually called Jack, in deference to Hope's sage remark, that "John is too gentle a name for him—he can never be anything but Jack while he is such a rowdy."

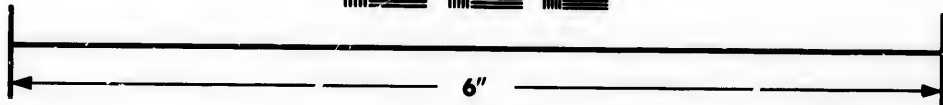
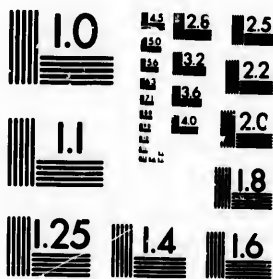
Jack has just learned to balance himself fairly upon his two legs; and to-night is doing his best, with the







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other children, to entertain his father; evidently never dreaming that he is an entire stranger to that stately individual, and that it is only proper he should wait until he is acquainted before making such a lavish display of his infantile graces.

If we look closely at Colonel Ellisson, we shall notice several changes in him that at first we failed to observe. Is it the sun of that semi-tropical clime where he has sojourned for more than a year, that has flushed his naturally fair complexion with that deeper, darker hue which shows in such fiery contrast to the white hand of his little daughter, as it rests so lovingly at times upon his neck and cheek?

He is changed, too, in form as well as in complexion; and, since taking his tea, is not quite what he was before. There is a glitter in his eyes, and he has a nervous restlessness of manner that he had not a few hours ago; yet none seem to notice it. Possibly they failed to observe that he emptied his glass more than once—more than twice even; but if they did, doubtless they are not seeking to trace effects to-night.

The dearly loved, the long absent one is at home once more; and they are all happy—too happy to notice the shadow that keener and more observant eyes might detect.

Ah! wine is *indeed* a mocker, a deceiver, a serpent masked, that steals in ever-narrowing circles upon its victim, and holds him ever under the fascination of its glittering eye, until at length the tightening coils are around his throat, and human aid is impotent to break the fatal bond. A few unavailing struggles, and the wretched victim dies; and the unsated monster glides steadily on in search of other prey.

Amy is not perceptibly changed for the worse during these six years of married life. The lines of care and anxious thought are even less apparent than they were before she became Mrs. Ellisson; and with the rosy little ones that have gathered around her feet, she seems to have gathered back the bloom and fresh-

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ness of her youth ; while the natural buoyancy of her disposition, checked almost in childhood by adverse causes, has sprung into new and vigorous life under the same gladdening influence.

As for Gordon, his avowed purpose of six years ago, to rival his brother-in-law in stature is not yet accomplished ; though from present appearances it is likely to be, at no very remote period. But, though he has not yet realized his wish in this respect, there are others in which his ambition is more nearly gratified ; and he now fancies himself about as graceful a smoker and as skilful a player as his model.

For two or three years his sister stood between him and the use of wine at home ; but as he grew older the restraints were gradually relaxed ; and when Colonel Ellisson was at home Gordon was usually invited to partake. How could he do otherwise ? he would sometimes ask, in reply to the feeble remonstrances of his wife. Gordon was almost a man—he could not think of always treating him as a child ! And so Gordon had been treated *as a man* ; and probably that very judicious treatment would have resulted in the manly effect of a decided craving for stimulating drinks, had he possessed any morbid or hereditary tendencies in that direction. As it was, he had no special relish for intoxicating liquors, and consequently seldom tasted them ; hence he was proportionately slow in forming a habit of the manliness and dignity of which he still retained very exalted ideas.

At the usual hour Mrs. Green and Norah appeared to conduct the children to their rooms, and the older people were left alone.

“I am exceedingly glad, my dear,” said Mrs. Ellisson, resuming her seat after dismissing the children for the night, “that you did not disappoint us again, as you did a month ago, for I have invited some friends for to-morrow evening in honor of your coming. By the way, here is a letter in my pocket, which I have had since early in the afternoon. In the general rejoicing over your arrival, I had quite forgotten it.”

"Well, read it at your leisure, Amy. In the meantime Gordon and I will adjourn to the smoking-room—I believe those irrepressible youngsters have tired me."

Amy took the letter from her pocket, and narrowly examined the post-mark.

"From Maine—that is odd enough!" she mused; "there is no one in Maine that I know anything about. 'Leeds, Leeds, Anthony Leeds'—why, that is strange!" she continued, as her eyes rested upon the name at the bottom of the page, and then unfolding it she read:—

"MY DEAR NIECE,—You will, doubtless, be surprised at receiving a letter from one claiming to be your uncle, of whom you possibly once knew something, but of whose existence, even, you must for many years have been wholly ignorant.

"Possibly, in your childhood your father may have told you of a little brother whom he left in that 'd homestead with his parents, the youngest, and, except himself, the only surviving one of a large family.

"I barely remember your father. For a few years after he left them, our parents received occasional letters from him; but they both died suddenly not far from the same time, and I, then a mere child, was brought by a distant relative of my mother's to this State, and by him adopted and educated as his own child.

"By the time I was old enough to feel any special interest in the fact that I had an elder brother, I found myself unable to trace him; his letters had all been lost in the breaking up of our home, and, as I grew older, new interests and associations gradually dimmed or effaced the memory of those older ones which existed only among the shadowy recollections of my early childhood.

"Some time before completing my collegiate studies, I became a Christian; and, with the kind approval of my dear uncle, as I called him, I at once turned my attention to preparation for the work of the ministry, and in due time settled with the people to whom I now minister.

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"Not long ago a gentleman from your town, in the prosecution of business, visited this place; and, being detained over Sabbath, came to worship with us. Learning the name of the speaker, he called on me the next day, because, as he said, I bore the name of one who had been his pastor for several years, and he wished to learn if we were anything to each other.

"From this interview I gathered a good deal of the history of my long-lost brother and his family; and now I am going to visit his children with as little delay as possible. I expect, all being well, to be in your town as early as the fifteenth inst. Trusting to see you then, I am, though unknown to you all,

"Yours very sincerely,

"ANTHONY LEEDS."

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## CHAPTER XV.

"WHAT news do you suppose I received in my letter last night, Gordon?" enquired Mrs. Ellisson, as her brother took his seat at the breakfast table the following morning.

"It is not likely I would ever guess; but I hope something that gives you pleasure. What is it, Amy?"

"It is that we are about to be favored with a visit from the Rev. Anthony Leeds, of Maine."

"Leeds, Amy; is he anything to us?"

"Read for yourself, Gordon, and you will know all about it," said Mrs. Ellisson, handing him her uncle's letter.

"The fifteenth—why, Hugh, isn't that to-day?"

"To be sure it is, Amy,—what of it?"

"This, then, is the day he is coming; how unfortunate! it is the evening of our party!"

"Why do you say 'unfortunate,' Amy? I think it is happening very nicely. You will be delighted, I am sure, to welcome your uncle among your other friends."

"I am not so sure of that!" and Mrs. Ellisson looked

perplexed and anxious. "Being an old man and a minister, too, he may not feel particularly at home in a gay party and among so many strangers."

"Trust him for that, Amy! ministers like gay society and good cheer as well as other folks. I, for one, am glad he has hit upon a time for seeing us at our best."

"If we only knew him, Hugh! but suppose —" Mrs. Ellisson checked the remark that was rising to her lips, for she never alluded to her father's poverty, and the possibility of her uncle's being as poor as he had been, was, at that moment, anything but a pleasant thought.

"Suppose what, Amy?"

At this instant Gordon came opportunely to his sister's relief by remarking, as he returned the letter, "He cannot be 'an old man,' Amy, judging from what he says here—probably not half a dozen years your own senior. I hope he looks like father; I am often wishing I could know how he looked."

Mrs. Ellisson did not reply. Her thoughts were elsewhere; and as soon as breakfast was over, she hurried away to give directions in reference to preparations for the evening.

The truth was, she was not a little disturbed at the prospect of having this newly discovered relative dropping in upon them at such a time; for, in addition to the uncomfortable dread of his being poor and unable to make a favorable impression upon the minds of her husband and guests, there was another thought which disturbed her even more.

She remembered well her father's high-toned religious character, his opinion of the indulgences and amusements she had since learned not only to countenance, but participate in, and the probability of meeting one like-minded in regard to those things at such a time filled her with anxiety, which only increased as the day wore on. She at length, however, as evening approached, and he did not come, solaced

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herself with the thought that probably he might not reach Weston till the following day; or, if he should arrive, he might be tired, and unprepared to meet so many strangers, and therefore would gladly avail himself of permission to retire to his room at once.

Persuading herself that what she so much desired must certainly take place, she at last quite dismissed the matter from her thoughts, and looked forward to the approaching festivities with an easier mind.

Evening came at length; one by one the guests arrived, and by ten o'clock the brilliantly lighted drawing-room was filled with the beauty and wealth of Weston.

Mrs. Ellisson had dressed herself for the occasion with even more than usual care. As she moved among her guests, the most faultlessly attired and the most richly jewelled lady of the company, all eyes were bent upon her with admiration, while many a sigh of envy was breathed by those who would gladly have outshone her; and, as her husband whispered a flattering compliment in her ear, she believed herself truly the happiest woman, not alone in Weston, but in the whole world. The next moment, however, her joy was damped by a message that was brought her that a stranger was below who wished to speak to her. Glancing at the card that was handed her, she saw that it indeed bore the name she least wished to see; and with no little trepidation she hastened to meet her guest.

The mental picture of her uncle that Mrs. Ellisson formed while descending to the library was anything but flattering. As she saw him thus, he was a plain, elderly man, with a bald head and a stoop in his shoulders, travel-stained and untidy, shy of manner and slow of speech, altogether a different sort of person from the one she would be proud to introduce to the brilliant assemblage she had just left; but she started with surprise, as she entered the room, to see how unlike her hastily-formed ideal was the man who advanced to meet her.

He was above the medium height, well-formed and erect, with a handsome face that still bore the bloom and freshness of one yet on the sunny side of middle age, and with that unmistakable something in his countenance and bearing which instantly commands respect and deference.

Though differing in many respects from her own father, Amy saw at a glance that he could be no other than what he professed to be, that father's younger brother. There were the same serious, commanding eyes, the same large, but delicately-formed mouth, and the same dignified poise of the head, which had been her one special admiration in her own father.

With a feeling of diffidence she could not conceal, Mrs. Ellisson approached her uncle, and extended her hand.

"I am glad to meet my brother's daughter," said Mr. Leeds, with a pleasant smile; "I hope you received my letter in good time."

"I only received it last night, sir; so I am not quite as well prepared for your coming as I could wish. I am, however, very happy to see you, and make your acquaintance. I see so much resemblance in you to my dear papa that you hardly need an introduction."

"And yet I fear my arrival is a little inopportune," said Mr. Leeds, still quietly scanning his niece's face with eyes that seemed to read more than Amy would willingly have had revealed, "I see you are engaged with company."

"That need not make the slightest difference, sir," said Mrs. Ellisson hastily; although in her heart she knew it made all the difference in the world; and that she would give almost anything to hear him say he would like to be shown at once to his room. "I had invited a few friends in honor of my husband's return after a long absence from home, before I received your letter; but if you are weary and would prefer the quiet of your own room to meeting company, I will send up refreshments, and you can be quite alone."

"That is just as you please, Mrs. Ellisson," said Mr.

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Leeds, still without withdrawing his gaze, "I am not weary, as I had a long rest in town before coming here; but I shall be happy either to retire to my room, or meet your friends as you may prefer."

It seemed to Amy that there was a slight touch of irony in her uncle's tones, and she answered hastily: "Then I shall have great pleasure in introducing you; but first of all allow me to call my husband and brother. It will be pleasanter for both you and them to meet here than among strangers."

Amy soon returned with Colonel Ellisson and Gordon, whom she presented to her uncle, and after a few minutes' conversation they all proceeded to the drawing-room, and soon after supper was announced.

Mrs. Ellisson had spared neither pains nor expense to make the entertainment a grand success; and nothing that either wealth or taste could contribute to gratify the eye or tempt the appetite was wanting. Colonel Ellisson was in the best of spirits, the guests were charmed with the lavish hospitality of their entertainers; toasts were drank in the costliest of liquors in honor of the happy return of the host; and then the company withdrew, and music, dancing, and other amusements filled up the remaining time until a late hour, when the guests dispersed, and Mrs. Ellisson was left alone amid the solitary magnificence of her deserted rooms.

Mr. Leeds had retired an hour after supper, Gordon, as soon as the company began to break up; and as the last carriage rolled away, Colonel Ellisson, who had drunk more freely than usual, made haste, while he was yet able, to gain the privacy of his own room.

Amy seated herself for a little while in her deserted drawing-room, weary and dissatisfied. The evening had brought her little pleasure, and a great deal of pain. Thoughts that for years she had succeeded in banishing crowded fast upon her, and would not be turned away. The sight of that brother of her buried father, so many of whose lineaments she had been able to trace in him, called up recollections of that

Mr.

father from which she would gladly have escaped; while those old words of warning, of caution and advice which he had uttered in the far-away years seemed again ringing their earnest, pleading protest in her ears.

She had furtively watched her uncle's face during supper, and had not failed to notice his look of surprise and pain as the wine went round; and especially when she had raised the cup to her lips in response to a toast in honor of her husband, that had been given.

She had observed the pallor that overspread his face as Gordon lifted and drained his glass; and now, as she sat there alone, she seemed again to hear the voice of her father crying to her from the past like the wail of a breaking heart: "O Amy! as you love your mother's memory, as you value your father's blessing, keep my boy out of the path of this terrible temptation!"

With a suppressed groan she sprang to her feet and hurried to her room. As she passed her uncle's door she saw that his light was still burning; and, pausing for a moment, she heard him pacing the floor with the slow, measured step of one too sorely disquieted to think of seeking repose in sleep.

Passing on, she glanced into Hope's room, and there, kneeling by the bed-side of the sleeping child, was the humble woman, who had never since she came to reside under her roof faltered in her Christian integrity, wrestling in prayer for the child—doubtless for the children—for whom she, the mother, had no prayer.

Entering the nursery, she saw her four little ones nestled down in the sweetness of their innocent repose; and the sight seemed to smite as with an iron hand upon her heart, as the unbidden thought forced itself upon her, that a few years might mar it all.

She fled to her own room only to encounter a worse pang; for there, in the heavy slumber of partial inebriation lay her husband, his face ablaze with the fiery imprint of the cruel appetite that was destroying him.

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Mrs. Ellisson dashed aside her jewels with a reckless hand, cast off in desperate haste the rich drapery of the evening, extinguished the lamp, whose soft light seemed almost to madden her, and made haste to seek repose from thought in the oblivion of sleep.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

MR. LEEDS was roused from an unrefreshing sleep by the sound of children's voices ; and as soon as he was dressed he flung open his window, and walked out upon a balcony that overlooked the garden, in order to watch the little ones at their early sports.

Mrs. Green, who was an early riser, had accustomed the children to a morning walk as a reward for going early to bed ; and they soon learned to value a privilege so congenial to the spirit of childhood.

In watching the sports of the little ones and listening to their merry voices, Mr. Leeds felt the sadness that had settled upon his spirits during the previous night gradually dispelled, and the gloomy forebodings that had filled his mind were for a little while forgotten.

At length, taking his hat, he descended with a quiet step to the garden, and joined them.

"Good morning, sir," said Mrs. Green, in response to his kindly greeting ; "I never thought about your having that room up there, or I should have taken the children somewhere else. I dare say you were tired, and wanted to sleep."

"Not at all ; I am fond of being out early ; and seeing the children, I could not deny myself the pleasure of coming down and sharing their enjoyment. That is right ; come along," he continued, extending his hands to Jack, who, always eager to cultivate new acquaintances, was stretching his arms to be taken ; "will these little folks all shake hands with me ?" and each one, with childlike frankness, gave him a willing

hand, except Hope, who, with a touch of womanly reserve, still kept her place beside her nurse.

"I wonder if this little girl has no good-morning for me?" said Mr. Leeds, observing her shyness of manner.

"I do not know you, sir," said Hope, timidly, "unless, perhaps, you are mamma's uncle, who she said was coming."

"Yes, dear; that is just who I am."

"And Gordon's uncle, too?"

"Yes."

"Oh, then I shall like you ever so much," and Hope came forward with a bright smile; for whoever was a friend to Gordon had a ready passport to the goodwill of Hope.

"I supposed I was uncle to all these little people; are they not all Mrs. Ellisson's children?"

"The four are, sir," replied the nurse, pointing to the younger ones; "the mother of this little dear died before she was two days old."

"Then Colonel Ellisson has been twice married?"

"Yes, sir." And Mrs. Green added no more, for it was against her principles "to be telling family matters to everybody." "Mebby you'd like to walk around a little while; everything is lovely just now," she added, a minute after.

"I see it is;" and Mr. Leeds handed the reluctant Jack back to his nurse, and walked quietly away.

"I begin to think I shall find myself in everybody's way here," he sighed as he moved pensively on; "I could not help fancying that Mrs. Ellisson felt my coming last night very unseasonable, notwithstanding her well-bred assurance to the contrary, and this morning I am not less a restraint among the children. But I have a duty to perform before I leave this house—a debt I owe to my dead brother, who, I cannot believe, ever dreamt of his children being seen as I saw them last night. When that is done, I shall hasten back to dear New England, a sadder man than I was before I came."

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"Please, sir," said a sweet voice at his side, "nurse said I should come and walk with you, for she said she was afraid you were feeling lonely; would you like to have me?"

"Yes, my darling, I should like it very much indeed! Nurse is very kind; but are you not afraid you will feel it dull to leave your brothers and sisters, and walk with an old man like me?"

"You are not an old man, you are nice!" and the little girl looked up at the kindly face with genuine admiration—"besides, I like to be with big folks better than with children. Mamma says I am a little old woman; and I guess I must be, for Jacky always minds me!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Leeds, smiling; "and doesn't Jacky mind any one else?"

"Not if he can help it, sir; but here comes Lee—I guess he wants to help keep you company, too;" and, giving up to her brother the hand she held, Hope walked quietly to the other side.

Listening to the prattle of the children, Mr. Leeds soon half forgot the burden at his heart, and the time slipped away almost unnoticed until the ringing of a bell summoned the little ones to their breakfast.

"That is our bell!" exclaimed Hope, withdrawing her hand and snatching her brother's, "and we must run, or Norah will be calling us lazy; your bell will ring in half an hour!" she added, over her shoulder, and in a minute they were lost from sight among the winding paths of the garden.

"Good morning, uncle!" said Gordon, emerging from behind a clump of lilacs. "I discovered you were out, so I set off in search of you. I hope you are rested."

"Quite so, thank you. I am glad to see that you, too, relish the morning air, it is one of my special delights;" and Mr. Leeds gazed admiringly at the bright young face, so fresh and rosy with health and exercise; but the smile faded quickly as he remembered the previous evening and its dissipating pleasures.

"Yes, I always liked the morning; it's glorious to be out just when the sun is rising and the birds waking up. How do you like our prairies, uncle? I presume they are new to you."

"Their vastness oppresses me a little. I soon tire of boundlessness, and begin to wish for variety; a forest, a river, a stretch of breezy upland sinking away into a green, quiet valley among hills, with here and there glimpses of distant waters—or a broad table-land outlined with blue and purple mountains. I think, Gordon, if I lived on the prairie, I should be always craving—craving—for something to rest the eye and the mind upon."

"Well, uncle, I never have seen anything but prairie, and I like it; it suits me splendidly. Still, I think, too, I'd like to see mountains; it must be grand to get up six or eight thousand feet, and look off over the surrounding country!"

"Would you like to visit New England, Gordon?"

"Wouldn't I, though! I mean to travel some by-and-by, when I get through my studies, if I can scrape together enough money."

"How much longer have you to study, Gordon?"

"That depends, of course, upon what I do. The Colonel and Amy are anxious I should take a college-course, and I rather like the idea myself; though it seems, after all, like making a big hole in a fellow's life—taking four or more solid years out of it."

"Are you quite prepared for college?"

"I think so; if I go at all, I suppose I'll make a start this fall."

"Where do you intend to go?"

"I've no idea, uncle; Amy says Harvard or Yale; but I guess our western colleges are good enough for me. That's the breakfast-bell, uncle, but I'm sure I don't want any; last night's foolery has taken the appetite all out of me, and given me a furious headache!"

Mr. Leeds looked at him sadly. Could it be, that bright, young creature standing thus upon the thresh-

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old of manhood—neither boy nor man—gazing out upon the vast sea of life with all the restless activities of the one, yet without the settled purposes of the other; could it be, that that young, buoyant life should be wrecked in the outset of its perilous voyage by the demon of drink?

He stopped short under the pressure of the overwhelming thought, and, without pausing to give the second thought to what he was about to say, exclaimed:

“Come home with me, Gordon, to New England, and be my son! I will educate you! I will be a father to you; come with me!”

In the intenseness of his emotion he held out his hand; and Gordon, bewildered by the suddenness of the appeal, laid his hand in that of his uncle, with a strange yearning to say Yes, but the word did not come.

There are moments replete with destiny—moments upon which hinge, not alone the whole future of this life, but the eternity beyond. They come and pass, little heeded at the time, perhaps, but from every step in the individual's after-course he may look back and see all his paths radiating from that one point. Suddenly, unperceived, it may be, his path broke off; and in an instant he stood face to face with scenes, pursuits, lines of thought and action before undreamt of. Henry they whose life-course thus reversed takes an upward direction, tending ever higher; but alas, too often it is not so; and from that moment dates eternal ruin!

Mr. Leeds tightened his grasp for a moment upon the hand, and his strong frame shook with suppressed feeling, as the longing to drag the boy away from his perilous surroundings swept over him like a tempest; but, with an effort at self-control of which only a strong nature is capable, he relaxed his grasp, and drawing Gordon's hand within his arm turned toward the house.

“Think of it, my boy,” he said, after a brief silence; “think the matter over carefully, and tell me by-and-

by. I spoke just now under the pressure of emotions that you cannot understand, and which I cannot at present explain to you; but believe me, Gordon, I meant it, and mean it still. I want you to go home with me; I am not willing to leave you behind; but, as I said, think of it, and when you have had time for reflection we will talk of it again."

Mrs. Ellisson met her uncle, as he entered the breakfast-room, with a show of cordiality that took him a little by surprise; so different was it from the constrained politeness of the previous evening.

The ordeal she had so much dreaded was past; and with her usual facility for casting off impressions, she had dismissed the thoughts that appalled her amidst the solitary dreariness of night; and the morning found her calm, placid, unconcerned.

"I hope, uncle, you find yourself rested this morning," she said, showing him a seat. "You will have the goodness to excuse Colonel Ellisson from breakfast, if you please. He is not quite rested yet from the fatigue of his journey, and after the late hour of retiring last night, he is inclined to sleep."

Mrs. Ellisson seated herself at the head of the table, and was proceeding to pour the coffee, when, suddenly recollecting herself, she looked up and met her uncle's eye. She reddened, and would have apologized, but he did not wait for her to do so. Raising his right hand with an impressive gesture, he bowed his head, and in a few, solemn and well-chosen words, invoked God's blessing upon the food.

Mr. Leeds did not look up at either his niece or Gordon. He felt certain he had done what was an unusual thing at Mrs. Ellisson's table, but he did not wish to seem conscious of it. He, therefore, waited quietly until he was served, and then, with ready tact, drew them both into conversation; and thus the half-hour, which had threatened to be one of awkwardness and constraint, passed pleasantly away.

When breakfast was over, Mr. Leeds withdrew to

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the library to write some letters, Gordon had errands to do in town for his sister, and Mrs. Ellisson went away to spend an hour with the children.

After dinner, Colonel Ellisson ordered the carriage, and his wife and himself accompanied their guest for a drive around their beautiful estate, while Gordon remained to give Hope a ride on the back of a pony which her father had sent her as a birthday gift. At evening, accompanied by the children, they all went for a walk through the garden and grounds; and as the dew began to fall, Mrs. Ellisson returned to the house with the little ones, Colonel Ellisson allowed Hope to coax him away to see some birds' nests she had had the extraordinary good fortune to discover, and Gordon and his uncle were left alone.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

"WELL, Gordon," said his uncle, after a little talk upon indifferent topics, "have you given any thought to my proposal of this morning?"

"Yes, uncle, ever so much. The truth is, I've thought of little else; and the more I think about it, the funnier it seems!"

"How so, Gordon?"

"Why, uncle, you don't know anything about me! I might be the biggest scapegrace in the West for aught you know; you can't say but that I would disgrace you in a month, or half the time, for that matter!"

"True, Gordon, I have thought of all that; but I want you to go with me notwithstanding. I have several daughters, but no son—a pleasant home, plenty of property for all of us, and if, for special reasons of my own, I wish to assume the responsibility of your education, and run my own risk in the matter, who shall object, provided you are willing?"

"Well, Uncle Leeds, you see I am not a goodish sort of a fellow, such as you have been used to; and I'm

not going to pretend I am. Father died before I could remember him; and the fact is, I've grown up a pretty lawless youth. Amy did what she could for me; but, as soon as I got up a little, I concluded not to be controlled by a girl; boys don't like that sort of thing, you know; and I very soon learned the trick of managing her a good deal better than she did me. Not but that I liked her well enough; but of course, when I found I could get my own way by teasing her or laughing at her, I did it; and so managed to have my own way pretty generally.

"When she married and came here, of course I came with her; and the Colonel, a jolly, good fellow, just made a companion of me, and I liked him, and copied him to the utmost of my ability. I had no restraints of any kind placed upon me; and having an idea I was uncommonly smart, I put on airs accordingly. That's the way I've come up, uncle; and now it isn't likely that, with my lawless fashions, and your strict notions of things, you and I would hitch at all!" and Gordon struck his heel into the gravel path with as much decision as though the clash had come, and he were preparing to face it.

"You see, uncle, I am not going to try and hide the truth. I am not one of your proper people. I have habits and fashions that would shock you a dozen times a day. We're none of us religious here, unless it's Green, and she *is*--no mistake about that. Of course, father was; he was one of your kind, you know; and Amy used to be, but she got over all that long ago. Ever since she married the Colonel she's conformed to him in everything--he's religion, and law, and everything else to her. Why, uncle, I never go to church, nor read the Bible; but I can smoke, and play cards, and tip the glass when it suits me, as you saw me do last night; think of that, and you a preacher! and Gordon reddened in spite of his intended bravado.

"I am certainly obliged to you for your candor, Gordon. I do not understand you as intending to boast of

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these things, but as merely stating them in order that there be no misconception on my part; and your honesty in the matter makes me the more confident that, when you come to see—as of course you will—that those habits must all prove fatal barriers to your success in life, you will be equally honest with yourself in breaking them off. Your father was a brave, strong man; it is not for a moment to be supposed you will be less so than he!" Gordon winced under his uncle's eyes; he had given a turn to the thought Gordon neither expected nor intended. He had begun his speech with a measure of self-importance that had, somehow, grown smaller as he went on; and while his uncle was speaking he had felt himself rapidly dwarfing down immeasurably below anything he had felt himself to be for many a day.

"But, leaving all this personal matter out of the question," continued Mr. Leeds, "how do you feel about going? are you unwilling to try it?"

"I can't quite say that, uncle; but I don't like the idea of being dependent. I've told the Colonel more than once that I won't be dependent upon him for an education; and I don't like the notion any better of being dependent upon you. The fact is, I am rather old to be adopted! I'd like to paddle my own canoe; but the trouble is, I am worth nothing but the farm that was my father's, and that I can't get possession of for some time to come; and even if I could, I wouldn't like to sell it, for it is rising rapidly in value, and in a few years will be worth twice what it is now. Besides father and mother, and all the children but Amy and I are buried there, which makes me feel as though I'd like to keep it always. Amy says she has some money saved up for me to begin upon; but I know part of it, at least, is money she herself worked for and earned years ago; and I don't want to touch it. She brought me up and that is enough for her to do, I think."

"Well, Gordon, if you want to be independent in those matters—a very laudable ambition, indeed—I

can put you in the way of it. I will advance money for your education, and you shall, when of age, give the farm in security, until you are able to redeem it by paying back the money. There is a first-class college in the town where I reside; you can board in my family upon easy terms, and when you have completed the course there, a year or two at Yale will make you a finished scholar."

"That all sounds well, uncle, and I am ever so much obliged for your kind interest in me; but there's this in the way, and you don't seem to see it at all,"—and Gordon again struck his heel impatiently into the gravel; "I am not of your sort—you are religious, and I am not; what's more, don't want to be. You would be trying to make a Christian of me, and that would make me contrary. You wouldn't like me, and I shouldn't like you, if you teased me about religion; that's just how it is, uncle. Excuse me, but I think it's best we should understand each other!"

"I understand you, Gordon, perfectly. Your feeling is much what I should expect; and your frank avowal of it has a ring of honest-heartedness in it that I esteem very highly. And now I will not be less candid with you. I shall certainly feel very anxious to see you a Christian; I could not be a Christian myself, and not desire to see you one. But as for *making* you one, that is out of the question—God alone can do that. We have certain household regulations—such as having every member of the family present at worship, punctual at meals, regularly in bed at the established hours, all which regulations we deem important to health or morality; and it will certainly please me very much to have you comply with them.

"It will gratify me, too, to have you adopt the rule of being always at church, either where I minister, or at some other place of worship which I might advise. There are certain habits, too, Gordon—I need not name them, your own mind will readily suggest what I mean—that I should long intensely to see you break

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off. But I shall neither command nor insist. You are of an age to see clearly what is for your interest and what is not; and I trust your desire to please me, and to do what is right, simply because it is right—not to say for your own best interests—will be amply sufficient without any wordy interference on my part.

"I shall desire your confidence in everything. I shall wish to advise you as I would my son, and have you defer to me as though I were your father; but I would like it all to be for love's sake, Gordon, and not of constraint. Does all this seem hard—unreasonable?"

"No, uncle, nothing of the kind; and if I could only believe it possible for you ever to like such a fellow as I am, I wouldn't hesitate to say Yes to your kind offer!"

"What if I were to tell you I like you now, notwithstanding your frank admissions concerning yourself?"

"I should say you were out of your head!" said Gordon, laughing.

"Well, 'out of my head' or not, Gordon, believe me honest when I say I do like you, and want you to go with me, and see whether it is not possible for you to like me—to put me, to a certain extent, in the place of the father whom you have lost.

"If you want to be placed upon an independent footing in respect to means, it shall be done; and if, after you have tried it, you are not content to remain in New England, you shall return West whenever you choose.

"And now, think the matter over carefully, and, if possible, let me know in the morning, as I do not wish to remain more than one more day, unless it be to wait for you to get ready. Act freely, Gordon, so that you may have nothing to regret; at the same time, be guided by judgment and not by feeling;" and, taking his nephew's arm, Mr. Leeds walked slowly to the house, and in a short time retired to his own room.

Gordon communicated his uncle's proposal to his

sister and Colonel Ellisson; and, meeting no serious opposition from them, retired to his own room to think the matter over.

In the morning, after a little more consultation and talk, he made up his mind what to do; and, when his uncle appeared at breakfast, informed him that his decision was made, and that he could be ready whenever he required it. Their departure was accordingly settled upon for the following day; and Gordon, with his usual impetuosity, was soon thoroughly engrossed with his packing and other preparations for his journey.

"Just think of it, youngsters," he said to the children, who had followed Mrs. Green, whose aid he had successfully invoked—"just think of it; your uncle Gord. is going off to be gone for four whole years, and may be more! Aren't you sorry?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted Lee and his sisters, while Jack indicated his assent to what the others were saying by certain vigorous grunts and nods which ended in a fit of very inappropriate laughter, which outburst Jack evidently thought altogether suitable to the occasion.

"And what do you think of your uncle's going?" continued Gordon, turning to Hope.

"You are not my uncle, you know you're not; you are just Gordon and nothing else!" answered Hope, between a pout and a smile—it was the only point upon which Gordon ever teased Hope. "I don't think," she added, sadly, as she ran her fingers through Gordon's chestnut curls, "if you go away I shall ever care any more for Nobby; it won't be at all nice to have anybody else teach me to ride!" and Hope retreated to a window to hide the tears that were fast gathering under the dark eye-lashes.

"Bless your soft, little heart!" exclaimed Gordon, upsetting in his haste a chair-load of books, and kneeling beside the forlorn little maiden, nearly as hard pressed as she to control his tears, "if you cry, I won't go a step; do you hear me, Hope?"

"Oh, yes, you must go, Gordon! Nurse says she's

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very *glad* you are going; and if it weren't best, she wouldn't say that any more than I would!"

"But if you cry, I won't!"

"I'm not going to cry, Gordon; but I don't think I shall ever care for Nobby any more. Lee likes him, and papa will not care if I give Nobby to him, since I can't ride him myself."

"Nelson can teach you to ride as well as I can. You needn't care about my going away, if that's all!"

Hope's great eyes brimmed over. Gordon had hurt her; but she said, very quietly —

"It isn't all, Gordon, but Nobby will make me cry thinking of—of—" and the sentence was broken short by sobs.

"Hope Ellisson! look here, old girl; I didn't mean that, you know I didn't. Now if you keep on crying, I shall give it all up, and stay at home. You know I'd sooner cry myself than see you cry!"

Hope wiped her eyes quickly, and with a strong effort, answered bravely—

"I shall not cry any more, Gordon. I'm sure it's best for you to go, or nurse wouldn't say so. See, I am going to help you pack!" and without the slightest judgment, she began piling book after book into the trunk, while Gordon sat by watching the proceeding, without the heart to check her.

"That'll do, dearie, that'll do!" said Mrs. Green, entering with an armful of clothing; "you run and talk to Jacky now, like a good little girl, and I will do that every bit as well as you can!"

Hope appreciated commendation, and looking up with a pleased smile, she hurried away to mind Jacky, while Gordon, with an awkward attempt to whistle down the lump in his throat, went on with his packing in a vain show of doing well what he knew would all have to be done over again.

"There, Gordy, now," said Mrs. Green at length, "don't you bother yourself another bit with that packin'; I shall have plenty of time to do it all myself. Suppose you go and show Nobby to the children, and

treat Hope to a little bit of a ride. She aint very well this morning; a kind o' babyish like about you goin' away, she added in a whisper; and calling the children, and perching Jack upon his shoulder, Gordon gladly availed himself of the privilege.

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### CHAPTER XVIII.

"I SHOULD like to visit your father's grave, Amy, before I return home, and see the cottage, too, where he lived and died. Gordon pointed it out to me across the fields, but I want a nearer view. Can you not go with me this evening?"

"Yes, uncle, I don't mind; though, indeed, I am very busy to-day; I dare say Gordon will be pleased to accompany you;" and Mrs. Ellisson glanced eagerly across the room for her brother's assent.

"Thank you, Amy; I shall probably have Gordon's company for some time to come, and I may never have yours again. Besides, I want to ask some particulars of your father's history which Gordon will know nothing about. Can you not possibly spend the time?"

"Oh, yes, uncle, if you wish it specially. I presume, Gordon, you would like to go with us? you will want to visit the old place before you go away."

"Excuse me, Amy, but if Gordon would be so kind, I would much prefer going with you alone!"

"Certainly, uncle. I shall go over for a few minutes in the morning before breakfast;" said Gordon, glad to be released; for he had promised Hope a nice long walk at evening. "By the way, Amy, I was showing uncle our private way across the fields. It will be a lovely walk just now."

"Very well, Gordon," said Mrs. Ellisson, with a vain effort to hide her chagrin; "I will be ready in a few minutes, uncle; you will please wait for me in the library;" and with a flushed, almost displeased face, Amy withdrew to prepare for the unwelcome interview with her uncle.

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During the whole of his stay she had studiously avoided giving him any opportunity for private conversation; and now the thought of being his sole escort to visit her father's grave and the cottage where he lived so long, of reviving old memories and impressions which she had so long striven to consign to oblivion, and the possibility of her uncle's conversation becoming personal to herself, filled her with unspeakable dread.

But there seemed no escape; and she fortified herself with a haughty resolution to treat any attempt he might make to direct her thoughts to the religious duties and obligations she had so long neglected, with silence, if not contempt.

"My own habits and those of my family are no concern of his; and I am not going to submit to any interference which, as my father's brother, he may deem himself at liberty to offer!" was her angry, half-defiant thought, as she descended to the library where her uncle was awaiting her.

Little was said between uncle and niece as they walked quietly across the fields that summer evening; for each was struggling with thoughts and feelings little in harmony with the sweet restfulness of nature—the former, for wisdom and grace to discharge a painful duty; the latter to fortify herself against any appeal in such a way as to repel and silence, without, at the same time, giving offence.

"And this is the grave of him who for many years was my only brother!" said Mr. Leeds, sadly, after he had stood for some time in silence beside the gray stone shaft upon which the names of that brother and so many of his family were inscribed.

"It seems strange to me to be here beside the last resting-place of one so near of kin, of whom, only a few months ago, I had not the slightest trace. Of course, you remember your father, Amy!"

"Oh, yes, uncle; I was nearly eighteen when he died!"

"Be so kind, then—we have two or three hours of

daylight yet—as to sit down and tell me all you can about him, how he looked, what were his habits, the Christian work he accomplished, his sickness and death—anything, in short, that you can remember. I would like to return home with some definite idea of one who was long the only link that bound me to the parents whose memory I so much revere.”

Amy complied with her uncle's request; and as she briefly reviewed her father's history from the period of her own first recollection of him, spoke of the little church over which he so long presided, of his toils and privations, of the loss of his children, of her mother's death, of the quiet, uneventful months that intervened between her death and his own, her heart softened under the flood of tender memories that came over her, and cutting short the narrative with a brief account of her father's death, she rose and led the way to the cottage.

The house, though old, had been kept in careful repair; and the garden and grounds were prettily arranged and scrupulously neat; for both Thompson and his wife had an eye to beauty and order as well as thrift.

Amy entered the house without any formality; and after showing her uncle the various rooms, and pointing out such articles of furniture as were specially associated with the memory of her parents, she opened the study, remarking:

“And here, uncle, was the little room where papa used to spend every moment he could command, in pulpit preparation or in quiet study. He was a very laborious man; and I think I can say he never went to his Sabbath duties, no matter how pressing his farm-work might have been, without thorough and careful study.”

“Is this the whole of his library, Amy?”

“Yes, uncle; his supply of books was very limited; they are all religious books, I think.”

“Then you took none with you, Amy?”

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so I left them all for Gordon; he may value them when he is a few years older."

"Why, 'of course,' Amy? I see none here that are beyond the depth of a lady of your intelligence; and the matter of which they treat as really concerns you as it ever will Gordon."

"Perhaps so: but I have plenty of books that interest me more, and, doubtless, profit me quite as much!" replied Amy, stiffly.

"Is not this your father's Bible?" continued Mr. Leeds, without noticing her remark, as he took down a venerable looking book from the shelf, and opened the soiled pages.

"Yes, uncle, he brought it from New England. I think he said it was a gift from his parents on his fourteenth birthday."

"Pardon me, Amy," and the tears sprung to her uncle's eyes; "I should have thought this would have been the one book of all that you could not have left. Why, here are the pages he read and re-read for years and years. This book was his 'joy in prosperity, and his solace in sorrow, the source from which he drew themes for his most sacred meditations. Here are the pages his own hands turned hundreds, probably thousands, of times. It seems to me *this* should have been your most precious, earthly treasure!"

"Uncle Leeds, I do not live without a Bible in my house—several of them, indeed! I left this for Gordon; not that I disregard the book myself, but I want him to find the old house and its contents as nearly as possible unchanged whenever he takes possession of them."

"Which will be at the age of twenty-one, I presume."

"Yes."

"Would it not have been better to have given him the book years ago, and had him storing his mind with its precious truths ever since? Perhaps when he is twenty-one his mind may be, like the minds of too many of our youth, already filled with ideas hostile to God's word."

"If Gordon learns to despise the Bible, it is his own fault, not mine. I have done my best with him!"

"What if he already despises it, Amy?"

"Then his father's Bible would not have saved him. There are always plenty of Bibles within his reach—it is his own fault if he has not read them."

"I do not say it is not, Amy; and I trust you have, as you say, done your best to direct Gordon aright. But I grieve to say that, if so, he has sadly departed from your teachings; he is not only averse to religion, but frankly avows it."

Mrs. Ellisson made no reply. She was angry, but the words she most desired to speak would not come at her bidding. After a pause, Mr. Leeds asked:—

"May I take this book with me, Amy?"

"If you wish it for Gordon, sir—not otherwise."

"It is for him I want it. The sight of his father's Bible may sometime touch him very deeply, and influence him for good when, perhaps, other influences will have failed. I think you were once a member of your father's church—were you not, Amy?"

"May I ask who told you?"

"I gathered as much from Gordon."

"I hardly thought, sir, you would stoop to question my brother in reference to my past history!" and Mrs. Ellisson's eyes flashed angrily, as she lifted them to the calm, dignified face of her uncle.

"You do me great injustice, Amy, by such an insinuation. It was from an incidental remark of Gordon's that I gained the impression that you were once a professor of religion; but the remark was not the result of any questioning or drawing out on my part. Was I correct in my inference, Amy?"

"You were, sir, quite correct. I professed to be converted at the age of eleven, and my father baptized me. I was quite too young to know my own mind; consequently, in after years, I discarded the idea of my having been converted, as the result of ignorance and excitement. I am not a Christian!" and Amy's face grew red and white by turns while giving utter-

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ance to thoughts which she had never before dared put into words.

“Possibly you are right in your judgment of yourself, Amy—I cannot say how that may be; but the fact of your extreme youth at the time of your real or supposed conversion furnishes no valid argument against its reality. Many little ones, younger than you were, have received Christ by faith; and through a long life have witnessed a good profession. Our Lord himself recognizes the possibility of children having faith, when He speaks of ‘these little ones that believe in Me.’

“Many professors—possibly some who in early life knew Christ—by some means depart from the simplicity of their first trust, and suffer the world, little by little, to usurp the place in their affections which Christ claims for Himself. Finally the time comes when they have to compare themselves with others; and then they see how unlike their lives are to the lives of those whose Christianity they cannot doubt—how far they fall below their own ideal—how terribly their practices contradict their professions; and then, instead of returning to the path of duty, and taking again the cross of self-denial and obedience, they resolve to cast off their profession; and, in order to do so consistently, their first business is to convince themselves they were never converted. Having at length brought themselves to believe this, or at least to think they believe it, they at once plunge into vanity and folly, often into actual vice. But O, Amy! it is a dreary retrogression, this backward, downward movement from the sweet ‘Fountain of Living Waters,’ to the empty, ‘broken cisterns’ of earth—a poor, *poor* bargain this giving up heaven and hope for the froth of this unsatisfying world!”

Mrs. Ellisson’s resolution to be brave, and haughty, and forbidding, had melted like frost-work in the sun; she had no reply, and, turning to a window, she stood silent and abashed.

“If you ever were a Christian, Amy,” continued her

uncle, "you know my words are true. If you have reached your present spiritual level without a struggle, it argues conclusively to my mind that you never really have known Christ. But I am not willing to believe it. Brought up, as you undoubtedly were, in the knowledge and fear of God, early consecrated to God by your own voluntary act, and with the approval of wise Christian parents, I cannot think you have come to be able to say what you just said, without many bitter tears, without many broken resolutions, and very much self-conflict.

"O Amy! consider well the weighty responsibilities that rest upon you. You have a husband and brother looking to you for a holy example; you have five little children who call you mother; and you know well, without one accusing word from me, that you are not rising to the measure of your responsibilities—not living in such a hallowed nearness to God as will enable you to meet them faithfully."

"Uncle Leeds! you quite exceed your privilege as a relative in saying such things. What do you know of my ability to meet my responsibilities to my family?" And again Mrs. Ellisson's eyes flashed out upon the speaker with angry brightness.

"Your own admission, my dear child, if true, would prove what I say to be correct, had I seen nothing since I have been with you to give it fuller confirmation. Would that I had not seen anything, Amy!—would that what I witnessed the first night I was with you were all a hideous dream. Surely I need not remind you of the social amusements, so called, which you both tolerated and participated in; amusements, if such a term may be allowed, which I am satisfied you once looked upon, in the light of a higher religious experience, as utterly opposed to the spirit of Christianity.

"But, when to all that is added the unrestrained use of intoxicating drinks, not alone by the majority of your guests, but by every member of your family who was present, yourself included, what can I think,

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but that you have departed very far both from the teaching and example of your father, and from what was once your own rule in life?

"What will be the direful consequences to your family of those two vicious indulgences—card-playing and drinking—if continued, God only knows. Shall I tell you, that yesterday, Gordon, with a certain show of pride in the avowal, volunteered the information that he was familiar with both? and to what length you yourself have gone I may infer from what I have myself seen.

"O Amy, Amy! for your own sake, for the sake of your husband and five little ones, rise, I beseech you, in the strength of your womanhood, and do what you can to banish those evils from your house!"

"Uncle Leeds, you know very little what you ask me to do! Is it for me to interfere with my husband, as though he were not able to regulate his own amusements and indulgences? I presume he is competent to take care of himself; and as for our children, I trust, as they grow up, we shall succeed in keeping them under needful restraints. I did not come to Colonel Ellisson's house to interfere with the social usages of the family; that is not my prerogative, as I understand it. As regards Gordon, I have done my best to train him up according to papa's—" Mrs. Ellisson stopped short—she dared not finish the sentence.

Her face flushed crimson under the lash of memory and conscience, but with an effort she controlled herself, and after a moment's hesitation added:

"I have done my best to have him respectable. If he goes wrong he has himself alone to blame. But the sun is setting, and I must go to my children. I am sorry if I have displeased you, but I do not feel that I merit all your censure, and I am not prepared to accept all your advice;" and without waiting for further remark, she led the way out of the cottage and across the garden; and after a minute's pause at the graves of their kindred, they slowly, and almost in silence, retraced their way across the fields.

Mr. Leeds joined Colonel Ellisson, who was walking in the garden, and Amy hurried away to her own room.

The sun went down behind a pile of golden clouds; the slow twilight faded out of the west; the stars came out one by one over the blue vault; and at length the moon rose in the east; yet still the two men talked on.

It was a long, quiet talk—an earnest protest on the part of the one against habits and indulgences which he believed were ruinous in their tendencies; and a patient, respectful hearing, with very little attempt at self-justification, on the part of the other.

It was the old, oft-repeated protest against a habit whose claims are stronger than honor or duty, stronger than the love of wife or child, stronger than the hope of Heaven or the fear of Hell; a habit which yearly robs thousands of noble-hearted men of all the most precious treasures and most cherished hopes, and plunges them at last into irretrievable ruin.

Colonel Ellisson was not angry—he was even grateful for the earnest and faithful counsel he had received; and as they parted for the night he gave his hand to his guest, remarking, with genuine feeling:

“I thank you, sir, very heartily, for your advice; and I shall endeavor to profit by it. Whatever my own course may be, I will, at least, act upon your suggestion in regard to the children; and I hope I shall be both a wiser and better man for this conversation.”

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## CHAPTER XIX.

“NURSE?”

“What, my precious?”

“I shall not go down to tell Gordon good-bye; will you say it for me?”

“Why, Hopie, darling, what is the matter? Are you feeling so bad as that?”

The little word of sympathy was too much; with a

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great sob the child threw herself into her nurse's arms, and, hiding her face in her bosom, gave vent to the long-pent sorrow.

"There, my darling, try and stop cryin', now!" said the nurse, after Hope's grief had had a little time to spend itself; "it'll make you sick to cry so hard. Don't you think you can go down now? Gordy'll feel bad if you don't."

"No, no!" exclaimed Hope, hurriedly, "I shall be sure to cry if I do. He said he wouldn't go if I cried, and he must go?"

"What makes you say that, dearie? You don't want him to go, do you?"

"You said it was best he should go, Nurse; and I want him to do what is best."

"Bless your brave little heart! and you want to help him—make it easy like for him! That's right, you dear little woman, you! there ain't so much baby in you now, as there is in me!" and Phœbe drew the back of her hand hurriedly across her eyes. "So it is best for him to go! I'm as certain of it, as I be that the sun shines. If his uncle don't do him any good, he won't do him any hurt; and that's more'n can be said for everybody. I'll make Gordy promise to write to you, dearie, and you needn't go down if you don't want to. Now don't cry any more, little bird!" and kissing the child again, Mrs. Green hurried away to take leave of Gordon, who, next to Hope, was dearer to her than any one else in the wide world.

His baggage was waiting in the hall, and a dray was momentarily expected to convey it to the station; while Gordon, flushed and heated with his morning walk, had hurried to his room to complete his preparations.

"The carriage is at the door, Gordon," said Mrs. Ellisson, looking in, and the children are waiting to say good-bye."

Snatching his hat and gloves, Gordon followed his sister down stairs. "Where's Hope?" he exclaimed eagerly, glancing at the group of little ones. "Aunty Green, where's Hope? She isn't sick is she?"

"No, Gordy she ain't sick; but she's been a-cryin', and didn't want to come down. You'd better not go a-near her or you'll set her off again."

"The solemn little owl—it's likely I won't!"—and the next moment Gordon was making his way up the stairs, three steps at a bound, to find Hope.

"Ah, ha, little girl! you meant to cheat me, didn't you!" he exclaimed, bolting into the room. Hope sprang hastily from the window-seat where she had settled herself, to watch the carriage as it rolled away, and would have concealed her tear-stained face, but it was too late.

Catching her up in his arms, Gordon folded her closely to his bosom, and looking down into the flushed little face, said huskily—

"Do you love me, Hope?"

"Yes, Gordon!"

"Why didn't you come down, then, to bid me good-bye?"

"I was afraid I'd cry; and you said if I cried you wouldn't go."

"Do you want me to go?"

"Yes, Gordon, because it's best!"

"How do you know?"

"Nurse said so; and she wouldn't say it if it wasn't so!"

"Look here, Hope; you needn't tell me that again! Nurse is a humbug! what does she know about it? Now I'm going to write to you every month, true as true; will you write me back?"

"I can't write very well!"

"No matter, you will write?"

"Yes, Gordon!"

"All right! and now good-bye, old pet! they are calling you down stairs;" and with a long, lingering kiss, Gordon replaced the little girl in the window as tenderly as her own mother could have done; and, dashing something that was suspiciously like tears from his eyes, the next moment was at the foot of the stairs.

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The remaining good-byes were quickly said—the great lump in Gordon's throat grew more and more troublesome—and leaping into the carriage, he called out, by way of a diversion, "Come on, Uncle Leeds! come on, Amy, Hugh, and all of you, we shall be too late for the train, if you don't hurry!"

Colonel and Mrs. Ellisson accompanied Gordon and his uncle to the station; final good-byes were hurriedly exchanged; and in a few seconds the train swept on again toward the rising sun, leaving Amy, with many conflicting emotions, gazing wistfully after it till it was lost to view, and only a long line of smoke, far out over the prairie, was left to indicate where its rapid flight had been.

"Are you sorry he has gone, Amy?" said Colonel Ellisson, at length, interrupting her meditations.

"I don't know, Hugh, whether I am or not. I don't like the man he has gone with; I wish I did, I should feel better to see him go."

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"I have been puzzling my brains all the morning, Amy," said Colonel Ellisson, as he finished his after-dinner dessert, and poured himself another glass of sherry, "to make out why you have been so stiff toward that uncle of yours. You were as stately and cool as an iceberg at breakfast; and you parted from him with most overwhelming dignity! What came between you?"

"Why, the truth is, as I said at the station, Hugh, I don't like him a bit; and the more I think about letting Gordon go off with him the more I regret it."

"What is the trouble, Amy? what has he done? I am sure I have seen nothing in him to find fault with; indeed, I like him. He seems to me a very sincere, gentlemanly person."

"I have not quite liked 'the Reverend Anthony Leeds' from the first, my dear; but he insulted me yesterday in a way I shall not soon forget!"

"Insulted you!" and Colonel Ellisson's brow darkened; "what do you mean, Amy?"

"Why, just this, Hugh. He wanted me to go with him to visit papa's grave, and to see the cottage; and when I proposed to have Gordon go instead of me, he very decidedly objected, saying he wanted a quiet talk about papa; and also wished to obtain some particulars concerning him; of which Gordon would, of course, be ignorant.

"Accordingly, I went with him; though I suspected he merely wanted an opportunity to lecture me; and, as I expected, the moment he found a convenient starting point, he began, and read me such a lecture upon my spiritual condition, and my responsibilities to my family as even papa would have hardly felt at liberty to give, had he been there himself. I was, really, very much offended, and I took very little pains to conceal it!"

Colonel Ellisson's face had been relaxing into a smile as his wife proceeded, and as she finished he burst into a laugh.

"Really, Amy, that is particularly rich! I thought you were pious, and could put up with a gentle reminder of your shortcomings with becoming grace! Why I, who make no pretensions in that way, put up with talk of the same sort that ran through two mortal hours last night; and, so far from taking a huff, ended up by thanking the worthy man, and promising to be a better boy!"

"No, Hugh!"

"Indeed, I did! and I mean to keep my promise—in some things, at least."

"What was he lecturing you about, Hugh?"

"Drinking and kindred vices, Amy!"

"The impertinence!"

"No, Amy; it was not an impertinence! I have great respect for a man who is not ashamed of his religion, or afraid to avow it; and who has the courage to tell people what they ought to do when he believes they are wrong. But your cringing, cowardly, half-and-half people who can be one thing or another, as suits the occasion, are a contemptible race, in my opinion."

"Standing by one's religion is one thing, Hugh, and meddling with family matters is another. What does he know about the way I discharge my duties to my family?"

"If he does not know how to apply general principles to particular cases, whether of the individual or the family, especially where he has had as ample opportunities for observing as he has in our family, he is hardly fit for his calling. My private opinion is, Amy, we could both make a change or two to the advantage of all concerned; I wish, for instance, that you had dealt with me from the first, on the liquor question, as sharply as he did last night."

"You would not have heeded me, Hugh. I tried once, as possibly you may recollect."

"Yes, yes, Amy, I recollect;" and Colonel Ellisson shaded his face with his hand as though the recollection were anything but pleasant. "But you did not follow it up; I wish you had. The truth is, I was brought up to it, and I like it!" and Colonel Ellisson filled his glass again, and held it up between his face and the light. "I like it!" he repeated slowly, "and yet I know it's an enemy. It has damaged me more than once or twice, and is making a fool of me every day!"

"Hugh!"

"It is, Amy, I'm sure of it; and I'm sure of another thing—I like it more and more as I grow older. I wonder if it will ever get the upper hand of me, as your uncle says it will, if I keep on!"

"Did he say such a thing, Hugh?"

"Yes, he did; I wonder if it is true! Amy, what do you say? suppose we two make a raid upon the wine-cellar this very afternoon, and pitch every drop of the stuff to the dogs?"

"All right, Hugh! I shall lend a willing hand. Shall we proceed to business at once?"

"Not this afternoon, Amy, not this afternoon; to-morrow, perhaps, or the next day!" and Colonel Ellisson broke into a forced laugh; he was more in earnest than he wished should appear.

He was beginning to feel himself a slave, and to wish for freedom ; but he was too weak to break away without help ; too weak to cope single-handed with the fiends that were clutching at him on every side, to drag him down to ruin.

He needed help ; but the wife, who should have been first to detect the faint, trembling wish to break his bonds—the first to fly to his aid with all the succor a woman's love and a woman's prayers could afford, was even more powerless than he. She lacked even the stimulus of fear to urge her to action ; and perhaps the feeble wish, itself, was at the moment more feeble in her than in him.

Not that the appetite for strong drink had gained any special ascendancy over her ; but she had implicit confidence in her husband's ability "*to take care of himself,*" as she had termed it ; and that confidence made her blindly complacent toward the insidious foe that was destroying him.

Besides, her moral strength was gone ; her hold upon Christ was broken. She had deliberately cast off her anchor, and with her face turned away from God, was, with her husband, drifting down a stream whose current was daily growing stronger and stronger.

Her spiritual forces were so utterly paralyzed, her eyes so blinded by the dazzle of the world and its vanities, her sense of his danger so blunted through ignoring that danger, that she had no help for him—not even her prayers, for she did not pray.

She was drifting with the tide—drifting. The roar of the distant cataract might even then have been heard, had not her hearing been fatally dulled ; the black rim of the gathering storm, which she had long before faintly descried through the gloom of that far-off autumnal midnight, was rising higher and higher above the horizon, but her eyes could no longer see it.

The sun still shone ; and the ripples still sparkled ; and the tide moved gently with a lulling murmur ; so she was content to drift.



Yes, Colonel Ellisson needed help; but he neither asked nor desired help from above. Nurcured from childhood in ignorance of the sacred truths of religion, when he became a man he was more than willing to remain so. With that easy amiability which wins friends, without any effort on the part of its possessor, and with wealth to gratify every wish, he had gone on thus far in a sort of unquestioning serenity of worldly enjoyment, neglecting religion rather than despising it, and very seldom troubling himself about its claims, either for this world or the next.

He had felt pleased rather than otherwise when his wife conformed so entirely to his tastes and habits; and yet he had felt surprised—it was not what he expected; and had she stood staunchly by her early convictions, and remained thoroughly loyal to religion in practice as well as in precept, he would have esteemed her all the more highly for it.

She might not have gained the enjoyment, if such it can be called, that flows from gratified vanity and voluptuous self-indulgence; but she would have gained immeasurably in the sweet consciousness of God's approval, and in the higher position she would have held in the respect, and, ultimately, in the affection of her husband.

But sin is always blind; and the professor of religion, who relinquishes the higher joy of fellowship and communion with God for the unsanctified enjoyments of the world, ultimately has to mourn the loss of both; and finds himself bankrupt for both heaven and earth.

Colonel Ellisson's conversation with Mr. Leeds had roused him from the lethargy of his life-dream more than anything else ever had; but the awakening influence once removed, there was nothing within himself to impel him forward toward the desired reform, while there was much to keep him back; nor was there any disposition in him to seek strength from God.

Perhaps, had there been, in that hour of heart-softening, when the soul, for almost the first time, had

been made to sigh for freedom from the enslaving vice of strong drink, one true, earnest Christian to lay hold of him, and, by the might of faith and sanctified effort, help him to rise, he might have been rescued; but there was no such at hand to seize the opportunity; the moment went by, and the impulse toward the better way, slight though it was, was forever lost.

"There is another thing, Amy," said Colonel Ellisson, suddenly, after a brief silence, "that your uncle was speaking about, and I am satisfied he is right; and that is, about letting the children learn to play at cards.

"He says if they are not allowed to learn when young, they are not so likely to acquire a taste for it in after years; and thus are in less danger of ever becoming gamblers. I heartily wish I had never learned to play, Amy; it has cost me—" the sentence remained unfinished; for Colonel Ellisson at that very moment was smarting from recent losses, of which his wife knew nothing; and it was furthest from his design to enlighten her.

"I'd give a thousand dollars this very minute," he added, excitedly, "if I could undo the mischief I did in teaching Gordon to play! Why, he is a better player to-day than I am, or ever shall be; and if he ever gets drawn into companionship with professional gamblers, and comes to know his power, he is ruined!"

"Nonsense, Hugh! Gordon has been too well brought up; there is no fear of him!"

"I tell you, Amy, I know better; and so would you, if you knew the world as well as I do! I want you to gather up all the cards about the house, and burn them this very day. I am resolved our boys shall never learn to play at home, whatever they do abroad!"

"Why, Hugh, what has come over you? Are you losing your wits over this new crotchet? Both Lee and Jack are babies yet; it will be time enough for your bonfire when the boys are in danger—say a dozen years from now, for instance."

"You ordered the carriage, sir, to be at the door at three, I believe; it is ready."

"Yes, Nelson; I had quite forgotten it!" and, tossing off another glass, Colonel Ellisson rose from the table, and hurried away.

## CHAPTER XX.

"HERE'S a good-sized mail, Amy, and all from Gordon," said Colonel Ellisson, a short time after the former left home, tossing some letters into his wife's lap, "and there is still another in my pocket for myself."

"He seems to have done little else but write," said Mrs. Ellisson, glancing at the letters she held in her hand; and then, breaking the seal of the one addressed to herself, she read:—

"DEAR SISTER AMY,—

"I suppose by the time this reaches you, you will be quite reconciled to the loss of your troublesome big brother; the house will be all quiet and settled again after the upsetting I made getting off; and things will be gliding on in their old grooves as smoothly as though I had not given them such a rough jostling during the last twenty-four hours of my stay.

"If so, I am glad; though, after all, if you were to tell me you didn't miss me, I should feel a little sorry; I suppose, it's natural to like to know we are missed, don't you think so, Amy?

"Well, according to your parting injunction, I have not been home-sick, even for a single hour. The journey was as pleasant as it well could be, though I suppose I need not tell you anything about it, as you have visited every place we passed through, and probably spent as many days in most of them as I did hours. But to me, everything was full of novelty and interest—the country, almost more so than the cities, so different from the dear old prairies to which, as you know, my whole previous acquaintance with the world had been limited.

"I like the hills, and mountains, and lakes; the fresh uplands and the sheltered valleys; they seem to me wonderfully grand, wonderfully beautiful, some of them. Uncle Leeds took great pains wherever we stopped to have me see all that was of special interest; and, as he knows about everything—at least, so it seems to me—there was no end to the information he poured into my ears.

"You are aware that I always thought myself particularly *knowing* on nearly all subjects; but before I had spent three days with him I felt like—what I am more and more convinced I am—a *boy*, very big and very green. Before we reached Portland, my stock of conceit had run so low that I began to question whether I really knew that two times two are four; or that water mostly always runs down hill when it runs at all. It gives a fellow a queer sort of a sensation to have his importance lowered so rapidly, especially when such lowering is neither natural nor habitual to him. It may be *good* for him, but it isn't pleasant. There is one comfortable feature, however, in my case, *he* never seems to know you are an ignoramus, but talks to you just as though you were as wise and as well-informed as he; and is content to talk as long as you are to listen, which, in my case, was the greater part of the time.

"As we stepped off the train at this place, a tall, handsome lady and two young misses, her daughters, came forward and shook hands with uncle, who, calling me forward, introduced me to the tall lady as 'Our nephew, Master Gordon Leeds'; out West I've been Mr. Leeds for some time, you know, and to the girls as 'your cousin Gordon.' Imagine my conceit running down the scale two or three degrees more, Amy!

"Aunty's face seemed just running over with smiles, as she took me by the hand, and said, 'I am very glad to see you, Gordon!' and it was none of your make-believe politeness either, I felt sure of that; and when she looked me in the face, and asked me if I had come all that long way to be her little boy, I half wished I

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were a little boy, indeed, so that she'd take me up in her arms and kiss me; a genuine case of 'love at first sight,' Amy; quite allowable too, I think, in a boy who never knew what it was to have a mother to love him.

"Your uncle will ride up with me, Gordon, and you will walk with the girls; there is hardly room for us all in the carriage, and you three can get acquainted by the way," said my aunt. So the girls took me in charge in the kindest possible way, talking to me as though they had known me always; and before we got to the parsonage we seemed to be well acquainted.

"Papa is always giving us such pleasant surprises," said Naomi, the eldest. "He never told us you were coming, though I think he told mamma, for she has seemed, ever since she received his last letter, to have some pleasant secret to guard."

"It will be so nice," said Ella, with a shy glance at me, "for cousin Gordon to be here! He will be our big brother, and go with us to lectures and all that, won't you, Gordon?"

"You must not exact any promises from Gordon, Ella," said Naomi, "for papa is sure by this time to have some plan for him." "Which is, to have me in college in a short time," said I. A Western girl would have cried out, "Now that's too bad! it will spoil all our fun!" But Ella said very demurely, like a little old lady as she is, "O, well, it will be all right, I suppose. Of course we'll have him with us at church and Sunday-school, and during holidays, too; so we must try and be satisfied."

"By this time we were at the parsonage; and as soon as we could get ourselves tidied up, we were called to dinner. The dining-room seemed so much like our own in the old cottage at home, Amy; only, of course, more nicely furnished, just such a cozy, cool, little room, with plain, white muslin curtains at the windows, a square of carpet in the middle, and bare floor around the wall, scoured as white as wood could be. The spread of the table, too, was in just our own

old style, all so plain and yet so nice. But the best of all was, that everybody seemed thoroughly pleased with everybody else, each trying to make all the rest happy. It seemed very odd to me to have everybody at the table looking after my interest, trying to make me comfortable and perfectly at my ease. If uncle hadn't so completely wilted my self-importance, I am afraid it would have revived in the sunshine of so much loving-kindness. However, I do not think it rallied again so much as to appear particularly offensive to my well-bred relatives, and I really felt very happy among them.

"When dinner was over, my aunt and uncle took me through the house. It is a plain, quiet old mansion, with large, airy rooms, and numbers of verandas, and little balconies, and queer, cozy corners filled with plants or overrun with vines, and here and there the cunningest little window-seats to tempt you into when you want to rest or read.

"My room is large and pleasant, facing the south, where I can have plenty of sunshine if I want it; just the place for a student, with a nice, large bed-room adjoining, from the window of which I can get a glimpse of the sea, only three or four miles away, and from which, when the weather is favorable, I can see the sails out on the bay quite distinctly. Just think of your prairie-boy regaled every day with a not distant view of the ocean!

"It makes me think always of that stanza in the old ballad you used to repeat to me, commencing—

"Where Penobscot Bay with an azure curve  
Winds proudly round Castine,' etc.,

though this is neither Penobscot Bay nor Castine; yet it is Maine, and it is the Atlantic, or, at least, a portion of it, which is all very gratifying.

"In the evening another pair of cousins, Nannie and Bessie, came home from a visit in the country; and then there were another pair of introductions and

another pair of surprises. Nannie, the older of the two, is the exact counterpart of her mother, with one of the brightest of faces; Bessie is small and delicate, and very shy, much like our Hope, only not so nice; nobody was ever so nice as Hope, or ever can be, the dear old baby!

"The next day, Saturday, uncle took me up to the college to look round. There are holidays now, and not much to be seen; but the janitor kindly took us through, and showed us the buildings and all that is to be seen just now.

"There will be about four weeks of holidays yet; and uncle and aunt and Bessie are going to visit some of the lake scenery in the western part of the State. They have given me an invitation to go with them, and possibly I may. We may visit the White Mountains for a few days when we are so near. Fancy your brother, who never saw a hill before he was eighteen, climbing Mount Washington and revelling in the novelty and grandeur of the scene!

"On Sunday I went to church, for the first time in—how long? and heard our uncle preach. I tried to fancy, Amy, that it was our father; I am glad you told me uncle is so much like him. Well, I think this is the first sermon I ever really heard, and I did hear it. I couldn't have helped hearing if I would. He talks right straight to people, and not *over* them.

"He does not roar or rant, but is in such tremendous, downright earnest, that you have to hear, and listen, and remember, whether you like it or not. What he says he *proves*; that is, he makes it clear it's what the Bible teaches, and that appears to be what he considers proof. When he tells people they are sinners, and will go to hell if they don't repent, he gives them Bible for it in a way they can't get round, unless they know Bible better than I do!

"Maine is a great temperance State, you know; and Uncle Leeds doesn't hesitate to preach temperance among other things. I don't suppose there was either a drunkard or a tippler in the house; but if there was,

he got something to remember and take home with him.

"I couldn't help thinking about your party, Amy, that first night he was with us, and wishing you and the Colonel could have heard him. I don't suppose I shall ever see anything 'to take' while I am here; but if ever I should, I should feel pretty shaky after listening to that sermon.

"But it's time I brought this long letter to a close, as I have yet to write to Aunty Green and to Hope; and I must be careful not to quite exhaust my already diminished stock of brains this time, lest I have nothing for the next effort. With kisses for all the youngsters.—Your brother Gordon."

Mrs. Ellisson folded the letter slowly, and mechanically replaced it in the envelope; and then, after sitting still and thoughtful for many minutes, went and gave their letters to Hope and the nurse.

"Oh, a letter; a letter from Gordon!" cried Hope, springing lightly into her nurse's lap and nestling down as was her custom while being read to. "Read my letter first, if you please, aunty dear!" she pleaded in her coaxing way, and Mrs. Green opened the letter and read.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

"DEAR LITTLE HOPE:—

"I am going to tell you what I think I should do if I were in Weston this very minute. It is my opinion I should start straight for Prairie House; and without stopping to speak to a single other one, should run right upstairs, and never quit searching until I had found a certain little girl with big, sober eyes and the dearest little round face I or anybody else ever saw. And then I would sit right down on the carpet—she, of course, would sit on her stool beside me, for she is a very proper little woman—and I should tell her of dozens and dozens of things I have seen, and heard



about since I went away ; of broad, beautiful lakes asleep in the sunshine ; of high, high hills whose tops seem to hold the clouds up ; of green, sweet valleys down among the hills, where brooks run and trees grow, and birds sing, and flowers—not half as sweet as my wee prairie flower—are blooming in the cool, shady places. And then I should tell her about great cities with their fine houses, and cool parks, and lovely gardens, and museums full of rare and curious things ; of great, grand churches and public buildings ; and of the hosts and hosts of people who crowd and jostle each other all day long and half the night ; among whom there are sometimes found little, pale, peaked-faced children ragged, and hungry, and poor, who would make her heart ache and her eyes weep to think how sad and sick they look.

“Then I should tell her about the grand old ocean, on which I took a long ride in a beautiful vessel ; and try to help her realize what a wonderful thing the sea is, with its great world of waters stretching away for hundreds and hundreds of miles, and spreading out on every side, so big and blue, and bright with sunshiny ripples.

“Then I would tell her about a new home I have found in this far-away country, where there are some very kind friends whom I think I shall like very much when I get to know them better, and of a little cousin who reminds me very much of Hope, only she has not her fresh healthy complexion and bounding step, but has a weak hollow cough, and often looks very ill.

“But I cannot go and tell you of all these things, nor even write them, for they would take too long. But, by-and-by, when you are grown up, you will come and see all the beautiful places and lovely scenery for yourself, I dare say ; and that will be a great deal better than anything I could write.

“I want to see you very much. I have never been so long without seeing you since that summer morning when you woke up in our little cottage, eight

years ago. But it will have to be a long time before I see you again—fully four years, I suppose, and may be six. Isn't that a long time? Why, by that time you will be almost a young lady, and Lee will be as big as I was when you came to live at the cottage, and Augusta and Eva as old as you are now, and Jack—well, perhaps Jack will have learned to behave himself, don't you hope so?

“Now, if Aunt Green will read you her letter, and mamma and papa theirs, you will know a great deal about me—enough, I dare say, to last you a whole month. Good-bye, little darling, and don't you ever, ever forget your old playfellow—

“GORDON.”

Mrs. Ellison had withdrawn to her room, closed the door, and casting herself into an easy chair, sat for a long time buried in thought. Gordon's letter had surprised, and in some of its aspects annoyed her. She had never given him credit for having very much heart—indeed, his warm affection for Hope had seemed to her quite an exceptional thing. She had never taken into consideration the possibility that, had she herself been more demonstrative toward him, he might have been more so toward her; or the fact that Hope and her nurse—the only two who had ever lavished upon him much of the outward expression of love—were the only ones who had ever elicited a corresponding warmth from him.

There had never been much of that warm, tender sympathy between herself and Gordon which might naturally be looked for between a sister and a brother so dependent upon her as Gordon had been.

During the first years of their orphanage, her thoughts were so much engrossed with her own prospects and aims that she had little time to spend in that tender, loving intercourse which every child's heart instinctively craves, and without which its nature will be more or less warped and distorted.

To keep him clean and nice, and, from the time he

was able to go to school to send him there with the most perfect regularity, had seemed to her about the sum of her duties to the child; and in later years, when trial came, she had withdrawn into herself more and more; and thus Gordon had grown up almost ignorant of love in its outward manifestations.

The advent of Hope marked an era in Gordon's history; and the encouragement Mrs. Green gave to his fondness for the child, as well as her own motherly treatment of him gave her a hold upon him that his sister had never gained; and though often he did not seem to heed her counsel, it was not forgotten; but was waiting to be revived in after years when life should take on a more serious and earnest tone.

After her marriage, Amy was too much occupied with other things to think much about her brother, except to see that he lacked nothing for his physical comfort, and that in a general way he conducted himself with becoming decorum.

For a year or two previous to his leaving home, she had been gratified to see him growing more manly, and less disposed to have his own way at all hazards; and proud, also, to see him taking the place of honor in his classes; nor had she scrupled by injudicious commendation and reward to foster the overgrown vanity and conceit, of which he was just beginning to make the humiliating discovery.

Still, although realizing a good deal of praiseworthy change in Gordon, Mrs. Ellisson had continued to regard him as, on the whole, a wayward and selfish youth, who really loved nobody but himself and Hope. But his letter had revealed to her a vein of affectionate warmth in his nature for which she had never given him credit; one, indeed, for which she had never sought, and which, consequently, she had never found.

But that this warmth of heart and feeling should have its first development, except in the case of Hope and her nurse, toward strangers whom she had come to regard with a certain feeling of hostility, vexed and saddened her.

That "tall, handsome lady," his aunt, what peculiar quality could there be in her to stir such a sudden yearning in the heart of the "boy who had never known what it was to have a mother to love him?" What could a mother be to Gordon that *she* had not been? what love had Gordon lacked? His remark hurt her inexpressibly; and, not only so, it roused an emotion of jealousy toward the gentle woman who was the unsuspecting cause.

That uncle, too, whom she had repulsed; and from whom she had parted with undisguised coldness; what was the secret of the manifest ascendancy he had so soon gained over Gordon? It must be the extreme fickleness of Gordon's own nature that could cause him to take up so entirely with strangers in that brief time, while she, who had been as a mother to him, had never elicited any such interest.

Mrs. Ellisson took her brother's letter from her pocket, and again drew it forth from the envelope, in order to give it another and more careful perusal, when a folded paper, which she had not at first noticed, slipped from the envelope, and fluttered to the floor.

She picked it up, and unfolding it, read: "I forgot to tell you of something that happened on Sunday, Amy, which I am sure you will think very extraordinary—at least I do; indeed, I begin to question whether I am really Gordon or not, I am getting to do such unlikely things.

"But, to my story. After dinner, Uncle Leeds put on his hat, and, turning to me, remarked: 'I am going over to the vestry, Gordon, to make some preparations for Sunday-school. I have a class of young men who meet me there, and I usually devote this hour to special preparation. I trust I shall see you over with your aunt and the girls;' and without giving me a chance for either yes or no he walked away.

"When the time came, aunty, with one of her irresistible smiles, said to me, 'Are you ready, Gordon?' so what does Gordon do but picks up his hat, as though

he had been a dutiful Sunday-school child all his days, and marches off.

"I am not going to tire you with details; suffice it to say, that when Gordon was invited to take a seat in the class, he took it, although his protest had been all made up and ready for several minutes; somehow it would not say itself, and, for the life of him, he could not say it. By-and-by a Bible was offered him, which, without in the least intending to take it, he took; and, when a question came round to him, he had become so interested that, in spite of his firm resolve not to answer, he answered at a venture, and was lucky enough to be right. This so encouraged the child that, in due time, he volunteered another, and hit the mark again!

"Finally, his uncle came to him with his class-book; and, with that peculiar way of his, which leaves you a chance for only one answer, said, 'Shall I take your name, Gordon?' and Gordon, in the meekest manner conceivable, said, 'Yes.'

"But, when the lesson was over, and a dozen or more fine, intelligent fellows came round to be introduced, and all shook hands with him as warmly as though they had been fast friends for years, the fellow was actually so far gone that I caught him in the act of congratulating himself—secretly, you understand—over the fact of his having had the good fortune to become one of their number—a *Sunday-school scholar!*

"He learned afterwards, Amy, that all of them but three are college boys; but—alas! for his long-cherished love of superiority—all but one, a year or more ahead of him! In a day or two we expect to start on our excursion, and I am as enthusiastic as—a boy."

That excursion fully justified Gordon's most sanguine expectations. The wild, romantic scenery of the western portion of the State was a source of ever-varying delight; and when at length he reached the White Mountains, his enthusiasm was at its height.

After a fortnight spent in the neighborhood of Mount Washington, climbing and exploring by day,

and at evening in the enjoyment of pleasant familiar intercourse with his newly-found relatives, or in kindly, watchful attentions to his little invalid cousin, Gordon and his friends returned home; but that fortnight had given a new coloring to the young man's life.

It did not require a very long acquaintance with his uncle's family to make him realize how little of real, social enjoyment had ever been his; and that it was no small privilege to be one of a family circle where each seemed to make the happiness and comfort of all the rest the peculiar purpose and study of the social hour.

Nor was it at all strange if the old, selfish, purposeless life he had led in the past sometimes seemed peculiarly empty and unworthy of him; or that, with characteristic outspokenness, he should sometimes say as much in his letters to his sister.

His new friends—their cheerfulness, their unselfishness, their unswerving loyalty to principle, and the delicate tact with which they all sought to secure his happiness; but, above all, the beauty and grace of his aunt, and the parental bearing of his uncle, furnished him with exhaustless topics for correspondence, of which he never seemed to weary; not once dreaming but that his sister would be as delighted to hear as he was to write of what gave him such unbounded satisfaction.

The truth was, that, with Gordon's natural inclination to always set before himself some model, and to exalt that model to the highest place in his ideal world of perfection, he was, unconsciously, putting his uncle into the place once occupied so completely by Colonel Ellisson; and, though not attempting that servile imitation he had made in the first instance, he was exalting the excellent qualities of his uncle to the same high place, and bestowing upon them equal, yet far more discriminating admiration; and the effect upon his character was proving itself, in this latter case, as different as the standard of excellence was different.

"Isn't Gordon the greatest youth for *models* you ever saw?" remarked Mr. Leeds to his wife, months afterwards, when he had learned more fully the characteristics of his nephew. "I must yet, by God's help, get his eye fixed upon Christ; and if once he comes to see Him as He is, I am much mistaken in my estimate of his character if it does not at once become his enthusiastic endeavor to be like Him.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

IN a few weeks Gordon was settled and hard at work. It was no new thing to him to study; thus far it had been the business of his life; yet in the past his studies had had no specific aim; now he was working with an object in view, and his satisfaction and zeal were proportional to the steadfastness of his purpose.

Not that he had settled definitely upon a profession; yet he was looking vaguely forward to the law as his life-work, and his mind was fixed upon several years of hard study as the necessary preparation for it, and thus, with the new influences and changed circumstances that surrounded him, he had gained an impulse toward a higher and nobler standard of living, and a more clearly defined purpose.

His new home possessed so many attractions that there was seldom anything in the town which seemed to possess sufficient interest to make him willing to forego its enjoyment. Consequently he seldom went out unless it was in company with his uncle, or some other member of the family.

Mrs. Leeds possessed the rare ability to make home a happy place for all around her. Her children were all trained to habits of industry, yet she never allowed work to become so absorbing but that some were free to engage in something by which not only themselves, but others might be both pleased and profited.

Evening was the hour to which all looked forward as the brightest and happiest one of all, for then the father, with his rich fund of information, and the mother, with her fine culture and ready tact, made it their special aim to interest their children and entertain each other.

Books, music, conversation, and those lighter kinds of work with which ladies know so well how to enliven the social hour, filled up the time, and none felt the hour for retiring, as in too many families it is felt, a happy escape from ennui and discontent.

Gordon's studies occupied the greater number of his evenings, but no one was happier than he, whenever an hour could be snatched from absorbing work, to join the happy circle in the family sitting-room, and, at such times, with generous unselfishness, all strove to make the hour one of special interest to him.

It was no very strange thing, therefore, if Gordon's letters home were often filled with these pleasant pictures, but as his sister in her replies alluded to them, except in a sarcastic vein, and never expressed any interest in the family of her uncle, he gradually became formal and reserved in writing to her, only to give free vent to his enthusiasm in writing to Hope, who never failed to make him feel, child though she was, that she was made happier by everything that increased his happiness.

One day, when Gordon had been absent about a year, Hope came running to Mrs. Ellisson's room, her face radiant with delight, exclaiming, "O, mamma, I have a lovely letter from Gordon, and there's *such* good news in it you would never guess, I'm sure! O, I'm so glad!"

"And what is this wonderful item of news?" asked Mrs. Ellisson, a little coldly, for she had grown sensitive at Gordon's more unrestrained communication to Hope of whatever made him happy than to herself, not reflecting that the reason could easily be traced to the indifference she had herself shown to such communications, connected, as they generally were, in some way, with her uncle and his family.



"O, mamma, do guess! Why, aunty is crying about it, she is so pleased, and when I begged her not to, she said she must, the news made her so glad. Guess what it is, mamma, do!"

"No; I am not good at guessing—what is it?"

"Why, just this, that Gordon has signed the temperance pledge; and that means, you know, mamma, that he'll never, never drink anything to make him drunk; and aunty says, the next thing he'll be a Christian—she has faith to believe it!"

"'Faith'! you silly little parrot, you are always repeating Green's nonsense!"—and Mrs. Ellisson's voice sounded harsh and repulsive in contrast to the glad ring of the child's utterances.

Hope looked shyly in her mother's face, to see if the words meant scolding or teasing; but the joy of her heart was too great to be held back, and she broke forth again.

"Oh, I'm so glad. Gordon is never going to drink that poison stuff that makes folks so awfully wicked any more, is he, mamma?—and by-and-by he will be a dear, good man like his uncle, and learn to pray— aunty says maybe he'll be a preacher!"

"Hope Ellisson! Now, let this be the very last time I hear you repeating Aunty Green's nonsense. I am tired of speaking to you about it. I must send that woman away, for you are continually parroting her words. Really, I am ashamed of you!"

Such sudden woe treading close upon the heels of such joy! Hope's lip quivered, and her eyes overflowed with tears; all her joy for Gordon was for the moment lost in the unutterable dread of losing her beloved nurse.

"O mamma! don't send dear aunty away; please don't! and I'll never, never—" but the sentence was drowned in sobs, and with bitter weeping she hid her face in the ottoman at her mother's feet.

"Hope, come here."

Mrs. Ellisson laid aside her work; and lifting the little girl upon her knee, said, in a changed tone, as

she wiped away the tears from her flushed face, "I cannot allow you to cry so, my little girl; be quiet now, I want to speak to you."

Hope dried her tears, but the deep, hysterical sobs would not for some time be controlled.

"Who told you, Hope," said Mrs. Ellisson, at length, "about drinking poison stuff that makes folks awfully wicked?"

"Aunty, mamma."

"What did she tell you?"

"O mamma! you are going to send her away, I know you are, you look so, so—"

"Hush, Hope! no more crying! I am not going to send her away if she's good."

"Yes, she *is* good, mamma! Oh she is *so* good, and she loves me so dearly!"

"All right, I am very glad! tell me now what she said, Hope."

"Why, she said wine, and brandy, and all those things, mamma, are as poison—not to kill people right at once, you know, but they just keep burning, and burning, and burning them, and so they get cross and crazy like, and stagger, and swear—"

"That will do; who did she say does such things?"

"Why, people who drink, mamma."

"All people, Hope."

"She said all people *might* come to do those things if they kept on drinking; and do you know, mamma, I am *so* afraid papa—"

"Stop, Hope! never speak of your papa in connection with such things. Have you heard Green do so?"

"Oh no, mamma, never! Once when I asked her if papa would get bad if—if—don't be angry, mamma!—if he drank those poison drinks, she put her hand over my mouth, and said I mustn't ever speak so again; though I am sure I didn't mean any harm, mamma!"

"She was quite right, Hope! Little girls should never be found making remarks to any one about what their parents do; and the sooner they are taught

that it is very improper the better. I hope you will remember the lesson."

"I shall try and remember," said the child, absently; "but oh, mamma!" she exclaimed suddenly, her thoughts running back again to what had been the one great trouble of her life since the day she had been allowed to sit at the table with her parents, "I do be afraid when I see you and papa--"

"Stop, I say! Do you not understand yet that you are not to talk of those things?"

"Yes, mamma," and Hope lifted a sad, grieved face toward her mother's. "I may speak about Gordon, mayn't I?"

"If you have anything proper to say."

Hope looked timidly into the flushed face of her mother, but the sudden recollection of her great joy on Gordon's account banished the rising grief, her face brightened instantly as she remembered her "lovely letter," and snatching it eagerly from her pocket she exclaimed:

"Please, mamma, will you read it to me? I love to hear you read, you make it sound so much like talk."

Mrs. Ellisson's face wore a troubled look, and there were anxious, fretful lines in her forehead, which seemed at that moment deeper and more marked than usual; but she took the letter from the little girl's hand, and, unfolding it slowly and in a hesitating manner, read:

"DEAR LITTLE HOPE,--I always call you little, and so I know you are, though it sometimes seems long enough since I saw your dear, sober face to have you grown a big girl; but when I stop and think that it's little more than a year since I came here, I know you must be almost the very same you were then, only, perhaps, a little bit taller.

"But though I want to see you, and all the rest very much, I am not, as I have often told you, in the least lonely or homesick, for I have such a pleasant home I could not possibly be either. Everybody is very kind to me—if I were one of their very own

they could not be more so. My good aunt acts towards me precisely as she does toward her own children, and it sometimes seems to me almost as though I had in her and my uncle my own parents back.

"There is one thing, however, which makes us all anxious, and sometimes sad, and that is, seeing our little Bessie so very poorly—I do not like to say ill, though it really amounts to that. She has a cough all the time, and we sometimes fear she has consumption—a cruel lingering disease which you know nothing of, and I hope you never may.

"She is a dear little girl, considerably younger than you; and, as I have told you before, very much like you, only not quite so shy as my darling little prairie bird is.

"She is very thoughtful and quiet, and always so patient; you would love her very much, and feel grieved, as we all do, to hear her cough so hard.

"Little Bessie has a half-sister, her own mamma's daughter, a young girl who has been away for some time at a boarding-school. She is coming home soon, to take Bessie south to spend a year with her grand-mamma in Florida, in hopes the warm climate will make her strong again. Bessie is going to write to you when she gets there, and you must answer right away, for she will be lonely, and your letters will be company for her.

"And now, Hope, I am going to tell you something which I dare say will make you very glad. You can tell Aunty Green, and your papa and mamma if you like, and I hope it may make you all as glad to read, as it does me to write about it. It is this:

"There have been some very earnest men lecturing in this town on the subject of temperance, and they were getting all that would, to put their names to a paper called a *Temperance Pledge*, which was just a promise never to drink anything that would make them drunk.

"Well, every night, after the lecture, they gave

every person a chance to come and make this promise; but for a long time I thought I never would sign it. I thought it would be very nice to do just as I liked; and I often said as much, forgetting all the time that that just meant free to make a vile drunkard, or even a murderer of myself; and at last, more likely than not, to destroy myself.

"One evening, before I went to the lecture, my uncle talked to me a little about this freedom I thought so much of; and he said it was a kind of freedom he did not think any one should desire; and that, if he were a young man, he would not like to feel free to make himself an idiot and a beast—free to put himself into such a condition that he would be almost certain to do some dreadful thing, and possibly to commit some awful crime.

"My uncle don't say a great deal, but what he does say makes one think; and I thought and thought, for he had put things in such a way I could not help thinking. So, finally, I concluded that the best kind of freedom after all, is to be able to govern one's own self in everything, so as to be able to say to our appetite, '*I am master, and not you.*'

"One night, a little while after, I went to the lecture all by myself; and as soon as it was over, I went up and signed my name in a big, bold hand, so as to make myself see that I wasn't a bit ashamed of it; and, when I got home and told my uncle, what do you think he did? Why, he went and kneeled down and thanked God for helping 'dear Gordon to do what is right'—those are the very words he said—and then he asked Him to help me never to break my pledge.

"You know, Hope, I'm not a bit good; and when he did that I felt cross and uncomfortable; but when he rose on his feet, and I saw my aunt's face all wet with tears, and she came and kissed my forehead, and said, 'God bless and keep you my dear,' and little Bess came and laid her hot cheek against my face, and whispered, 'I'm so glad, Cousin Gordon,' and my uncle and the girls all looked at me as though they were too glad to

speaking, a big lump came into my throat, and I ran off upstairs with a great, make-believe laugh, to get rid of them.

"But it is all over, and I am very glad I did it; and now, if you want to send me your name to stand right alongside of my own, I will put it there myself, and there they shall stand together always.

"But I'm doing what I always do when I write to you—sending you such a long, long letter, that it will tire your eyes to read it.

"You must give my love to your papa and mamma and Aunt Green, and kiss your brothers and sisters for me, and, as soon as you can, send a good long letter to your naughty old  
GORDON."

Mrs. Ellisson sat for a while silent and thoughtful, with the open letter in her hand, and quite forgetful of the little girl at her feet; thinking less, perhaps, of the brother who wrote the letter than of what the letter suggested; and with a vague, undefined sense of trouble lying heavy at her heart, until roused by the timid question: "Aren't you *very* glad, mamma?"

Her eyes wandered dreamily toward the child, something in the eager, questioning face recalled her from her reverie, and she answered:

"Glad? O, yes, Hope, very glad, certainly! Here," she added, folding the letter, and returning it to the envelope, "take this to your papa; he is in the library, and may be glad to get it."

This was a new thought to Hope. It had not occurred to her to show it to her father; and under the impulse of her sudden joy at being permitted to do so, she darted away with her treasure, bounded down the stairs and along the hall, and only when standing hushed and eager in her father's presence remembered the recent prohibition never to enter the library without first knocking at the door.

"I did not think, papa!" she said, checking her speed in the middle of the room, "I did not remember—I was so very glad!" and Hope held out the precious letter. "O papa! will you—?" and, encouraged by

her father's glance, she laid her hand upon his knee ; but her face flushed crimson as she remembered her mother's displeasure at what she had just been saying, and with the rising entreaty unuttered, she stopped short, confused and agitated.

"Will I what, my little girl?" said Colonel Ellisson, lifting the child to his knee ; but so many conflicting emotions had quite unnerved Hope, and, burying her face in her father's bosom, she sobbed hysterically.

"Gently, gently, now—why, what a baby it is!" said her father, soothingly. "Listen now, and I will read your letter to you, if you wish;" and, with wonderful self-control, Hope subdued her sobs, and listened again as eagerly as though it had been for the first time.

Colonel Ellisson read on slowly until he reached the word "Temperance Pledge;" then, quite forgetful of the earnest eyes that seemed entreating him to go on, his voice ceased ; his eyes followed the lines swiftly down the page ; his color came and went in rapid alternations, and then, as if the gaze of the child disconcerted him, he said, without raising his eyes from the page, "Run away, daughter ; there's a good girl—you shall have your letter by-and-by;" and Hope, accustomed to unquestioning obedience, quietly left the room and closed the door ; and Colonel Ellisson was left alone with his thoughts.

Let us be careful that we do not misjudge the unhappy victim of strong drink. Few men reach the drunkard's grave without struggles, of which the untempted do not dream ; without tears, which God alone sees ; without again and again cursing their chains and vowing to be free ; without often rising to the height of a temporary victory, only to be speedily thrust down again by the cruel appetite to a lower depth than any before reached, unless a stronger Helper than their own enfeebled human will interpose to save them.

When Colonel Ellisson again appeared in the midst of his family, his pale face and heavy eyes told of a

struggle, known only to his own soul and God. For a while the wine stood untasted on his table; but it was not long. There had been a transient recoil, a short-lived resolve, but the angels blotted with tears their brief record of his unkept vow, and soon he was gliding on once more, smoothly and buoyantly, down the fatal stream that is sweeping millions to ruin.

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### CHAPTER XXIII.

It was a bright evening in the early part of summer, five years from the time Gordon Leeds left his home in the West.

He was sitting thoughtfully at a window, his book lying open on a table at his side, and his arms folded as if tired of the wearisome monotony of study.

His table was loaded with books and papers---lexicons, text-books, and note-books were lying around him on chairs and stools, or tossed in heaps on the carpet at his feet; while on his pale, thin face there rested a look of weariness, almost of disgust, as though at that moment he realized the full meaning of the proverb that "much study is a weariness to the flesh."

At the back of the table, almost hidden by a promiscuous heap of note-books, exercises, and blotted scraps of paper, lay an old volume, marred and defaced by much handling, yet evidently long disused, for the dust had gathered thick upon the cover and upon the irregular edges of leaves long loosed from their binding, and projecting beyond their fellows.

Suddenly, as though impelled by the force of urgent thought, Gordon flung aside the heavy volume of metaphysics with which he had been torturing his brains, and drawing forth the old book from its hiding place, he turned the leaves rapidly until the desired passage was found. He carefully read over a few sentences, and then, closing the book, thrust it again into its place.



"I wish I could believe it," he said, half aloud, "I wish I could believe it! And yet, why do I not? It all seems quite reasonable, surely, and yet—" and again the tired student, folding his arms wearily across his breast, as if unable or unwilling to pursue the thought further, relapsed into his former dreamy meditations.

The book he had just re-assign'd to its neglected corner amidst the rubbish of his study-table, was the old Bible his uncle had brought away with him from his brother's library, and had placed upon Gordon's table with the simple words pencilled upon a slip of paper—"This is your father's Bible, Gordon. It was for him '*a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path;*' what shall it be to you?"

Gordon had never given an hour to its perusal. Study, as is too often the case with the ambitious student, had been no help to him spiritually; yet questions were continually coming up in his uncle's class, of which he still remained a member, which fastened themselves in his mind, and would not give place even to the absorbing themes of college study.

The subject of the previous Sabbath's study—"God's parental regard for the sinner, as illustrated in the story of the prodigal son"—had been unusually impressive, and the softened tone of Gordon's feelings, the result of recent illness, made him specially susceptible to the tender interest of that wondrous story.

At length, rousing himself, Gordon opened his eyes, and gazed wistfully over the distant hills, bright with the beams of the declining sun, and yielding to that sudden craving for the fresh air, and open fields, which one often feels after a day of severe mental toil, he sprang from his chair, snatched his hat, and, student-like, without giving a thought to the wild disorder he was leaving behind, sallied forth for an evening walk.

As he passed through the sitting-room, he paused for a moment to look at the pale, sleeping face of little Bessie, who, after an exhausting fit of coughing, had fallen into a heavy sleep.

Physicians, change of climate, and all the means of restoration usually resorted to in such cases, had failed; and patient, little Bessie, the pet lamb of the flock, the darling of the household, had been given up to die.

But with that strange tenacity with which some consumptives cling to life, and wear out years and years in suffering, the child had lingered on far beyond the hope or expectation of her friends; and yet, with no more prospect of immediate release than at many previous times, she still lingered.

Mrs. Leeds was sitting near her, and, as Gordon bent over the little sleeper, she looked up in his face and whispered sadly, "It will soon be over, Gordon!"

It was the first time he had ever heard her speak of Bessie's death as immediate; and he started with a sudden feeling of horror. He had never looked upon death except in the case of Hope's mother, and then his dread and dismay were so great he would not be induced to take a second look; now the thought of confronting it at any moment, and in the case, too, of the almost idolized child before him, was too much for his strength.

With a face almost as white as that of the little sleeper, he turned silently away; but, beckoning him back, his aunt handed him a letter, remarking, in a whisper:

"It came half an hour ago, but I was so busy with Bessie that I forgot to send it up."

Gordon glanced at the letter, and seeing it was from Hope, passed on.

The last two years had been for him almost lost time; yet his uncle, who regarded him as a son, would not hear of his going back to the West, nor would such a course have availed anything for Gordon, unless he had given up study, and that he was resolved not to do.

With the blind recklessness in regard to health with which the young student too often launches out upon a course of study, he had found himself, before his second year's work was done, obliged to leave his

books, and devote himself to the task of recruiting his health; and this had occurred again and again, until, at the end of five years, he had only done the work of three; and that very day his physician had warned him that, unless the summer did more for him than there was any reasonable prospect of its doing, he must give up study for an indefinite period, and devote himself wholly to out-door employment.

"I won't do it!" he exclaimed, rebelliously, after revolving the hard alternative with mingled feelings of discontent and anger during a dreamy, listless, half-hour's walk. "Give up study, indeed, at this stage of my work—so much begun and nothing finished!" and casting himself down at the foot of an old tree that stood in a retired spot half a mile out of town, the usual limit of his evening walks, he began vigorously tearing the green leaves from a shrub that grew beside him, and, tossing the fragments into a stream at his feet, endeavored to soothe his irritated nerves by watching them as they glided swiftly on toward the sea.

At length the thought of Hope's letter recalled him from his dream, and, snatching it from his pocket, he tore off the envelope, and, flinging it into the stream to share the fate of the poor leaves, he unfolded it, and read:

"DEAR GORDON—What do you think; I am thirteen years old in a fortnight! and papa has just told me I may write, and ask you to come and be with us on that day.

"I expect to have a little party—my schoolmates, just—and I think it cannot be that you are grown too old and grave to enjoy being with us.

"At any rate, you will come; and in order to be sure of you, papa gave me the enclosed cheque to send you; so now you can have no excuse on the score of funds.

"Now, dear Gordon, you *must* come, if only to see how tall I have grown. Papa says I am going to be

just the picture of my own poor dear mamma; won't that be nice? Not that I care so very much for looks, only I would like to know just how her darling, sweet face looked when alive; and *that* I cannot be quite sure of by a picture.

"O Gordon, my heart gets very hungry for my own mamma sometimes, especially after dear aunty has been telling me about her, and how dearly, dearly she loved me, her poor, tiny, little babe! Sometimes it seems to me I would always be quite happy if I could remember her beautiful eyes, and have always in mind one—just one, even—of her sweet, loving kisses.

"Not but that I love the mamma I have very dearly; but you know, Gordon, she isn't my own, own; and that makes a difference, I think—don't you think so?

"Augusta is mamma's favorite among us all; but I am not jealous, for Augusta is beautiful and very clever, and I am neither. I love Eva more—I am not sure but it is partly because she has my own mamma's name; still, she is very sweet and gentle, and loves me; Augusta never did. Lee has grown a big, strong boy; he is extremely like papa, and besides, he is very clever; but he likes his own way, and gets it, too.

"Jack is the same dear old rowdy he always was—forever in some sort of trouble, either on his own account or somebody else's. But you are coming in a fortnight, and then you can see us all just as we are, and papa and mamma, too.

"We are not going to tell mamma—we want her to have a genuine surprise. Nobody is to know it but papa and I—not even dear aunty, for she will be as surprised and as glad as mamma, every bit.

"Won't it be nice for you to come and spend all vacation here? It will help you to get well—don't you think so?

"Nobby has grown as cross as cross. He bites and kicks, so that nobody dares touch him but Nelson; and papa says he'll give him to Nelson for his own, and buy me a horse that I can ride as much as ever I like. Papa is just the dearest love in the world, Gor-

don ; there's nothing he wouldn't do for me ! Oughtn't I to be good ?

"I have to send this letter to post in a few minutes, so I must say good-bye. I send love to all those dear, good folks where you live, especially to darling Bessie. I am so sorry she is too ill to write to me this month. Now don't fail to come and spend the whole vacation with your own little  
HOPE."

"Yes, my 'own little Hope,' I shall go!" said Gordon, depositing the cheque in his pocket-book, and looking around vainly for the envelope, which by that time was far away on its seaward voyage—"hurrah for the dear old prairies!"—and springing lightly to his feet, he walked homeward as rapidly as his strength would permit.

"Who will guess what I am going to do?" said Gordon, the next morning after the family were gathered round the breakfast table.

All looked up inquiringly ; but as nobody ventured a guess, he added, with a smile, "I am thinking of going to visit the prairies. They want me home to help celebrate Hope's birthday ; and as the Colonel has shown his earnestness in the matter by sending me the requisite funds, I think I shall go."

"I have no doubt but it will do you good, Gordon," said his uncle, "and we must not be so selfish as to object, though we shall miss you very much."

There was a long silence, and Gordon could not help but feel that his announcement had cast a shadow over the minds of all.

"You are not willing for me to go, Aunt Eleanor," he said at length ; "I will give it up if you wish!"

"Oh no, no, Gordon! only I was thinking if dear Bessie were to—" a rush of tears finished the sentence ; and all knew then that the mother's heart, which had held out bravely for so many years in the hope of what she so much desired, had failed at last.

"Don't let my proposed journey distress you, Aunt Eleanor ; I will not go, if it is going to grieve you in the least!"

"Yes, dear, you must go, by all means, it will do you good; but if we write you of any change, you will come home at once, I trust?"

"Yes, aunt, by the very first train."

"It scarcely seems right to lay Gordon under such an obligation as that," said Mr. Leeds. "He has been away a great while; and a summer in the west may benefit him very much!"

"I shall return, uncle, the moment I hear that Bessie is worse; I should be extremely sorry not to do so."

"I feel assured of that, Gordon," said Mrs. Leeds, "and I sincerely hope that your visit may not be interrupted by any such intelligence. We shall keep you constantly informed with regard to her state, and I greatly desire you to come, if possible, should there be any unfavorable change. Her eldest sister, dear Laura, will be home next week if all is well, an event Bessie is looking forward to very longingly. The poor child loves you very dearly, Gordon, and I cannot bear to think of her missing any one she loves, when God's time comes for her to go."

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#### CHAPTER XXIV.

"MAMMA, papa said Nelson could give me a drive in the carriage this afternoon, if you were willing; can I go?"

"Why, you expect company, Hope!"

"Yes, mamma, but they will not be here until about four, and I shall be back by three or earlier."

"Yes, you can go, Hope; but your brothers and sisters will want to go as well as you. You will have to wait for them."

"Well, there is plenty of room for us all in the carriage. Are they dressed, mamma?"

"I suppose so; if not, you can tell Norah to make haste and get them ready."

Hope felt disappointed. She had wanted very much

to go alone for once; but the inevitable burden of the younger children had been laid upon her, and, as usual, she did not object, though it was going to interfere very much with her dearly cherished wish to be Gordon's sole escort home.

There was a great deal of trouble upstairs for the next half hour. Augusta was in the pouts because she was not, like Hope, to be dressed in white; and Lee was in a most ungracious humor, because of not being allowed to spend the afternoon at ball-play with some boys in town. Eva was in tears over a favorite book which Lee, in a freak of ill-nature, had thrown into a basin of water; and Jack, whose favorite pastime of wallowing in the dirt with Growler had been interrupted, was venting his dissatisfaction at the vigorous infliction of soap and water which he was undergoing under Norah's ruddy hands, in kicks and howls.

The entrance of Hope in her pretty white muslin and blue ribbons had, as usual, a calming effect upon the two younger children; and when she announced that there was to be a ride in the carriage, even Lee and Augusta took on a pleasanter aspect.

In a short time Hope, holding Jack by the hand, and preceded by the three older children, was hurrying down the stairs when nurse Green called to them from the landing above:

"There now, little dears, you all look just lovely! but you mustn't forget there's going to be company by-and-by, so don't go and spoil your pretty clothes."

Hope looked up gratefully, and tossed a kiss; but Augusta muttered quite audibly—

"O yes, *very* lovely Eva and I look in our old blue tarletans! that's as much as *you* know!"

"Why, Augusta! don't speak so rudely to aunty! Your tarletans are lovely, and quite new, too."

"They're not new; you know they are not! haven't we worn them twice? You needn't put on airs because you're thirteen; you are not so very much larger, after all, than I am. I've as good a right to a new white dress as you have; and so has Eva, too!"

Jack was about to enter a boisterous protest in behalf of his "own sister," as he always called Hope, and whose champion he believed himself specially called upon to be on all occasions suitable, or otherwise, but she checked him with a touch of her fingers upon his lips. The next minute they were all in the carriage, and Nelson, to whom Hope had whispered "drive to the station," turned his horses' heads toward Weston.

"Will you all stay in the carriage while I run across and see if a person I am expecting comes in this train?" asked Hope of the other children, as the carriage stopped not far from the depot.

"I won't," answered Lee, "I am going to see the folks get off the train."

"And I, too," cried Augusta, preparing to alight.

"No, no, Lee; mamma never allows you to be about the station when the trains are coming in; please don't get out!"

"Well, I will, and it isn't you that can hinder me! I've as good a right around here as you! I'm not going to be ordered about by you!"

"Nor I," exclaimed Augusta; and both made a hasty move to leave the carriage.

"Lee," said Hope, hurriedly, "mamma did not know we were coming here; and if anything should happen to you I should be very much blamed; don't get out!"

But neither Lee nor his sister heeded her entreaties; and Hope catching a hand of each held them back until she had called to Nelson to drive round for a while, till the train had come and gone.

The children struggled, but Hope clung to them with a firm hand until the horses were again in motion, and then she sank back upon the seat trembling from terror and exhaustion, while Lee and Augusta, balked of their purpose, vented their anger in wordy violence.

"I'll give it to you!" exclaimed Jack, at length, clenching his chubby fists, "if you don't let my own sister alone!"



This sally by its very comicalness elicited a general burst of laughter, and soon peace was restored.

In a few minutes the train swept in, and, after a brief interval, passed, leaving Gordon, satchel in hand, standing upon the platform, and looking eagerly about him to see if any familiar face appeared to welcome him; but seeing none, he walked slowly away.

"There he is! there he is!" exclaimed Hope, whose eager eyes had been glancing in every direction, "and he sees us, too!

"Wait, Nelson, wait, he knows the carriage;" and the instant it stopped she sprang to the ground and hastened forward; but when within a few yards of the person she had supposed was Gordon, she stopped short, her face crimson with blushes, ready to fly from the presence of the strange young man before her.

"Why, Hope, bless your heart, don't you know me?" exclaimed Gordon, rightly interpreting her confusion, and extending his hand.

"Gordon! oh, I'm so glad!" and Hope held out both hands in the sudden joy of finding she had not been mistaken in the person; but when Gordon stooped to kiss her she drew back in confusion, saying:

"Excuse me, sir; Gordon, I mean! but you are so changed; I cannot think of you as my own, dear old Gordon!" and tears of undefinable disappointment sprang to her eyes.

"Why, you darling pussy! you are not going to cry because I have grown such a big, bearded monster, are you? I am the very same naughty, bad Gord. I used to be—your uncle Gordon, you remember!"—and Gordon broke into a merry laugh at the recollection of the one only point upon which he had ever ventured to tease Hope, and the pretty pretence of anger with which she had always received it.

"The old, old joke!" cried Hope; "and that makes me know you are the very, very same. But you can't tease me with that now; indeed, I think I may as well begin at once to call you 'Uncle Gordon,' you

have grown so tall and old, and I am such a little morsel beside you !”

“If ever you dare !” and Gordon sent a threatening look down into the mischievous brown eyes that were lifted to his face ; “but who are these ?” he continued, as the children gathered round him, curious to know who it could be with whom Hope was conversing so familiarly. “Is this my nephew ?”

“I am Lee Ellisson, sir ; but I don’t know you !” and the boy thrust his hands into his pockets, and eyed his uncle with a comical mixture of bashfulness and self-importance in his handsome face.

“Why, Lee, this is our dear, old Gordon ! your very own uncle ; and this, Gordon, is Augusta, and this Eva, and this is Jack, my own, own brother Jackie !” and Hope patted the cheek of her sturdy young champion affectionately ; and Jack, who only wanted the slightest mark of tenderness from Hope to bubble over with delight, burst into a fit of uproarious laughter as he glanced from Hope to Gordon, and from Gordon back to Hope ; and then, not knowing what else to do with his irrepressible self, broke into an awkward run for the carriage.

Nelson treated the merry little company to a drive around two or three squares, and then, turning his horses’ heads homeward, reached Prairie House in a few minutes.

“I am going to tell mamma,” whispered Hope, as the carriage touched the steps ; “you stay in the library, Gordon !” and, springing from the carriage, she flew up the steps, and away like the wind to Mrs. Ellisson’s room.

“O mamma, guess who has come ! But you never, never can guess ; so do come down to the library this very minute and see !”

“You are always full of mysteries, Hope,” said Mrs. Ellisson, closing the book she had been reading ; “what new marvel have you stumbled upon ?”

“Somebody is in the library that you want to see ever and ever so much ! Do come this minute !”

"Mamma! Uncle Gordon's here!" came ringing up from below, the burden of no less than four young voices, and in an instant Mrs. Ellisson was on her feet.

"Hope, is Gordon here?" she exclaimed, turning sharply toward the child.

"Yes, mamma; I would have told you at once, only I wanted to surprise you. You would never have known him unless you had been expecting him!"

"How came you to know him, then?"

"I *was* expecting him, mamma!"

"You 'expecting!' Did he inform you he was coming?"

"Yes, mamma! Papa and I sent for him to come on my birthday; and we did not tell you, for we wanted to give you a nice surprise."

The coupling of her father's name with her own in relation to the matter, instantly quelled Mrs. Ellisson's rising irritability; and, without further question, she walked hastily away to find her brother.

From the time her own children were old enough to attract notice, Mrs. Ellisson had felt secretly piqued at the preference her brother had shown for Hope; and this undefined jealousy had increased with years.

Gordon's frequent and affectionate letters to Hope, so much fuller of naturalness and warmth than those he wrote to herself, had kept this morbid feeling alive; and had often given a sharpness to her tone and manner when dealing with Hope, which she would probably have been unable to account for, even to herself; so little was she accustomed to look into her own heart in order to ascertain the real motives which governed her actions.

She had never been immoderately fond of her brother; yet, when she saw him evincing more attachment for others than for herself or her children, she felt irritated and uncomfortable toward the innocent objects of his regard, even though one of them was the motherless lamb of her own flock.

True to the promise made on her marriage night, she had loved Hope very tenderly until her own chil-

dren came; but just as her love for Colonel Ellisson, both before and after her marriage, had thrust Gordon into a lower place in her regards, so the love which came with her own little ones gradually crowded Hope more and more into the background.

With that selfish intensity with which some persons love their own, to the weakening or destroying of all other ties, she gave her whole self to her husband and children; and yet expected as much from her brother and Hope as though she had been making them the sole objects of her regard; forgetting that—

“Love, and love only, is the loan for love.”

On the landing Mrs. Ellisson encountered Mrs. Green, who had been roused from her afternoon nap by the outcry of the children, and had just rushed out to ascertain if she had heard aright.

“I wonder if them children are a foolin’!” she exclaimed; but Mrs. Ellisson passed quickly on without offering to relieve her suspense.

“It ain’t Gordon, is it, Hovie?” she inquired, anxiously, as Hope emerged from her mother’s room.

“Yes, aunty, it is his very own self, and nobody else! But he is so changed! He is near every bit as tall as papa, with such a beard and moustache, you would never believe!”

Poor Aunty Green; it was too much of a surprise for her affectionate heart! and, lifting the corner of her apron, she began rubbing her eyes with an energy which seemed to Hope manifestly endangering to their safety, for she snatched it away, and, smoothing out the wrinkles from its polished surface, peeped roguishly into the benevolent face which never gave back into her own any look but love, and said, with one of her own irresistible smiles:

“There, aunty, darling, it’s as smooth as ever now, so please don’t spoil your dear old eyes any more with it, will you?” and, turning to kiss the fingers that patted her cheek, Hope glided down the stairs, leaving

her nurse gazing fondly after her, and murmuring over and over, as though the words acquired an added relish with every repetition, "The precious child! how *ever* could I live without her!"

"I am very glad to see you, Gordon!"

There was a stately formality in his sister's greeting that at any other time would have clashed painfully with Gordon's mood; but he was, at the moment, too full of joy at being again at home to heed it.

"And I am glad to see you, Amy! How are you?" he exclaimed, with affectionate warmth, as he stooped to kiss her.

Mrs. Ellisson offered him her cheek with grave politeness, and then begged him to be seated.

"You have studied a surprise for me, I understand," she said, smiling; "and have succeeded to your entire satisfaction, I presume."

"It was not I who planned a surprise, Amy; I quietly submitted to what others planned; and, since you are glad, it is all the same to me whether you are surprised or not. How is the Colonel?"

"He is quite well, thank you. He had to go into town, to meet some old friends from the South. He bade me excuse him to any who might call—I suppose you are the one he had in mind—and say he would be home to tea. Are you quite well, Gordon?"

"Better than when I left home, Amy, thanks; the journey has done me good."

"So you have come to speak of that Eastern Paradise of yours as *home*, have you?"

"Yes, Amy; I have come to feel very much at home in our uncle's family. I wish you knew them; you would like them very much."

"Perhaps so. You are greatly changed, Gordon. I scarcely expected to see you so tall; you are fully as tall as Hugh, and you have lost nearly all your old child-looks. You have very little of the Leeds in your make-up, it seems to me."

"Doubtless I am more like my mother's people. Uncle says the Gordons are a tall race."

"You have never met any of them in the East?"

"No, Amy; the few that survive are widely scattered, I believe."

"By the way, I am forgetting my duty. I have not inquired after the Rev. Anthony and his family; I trust you left them all well, Gordon?"

"My uncle and his family were all well when I left, except Bessie, the little cousin of whom I wrote you. She is failing rapidly, poor child!" replied Gordon, reddening with surprise and pain.

At that moment Hope entered the room with a tiny bouquet of moss rosebuds in her hand, and the conversation was suddenly interrupted.

"Some of the girls are here, mamma; shall I take them up to the drawing-room?"

"I will receive them," said Mrs. Ellisson, rising. "Excuse me, Gordon, you will make yourself quite at home, of course; come, Hope," and with a secret triumph, not, however, unmingled with pain at the needless stab she had given her brother through the friends she knew he loved, she walked away.

"May I fasten this here?" said Hope, resting her bouquet against Gordon's breast, and looking up half timidly into his face. "See," she added, as Gordon, with a smiling assent, seated himself to receive her birthday favor, "what a dear, little bouquet-holder papa bought me yesterday for you."

"Thank you, and thank him too! It is very beautiful, and the buds also."

"There! that looks very lovely against the soft gray of your coat, Gordon. Now, each of these two half-opened buds counts five; and each of the three little ones counts one; do you understand my bit of birthday arithmetic?"

"Yes, they are for thirteen, are they not, Hope?"

"Correctly answered, you are an apt pupil; and now I must run to mamma; bye, bye! Remember you are to help at our games," she added, looking back.

"Yes, Hope, anything you wish!" and rising, Gordon walked gloomily to a window.

His feelings had undergone a sudden and painful revulsion. Something in his sister's manner, and more in her words, had thrown him back upon himself; and for a moment he wished himself a thousand miles away. But the thought of Hope and his brother-in-law banished the half-formed wish, and taking up a book he was becoming absorbed in its perusal, when a well-known face at the door suddenly brought him back again to the consciousness of a warm, motherly sympathy, long missed but never forgotten.

## CHAPTER XXV.

"WHY, Gordon, dearie, is this you?"

The true heart of Mrs. Green would be repressed no longer; and, at the risk of incurring her mistress' possible displeasure, she had ventured to the library to find Gordon.

"Yes, auntie, bless your kind heart, how are you?" and Gordon stooped his glowing face to receive the motherly kiss of the humble woman who had shed more of the warmth of a true mother-love over his boyhood than any other one.

"Well, well!" and Mrs. Green stepped back and surveyed the young man from head to foot. "Hope said I wouldn't know you, and sure enough I wouldn't. Five years does make a change in a growin' boy, now, don't it! You've come home to stay now, hain't you, Gordon?"

"No, auntie; I have lost a great deal of time, and am scarcely half through my work yet. I have only come for a short visit."

"Well, dearie, I am so glad to see you, I don't know what to do; but I can't say I'm sorry you ain't goin' to stay, though mebbly you may think it strange that I, who love you next to Hope as though you was my own, could say such a thing."

"How is this, auntie? you were glad to have me go,

and now you are glad I am not going to stay; I'm not quite sure I understand you!"

"O child, I can't talk about it!" and a look of inexpressible pain swept over the woman's face. "It's because I love you so much that I say it, and you musn't let it hurt your feelings; but believe me, dearie, you're ever so much better off down there along of your uncle's folks than you could be here; and that's what I've said to myself all along!"

"Uncle Gordon, mamma wants you in the greenhouse, to help her fill some vases for the tea-table; and Hope says you're to come up to the drawing-room when you get through.

"There are lots of girls up there, and Hope's going to have some charades and things."

"Yes, Lee; I will be up there before long. Will you excuse me, auntie?"

"Yes, dearie, bless you! young folks is young folks, and I can't expect you to stay talking to an old woman like me. Now I hain't hurt your feelings, have I?"

"No, no, auntie, nothing of the kind; don't dream of such a thing! It is quite possible I understand you better than I seem to, after all;" and with the painful shadow all banished from her kind face, Mrs. Green withdrew, and Gordon went to help his sister.

The evening passed away pleasantly to Hope and her companions, the prolonged absence of Colonel Ellisson being the only drawback to their enjoyment.

At an early hour the little party broke up; and as the last group disappeared down the long avenue that stretched from the house to the street, Gordon turned to his sister, who with himself and Hope had been watching the receding forms, with the inquiry:

"What can be keeping the Colonel so late, Amy?"

"Oh, he is engaged with some friends, and has not found it easy to get away, I suppose. He will be home soon, I think; but we had better go in; the dew is falling, and the night is growing cool."

"Thank you, Amy; but I think I will go and meet



Hugh; he is surely on the road by this time;" and Gordon commenced buttoning up his coat, preparatory to his walk.

"No, Gordon, you must not go out to-night!" said Mrs. Ellisson, nervously; "Hugh may not be in till midnight; and as you are not well, the night air will do you harm. There is no need for any one to go to meet him."

"Oh, no need, of course! but the night is beautiful, and anyhow I want a walk;" and, without further parley, Gordon walked rapidly down the avenue.

"I do wish he wouldn't go!" said Mrs. Ellisson, fretfully.

"Why, mamma," said Hope, "papa will be glad to have him come and meet him; I'm sure he will."

"Hope, it is time you were in bed; go to your room at once!"

"Cannot I stay with you, mamma, till papa and Gordon come; it is scarcely more than nine o'clock yet?"

"No, Hope; you will see them both in the morning; good-night!"

Hope kissed the cheek that was bent to her, and, with a sigh, withdrew to her room.

"Can I stay up with you a while, auntie?" she asked, as she entered; "papa is not in yet, and Gordon has gone to meet him; may I wait up till they come?"

"I think you'd better go to bed, dearie; you're tired, and they may stay out till all hours talkin'. Come, let me undress you."

"This is my birthday evening, auntie; please let me wait till papa comes."

"Well, well; an hour or so won't matter much, I dare say; but you must put on something warmer than that, or you'll catch your death o' cold, the night's gettin' real chilly."

Hope withdrew to her dressing-room, and, in a few minutes, returned warmly habited for the evening, and, taking a book, seated herself by a shaded lamp to read.

The book she had taken was a Bible, the only book she ever read at night; for Mrs. Green, with the promise she had made Hope's dying mother ever uppermost in her mind, had trained her so sedulously into that habit that she thought of nothing else; and, as she grew older, it became one of her greatest pleasures to read aloud while her nurse occupied herself with sewing or knitting, in the meantime explaining, in her quaint, original fashion, the portions which Hope did not clearly understand.

"You needn't read loud to-night, dearie," said Mrs. Green, seeing Hope about to proceed as usual; "I ain't in a state of mind to listen, and it ain't right to have God's word read in our hearin', and we not attend to it."

"Are you not well, auntie?" inquired Hope, quite anxiously.

"I'm well enough in body, my darling, but I ain't happy; and my mind's a wanderin' where mebbly it hadn't ought to, but I can't help it. Read to yourself, now, darlin', and don't ask me no questions, that's a love, cause I can't answer!" And, seating herself in a recess of the window, Mrs. Green shaded her face with her hand, and tears dropped silently and unseen from eyes more used to weeping than any one who saw her cheerful, daily ways would have ever dreamed.

Hope longed to steal to her side with gentle, comforting words; but there were times when, if she ventured to offer them, they were gently but firmly declined, and she had learned to submit in silence.

But the poor child little dreamt that the sorrow was all on account of her own father; that his love of strong drink was daily and hourly lying at the heart of this faithful woman as a heavy burden of grief known only to God and her own soul; that even then she was lifting a voiceless cry to God that his feet might be turned from the path of the destroyer.

Years before, Mrs. Green had watched, with such solicitude as only a drunkard's wife can measure or comprehend, the progress of the same terrible appetite

while it gained its slow but certain mastery over the husband she loved as her own life. She had seen her babes, the tender springs of their existence, poisoned by her own deadly sorrow, carried, one by one, to untimely graves; and, at last, had seen their father pass away amidst the horrors of delirious madness—the effect of rum—into the dark unknown of eternity, unrepentant, unsaved; and now, with her vision sharpened by such a terrible experience, she was watching the slow descent of Colonel Ellisson along the same slippery, down-hill pathway.

Three times she had thrown herself in his way, and, with tears and entreaties, warned him of his danger; but he had laughed at her as a hysterical old woman, and recommended her to go and look after the children.

Once she had appealed to her mistress to waken to the impending danger; but the appeal had drawn down upon her a sharp reprimand, and so all that was left her *was prayer*.

When she knew Colonel Ellisson had not returned to share in Hope's birthday festivities, her heart sank, for something seemed to tell her that trouble was at hand. But there was no one to whom she could tell her fears, so she retired to the darkest corner of the room to endure the anxiety and suspense of the slow hours unobserved and in silence.

Mrs. Ellisson remained for a few minutes standing in the door-way, endeavoring to calm the perturbation of her mind, but in vain; and, closing the door, she entered the parlor, and, taking up a book, endeavored to read. But her efforts for composure were unavailing; and at length, flinging aside the book, she rose and paced the room with nervous haste.

Recently, Colonel Ellisson had several times returned late, and in a state of intoxication; and the possibility of her brother's encountering him in such a condition was intensely humiliating.

She had observed Gordon sufficiently closely to realize that his character had undergone a very great

change during the five years he had been absent from her; that he was no longer a headstrong, impulsive boy, but a thoughtful, self-reliant man.

She could easily trace in his manners and speech the refining influence of those with whom he had lived; and often she half shrunk from the grave, thoughtful looks he bent upon her, with a feeling similar to what she experienced under her uncle's gaze.

She had noticed the quick flush that dyed his temples at her contemptuous allusion to their uncle; and the answer he returned clung to her memory, bringing with it, as oft as it recurred, the irritating, uncomfortable sense of having placed herself at a great disadvantage in her brother's opinion, without the slightest gain to herself.

"I wish he had stayed away!" she muttered petulantly to herself, as she paused at length in her rapid walk. "He will notice, and gather up every little thing that occurs during his stay, and take it back to that model household, I dare say, to furnish grounds for unfavorable comparisons. I saw him observing the younger children this evening at table, as though their little wayward actions were quite dreadful; but whatever Hope did was all right; whenever she spoke he was all smiles and attention. If he should happen to find Hugh—" and without following out the half-formed thought, Mrs. Ellisson flung the book she had inadvertently taken up back upon the table and resumed her walk.

At length, glancing at the clock, she was startled to see that it was almost twelve; and at the same moment the sound of wheels coming up the avenue fell upon her ear. With a half-smothered exclamation she flew to the door, and opened it just as a carriage drew up.

A single glance revealed her husband in the seat supported by Gordon, and before she had time to speak her brother's voice rang clear and stern through the still air:

"Tie your horse, Clayton; I must have your help!"

"Hugh—Gordon!" cried Mrs. Ellisson, rushing forward, "what is the matter?" but her brother motioned her to be silent, and she shrank terrified and almost fainting into a recess of the doorway.

With great difficulty the two men succeeded in getting Colonel Ellisson out of the carriage and up the long staircase; and each carefully supported his swaying form as he dragged his heavy feet along the hall to his own room, where they laid him on his own bed; or rather where, still supported by them, he cast himself down like a log, and with a grumble of discontent at being disturbed, turned his expressionless face toward the wall.

"Drive back to town as quickly as possible, Clayton," said Gordon, in a low voice, "and send Doctor Eberly; lose no time."

"No, Gordon, no; I insist there shall no doctor be called to-night!" and Mrs. Ellisson confronted her brother with a face as pale and stern as his own.

Without recalling his order, Gordon motioned the man to proceed; and he ran quickly down the stairs, and springing into the vehicle, drove rapidly away.

"Gordon Leeds, how dare you!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellisson, trembling with anger; "have you not disgraced the family sufficiently by employing that low fellow to bring my husband home, and help you to pilot him to his room, but you must now raise a town scandal by sending for Doctor Eberly? Why did you not leave him at the hotel?"

"Your husband's life may be in danger, Mrs. Ellisson!" said Gordon, coldly; "I have been working with him for nearly two hours to bring him out of his stupor sufficiently to get him home. When I found him he was nearly dead."

"I know better; and so ought you, if you know anything! A night's sleep will set him all right; and if you had left him where he was, he would have been cared for, and no gossip. I wish you were less reckless in your folly!"

"Amy," said Gordon, flinging his coat upon a chair,

"you are talking about something of which, as yet, you are wholly ignorant; and while we are wasting words Hugh is sinking again into what may prove a fatal stupor. Will you help me keep him awake till the doctor comes?"

Mrs. Ellisson turned deadly pale. She had not, till then, dreamt of anything but mere intoxication; and without another word she hastened to her brother's assistance.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

THE heavy tramp of the men through the hall had roused Hope from the partial slumber into which she had fallen upon the couch, where she had thrown herself on observing that her nurse was asleep in her chair; and, with a sharp cry, she sprang toward the door; but Mrs. Green was on her feet in an instant, and, catching Hope by the arm, she said, in a low tone, "Wait till I see!" and, opening the door softly, she peeped out. "Stay back!" she repeated, almost sternly, as Hope pressed forward; "'tain't no sight for you to see—no, no!" and, closing the door again, she drew Hope to her side, and burst into tears.

"What is it, auntie? Oh, do tell me what is wrong? Who are all the people in the hall?"

"It is your father, lovey, and Gordon, and Clayton, who drives the livery. Be, as you always are, a good child now, and creep away to bed, and not say another word. I see your mother is there, and I am going to slip out and see if I can be of any use!"

"Oh, auntie, something is wrong with papa! I know there is! Do let me go to him!"

"No, no, no, my child! The same has happened before, and will again; but 'tain't for innocent little eyes like yours to look at. Now, don't speak again, nor ask any questions, but go straight to bed as quick as ever you can go!"

Accustomed to having; her commands implicitly

obeyed, Mrs. Green did not wait to see Hope in bed, but hurried away, leaving her standing alone in the room. But the agony of suspense was more than the child could bear, and, darting from the room, she rushed past her nurse, and was first at her father's bedside.

"Oh, papa, papa!" she exclaimed, with a bitter cry, as she saw her mother and Gordon chafing his limbs and hands.

"Oh, Hope!" cried Gordon, with a choking voice, "this is no scene for you to witness!"

"Go to your room this instant!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellisson; "why were you not in bed hours ago?" But Hope neither heard nor obeyed. With clenched hands and dilated eyes she was watching the livid face before her, and moaning, "O my dear, dear papa! he'll die—he'll surely die!"

"Hope Ellisson, why do you not obey me?" exclaimed Mrs. Ellisson, catching her by the shoulder. "Green, is it possible you are here, too?" Take that child to her room, and don't show yourself here again!"

"Amy, you are certainly beside yourself! Stay, auntie; your help is needed here!" and, lifting Hope in his arms, Gordon carried her, as tenderly as when she was a babe, to her room, and laid her on the couch.

"There, little one; there, my darling; don't cry so; please don't, but listen to me!"

"Oh, what is it, Gordon; do tell me; is papa dying?"

"I hope not; I trust not; but he has been drinking very hard, and something more than drink is wrong with him, but I don't know what. Dr. Eberly will be here just now, and he can tell us, I trust. Now won't you be quiet, little darling, and try to be patient?"

"Oh, I must, I must, for your sake, for dear papa's sake! O, Gordon, Gordon!" and Hope buried her face in the cushions to stifle the wailing cry she could not repress.

"Listen, Hope! I must go back to your father this minute, for I am needed there. Will you try and compose yourself?"

"Yes, I will, Gordon; *do* go to papa quickly; trust me; I will be good!" and with a heart-breaking "Oh, oh!" Hope buried her face deeper in the cushions, and was silent.

Gordon laid his hand tenderly upon the young head, bowed thus under its first great sorrow, but he dared not utter a word of consolation, lest the storm should break forth afresh, and with a stronger effort at self-control than he had ever put forth before, he left her, and hastened back to Colonel Ellisson's room.

"What does this mean? This is no ordinary drunken fit!" and Dr. Eberly glanced inquiringly from Mrs. Ellisson back to Gordon.

"All I know, doctor, is that I found him, some two hours ago, lying in a back room of Brown's saloon, in a heavy stupor, from which I aroused him, with great difficulty, sufficiently to get him home. I know, of course, he has been drinking excessively, but beyond that I know very little."

"How long since he went there?"

"He went to Weston," answered Mrs. Ellisson, "immediately after dinner, to meet two or three old friends from the South, and said he should be home early. I never knew him to go to Brown's saloon in his life; Gordon has made some mistake. He always meets his friends at his own parlor in the Metropolitan."

"He has not been at the Metropolitan this afternoon to my certain knowledge, for I have spent the whole day there myself with a sick man who is in a very critical state," remarked the doctor.

"He went to Brown's about two o'clock, and spent the whole afternoon there drinking and—"

"Gordon!"

"The truth must be told, Amy; *drinking and gambling!*"

"I read the riddle," said the doctor, with a signifi-



cant nod; "I know all about it. He has had great mental excitement, probably lost heavily, and taken brandy in proportion, and his system is not in a condition to bear the double strain. It's well you were on hand, young man; the case is critical, very critical."

There were quick, rapid orders, and prompt obedience, while the doctor stood, watch in hand, noting every symptom as the slow hours of night dragged on.

Servants hurried to and fro, and the coming and going of Hope's white face, and the vigorous, efficient help of the experienced woman, to whom similar scenes were no new experience, met no further opposition or rebuke.

Humbled, stricken, silent, Amy stood beside her husband through those terrible hours of agony and suspense; but when, just as the sun was sending his first rays into the room, the doctor whispered to Gordon, "We have conquered; he is sinking into a natural sleep!" she fainted and would have fallen had not Gordon caught her in his arms, and carrying her to her room he left her to the care of her women.

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Days lengthened into weeks before Colonel Ellisson was able to leave his bed; and during that long period Gordon sat patiently by his bedside, attending to every want, and only taking such brief intervals of rest as were absolutely necessary.

Hope seldom left his side during the day. Through the more serious stages of her father's illness, she sat on a low ottoman at Gordon's feet, alternately watching his face and that of her father, and gathering hope or giving way to despondency as she was able to trace encouragement or anxiety in the former.

Gordon saw little of his sister except when she was in her husband's room, and still less of her children, who were kept as much as possible out of hearing of their father.

When partial convalescence began, Gordon and Hope often stole away to a window-seat while the

invalid was asleep, and conversed in subdued tones of what had transpired during the long years they had been separated, and Hope's soft brown eyes would glow with pleasure as Gordon dwelt upon his high hopes and anticipations for the future; but very soon they would wander away dreamily towards her father, and the great, ever-present dread of what might come to him would fill them again with unutterable sadness.

Once only during those weary weeks Gordon and Hope stole away, towards the close of a beautiful summer day, to visit the cottage where they both were born.

The quiet, old house was little changed. Mrs. Thompson with her thrifty housewifery kept the old rooms and the old furniture in the most perfect order; and Thompson, in addition to planting many pretty ornamental trees and keeping the little garden radiant with flowers, had set several rows of hedge that were already thick and strong; and made the corner where the family graves were, as beautiful and attractive as flowers and shrubs could make it.

Here, with Hope at his side and listening with almost womanly interest to his words, Gordon spent the only really happy hours he enjoyed during his stay: and for many weary years the memory of that evening of tranquil enjoyment remained with Hope, the one fresh green oasis in the desert of dreary memories to which she could turn and find comfort and refreshing.

One morning, as Gordon and Hope were sitting in quiet conversation while Colonel Ellisson slept, a servant entered softly, and handed the former a telegram.

"I fear it refers to Bessie," he said, tearing off the envelope, and with a startled look, he read: "Bessie is very low—come as soon as possible."

Handing the telegram to Hope, and motioning the woman to remain with her, he hastened to find his sister and announce his intention to leave immediately.

Mrs. Ellisson was resting herself upon a sofa when Gordon entered the parlor; but she rose quickly,

startled by the expression of his face, and asked, eagerly: "What is it, Gordon; is Hugh worse?"

"No, Amy; but I have just received a telegram from home that Bessie is very low, and I think I must start this afternoon."

"Why, Gordon, you surely will not leave *me*, in my present trouble, for the sake of those people!"

"Those people," as you term them, Amy, are very dear to me, and I owe them, not only this consideration, but any other they may think fit to expect, for all their kindness to me."

"Have I shown you no kindness, Gordon?"

"Yes, Amy, you have been a good, kind sister to me; and I hope I am not ungrateful. I have been trying, in a small way, to manifest my gratitude and affection for both yourself and Hugh for the last six weeks; it is for you to say if I have succeeded."

"You have been very kind, Gordon, I'm sure; but Hugh is very ill yet."

"He is quite out of danger, Amy; all he requires now, as the doctor told you yesterday, are nourishment and rest; and, as I am bound by my promise to do, I must return at once. I confidently hope there will never be a recurrence of the trouble you have been having; for Hugh has promised me *positively* to abstain in future from all intoxicating drinks; and, Amy, *you must help him.*"

"That is a very easy thing to say, Gordon; but will you kindly inform me how I am to do it?"

"In the first place, Amy, let it alone yourself. Banish it from your table; and now is the time to begin, when Hugh is keenly alive, as I know he is, to the misery and ruin he is bringing upon himself and his family, and while his promise to let drink alone is fresh in memory. Here is a pocket pledge—I always carry one with me—and Hugh has signed it, as you can see. Now will you not put your name here with his; and then, like an earnest, resolute woman, carry out your own pledge, and help him to carry out his? Will you, Amy?"

"Perhaps so, when I have seen and talked with my husband about it."

"O Amy, don't, I beseech you, say or do anything that can unsettle him, now that he has taken the first step. Do put your name here, and then show him what you have done. I know it will have a very powerful influence with him in keeping him steady to his purpose."

"Gordon, I am more than willing to sign that or any other paper of the kind with my husband, provided he does it deliberately and of his own choice. But I must know from himself that that is the case. Much of the time since he has been ill he has been delirious, and if he has signed the pledge in that condition, he will not respect his own act."

"Believe me, Amy, Hugh was perfectly sane when he signed this paper. You do not dream how near the verge of ruin he has been; and let me warn you, that if he lapses again, there can be very little hope in his case. You surely will not shrink from anything that will help him to rise?"

"When I see my way clear, and know what course is best, I am usually ready to act. You will allow me to say, however, Gordon, that I think you are rather forward in this matter!"

"Amy, I have something to tell you; and your present tone and manner enable me to tell it with less hesitancy than I would otherwise feel. What I am about to tell you, I received from your husband, *in confidence*. I felt it was something you ought to know, and when I asked permission to tell you, his reply was: "If you consider it best, Gordon, you have my free consent." I mention this, Amy, that you may see I am not betraying confidence."

The flush faded quickly from Mrs. Ellisson's face, but she merely inclined her head, as she said quietly: "Go on, Gordon. I presume you are, as usual, exaggerating some fancied evil to most unreal proportions, but I will hear you."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"I WISH I were doing so, Amy, I do indeed, for your sake and for your husband's; but I am not. When Hugh told you that afternoon that he was going to Weston to meet some friends, he misled you; they were not friends, but a couple of sharpers whom he had met several times in gambling circles, and at whose hands he had lost considerable money."

"Gordon Leeds, I don't believe it! Hugh never gambles."

"That shows how little you know about it, Amy. He has been in the habit of gambling for years. Card-playing, begun as an amusement at his father's fireside, finally deepened into a habit—a passion, I may say—which has already cost him thousands of dollars. You shake your head, Amy, look here;" and Gordon took from his pocket an old letter which he unfolded slowly, as he spoke—"here is a letter which reached me the day after I arrived at my uncle's house. It is dated the day I left yours; and, as he says, written after a talk with you about card-playing and its possible effect upon both myself and his own children. I always carry it with me when I am going where I am likely to meet with gamblers, as a restraint upon my own passionate fondness for cards. Read it, if you please, and then I will finish what I have to tell you."

"I have no wish to read a letter intended as private. I shall not avail myself of your breach of confidence toward my husband."

"Amy! taken in connection with what I have to tell you, this is no breach of confidence; and unless you read it, I shall not go on. You doubt my truth; this letter must be my defence. It is due to myself that I insist upon your reading it!"

The letter contained a passionate appeal to Gordon to utterly and forever abandon card-playing; a brief history of the growth, within himself, of a simple liking for it as an amusement, into a passion; a state-

ment of a number of heavy losses in which it had already involved him ; and ended with another urgent appeal to Gordon, not only to abandon it himself, but to discourage and discountenance it in others.

Mrs. Ellisson read the letter with a clouded brow, and then silently returned it to Gordon.

“ Are you satisfied, Amy ? ”

“ I have read the letter, Gordon ; that was the condition you made, but it did not bind me to answer questions. Will you go on with what you have to tell ? ”

“ As I was about to say, Amy, Hugh had previously lost a good deal of money by those fellows ; and he went that day hoping to change his luck, and win back a portion, at least, of what he had lost. In this, however, he was disappointed, and, so far from winning, again lost heavily, he would not tell me how much.

“ In desperation he played, and drank, until his last cent was gone ; *and then his friends left him !* The rest you know better than he does ; for he remembers nothing more, except that he drained the decanter to its last drop ; and then flung himself upon a lounge and wished to die.

“ And now, Amy, in view of all this, will you encourage him by signing this pledge to which he has already set his own name ; and then do all you can to save both him and your children from this evil in the future ? ”

“ Why do you allude to my children, Gordon ? ”

“ Because your children are in danger. You have two sons and two daughters, not one of whom is safe while this demon of strong drink is harbored beneath your roof.”

“ I thought I had three daughters, Gordon ! ”

“ True, Amy, I do not forget that ; but one of them, as you well know, signed the pledge of total abstinence years ago.”

“ Yes, I am aware of the fact. Possibly, if you had shown the same interest during those years in the others that you have in her, they would have done as

she has. You make a marked distinction between my children, Gordon!"

"Amy! Hope is more to me than any other child ever was or can be! She came to our home when I was a bad, wilful boy; and her baby influence did more than all other things put together to restrain my temper, and subdue my arrogance and conceit. I have never lacked the interest in your children which was due to them as my nephews and nieces; but I fear I shall, if any one ever undertakes to thrust them between Hope and me. I tell you, Amy, the world can never hold for me another such child as Hope. Neither you nor any other one can know what a sacred, restraining power her love has been to me!" and Gordon's voice faltered as he spoke.

"As regards your children, Amy," he continued, after a little pause, during which his sister had been watching his face thoughtfully—almost sorrowfully—"they have none of them been, till recently, able to write to me; so there has been little inducement for me to write to them as I did to Hope; and since I came here, I scarcely need remind you that I have not found a quiet hour to devote to them. But, admitting I have come short in regard to them, Amy, that does not in the least affect your responsibility. You have them all in your own keeping as yet; but it will not *very long* be so. Every year lessens your chance to strike *successfully* for them as well as for their father. But *if* you are prompt now, and firm and vigilant hereafter, you have it in your power to carry the day, I believe, with them all. Will you sign this paper, Amy, so that I may have the pleasure of showing your signature to Hugh before I go?"

Mrs. Ellisson took the paper, and, with an unsteady hand, wrote her name underneath that of her husband.

"There, Gordon, it is done; and you can show it to Hugh as soon as you like."

"One word more, Amy. Will you promise me to use your influence with your children as soon as they

are able to understand the nature of a pledge, and induce them also to sign it?"

"I don't like your asking me to *promise*, Gordon! It certainly looks as though you were very doubtful of me in some way. I don't understand your persistency in urging me to interpose a promise between myself and my duty, as though I were not likely to do it without such a spur!"

"Very well, Amy, since you put it on such personal grounds, I will not urge you further; but, that you may never again seek to shift your own responsibilities to me, I shall speak to your older children before I go, and try and show them reasons why they ought to sign this paper now. If they will hear me, well; if not I trust they will hear you; it is not likely that I shall see them again until the characters of the older ones, at least, are formed."

Mrs. Ellisson did not reply, and taking the pledge, Gordon went to find the children. When it was returned it bore the names of all the children except Jack, and his case was lodged in Hope's hands to attend to as soon as he should be a little older. Two hours later Gordon was gone; and with an added weight at her young heart, Hope was keeping her solitary watch in her father's room, thinking, thinking of the rapidly growing distance between herself and Gordon, and the long, long years that must pass before he would ever come again.

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The day Gordon left Prairie House was the first really unhappy day he had ever spent. The manifest displeasure of his sister at his leaving her in such a time of trouble, as she expressed it; her undisguised dislike, not only of her uncle, but of the whole family; her blindness to the faults of her own children; the petulance with which she had several times alluded to his partiality to Hope; the grievous fall of his brother-in-law from the high esteem in which he had always held him; and the burden under which he began to realize that Hope was already walking—a burden



which, so far as he could see, must grow heavier as her brothers and sisters grew older; her patient efforts to hide it from him, all these—the parting pain, and the thought of the new, and as yet unrealized, grief that awaited him in the death which even then might be doing its fatal work upon the dear child at the parsonage, were almost too much for his already overtaxed nerves; and during the greater part of the long journey he sat listlessly gazing out of the window, or musing with closed eyes upon the varied scenes and experiences of the past weeks.

At length the place of his destination was reached; and, hurrying from the train, a few minutes' rapid walk brought him to the parsonage.

There was a hush in the air, and a subdued quiet on all things around, that seemed to Gordon eloquent of sorrow. The curtains were drawn at the one window from which the shutters had been thrown back, and the only living creatures that met his gaze were the canary, hanging in the perch, and the great house-dog, basking in the sun upon the steps.

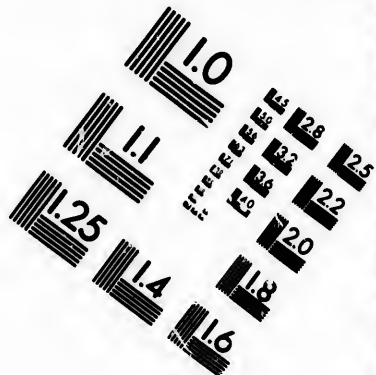
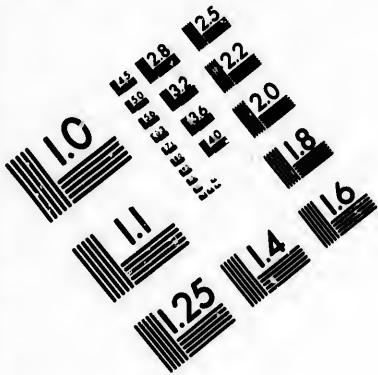
Pausing a moment to recover heart before he entered, and to acknowledge the dumb welcome of the faithful dog, Gordon left his travelling-bag in the porch, and, passing noiselessly down the passage, opened the door of the sitting-room, and found himself among friends.

"I'm so glad, Gordon!" was the whispered exclamation of one and another as they pressed forward to welcome him. "Bessie has been longing to see you," said Mrs. Leeds, in a faltering voice, as she returned Gordon's greeting; "and we all feared you would be too late. She is still here, however, poor lamb! but the strife is almost past now. We have been watching for her departure since sunrise."

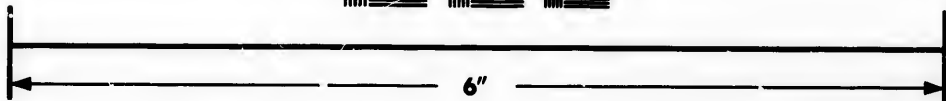
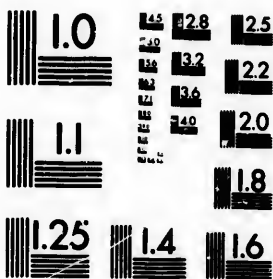
"Who is it, mamma?" said Bessie, feebly; then, opening her eyes, she recognized Gordon, and, with a bright smile, held out her hand.

"Dear, dear Gordon! I thought you would come; I knew you would come; and so I asked God to let me wait for you, and He has!"





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Gordon could not speak ; but, kneeling by the couch, he took the wasted little hand in his, and pressed it to his lips. "Mamma, may Gordon hold me in his arms for a little while, and rock me as he used to before he went away ? You know, mamma, how he used to rock me and sing to me after I got so bad with the cough. May he hold me so now ?"

"Yes, my darling, if he is not too much fatigued!" and so the easy chair was brought, and, wrapped in a large, warm shawl, the little girl was laid in Gordon's arms, while some of the family, for Gordon was unable to join, sang at her request—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly!"

For a while the child lay very silent; then her countenance brightened, and, looking up eagerly into Gordon's face, she said, with that strong, clear voice with which many consumptives are able to speak when about to die, "Gordon, dear, I am going to Jesus! He is my own, own Saviour, and in a few minutes He is going to take me to live with Him forever. When I am gone, will you write to dear little Hope, and tell her I love her very, very much, and want her to love Jesus, too; so that by-and-by she will come and be with me in heaven? Will you tell her, Gordon?"

"Yes, Bessie!"

"Cousin Gordon, do *you* love Jesus?"

There was no answer.

"Gordon, darling, *don't* you love Jesus?"

Still there was no answer.

"Gordon—oh, Gordon!" and the little girl's eyes began to fill with tears.

"Aunt Eleanor, lay her down again. She must not weep; it will kill her!" Gordon's self-control was gone, and, averting his face, great tears chased each other down his cheeks.

"Speak on, Bessie," said Mrs. Leeds, kneeling beside her child; "speak on, my love; God will give you strength!"

"Gordon!"

"What, Bessie?"

"Jesus loves you, for He died for you on the cross; don't you love Him a little—just a very, *very* little, Gordon?"

"No, Bessie!"

"Papa, pray, pray quickly that God will help Gordon to love Jesus!"

Mr. Leeds fell upon his knees, and all heads were bowed; but the stillness was unbroken, save by the hard, suppressed breathing of the young man and the stifled sobs of the family.

After a moment of silent prayer, Mr. Leeds rose, and all faces were turned toward Bessie, but she was not there. The large, earnest eyes were fixed on the beyond, as though beholding scenes undiscoverable to any but herself; a smile of ineffable peace lingered upon the sweet lips, but the beautiful clay was all that remained—the ransomed spirit had taken flight.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE funeral of little Bessie passed with the usual solemnities; and then Gordon's overtaxed powers gave way, and he sank under a low, nervous fever.

For many weeks he lay in a quiet, darkened room, and all spoke in suppressed tones, and moved with almost noiseless steps around him; for the slightest sounds thrilled along his nerves like electricity, and caused his temples to throb with intense pain.

At length, long after summer had deepened into autumn, and the trees had begun to drop their crimson and yellow leaves in the valleys, or yield them to the plundering winds that swept in gusty eddies among the forest boughs, he began to walk quietly about his room; and sometimes was allowed to sit beside the open window, where the breath of the Indian-summer brought him hints of drowsy woodlands and dropping leaves, of the chattering squirrel and the whirring

partridge, and of merry children gathering nuts on the hillsides, and from which he could sometimes obtain glimpses of white sails gliding over the blue bosom of the distant bay.

During his sickness, whenever he had been at all able to think, the dying words of little Bessie had been uppermost in his mind; and as soon as he was permitted to read, he turned with a sort of heart-hunger to the old Bible that for years had lain neglected upon his study table.

With a spirit subdued and chastened by the events of the past summer, and especially by his late illness—for so many weary weeks shut within himself in almost voiceless silence—he perused its contents with eager interest; and its sacred truths opened up to his mind with rich and wondrous meaning.

One day, as his uncle, who had been reading the papers to him, in order to beguile the monotony of his wearisome confinement, was about to leave the room, Gordon asked him to remain; and silently taking the Bible from the table by his side, he opened it at the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and handing it to him said:

“Read that chapter for me, if you please, uncle.”

Mr. Leeds was taken by surprise; he glanced eagerly from the open page to his nephew's face, but Gordon had composed himself again to listen, and with folded hands and closed eyes was waiting for him to proceed.

There was a look of rest and peace upon his pale, composed features that his uncle had not before observed; and the sudden hope which dawned in his mind made his voice tremulous with emotion as he read that sweet, pathetic story of the heart-stricken prodigal, hungry, destitute, and utterly humbled, turning his weary feet again to his once despised, and long-forsaken home, revolving in his mind the penitential prayer with which he would fall at his father's feet, of the father's yearning love for the wanderer—a love which had never failed during those years of anxious waiting, and who, now seeing him afar off, hastened to meet him, and before the wanderer had time to utter

the whole of his broken-hearted petition, anticipating it all, sealed his pardon with the warm kiss of long-tried but undiminished love; and, as though that were not enough to testify the depth of parental tenderness, commanded that his unsightly rags be stripped off, his pollutions cleansed, and he adorned—not as one who deserves nothing, but rather as an heir restored to an forfeited inheritance.

Mr. Leeds finished the chapter and closed the book, but the young man still sat with folded hands and closed eyes.

“Gordon!”

The eyes unclosed, and tears, that had been slowly gathering under the shut lids, brimmed over, and rolled down his cheeks, but he neither sought to conceal them nor wipe them away.

“What, uncle?”

“Has the precious meaning of that beautiful history entered into your heart?”

“How am I to know, uncle?”

“By the sentiments, the affections, the aspirations and resolves it has awakened within you. Have you, with the penitential plea of the prodigal, returned to your Father’s house, and found acceptance?”

“I don’t know—I don’t know, uncle, what *I* have done—it seems to me I have done nothing at all, but lie in the dust and wait to be lifted up. But this I do know, that sometime and somehow, when and how I cannot say, my Lord has come to me and said—” the voice broke down for a moment under the stress of strong emotion.

“What has He said, my son?”

“He has said, uncle”—and a smile, like April sunshine broke through the tearful rain, and the pale face lighted up with tender beauty under the joy of his new hopes—‘*be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!*’ I did not know very well that I was coming to Him, though ever since we studied that chapter in our Sabbath lesson, I have been vaguely conscious of *wishing* to do so, and much more so since Bessie left us;



but to-day I find myself resting, I know not how, upon the great love of Christ as upon a strong rock. I find myself singing all day in my thoughts, though I'm sure I don't know where I learned the words:—

‘Tis done—the great transaction's done!  
I am my Lord's and He is mine!’”

“Gordon, may I call your aunt and cousins?”

“Yes, uncle, the whole world if you like!”

In a few minutes a glad, but tearful, group sat in Gordon's room, while Mr. Leeds again opened the sacred volume, and read the ninety-first Psalm; and then, kneeling, poured out his heart in glad thanksgiving and prayer.

When the prayer was over, all united in singing the sweet hymn, a portion of which had been singing itself, as it were, in Gordon's thoughts all day; and then, with smiles and loving words, they gathered around him, to rejoice with him in the great joy which had that day come, to give a new meaning and a new beauty to his life.

An heir is born to an earthly crown, and men note it as an event of surpassing interest. Royal honors are paid to the unconscious babe. Poets celebrate the event in their sweetest songs. Orators proclaim it in the studied pomp of words; and a hundred cannons thunder forth the great joy of a nation's heart at the auspicious event; while the Press catches up every item of news respecting the royal child, and sounds it forth to be perused by eager and inquisitive millions.

But every day, and many times a day, thank God, a greater event than this transpires, and the world takes no note of it. A son of God, an heir of heaven, a King is born whose destinies stretch beyond those of the highest seraphim before the throne—one whose crown shall outshine the sun in its noontide glory, and still shine on with ever-growing splendors when his fires are cold, and his lamp has paled and gone out in heaven. But when, their lips all tremulous with un-

spoken joy, and eyes dim with tears of a thankfulness too great for words, God's people say of such a one: "*He is born again!*" "*He has given his heart to Christ!*" men scoff, and cry, "superstition, infatuation, cant!"

But this is the earth-side of the picture. This King, untitled, unhonored, unrecognized on earth, is known and recognized in heaven: and *a new name*, unknown to men, unknown even to the new-born soul itself, is heralded through the courts of glory with shouts and acclamations by ten thousand times ten thousand voices.

The joy in some lowly pastor's home over a soul born into the kingdom of Christ; the joy in some poor mother's mud-walled cottage over her erring son 'clothed and in his right mind'; the joy of two or three patient, toiling ones in some "Retreat" for earth's outcasts over one wretched prodigal reclaimed from vice; the joy of the toil-spent missionary when a poor idolater turns from the pollutions of paganism, and bows to Christ as to his one only Lord; these, in which the world has no share, are the joy of God and His holy ones—a joy our insect powers shall never measure nor estimate till we join that great congregation, and their joy, in its wondrous fulness, becomes our own.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

"GORDON is making up for lost time, I think," said Colonel Ellisson, one evening late in autumn, as he returned from Weston, handing a number of letters to his wife; "you can scarcely accuse him of partial dealing this time, Amy, for there is one each for you, and Hope, and Green; and here, enclosed in mine, I find one for the youngsters, which, I suppose, I am expected to read to them, but which office I herewith resign to you;" and tossing the letter into his wife's work-basket, Colonel Ellisson passed on to the smoking-room.

He had already perused the letter to the children, and gathered from it the nature of the change in Gordon; hence his willingness to resign to his wife the task of reading it to them, finding, as he had, that it consisted mainly of religious counsel, and he felt in no humor to answer the numerous questions he knew it would elicit.

Colonel Ellisson had only partially recovered from recent illness, and he shrank with nervous weakness from every source of excitement, unless fortified for it by stimulating drinks.

Gordon's letter to himself had painfully disturbed him; reminding him, as it did, not only of the pledge he had deliberately taken to abstain from all intoxicating drinks—a pledge he had failed utterly to keep—but of duties to God and his own soul, to which, during his whole life, he had given very little heed, except when some sorrow or bereavement urged them home for a little while upon his thoughts.

Opening Gordon's letter again, he read it the second time, lingering over the closing portion of it with a clouded brow and an aching heart.

"O, Hugh!" so the letter ran, "I cannot tell you what an unspeakable satisfaction I have felt during my illness in thinking that you are safe from that which has been the bane of your past life, and which has lately so nearly wrought your ruin.

"I know that to many the pledge of total abstinence is wholly inadequate as a restraint against the cruel appetite engendered by strong drink. But in your case, I am persuaded it will not be so. I know well your high sense of honor, and how much you value your word; and I felt when I saw you sign your name to that pledge, so freely, and with no urgency of persuasion from any one, that you were secure; and that, thereafter, your children would not lack the safeguard of a father's influence and example against the deadly evil.

"And now, my dear brother, if I could know that you and Amy would as readily resolve to seek Christ,

and, doing so, walk ever in meek obedience to His laws, I should have little more to ask or wish in your behalf; and I feel a growing confidence that you will. Having so freely taken the first step, it seems to me you will no less willingly take the second, and give yourselves wholly to Christ.

"He is so precious to me; He seems so inexpressibly desirable, that I feel sure He will be as much so to you when you contemplate for a little the matchless excellence, the surpassing sweetness and beauty of His character."

With a sigh, Colonel Ellisson laid down the letter, and lighting his cigar, pensively watched the circles of smoke as they rose above his head and floated dreamily away, until drowsiness stole over him; and tossing the remnant of his cigar into the fire, he stretched himself upon a lounge, and was soon fast asleep.

Mrs. Ellisson glanced at the children's letter, and her face flushed and paled alternately as she gathered from it the change that had taken place in Gordon, and read his earnest and faithful counsel to her children; then laying it aside, she opened and read her own.

It was a long letter, giving a history of his journey, of the death of little Bessie, and of his long illness—utterly marring, as it had, his collegiate prospects for another year. He then gave a detailed account of his conversion and baptism; and ended with an affectionate, but urgent appeal to her to return to God and His people, and begin a new life of cross-bearing and self-denial in His service.

When she had finished reading, Mrs. Ellisson put the letter in her pocket, and went to find Hope, who was, as was usual at that hour of the day, preparing lessons for the next. Looking up as her mother entered, Hope caught sight of the letters in her hand, and, with an exclamation of joy, sprang forward to receive her own.

"Here is a letter for you, Hope, and here is one for your brothers and sisters, which you will read to them this evening when your study hours are over—just before they go to bed will be a good time;" and passing on, Mrs. Ellisson entered her own room.

Her paltry jealousy of Gordon's attachment to his uncle's family and his preference of Hope to her own children, had betrayed her into treatment of him which had reacted upon herself, as it almost always does in persons of her temper, in resentment toward him; as though he had in some way injured her; while, in reality, the unkindness, both in act and feeling, had been wholly her own.

Hence, her brother's letter, so far from softening her, was, like her uncle's appeal, construed into an insult.

"As though I need any exhortations from *him!*" she said, contemptuously, crushing his letter in her hand, and thrusting it into a basket of waste paper. "He is taking his cue from the Rev. Anthony evidently; but he need not attempt to keep up this sort of thing, for I shall not submit to it. He interfered enough when he was here!" though what the nature of that interference was, did not seem quite clear, even to her own mind; yet she vaguely referred it, in some way, to that pledge.

Although, so far, she had kept it herself, yet she had seen her husband violate it again and again; and she had all along regarded it as a mortifying restraint when in society—a restraint which she longed to cast off, and which she never ceased to be angry with herself for having submitted to.

Anxiety for her husband's safety had once more given place to the false security of former years. She had again seen him come and go with a steady step, and laying aside her fears, she had already sunk far back into her old unconcern.

Had Gordon's letter come to her within a fortnight after he left, it would have found her more accessible; but the world had once more interposed its fascinations

between her and the dangers that had for a time appalled her, and she was content once more to float with the tide, and ready to repel as an unwarrantable interference any attempt to rouse her from her lethargy.

Hope looked longingly at the letters she held in her hand, but her teacher had made a rule that certain hours were to be devoted exclusively to study, and a weekly report was required of each pupil in regard to its observance.

So far, since the rule was announced, she had received no demerit marks; the desire to have only perfect reports prevailed over her anxiety to read her letters; and laying them in her desk she returned again to her tasks.

At length, as the clock struck eight, she sprang quickly to her feet, closed and piled up her books, laid pens and pencils in their place, and then seizing the precious letters, was hurrying to her room, when she remembered that one of them was for the younger children; and that she had been told to read it to them before they went to bed.

There was now no time to spare, and hastening to the nursery she found Norah ready to wait upon the little girls, and Lee, whose study hours like her own had just ended, clamoring noisily for a light; for he had reached the age when he was allowed to go to bed unattended, and whenever he wanted anything he considered himself entitled to immediate attention.

"Don't go just yet, Lee," said Hope, "I have a letter for you and the girls, and Jack, too," she added—observing that that young gentleman was yet out of bed—"and mamma said I was to read it to you."

"I will read it for myself when I get to my room. Give it to me."

"But it is for the girls as well as you, Lee! If you will read it, read it now, and let them hear it," remonstrated Hope.

Lee took the letter, and after several bungling attempts to read it intelligibly, tossed it aside, exclaiming,

"Oh, I don't care for that!" and snatching up the only lamp in the room, walked away with it; but at length yielded to Hope's entreaties, and replaced it on the table.

Hope picked up the letter, and as soon as order could be restored, read it.

"I don't care for it either," yawned Augusta, when it was finished, "there isn't a bit of fun in it!"

"Of course there isn't. It's as poky as Mr. White's lectures to us boys on manners!" and again appropriating the lamp, Lee illustrated his opinion of Mr. White's lectures by walking off with it; thus leaving all the rest in darkness.

There was a general uproar among the younger children, but while Norah went for another light, and Augusta was making ineffectual attempts to prevent her brother's accomplishing his purpose, Hope drew Eva and Jack to her side, and whispered a few quieting words to them; so that by the time a light was brought, peace was pretty well restored to all but Augusta, who, having hurt herself in her efforts to secure the lamp, was pouting in a corner.

Hope breathed a sigh of relief when at length she found herself in her own room, and free at last to read her letter, the first she had received since Gordon left.

Mrs. Green looked up from her work as Hope entered, and drawing a chair to her side, said quietly, "Come here, dearie! Ah, I see," she added, "you, too, have got a letter from Gordon; but you hain't read it, I see, so you don't know."

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### CHAPTER XXX.

"KNOW what, auntie?"

"Why, that Gordon's a Christian, Hope—a real, happy, rejoicing Christian! It seems too much to believe, it really does! I always said *it would be* some day, but now it's come, my faith ain't strong enough to more'n half believe it!"

Hope had read Gordon's letter to the children, and felt deeply moved by the spirit that breathed through it, and wondered the others did not feel the same; but that the warnings and advice it contained sprang from anything but the natural kindness of his heart, softened by absence and sickness, as well as by Bessie's recent death, had never dawned upon her. "A *Christian*, auntie! you don't mean—"

"I mean, my darling, that Gordon has given his heart to Christ, and that Christ has washed away his sins in His own precious blood; in other words, dearie, that they are all forgiven and taken away. You understand what I mean, don't you, my child?"

"Yes, auntie, but I didn't think he meant that," and Hope drew the letter she had just read from her pocket.

"What's that, Hope? did you get two?"

"No, auntie, this is one he sent to the children; and mamma had me read it to them; but I did not understand—"

"Let me read it, Hope;" and Mrs. Green took the letter, and read it aloud, while Hope listened with new interest as the import of the words became more clear to her apprehension.

"Will you read mine now, auntie?" she said, her lips quivering with emotion.

"Yes, my love, if you want me to, but I can't see why you should, for I ain't half so good a reader as you;" then noticing Hope's agitation, she drew her closer to her side, and read:

"MY DEAR HOPE,—I used to write to you and think of you as a little girl; but since my recent visit to Prairie House you have passed from the region of childhood, and become, to me, a woman, a friend—one who can sympathize with me, and understand me.

"You are many years younger than I am, but it seems to me you have left your childhood much further behind you than I have mine; and gained, in some respects, a maturity of mind and character which,



with all my superiority in respect to age, I have not acquired.

"But I am not envious. You were always my teacher; even when you were in your cradle I was your willing pupil, and now I am going to try to put in practice the later lessons which you have taught me by your patient forbearance and unselfishness.

"I need not give you particulars of my journey, those you can get by reading your mother's letter; nor of my recent illness, of which you have been kept duly informed by my uncle; but I want to talk to *you* of something else—of a new gladness that has come to my life, a gladness which, it sometimes seems to me, I could not have found except in such a home, and under such influences as I have enjoyed here. Yet I know very well that that is a foolish thought, for God is able and willing to come to us at all times and in all places, whenever and wherever we are willing to receive Him.

"Still I do think, and I love to think so, that God sent my uncle to Weston, to take me, as it were, away from myself, and make me acquainted with something better and nobler than anything I had ever before cared for, or sought after.

"I love to think it was God who caused him to feel an interest in me, led him to invite me home with him, and inclined me to accept his kindness.

"I think I can see now, that it is because God would have it so; that, from the day I first put myself under his influence to this, I have been guided by others rather than by my own will; and that I was, through love, following a guidance I never should have followed from any other motive.

"I can now see, also, that it was because God was directing all my way Himself, though I knew nothing about it—did not even ask or wish Him so do so—that I went to my uncle's class, and became interested in the Bible, a book I had always treated with contempt; and that, after four years and more, the fifteenth chapter of Luke should fasten itself upon my

mind, and never leave me until, like the prodigal, I, too, came to my Father's house, and found forgiveness and peace.

"And so God has been gently and kindly leading me by the hand, though I have been too blind to see Him, and too sinful to desire His love. Dear Hope, I am not sure that you will understand all this just now; but the time will come, I trust, when you will, when God will enable you to see His dealings with you as plainly as I see them with me.

"Let us now look at the links in this golden chain of influences, one by one. *God loved me* when I was bad and wicked, and cared nothing at all for Him; that is the *very first* one.

"*He brought my uncle to me* just when I stood most in need of some kind, wise friend, whose influence would be very, very strong over me.

"*He took me a very great way from all my old associates and friends*, from my old home even, and put me under the restraints of a Christian home, and the loving influence of a Christian lady, who was a second mother to me; and this, too, just when, perhaps, I should have run swiftly to ruin without them.

"Then came, one after another, *the Bible class*, to instruct me; *the Temperance pledge*, to restrain me; *the fading away of darling Bessie*, to make me thoughtful and tender; *my failure in College work*, through ill-health, to chasten and humble me, and make me stop and reflect; *that fifteenth chapter of Luke*, to make me think about my Father's house, and long to go there, and find a place of sweet, sweet rest and real peace; *my late visit to Weston*, to show me the dreadful abyss into which I might have fallen, but for His hand holding me up and keeping me back; *the death of little Bessie*, to show me how blessed a thing it is to have Jesus with you in dying; *my late illness*, to shut me up in silence and helplessness in the presence of God, as it were; and, last of all, *the Holy and Blessed Spirit of God*, working through all these influences so lovingly and so silently, to bring me to Jesus!

"Isn't it strange, dear Hope, that the great God, who is King over all worlds, who has all the holy angels, and all the blessed ones who have gone up from this world to love, and praise, and adore Him all the time; who is so pure, and so holy, and so good—isn't it *very* strange that HE should stoop so low, so very, very low, as to take all this pains with your wicked, careless, conceited Gordon?"

"Oh, I think it is! and I wonder at it more and more, as I learn more and more about Him and about myself. Just think, Hope, of His coming down, Himself, to this earth in the person of Jesus Christ, to live such a sorrowful life in human flesh, and then taking my punishment upon Himself, so that I might go free!"

"Just think of it, He took my sins so that when I became His child I might have His righteousness. Oh, it's wonderful! we don't any of us understand it now, but when we go where He is, I expect we shall understand it better, and keep on understanding it better and better forever. Will not that be blessed? I think it will!"

"When Bessie was dying she told me to tell you the words you will see written at the bottom of this page. And now, in conclusion, let me ask you to lock into your heart, and see whether you do really love Jesus or not. If you do not, you have your Bible to show you the way, and tell you what great things He has done for you; and your good nurse is able to help you, and ready to pray for you as I do also every day. She used to try to teach me, but I ran away from her and would not hear; you, I know, will heed her advice."

When Mrs. Green had finished reading, she returned the letter to Hope, and quietly resumed her work, while Hope retired to another part of the room, and read it over again in silence.

"Auntie," she said at length, after sitting for a long time, in deep thought, "did you not promise my own mamma, when she was dying, that you would teach me to love Jesus?"

"Yes, my darling, and I've tried to do so many times, haven't I?"

"Yes, auntie, you have; but I'm afraid I've been a very poor scholar!"

"You've often told me you loved Jesus; haven't you, Hope?"

"Yes, auntie, and I thought I did; but to-night—" and Hope crossed the room quickly, and kneeling, hid her face in her nurse's lap.

"Come here, darling!" and Mrs. Green took Hope in her arms, as she had done every day for more than thirteen years; "there now," she continued, "tell me all about this love of yours. How is it, Hope?"

"Why, auntie, I think I do love Christ, I'm sure I do, sometimes, very much; but I am not like you, always glad and happy when I think about Him. I can't make myself think He loves me; I'm such a child, and such a sinful one at that, that I am sure He doesn't love me. I believe He loves you and Gordon, and all good people; but I don't believe He loves me! I think about it a great deal, and sometimes I get so frightened that it seems to me if He should come to judge the world, I should be so afraid of Him I would want to creep away, if it were possible, where He could never see me; and then when I remember I could not do that, it seems just awful! I wish I knew He loved me as much as I do Him; it seems to me I should be perfectly happy!"

"Well, my darling, if that is all true, your love isn't made perfect; for the Bible says that '*perfect love casts out fear.*'"

"Now, dearie, suppose we for a little while go to thinking what these doubts and fears of yours about Christ's love really mean. It seems to me you are committing an awful sin when you think and say the blessed Jesus don't tell the truth!"

"Auntie, dear! why, I never thought that—never, never!" and Hope sprang to her feet in the energy and strength of her protest; but the revulsion followed

almost instantly, and she cast herself down again in a paroxysm of weeping.

"My child, didn't you just say you didn't believe that Jesus loves you?"

"Yes, auntie; but that isn't saying He does not tell the truth, is it?"

"Why, dearie, what else is it? All through the New Testament, and the Old one too, for that matter, He says He does love you, or what just means that; and then He proved it by giving up His life for you on the cross; and, as if that wasn't enough to convince you, has sent His blessed Holy Spirit to teach you, and His Word to be your guide; and now you turn round and say you don't believe He loves you! Why what is it, dear child, but saying He hasn't told the truth!"

"O auntie! I didn't think of it in that way, indeed, indeed, I didn't;" and the young head sank lower in contrition, and shame, and bitter tears.

Mrs. Green's tears coursed down her cheeks, as she stroked the bowed head, and murmured softly to herself: "Oh, the cruel, cruel tempter! the wicked tempter! to hurt the tender lambs so that believe in Jesus, a tellin' 'em He don't love 'em, when He says He does love 'em with an everlasting love!" At length she spoke.

"Hope!"

"What, auntie?"

"Get up, my darling, and listen to me."

Hope rose from her bowed posture, and resumed her seat; and again the kind, motherly arms were wound lovingly around her. "Now, my child, the Bible tells us a great deal about Jesus' love to us poor, ruined sinners, more than I could tell you in a long time supposin' I knew it all, and could repeat it every word; why, child, you can't hardly turn up a page but what's just a sparklin' with it.

"Now, after what He says over and over again, and in so many different ways, too, and has proved so plain by giving Himself up to die on the cross for sin-

ners—all sinners, His worst enemies even—and just because, as He says Himself, He loved them so, it's a great sin, an awful sin, not to believe Him! If I tell you anything, you'd believe *me*, now, wouldn't you?"

"Why yes, auntie, I should *know* 'twas true!"

"Well, then; if you would believe a poor, sinful woman like me, how much more you ought to believe God 'who cannot lie!' The Bible says unbelief makes God a liar; and that is just what this unbelief of yours is doing. 'Taint no wonder you ain't happy, is it, now? Why, dearie, the devil has always made it his business to tell lies about God; and it's he that's been a puttin' all these wicked things into your heart. Now don't you listen any more to him, but listen to Jesus. Look right away from your own poor love—at the best, 'taint worth a minute's thought—and think about His love. Why, Hope, when His is so large as to admit the whole world into it, do you think He won't find room for your poor little tremblin' self? Trust His love, my darling, it's wonderful love that could cause Him to die for His enemies; and, even after they're won, to be so patient and forbearing with their wanderings and their bad behaviour. Go to Him this very night, and ask Him to show you His heart so plain that you can never think again that He will tell you what isn't true."

"O aunty, that sounds very harsh!"

"I know it does, my child, but that is just what unbelief does. It ruins hundreds every day, and will ruin you if Christ doesn't take it out of your heart."

Hope shuddered, and hid her face closer in her nurse's bosom. The world's sin, the fruitful parent of all its ruin and all its woe, was suddenly unmasked before her, and with bitter tears, she cried out:

"Oh, dear, dear nurse, pray for me this minute that God will help me to believe Him!"

"Go to your closet, Hope, and ask for yourself. Take His promise with you, that if you ask you shall receive, and I will do the same."

The next morning there was peace in the little girl's face which had never been there before. The heart that had been seeking to rest in its own love for Christ and found itself still in doubt and sorrow, was now resting in His great love for her; the snare of the tempter was broken, his falsehood exposed, and the sweet dawn of a bright, new day was filling her soul with a gladness hitherto unmet.

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### CHAPTER XXXI.

Six years passed rapidly away, bringing few changes to Prairie House and its inhabitants, save such as come with the slow lapse of time—the parents growing older, and the children hastening by rapid steps to the time when they are children no longer.

It was a quiet evening in the latter part of winter. The young people were engaged as usual at that hour with their studies, and Colonel and Mrs. Ellisson were sitting by a bright fire in the large family parlor—the former enjoying his newspaper, in the luxurious ease of slippers and dressing gown; the latter, with folded hands and eyes bent upon the fire, deep in thought.

It was no new topic that occupied her mind, but one which she had dwelt much upon for several years; still she usually approached it with hesitancy, for she knew it was particularly distasteful to her husband.

At length Colonel Ellisson threw aside his paper, and turning to his wife, inquired:

“What are you dreaming about, Amy? So far as I have seen, you have not stirred for the last half-hour; something pleasant, doubtless.”

“I was just wondering, Hugh, why you cling so tenaciously to this home of ours, especially when you know it is for the interests of the family to make a change. Hope is a good deal past the age a girl should be to be introduced into fashionable society; and Lee and his sister should be having advantages for higher education than they can ever have here; and besides,

it is almost time the girls had done with school altogether—that is Augusta and Eva; I don't know that Hope has any further ambition in that direction, although she certainly should have."

"Of which I am far from being convinced, Amy. Hope has an excellent education—not so showy, perhaps, as you aspire to for her sisters; but she is thoroughly grounded in all that is really essential to any well-educated lady, besides having what is vastly better than your flashy accomplishments, a highly practical habit of mind."

"Yes; still I could wish she were a little more ambitious."

"If Hope is always as good a girl as she is now, I am not particular about her ambition. She suits me extremely well as she is."

"I am not finding fault with Hope, Hugh; she is all I could wish in the family; but you know perfectly well that ever since you allowed her to join Mr. Harvey's church, she shows a decided preference for the society she finds there."

"Harvey and his folks won't hurt her; *you* never found them dangerous, did you, Amy?" Mrs. Ellisson flushed.

"I should like to see Hope aspiring to something better suited to her position in life; but there is little probability of her doing so while she is within reach of those people. She seems quite infatuated. There is never a prayer-meeting, a Dorcas-meeting, a church social, a Sunday-school tea-drinking, or even a Sunday-school itself, but she must be there, no matter what company she is leaving in the house, or what kind of weather she has to face."

"Well, Amy, you see Hope is religious—Sundays and week-days too. She holds her lamp up high, so that we that sit in darkness can see what she is about; that's what I call consistency. And seriously, Amy, I can't see that she is likely to be harmed in any way by going out, so long as I send the carriage with and for her."



- “Not physically, Hugh; though I often think she works too hard at those socials and tea-drinkings; but I know, certainly, that her manners and tastes are not improved by her associations!”

“It was your father’s own church, Amy; and Mr. Harvey was once your own minister.”

“True, Colonel Ellisson, and that enables me to speak advisedly about both pastor and people. I know they are not the class of people your daughter should find her level among.”

“My wife once did; and she’s a lady of model manners!”

Mrs. Ellisson saw that old memories were manifestly chafing her husband’s temper; and she deemed it advisable to change the subject. After a brief pause, she resumed the topic from which they had digressed.

“Well, Hugh, this is not what we started with, I believe. I really do feel anxious, as I said before, to see our children in a better social position than they can ever have here, such a position as their station in life entitles them to hold. I am thoroughly tired of Weston. There are not a dozen families in our whole range with whom I care to have our young people associate!”

“Well, Amy, I have opposed you in this matter for six years, and I am tired of it. We have a beautiful home here, everything heart could wish for, and enough to satisfy the most ambitious desires either of ourselves or the children. For my part, I would be quite satisfied to see the children grow up here, and settle all around us; there’s plenty of room for us all, without a bit of crowding. But, for some cause, you are not contented; and, as I said before, I shall not oppose you any longer.

“Choose where you wish to go, and we’ll try it; though, as I’ve often said, I don’t believe it will benefit either ourselves or the children. Where do you want to go, Amy? To New York?”

“Yes, if that will suit you.”

“I can’t say it makes any difference to me. The

whole thing is of your choosing; choose for yourself where you will go."

"Let it be New York, then."

"Very well; when will you go?"

"As soon as it can be arranged."

"Shall we sell Prairie House and farm?"

"If it were left to me, I should say yes. I am sure I shall never return to it."

"You're quite sure, Amy?"

"Quite sure!"

"Well, my dear, notwithstanding your absolute certainty in this matter, I shall provide for possibilities, and *not* sell the farm. Prairie House will not be a bad place to creep back to one of those days, when you and I are old, and the birds have all flown away and left us. We two will come back then, and Jack, whose tastes are decidedly rural, shall be our farmer; will that do, Amy?"

"We shall see when the time comes; a time, however, which I never expect to see."

"No? perhaps we shall neither of us see it; who shall say? But there, I've talked myself thirsty; pour me a glass of sherry, that's a good girl!" and Colonel Ellisson took the glass from his wife's hand, and sipped it in silence.

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Six years had written lines of change upon both Colonel Ellisson and his wife.

A person to have seen her as she sat thus in the subdued light, with her hands clasped over the rich folds of her superb evening dress, and her eyes fixed upon her husband's face, would have pronounced her a very lovely woman; and yet, few would have recognized in her the Amy Leeds who, some eighteen years before, stood up in the little parlor of her parsonage home in the severe simplicity of her bridal attire as the wife of Colonel Ellisson.

There was the same studied care in dress as of old, even the minutest details of which evinced the most careful attention to harmonious effects; but the flash

of gems and the warm glow of satin and velvet could not disguise the lines of pride, discontent, and a haughty spirit, which had deepened year by year in her face; or banish from that face, so calm and placid once, the dissatisfied expression left there by the cares of the world, the pride of life, and the idolatrous love of riches.

As for Colonel Ellisson, he had never been quite the same since his narrow escape from death six years before. With his nervous system enfeebled, and his appetite for strong drink in no degree lessened, he had struggled through those six years; sometimes rising a little above that cruel appetite, and again yielding and sinking always a little lower, and struggling more and more feebly; until, as he sat that evening with the empty glass in his hand and his eyes fixed dreamily upon the coals, one who saw him on the evening of his marriage with the woman at his side, would hardly have recognized the handsome, stately bridegroom of that night in the faded, gray-haired man before him.

But the change had come gradually; and to Mrs. Ellisson it meant little more than increasing years and the care and occasional hardships of military life; how much or how little the wine cup had had to do with it, she seldom asked herself.

She had come to regard its use as a necessity to her husband rather than an indulgence; and it seldom, except when its effects became glaringly apparent, gave her special uneasiness.

She had long before abandoned the old pledge, taken when keenly alive to the danger her husband had so narrowly escaped, and under the pressure of her brother's urgency; yet, for some years after Gordon left her, she had had the consistency to strive to guard her children against the habit of drink.

When they came to an age to be admitted to the table with their parents, at her request Colonel Ellisson had consented to forego the use of wine there, except when guests were present; but as that was frequently the case, and on such occasions wine cir-

culated freely, the restraints upon the children were little by little relaxed; and gradually it came about that none but Hope and little Jack had maintained the integrity of their pledge; and thus the insidious habit had, at the end of six years, in at least two of the number, struck deep root, and was threatening to become an ineradicable evil.

Hope's profession of religion and baptism had been the occasion of the first real unpleasantness that had ever existed between Colonel Ellisson and his wife.

The thought of Hope's becoming a member of the church she had herself long before deserted; of her loving and honoring the pastor from whose teachings she had so far departed, and of her associating in loving fellowship with the people whom she had forsaken in scorn and alienation of spirit, was more than she could patiently brook; and when Colonel Ellisson openly espoused his daughter's cause, and cheerfully allowed her to pursue her own course, she was both grieved and angry; and from the day of her baptism Hope was conscious that a breach had been made between herself and her step-mother, not likely to be healed for many years, if, indeed, it ever were.

Added to this she saw that her nurse, to whose instructions and influence up to that time she had been indebted for all her religious knowledge, was falling more and more into disfavor, and she lived with the painful consciousness ever upon her, that there was only wanting a favorable pretext to dismiss one she loved as a mother, and who had been to her all that the tenderest mother could be.

But these were not the only causes of grief and unrest that lay upon the heart of Hope. Her father, who had ever been the light of her eyes, was going by rapid steps to ruin, and she saw and felt it all, yet was powerless to save him.

Again and again she had entreated, warned, implored him to forsake his cups; but he had put her off, sometimes with a jest, sometimes with well-meant promises. Sometimes he had melted to tears under

her entreaties, and, for a little while abstained; but it had not lasted. The transient gleam of sunshine went out in a deeper darkness, and then, almost frantic with apprehension and dread, she had appealed to her mother to interpose, but it had been only to be met with the coolest unconcern, or to be politely informed that her father was not a child—that he had taken care of himself thus far as well as most men, and that it was scarcely likely that, at his time of life, he would disgrace either his family or himself.

But Hope was not long in discovering that her mother always referred her anxiety on her father's account to Mrs. Green's influence, and that the latter was made to bear the weight of a displeasure she did not merit: for, even after Hope became a woman, she had not relaxed the strictness of her rule, never to speak to her, or the other children, of the habits or peculiarities of their parents.

Yet it was vain for Hope to assure her mother that this was the case. Mrs. Ellisson could see no reason why Hope should be so much more solicitous about her father than she herself was, unless through the influence of another; and there was no one she could so reasonably suspect of using such influence as Mrs. Green. Hope, consequently, gave up speaking to her mother, and confined her appeals to her father, who never frowned upon her, even when most urgent.

Nor was her father's the only danger that appalled the heart of Hope. She had not failed to observe that for some time Lee had been in the habit of drinking very freely whenever his mother relaxed her restraints, or the presence of visitors made it difficult for her to speak to him; and more than once she had noticed that his speech was not natural, and his step unsteady.

Yet this was not all, for she had discovered that Eva, the delicate, intellectual Eva, who, more than either of the others, seemed cursed with an inherited appetite, had already acquired a taste for ardent spirits which threatened to become ungovernable.

Finding at length that Hope was watching her closely, and that the slightest taint of liquor upon her breath was almost certain of detection, Eva had resorted to the practice of secreting it in her room, and drinking it by stealth, and many a night of partial inebriation had passed over the poor child before the deadly indulgence was discovered, and the means of self-gratification put beyond her reach.

Then the parents aroused themselves, and in dire alarm resorted to prohibitory measures. Then the sideboards and wine cellar were locked, Eva was disgraced, and for a fortnight was required to take her meals of bread and milk in solitude, and to sit companionless in her room all the long lovely days; and when the period of disgrace was ended she was handed over to Hope, with whom she was required to room, and under whose influence and care it was confidently expected she would speedily be cured.

But alas! for the nervous, eager young creature, consumed by the gnawing fever of an inherited appetite—an appetite that had been strengthened by months of secret indulgence, forced, whenever guests were present, to sit out the long, luxurious dinners, and watch with almost maddening desire as the glasses went round, or were sipped with lingering, loving relish by those whose example in favor of indulgence was infinitely more powerful than all their precepts against it. Is it matter for surprise, if the resolve to break those bonds at the first opportunity should grow into a fierce determination, which, sometime, unless controlled by Divine grace, would overleap all bounds, and hurry its victim to certain and speedy ruin?

O, parents, parents! will they never learn that surely, unless God interpose to prevent it, the seed they sow with such unscrupulous hands shall at length spring up, and bring forth its hundred-fold harvest of ruin and despair!

## CHAPTER XXXII.

HOPE did her duty by Eva very faithfully; and, but for Augusta's influence over her, might have succeeded in binding her very closely to herself; but Augusta had long looked upon Hope with jealous eyes, and she never lost an opportunity to poison Eva's mind against her. Sometimes Hope would begin to feel that her efforts in Eva's behalf were about to be crowned with success, but almost at the moment when triumph seemed certain she would find that Augusta had succeeded in alienating her sister, and she would discover with mortification and sorrow, that her whole work must be done over again.

But as the clouds were darkening more and more over her home there had come to Hope a great joy; and yet it sometimes seemed to her almost more grief than joy, as the thought would force itself upon her that the love which, could she but accept it, would clothe her life with sunshine, must be put aside, possibly forever, at the call of duty; and that for years she must bear her cross of self-sacrifice alone, perhaps sink beneath it at last, and that for which her heart cried out with such weary longing, be hers only in heaven.

Hope Ellisson belonged to a class of persons, one of whom, happily for the world, is found in almost every large family, to whom martyrdom of some sort seems to come as an inevitable thing.

They bear their own burdens so silently, carry their own crosses with such sturdy patience, and bury their heartaches so deep, that the selfish, exacting beings whom these heroic souls seem born to serve, would laugh at the bare idea of *their* having burdens, and crosses, and griefs; and with unscrupulous hands heap on more and more, as though, because the poor bruised hearts do not break outright, they have abundant license to increase the strain without stint or limit.

Truly the stake, the axe, and the Inquisition have never had a monopoly of martyrs. There are few thoughtful, sympathizing observers, but could count up a worthy score of them within the limits of the families they know; and when Christ makes up His jewels, many, doubtless, of the brightest ones will be from this very class of silent, uncomplaining burden-bearers.

Hidden away in a secret drawer of Hope's bureau, beneath dozens of letters written by the same hand, was one which gold was too poor to buy; one upon which no eye but hers had ever looked, and whose treasured secret had never been breathed to any but God.

It came on her eighteenth birthday, and said: "Hope, you are dearer to me than life; dearer to me than aught else but Christ and my hopes of heaven! Since the day you opened your eyes upon this beautiful world—eyes which were never to recognize the sweet mother-face that faded out so soon from these earthly scenes, to brighten again, let us hope, in heaven—I have loved you with the truest and best affection of which my wayward nature is capable.

"When you were a little babe, you were in my hands like a rich pearl in the rough palms of the diver; yet even then, my pearl gave a degree of whiteness to the hands that held it, for it brought a purifying and restraining influence with it which went with me up to manhood, and has blest and ennobled my life as nothing else has, aside from the holy religion I profess.

"But since my last visit to Weston, my love for you has taken a deeper and a higher tone; and your giving your heart to Christ has drawn you to me by stronger and tenderer ties than any which previously existed. O Hope! will you come to me, and, of your own, glad, free choice, live in my heart always, glorifying my earthly life, and walking with me step by step up the shining way which leads to the Heavenly land, where



our united lives shall flow on eternally in ever-increasing blessedness?"

For a few days Hope lived in a bewildered dream of bliss; and then her father's bent form and unsteady steps, his trembling hands and his gray hairs, came between her and the rosy visions of hope. Then, closely crowding after, came a young brother recklessly shaping his course to ruin; a sister gifted and beautiful, yet weak and wayward, upon whom the demon of drink had already fastened his clutches; another sister, selfish, imperious and vain, who might possibly be won by long-suffering patience and prayer; and, last of all, her "own brother," her best beloved Jack, wayward as the wind, turbulent, and impatient of control, yet generous and loving withal, and Hope paused, and wept, and prayed till her heart grew sick and faint at the vastness of the sacrifice she seemed called upon to make.

But at last the victory was won; and with a face pale from the stern conflict, she wrote: "No, Gordon, I shall never love another; but to be to you all you ask, is so far, so very far away in the future, that I dare not, even in thought, dwell upon the blessed possibility—dare not talk about it to you, thus feeding your heart with hopes that may never be realized on earth.

"I will not insult your truth and manliness by asking you to love another; for I know that a love that has grown and strengthened with all your years until it has become a part of your very self, is not a thing to be set aside at will. But, by all the depth and tenderness of that love, O Gordon! pity me too much ever to name it to me again, unless, in God's providence it should sometime be, in the far-away future, that these present duties are done, and these urgent claims hold me no longer. Then—, but I must not think of it now, and you must speak to me of it no more.

"Write to me, Gordon, my beloved; comfort me in my loneliness, encourage me in my toil, soothe me in

my bitter grief, if you can; and, above all, help me with your stronger faith to cling to Christ, or I shall die under the burden that comes rolling on; and which, unless God interpose, is as inevitable as doom.

“O Gordon! I have never told you, I may never tell you, all that seems impending over my beautiful home! You know in part what I refer to, you know my darling father’s frailty; and oh, if the anguish might stop there! but it is not likely to; and in all this great household I alone seem gifted to see.

“I know dear aunty sees it all, and has wept and prayed over it in secret for years, but her sturdy loyalty to my parents seals her lips, even from me; and so I must walk alone beneath my cross, so far, at least, as human help is concerned. Poor, dear mamma! I’m sure she does not see it, or she would rouse herself to struggle against the evil; but in the midst of it all she is calm and placid, seemingly quite unconscious of danger, while I—oh, if I did not see so clearly—and yet, I would not have it otherwise. Possibly I see too much, yet, better so than see too little; if so, I may be spurred on to more persistent effort.”

Gordon received this letter the day after his college work was finished, while yet the glow of success and well-earned honors was flushing his cheek and brightening his smile; and hurrying out to a garden-seat, where roses and honeysuckles made the air fragrant with their perfume, he opened and read it, and then the letter dropped from his hand, and for a long time he sat motionless like one stunned.

It was the first time during the long period that had elapsed since he saw her, that Hope had in any of her letters approached the subject of those home-trials that were weighing so heavily upon her heart; and he had never dreamt but that the pledge upon which he had built such high hopes had been most loyally adhered to.

After his recovery from the sickness already mentioned, his physician had ordered him to abandon study for some time, and urged him to spend a year or two

in a milder climate. In conformity with this advice, he went South; and after a few months, finding himself improved in health, he engaged in teaching, devoting a limited portion of his time to the study of medicine, under Dr. Leonard, a young physician of great promise, with whom he had contracted an intimate friendship.

After a lengthened stay in the South, he returned to Maine, and again entered upon the studies which that day he had seen successfully finished.

He was roused at length from his painful reverie by approaching footsteps, and looking up, saw his uncle.

"Come, Gordon," he said, "we cannot think of dinner to-day without you, unless that letter has some very special charm for you, but what's the matter? no bad news, I hope!"

"Sit down, Uncle Leeds, and read this letter for yourself; you know I have no secrets with you!"

With a troubled countenance Mr. Leeds perused the letter.

"I only understand this in part," he said at length, looking up. "I quite comprehend how the case stands between you and Hope; but what great trouble does the poor child refer to? You told me they were all pledged to total abstinence; to what, then, does she allude?"

"Evidently the old trouble of drink, uncle; though this is the first hint of it that she has given me in regard to it since my return from the West. I suppose she has been keeping it all to herself, in order to spare me; poor, patient heart! and now intends to end the matter by making an utter sacrifice of herself. But I will never allow it! If my sister will not rouse herself from her luxurious ease sufficiently to meet this evil, she must bear it. Hope shall not—"

"Stay, Gordon! say nothing rashly; let me see this letter again."

Gordon handed the letter to his uncle, and, with impatient steps, paced up and down the garden walk, in feverish excitement.

"Sit down, Gordon," said Mr. Leeds, at length, motioning him to resume his seat. "Hope is right in this matter, and you must not urge her from the course she has determined upon. It will be a dreary path for her, and a bitter trial to you both; but she has had grace given to discern the path of duty, and, by God's help, doubtless, decided upon the right course. It is for you both to suffer and be strong, until God's time comes, as I trust it will, to grant you the fulfilment of your hopes. Now, be advised. Do just what Hope asks of you; sustain her by the strength of your faith, and the uncomplaining patience of your love; or, as she says, she will sink under her burden. It is for yours to be the strong arm, next that of her Divine Helper, by which she must be sustained for the trials that are before her; and for this you must rule your spirit, and school yourself to submission. It is hard, I know, where self is so deeply concerned, to bring the heart perfectly into submission to God's will; but it can be done, for His grace is sufficient; and it is only when there is but one will between you and God, and that His, not yours, that you can be fully in harmony with Christ, the burden of whose prayer was ever '*Not my will; but thine!*'"

Gordon pressed his hand upon his forehead for a few seconds in silence; then, wringing his uncle's hand, he drew his hat over his eyes, and walked swiftly away.

Passing out of the gate, without a glance at the wondering faces that were gazing after him, he rushed blindly on, and never paused until he reached his old place of solitary musing, at the foot of the gnarled tree, around whose feet the singing brook still flowed on, making music as of old to the flowers that bordered and the green leaves that rustled above it in the summer breeze.

To that dear haunt of many years he had come, almost by the blind instinct of habit, alone and unseen, to face his disappointment, and endure the creeping horror that chilled him, as the whole meaning of Hope's letter unfolded itself to his mind; and there to

gather strength, as best he might, for the future that had so suddenly darkened before him.

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

Two weeks passed, and Gordon had not alluded to his trouble or mentioned his plans for the future; yet he had not been idle. He had written a long and impassioned letter to Hope, entreating her to reconsider her decision, and, if possible, reverse it; but, if she found herself unable to do so, to tell him fully and frankly the real state of affairs at home, and, if there were any possible way by which it could be done, allow him to help her to bear the burden of her cares.

To this she had replied in a long, confidential letter, in which she had neither disguised nor concealed anything, and, in conclusion, said:

“Thus, Gordon, I have told you all; and you will see by what I have written, how much I am needed here. You will see that my work, not only as a daughter and sister, but as a Christian, is here for the present: and I cannot feel that God will bless me in turning my back upon it.

“It is not impossible that I may yet be instrumental in reclaiming my beloved father; and that, Gordon, would infinitely more than repay me for any sacrifice I might make. But should I, in the end, fail in regard to him, there are still my brothers and sisters to be watched over and restrained; and whom, next to their parents, does their welfare so deeply concern as it does me?

“Dear Gordon, when you reflect that under this roof I am the only one who will act freely in opposing this evil which threatens us with such heart-breaking and ruin, you cannot, you will not dare ask me to abandon my task!

“God has given me my work—who shall say He has not raised me up for this very purpose? How long it is to continue, He only knows; and I *must* do it in

His fear and for His glory. Let me intreat you, in the meantime, instead of fretting about me, instead of seeking to lead me away from the thorny paths in which He sees best that I should walk, to seek from Him some work that will engross you so completely as to leave you no time for repining at His appointments, or distressing yourself on my account.

"Sometime, if it please Him, we shall find our longed-for happiness here; but, if not, we shall, if faithful unto death, find a richer and a fuller bliss than earth can afford at His right hand. Do not think it costs me nothing to write thus—nothing to put from me the happiness that might otherwise be mine; to bury in silence, and, so far as possible, in forgetfulness, my most cherished wish at the command of duty.

"Forgive the pain I know my decision will cost you; forgive me, and, if you can, tell me you approve of my course; for it seems to me your disapproval, added to all the rest, will be more than I can bear. I shall gain strength and courage by knowing you not only acquiesce in the choice I am making, but so discern in it a spirit of humble submission to the will of God, as to yield me your cordial approbation."

"Brave young heart!" wrote Gordon in reply, "that can resist my importunate pleading on the one hand, and the responsive voice of your own heart on the other, while you bow in uncomplaining submission to what you realize to be the will of your Heavenly Father, you put my wilful, selfish spirit to shame!

"I stand rebuked and humbled in the presence of your higher consecration, and shall learn of you to obey and murmur not. How long it will be before the lesson is fully learned, I know not; for I am not an apt scholar in what is so crossing to my turbulent will, to my selfish nature.

"Do not ask me to forgive the pain you have caused me by deciding as you have; rather let me ask you, as I have already asked God, to forgive me for presuming to urge you one step from the path He has pointed out and the task He has assigned.

"Accept the assurance, if it will strengthen you in the least, that I *do*, notwithstanding my late, selfish urgency, approve of your decision, and from my heart acquiesce in it. It is useless for me to tell you that it has cost me a weary struggle to be able to say this, for you know it already by the pain your decision has cost you; and knowing it thus, you will rejoice the more to hear me say that I am *content now to submit*, and happy in doing so.

"Stimulated by your example and advice, I am going to *work*; and, by God's help, shall seek in consecrated service of some sort to fill up the time of waiting; knowing that, though our trial should not end in the consummation of our cherished hopes here, it will be blessed to feel when the weary day's work is ended, that it has been done for our Lord; and that, when we have fulfilled our lonely, and it may be lowly, services for Him, He will make us partakers of His glory.

"I am going to start to-morrow, if all is well, for the South, to read medicine for a time with my old friend Leonard, whose name I have mentioned to you before in connection with that of my cousin Laura, as I always call her.

"I think, however, I must have been wrong in supposing there was any marriage engagement between them, as I hear she has given up her situation, and is coming home in a few months; and when I took the liberty in a recent letter of rallying Leonard on his possible loneliness without her, he answered in a stiff, almost resentful tone.

"Poor fellow! I shall feel very sorry for him if there is any misunderstanding between him and Laura, for they are admirably suited to each other, with one exception—Laura is a Christian, Leonard is not.

"Aunt Eleanor hinted to me the other day that she suspected that might stand in the way of Laura's accepting him; indeed the fling at Christians which Leonard gave in a late letter—their bigotry and intol-

erance—confirms me in the belief that her mother's opinion is correct.

“You will pardon this bit of gossip, so irrelevant to what I was saying above. It will not, however, I trust, do us any harm to turn away for a little from our own heartaches, to call to mind that there may be other heartaches in the world vastly harder to be borne than ours, because unsoothed by the sweet consolations of the blessed Gospel, so refreshing and comforting to us.”

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The removal of the Ellissons from Prairie House was not effected without many bitter tears, and the sundering of many tender ties.

The pain of Hope's separation from her pastor and the little band of Christians with whom she had associated in such loving fellowship was only second to that of parting from her beloved nurse, whom she loved as a mother, and whose old age she had fondly hoped to gladden and cheer with a daughter's tenderness and care.

From the first, Mrs. Ellisson had set herself resolutely against taking Mrs. Green to New York; but had quite readily consented to Hope's entreaty, when that idea had at last been given up, that a permanent home with the steward's family might be offered her in Prairie House. This, however, Mrs. Green firmly, but respectfully declined. “I can't do it, dearie!” she said, when Hope conveyed to her Mrs. Ellisson's consent to her plan.

“I can't do it; I can't stay here without you. Every room in the house and every path in the garden would haunt me with your face. When I lost the last one of my precious babies, I thought I hadn't anything more to learn about suffering. I thought my cup was full, and couldn't hold a single drop more. But I didn't know what God had in store for me, none of us does. When you came, you crept right into the place my own baby had left



empty. I loved you every bit as well as I did her; mebbe better, for that matter, a thinkin' of your own beautiful mother, and what you'd 'ave been to her if she'd 'ave been spared. But there, I hadn't ought to speak of her, I know I hadn't; for every time I do, your dear sweet eyes always take on the same look her's had when she gave you up; I'll never forget it, never! But, as I was a sayin', you've always been to me just the same as my own baby would'a been if she'd stayed, and I can't say but more; for there's no knowin' what natur' would 'ave appeared in her as she grew up; I often think Evy is wonderfully like her, I do, really, Hope!" and for some minutes Mrs. Green sat quite silent, absorbed in painful thoughts.

"No;" she added, recollecting herself at length, "I can't stay here, a missin' you in the house, and out of the house, and everywhere; 'twould kill me, I know 'twould!

"But don't think now I ain't grateful to you all the same, for I am. I shall just stay with the church members, and try and make myself useful; any of 'em will give me a home, and when I'm dead I've got property enough to bury me, and more too, for that matter. So livin' or dyin', I don't expect to be a burden on anybody's hands.

"You won't forget me. I know that, lovey, without you tellin' me; and you'll write to me now and then when you're not too much hurried; so I shall get along somehow. There, now, my precious child, don't take on so! it e'en a'most breaks my heart to see you a cryin' that way about me, who ain't worthy of a single one of them blessed tears!"

And so, burying her own grief in the depth of her true, unselfish heart, the brave woman consoled and encouraged Hope, cheerfully aided in carrying out the details of the removal, and at last, when the great family carriage rolled away from the door, bearing from her sight those whom she had served so many years, she waved a cheerful adieu to Hope, who leaned from the carriage window, to catch through her tears

a last glimpse of the face she believed she would never see again.

But when the sound of the wheels could no longer be heard, she went in, closed the door, and with slow, weary steps ascended the stair, and paused not till she reached the rooms she had so long shared with Hope, and casting herself into a chair, covered her face with her hands and gave way to the anguish that for many days had been wringing her heart.

She did not, however, long remain undisturbed, for already a light step was gliding along the passage, and before she was aware of the presence of any one, a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and looking up, she saw Mrs. Thompson standing beside her.

"I am sorry," said the farmer's wife, pressing the hand that was extended to her, "to see you grieving so over this break-up, still I know it's only natural.

"But I want you to cheer up, and read this letter, for I know when you do you'll feel better.

"Thompson got it just a few minutes ago enclosed in one to himself, and he told me to run right over with it hoping you might get it before the Colonel's folks got away. It ought to have been here several days ago, but seems to have been delayed somewhere."

Mrs. Green dried her tears, and after a little search for her glasses, wondering much, in the meantime, what on earth Gordon could be writing to her for, just at that time; she seated herself, and, while Mrs. Thompson stole quietly away, knowing—for she had learned all about Gordon's intentions from her husband's letter—how glad the letter would make her, Mrs. Green read:—"I have just received a letter from Hope, telling me that you are not to accompany the family East, and that you have declined Colonel and Mrs. Ellisson's offer of a home at Prairie House.

"I am glad you have done so. You could not endure the dreariness of that great, solitary place, with no society but that of Hale and his wife, between whom and yourself there could be no true sympathy of feeling or of aims. And even if there were, how could

you bear the misery of remaining there, and missing at every turn the face, the voice, and the gentle consideration of one who, for so many years, has been the whole world to you ?

“ But I am not a little selfish in the pleasure your refusal of Mrs. Ellisson’s offer gives me ; for it affords *me* an unexpected opportunity to take upon myself at once the duty of a son to you. This is a privilege I have long been promising myself, but I did not expect it would be mine so soon.

“ I have written to Thompson that my house is to be your abode until such time as I can provide you a better home ; and have given him instructions to have the apartments named in my letter put in order at once for your occupancy. I have arranged with him and his wife to have you board in their family ; and I trust the arrangement will be as agreeable to you as I know it is to them.

“ I am telling Hope all about it in a letter which will reach New York before she does, and it will gladden her very much to know you are in a Christian home, with kind, considerate people, and not so entirely separated from us as she was fearing you were to be.

“ And now, my good foster-mother, I trust you will be very comfortable and happy—at least, as happy as you could be anywhere separated from *your children*.

“ Both Hope and I shall write you frequently ; and sometime, if it please God to hear our prayer, we shall all be happy together again. With kindest love,

“ Yours—

“ GORDON.”

Before sunset Mrs. Green had taken up her abode in the quiet old parsonage ; the two best rooms had been made bright and cheerful for her reception ; the great sorrow of the morning had given place to tearful gratitude ; and when she laid her head upon her pillow, it was to spend long hours in tracing and re-tracing the various paths in which God had led her, and revolving in her mind schemes of usefulness, in the prosecution of which she might evince her gratitude to God for His unlooked-for goodness to her.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

MRS. ELLISSON'S long-cherished wish was gratified; Weston and all its associations had to her become things of the past.

The luxurious home which once dazzled her inexperienced eyes had been exchanged for a city mansion, compared with which Prairie House was dull and common-place. Several months had been taken up in the various details of furnishing and re-fitting, securing domestics, and getting the complicated machinery of a large and expensive establishment into quiet and harmonious working order. But at length everything was settled, and Mrs. Ellisson flattered herself, quite to her mind, as well as quite in keeping with their wealth and their social position; and now, all that remained was that definite arrangements should be made for finishing the course of education she had decided upon for the children, in order that they might speedily take their place in society on an equal footing with those of the wealthy families with whom they were to associate.

She never once questioned the possibility of her husband's income being insufficient to bear the strain of all the expenditure she had in view.

She knew his father left him large possessions, and that they had been largely augmented by his marriage to Hope's mother; how much had been lost in gambling or wasted in dissipating pleasures, she neither knew nor suspected.

At length, after considerable delay, a fashionable boarding-school within easy reach of the city was settled upon for Augusta and Eva; Lee was placed under private tutors, until he should be prepared for college; and Hope's earnest entreaty that Jack should be left for a time under her own tuition, had been granted, much to the gratification of Jack, whose greatest happiness was to have Hope all to himself,

"and nobody else around to bother," as he expressed it.

Colonel Ellisson had offered Hope the privilege of attending any institution she might choose, but she had respectfully declined.

"No, papa," she said, "you are very kind in this matter, and so is mamma; but I cannot think of leaving you. I am perfectly satisfied with the thorough English education you have already given me; and since you are willing to allow me private instruction in music and drawing, I am more than content to remain at home."

Colonel Ellisson flushed. He had for some time suspected that Hope's special reason for remaining at home had reference to himself; and it made him not only uncomfortable but angry.

For more than a year he had been growing more and more impatient at Hope's attempts to dissuade him from the use of intoxicating drinks; and though he had never expressed it directly in words, he had several times betrayed it in his manner; and although Hope had gradually become less importunate in her appeals, he could not fail to notice that her watchfulness and solicitude in his behalf had been proportionately increased.

He did not so much wish for Hope's absence from home, as he did for freedom from the restraints under which her presence constantly held him; and from the consciousness that his course of life was causing her pain. From her birth she had been dearer to him than anything else on earth; and it was with a feeling akin to worship that he had watched the sweet unfolding of her mother's lineaments in her face, and had seen her reproduce all her mother's grace and sweetness, with the added charm of a thoroughly Christian character and life.

But gradually all this had been giving way before the slow advance of the fatal appetite for drink. For a long time he had been persistently steeling himself against her appeals; and this very effort to resist her

influence, had gradually hardened his heart toward herself; so surely does the love of intoxicating drink ultimately kill out the tenderest affections, and transform the most generous and loving nature into that of the hard, unfeeling drunkard.

The thought of Hope's foregoing privileges that most young ladies prize so highly, coupled with the consciousness that it was all *for his sake*, chafed his pride; and the more so as he felt very certain that her resolution was based upon the hope of ultimately inducing him to give up his habit, and conform his life to her ideas.

Since taking up his residence in the city, he had indulged much more freely than ever before; and the tendency to irritability, which for years had been growing upon him, had increased in proportion; and more than once he had made Hope painfully conscious of this change in his temper.

"I shall certainly put a stop to her interference and watchfulness," he had several times said to himself; and as Hope ceased speaking, he turned suddenly toward her with a look that startled and surprised her, and in a cold constrained tone, he said:

"Well, Hope, if you choose to decline the advantages I have offered you, all right. Your present attainments fully satisfy me, as I have never had the same ambition for you or your sisters that your mother has had. But I want you to understand, once for all, that I do not consent to your making any sacrifices simply on my account; so you will please make up your mind to that.

"You seem, somehow, to have got the idea that I need watching over in some special way, and that it is your particular mission to do it; which honor you will allow me, both now and henceforth, to decline. When I need a guardian, I am quite competent to choose one for myself.

"I know very well that I have habits of which you disapprove; and you have labored with praiseworthy

zeal to induce me to abandon them, and persisted in giving yourself a great deal of needless anxiety.

"But if I ever *do abandon them*, as doubtless I may, it must be of my own free will, and because I see it for my interest; and not from any urgency of yours. With this understanding, and expecting you to govern yourself accordingly, you are more than welcome to remain at home, and prosecute your studies in any way, and at any expense you may see fit."

Colonel Ellisson did not trust himself to look at Hope; but snatching up his hat, as he ceased speaking, he turned hastily away, and left the house.

He had never given Hope a really unkind word before; and his heart ached with a dreary pain as he descended the broad, marble steps of his mansion, and walked aimlessly along. He realized that Hope was inexpressibly dear to him, and the pain he knew too well his words had caused her, made his heart ache and his eyes dim.

For a moment he felt like turning back, and gathering her up in his arms, beg her to forgive his cruel words, and watch over him still; for a sudden consciousness of his weakness came over him, and he felt as if he had thrust from him his only hope of safety—the only arm that ever had been, or ever would be, persistently stretched out to pluck him, and hold him back from the fate upon which he was rushing.

But with him, as with countless others, tenderness, manliness, self-respect, and all fear of consequences, were giving way before the all-consuming appetite whose demands were goading him on more and more fiercely toward the drunkard's doom.

"No; I shall *not* be interfered with!" he muttered at length, half aloud, after a momentary struggle with his better nature, and striking his walking-stick angrily across the palm of his left hand. "*I shall not be interfered with!* I have had enough of it! I don't like to vex the girl, heaven bless her; but it's time she learned that enough's enough. I've never yet submitted to leading-strings, and I never intend to!" and

turning into one of those gorgeous rum-palaces whose open doors allure their dazzled victims to madness and to death, he was ushered by a waiter into a richly furnished room, for the exclusive occupancy of which he had paid an enormous sum, and flinging himself upon a sofa, ordered brandy and cigars. He was not long in silencing the appeals of his better nature, and lulling the pain of self-accusing thoughts; gradually the white, tearless face he had left gazing after him with a bewildered stare, faded from his mind; past, present, future were lost in the soft delirium in which he was steeping his senses, and, at length, stretching himself upon the couch, he sank into a state of stupefaction rather than sleep.

Hope had listened to her father with dilated eyes, and a face that alternately flushed and paled, as astonishment, grief, and the horror of all that his words and mood revealed to her swept through her mind, but when he turned and left the room without one word or look of relenting, she sank pale and trembling upon the chair from which she had risen, and for a few minutes the life seemed stricken out of her young heart.

After awhile she rose, and scarcely heeding what she did, went up to her room, and seated herself beside a table to write. But her hand shook, the pen blotted, and the lines grew dim and seemed to swim confusedly before her.

"O, what shall I do, what *can* I do?" she moaned at length, rising and pressing her hands tightly over her temples, as if to crush back the thoughts that rushed wildly through her mind. "O, for the arm to reach, the might to rescue him! Is there no help, no help for him? Oh, aunty, dear, kind, faithful friend! can you not speak to me across the dreary distance, and tell me what I can do, *what I ought to do*?" And Hope pressed her temples more tightly, as with great, tearless sobs she paced the floor in agony.

Presently a quick step was heard in the passage, and the next moment Jack, with a flushed and eager



face, bolted into the room, slate in hand, for Hope to help him out of some difficulty with which he had been struggling for the last half-hour. But he stopped suddenly when he saw Hope in trouble, exclaiming in his abrupt fashion :

“What’s up, Hope, what’s up?”

“O, Jack,” cried Hope, and then dropping into a chair she clasped him tightly in her arms, and burst into tears.

“Goodness, Hope! whatever’s the matter?” cried the boy, disengaging himself from his sister’s arms, and staring at her with wide-eyed astonishment, “what ails you? are you sick?”

“No, dear, I am not sick, but my heart is breaking!” sobbed Hope, drawing him toward her again, and laying her head against his shoulder, “don’t go away from me, darling, there’s nobody in all the house that loves me but you!”

“Ain’t there, Hope?” cried Jack, fairly dazed by his sister’s trouble; “but I do, lots and lots, and I’ll give it to anybody that bothers you!” and Jack looked fiercely around the room as though he only wanted the enemy to show himself, to close with him in deadly conflict.

“Dear old Jack! nobody has hurt me, but I want you to help me; will you, darling?”

“Won’t I though! here, lie down on the sofa, and I’ll go for a doctor; I won’t be gone half a minute;” and Jack began pounding the sofa cushions preparatory to Hope’s following his directions.

“No, no, dear, not that; here, sit down and try and understand, and promise me, like a good boy, not to speak to any one about what I am going to say to you.”

“You may kill me if I do, Hope!”

“Dear, honest Jack!” exclaimed Hope, laughing in spite of her grief, and then weeping more bitterly because she had done so; “I am in trouble about poor, dear papa; you know what a dreadful habit he has!”

“Yes, Hope,” exclaimed Jack, now fully enlightened,

"and he has been at it more and more ever since we came to this horrid old city. I saw him not an hour ago going into Mason's saloon, that lovely place around the corner, Hope."

"Yes, I know, dear. Have you ever seen him going there before?"

"I should think I had, Hope! Why, he's been there nearly every afternoon since we came here! I think he has a parlor there; for one day I followed him to the door of a splendid room, but the waiter wouldn't allow me to go in. I saw a table in there, and decanters and glasses set out, but I got my orders to be off; so I haven't been back. But I'll go right over there and try to get father home, if you want me to, Hope."

"No," said Hope, "that would not do; papa would be very angry if you were to follow him; besides I do not wish you ever to go in there again, unless it is absolutely necessary. But I will tell you what I would like to have you do. Will you, the first time you see him going there, follow him, and when he turns to go in, go forward, and in a very respectful way ask him not to go there? O, Jack, darling! *will you coax him very hard to come home with you?*"

"Hope! he'll cane me, sure as sure!"

"No, Jack, he will not; my word for it; but if he were to, you are not afraid of a caning when you are doing what's right, are you, dear boy?"

"No; I can stand caning as well as the next one; but, but it wouldn't be a nice thing, Hope, to be twitted of by the fellows around the corner there!" and Jack's face flushed crimson at the thought.

"No, Jack, no, it would not!" and Hope's cheeks burned painfully too, as, for the first time, she realized something of the disgrace of being a drunkard's child. "But, darling," she added, more cheerfully, "think what it will be, if you and I can save our dear father from ruin! Now you are the only one to help me in this matter; will you run all the risk you fear, and stand by me through whatever may come, like the

dear own brother you have always been? *Will you, Jack?*”

The sight of Hope's misery, the tenderness of her appeal, a dawning sense of the magnitude of the evil she was nerving herself to combat, were too much for the impulsive but tender-hearted boy; his chest heaved, and with a half-suppressed sob, he turned aside his face.

“I'll do my best, Hope,” he said at length, laying his two hands in hers, and then, acting upon the impulse of the moment Hope drew him to her side, and kneeling with his hands firmly clasped in hers, poured out her heart in a few impassioned words of prayer for her father, and for the dear child who had pledged himself with her to do all he could to rescue that father from a drunkard's doom.

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#### CHAPTER XXXV.

“I'VE done it! I've done it!” exclaimed Jack, the following afternoon, bursting into Hope's room, his face all aglow with excitement, “and he didn't cane me either!”

“What have you done, Jack?” cried Hope, dropping her work and coming over to the sofa where he had seated himself with a triumphant air, “tell me all about it.”

“Why, just this, Hope, though 't isn't much to tell, after all. When I saw father putting on his hat to go out, I ran ahead of him, and waited two or three doors this side of Mason's for him to come up. When he got pretty close to me I went up to him, and says I, pretty low, for I didn't want anybody to hear, ‘Father,’ says I, ‘I wish you wouldn't go there this afternoon!’

“‘Go where?’ says he.

“‘Why, to Mason's,’ says I, ‘where you go every day, you know--don't go any more, please.’

“Well, Hope if you'd seen him! my! he looked at me as though he'd eat me for a minute or so; and then

he got as red as fire, and says he, a sort of choked like, 'Why not, Jack?'

"'Because, father, says I, 'it's no good for you to go there, and you know 'tisin't. Besides,' says I, 'if you keep on going there it'll kill Hope, as sure as anything. You should have seen her cry yesterday about you till I thought she was going to die just then; and I was going to run for the doctor, only she wouldn't let me. 'Now, father,' says I, 'won't you please not to go there any more?'

"Well, he never said a word for more'n a minute, I should think; but finally says he, 'Go home to your lessons, my boy;' and then he pulled his hat tight down over his eyes, and walked off another way, and when I'd watched him out of sight, I ran home to tell you."

"Thank you, Jack; you have made a good beginning, and it will set him thinking, I am sure. He has a kind, tender heart, and will not forget what you have said; but you must not fail to follow up your advantage. Remember, dear, we are going to try hard to save our dear father!"

"Yes, of course, Hope; but the bother is, there are lots of places besides Mason's where he can get all he wants, and neither you nor I be a bit the wiser."

"True, Jack; but I cannot help hoping an appeal from you may have a great deal of influence in causing him to realize what he is doing, and inducing him to change his course. At any rate, we must not leave off trying."

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Several months passed quietly away. Colonel Ellison's visits to Mason's had been, so far as Hope could ascertain through the vigilant Jack, discontinued; and though frequently absent until a late hour at evening, he usually returned sober.

Letters from Eva and Augusta were frequent, and both seemed to be doing well; Lee was proving tolerably studious, and Hope was beginning to rejoice in

prospect of a brightening future, when one morning Mrs. Ellisson entered her room, and handing her an open letter, sank pale and trembling into a chair.

It was from her daughters' governess, asking Mrs. Ellisson to come at once, and saying that she had something very painful to communicate concerning Eva, whose further stay in the Academy would not, she feared, be thought advisable.

"I regret this the more, dear madam," the letter went on to say, "as your daughter is unusually gifted, and, on the whole, amiable; but she has been detected in the secret indulgence of a fatal habit, which, she says, was formed in childhood, and of which, she tells me, you are well aware.

"I presume I need not be more explicit now, but shall enter into fuller explanations when you arrive; which, I trust, may be soon, as this is a most painful and embarrassing case."

"I think," said Mrs. Ellisson, as Hope silently returned the letter, "that you will have to go after your sister; I am sure I can never endure such a trial!"

"I am quite willing, mamma, to go with you, but I do not think it best that I should go alone. It seems to me very important that either you or papa should go!"

"Well, take this letter to your father, and see what he says, Hope. Oh, this is indeed a trouble I never dreamt of in my family!" and Mrs. Ellisson paced the floor in painful agitation.

"Cannot you do this, mamma?" said Hope, hesitating for a moment at the door; "it is more fitting for you, is it not?"

"*I meet your father with such a message as that!* No, Hope, I cannot; you will have to do it, if it's done!"

Hope glanced sorrowfully at the trembling woman; but, for once, her lips refused any utterance of sympathy, and she hurried away to find her father.

She found him alone, and, handing him the letter, retired to a window while he read it.

"Hope!"

In an instant she was at her father's side.

"Do you understand this?"

"Why, yes, papa; do not you?"

"No!"

"O papa! you surely must remember, do you not, the sad trouble we had with Eva some time before we left the West!"

"Why, I remember she used to—to—that is, she—she got a little fond of drink," stammered Colonel Ellisson; "but, of course, it isn't that?" and his hand shook violently as he returned the letter to Hope.

"Papa, dear, it is nothing else!" and Hope caught the trembling hand in hers, with a sudden burst of grief; "but," she added, quickly composing herself, "somebody must go for the poor child! Will you go with mamma, or shall I go?"

"Go, yourself, if you can, Hope; I cannot. God pity us!" and, with a shudder, he sank into a chair.

Hope looked for a moment in silent anguish upon her father's gray head, bowed in sorrow and self-upbraiding upon his hands; then, dropping upon her knees beside him, she exclaimed, with an earnestness that almost terrified him, "Father! father!"—she seldom addressed him thus—"O my beloved father! God *does* pity, and will help us, too, if we will but help ourselves! The cure of this dreadful evil still rests in your own hands. Oh, to-day, vow before God, upon your knees, that, by His help, you will, yourself, lead your family into better and safer paths;" and, before he could recover from his surprise, she was gone.

Four hours later, Mrs. Ellisson and Hope were ushered into the reception-room of the Academy at L—, and, in a few minutes, Miss Morton, the governess, joined them.

"I am thankful, Mrs. Ellisson," she said, as soon as the first hurried inquiries had been answered, "that you are here; for your daughter is really quite ill. But, as her physician is with her just now, I beg you to be seated while I explain a little."

"Of course, Mrs. Ellisson, as you did not inform me of your daughter's fondness for intoxicating drinks, I had no idea of the existence of such an appetite in one so young and so respectably connected; and, accordingly, I put her upon the same footing as the other young ladies.

"It appears, from her own acknowledgment, that, for some time after she came here, she tried to find opportunities for supplying herself, secretly, with stimulants; but, finding it impossible to effect her purpose unaided, without being detected, she resorted to another plan.

"The first step was to get my consent to her rooming alone, assigning as a reason for doing so that she could study to much better advantage alone; and further, that, at home, she had been accustomed to have a room quite to herself. Accordingly I gave my consent, and I did so the more willingly as she was known to be quiet and studious, and as her sister was, at the same time, anxious to room with another young lady.

"As soon as Miss Eva was alone, she hired one of the housemaids to supply her clandestinely with such stimulants as she wanted; and, through fear of detection, drank them stealthily at night. Gradually, as her appetite increased, she became more reckless, frequently feigning sickness as an excuse for keeping her room. At length, her door was found locked, and becoming alarmed at her not opening it on being called upon to do so, I had it broken open, and she was found in a heavy stupor, quite unconscious of what was going on.

"A physician was called, who soon ascertained the cause of the trouble: a little search through her closet revealed the fact of her keeping liquors, and on her return to consciousness she confessed all. Partly, doubtless, from missing her stimulants, and partly from excitement and grief, the poor girl is now really ill, though not in any danger; and her physician thinks that after a day or two of quiet, she will be able to return home."

"Do you think, Miss Morton, it will be necessary for Eva to return home? I should much prefer that she should remain at school, if possible."

"If her physician deems her stay advisable, I am quite willing to give her another trial; especially, as the facts in her case are known only to the doctor and myself, and now that I know her tendencies, I can, I think, control matters so that the present trouble shall not occur again."

"I will send the physician down, and you can consult with him yourself."

In a few minutes the doctor entered.

"I sympathize with you very deeply, Mrs. Ellisson;" he said, seating himself near her, "and the more so as I fear your daughter's constitution must soon give way under this violent craving for intoxicating drinks, a thing I can hardly understand in one so young. Has she been long accustomed to this indulgence?"

"It is some two years, sir, since her fondness for stimulants became specially noticeable," replied Mrs. Ellisson, nervously.

"But she has been accustomed to their occasional use from childhood, she tells me!"

"She had, up to the time I mentioned, seldom tasted them, doctor!" replied Mrs. Ellisson, reddening painfully. "Of course, in common with all genteel families, we usually have liquors upon our table, but I have carefully guarded the children against their use, and as soon as her fondness for them was discovered, they were kept out of her way."

"Alas, madam, this practice which you speak of as 'common to all genteel families' has, I fear, well-nigh, if not quite, ruined your daughter. Why, the girl tells me she has been in the habit from her earliest childhood of going to the table after the family had risen, and draining the glasses that had been used! of going to the sideboard whenever she could find it unlocked and sipping from the decanters! and, when she became older, of taking bottle after bottle from the wine-cellar and secreting it in her room; and, after secretly drink-



ing its contents, of destroying the bottle in order to escape detection!"

"Then she has told you, sir, much that I have never known; and I am inclined to think that, in her moments of excitement or delirium, she has told you a good deal that never occurred."

"I am sorry to say, madam, I cannot agree with you; the poor little thing knows perfectly well what she is talking about! The only question, however, for us to settle is, what are the best and safest measures to adopt, in order to undo the evil that is already done. Pardon my asking, but, if I am to advise, it is important that I should know, is this appetite simply acquired or is it hereditary?"

"Hereditary, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellisson, her face in a flame, "what do you mean?"

"Pardon me, Mrs. Ellisson, I certainly mean no offence! but, if I am to give you any intelligent counsel in regard to this child, I need to know the nature of her trouble. I need not tell you, I think, that there is a wide difference between an appetite which is merely the growth of habit, and one which is inherited; in plain terms, one which is transmitted from parent to child. I trust I am understood."

Mrs. Ellisson did not, or could not answer; and the doctor glanced inquiringly at Hope.

"Shall I answer, mamma?" she asked, at length.

Still there was no reply, and Mrs. Ellisson rose and walked to the window.

"I think, doctor, that Eva's love for stimulants is *not* the result of mere habit," said Hope, in a low tone, and covering her face with her hands to conceal her tears; "but oh, sir! be pitiful, and do not ask unnecessary questions!"

"My poor child!" said the doctor, compassionately, "I have not done so! Believe me, it is not in idle curiosity that I make these inquiries; and knowing the true state of the case, I must unhesitatingly advise, for it is worse than folly to keep her at study while enduring the gnawing of this fatal appetite as she is

at present, that she be taken home and watched over with the tenderest care. Her constitution has never been firm, and it is severely shaken already. Pardon me, my child, but are you attending?"

"Yes, doctor, I have not lost a word!" and Hope lifted a face so wan and full of unspoken misery that tears sprang into the physician's eyes.

"Miss Ellisson, are you a total abstainer?"

"I am!"

"And a Christian?"

"By God's grace, I trust I am!"

"Then to your special care I commit your sister," he continued, in a lower tone. "Just now, she is utterly powerless to resist this appetite; but her case, if judiciously managed, is not hopeless. Take her home, and watch over her with sleepless vigilance. If she needs further education, provide her tutors at home; but never think of sending her away to school again. Endeavor to make her realize the *sin*, as well as the awful *danger* of her course. Set before her the disgrace of it. Strive to arouse her conscience to look at this vice in its enormity as a sin against God; and one which, if not abandoned, will ruin her eternally. Indeed, Miss Ellisson, I can scarcely conceive it possible that anything short of divine grace can, even now, save her from a drunkard's grave. If she breaks over many times more, she is doomed!"

"With this advice I may take my leave, as there is nothing more I can do;" and grasping Hope warmly by the hand, he bowed to Mrs. Ellisson and withdrew.

The following afternoon, Mrs. Ellisson and her daughters were set down at their own door. Eva, who was very weak, was carried at once to Hope's room; and Hope, with an aching heart nerved herself to enter patiently and submissively upon her new task, and to bear as bravely as possible the added burden that had been rolled upon her.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WE'VE had a great old time here since you and mother went away!" said Jack, looking very red and excited, as Hope, sometime after her return, went up to his room, to assign him his lessons for the following day.

"A great old time!' how so, my dear?"

Jack seemed much depressed, and at a loss how to answer; but at length he asked abruptly:

"Whatever was up with father when you went away, Hope?"

"Nothing that I know of, Jack," except that he was feeling very unhappy about Eva."

"What's wrong with Eva? what made you bring her home?"

"Eva is very poorly, Jack," replied Hope, evasively, "and the doctor thought we had better bring her home; but what do you mean about having 'a great old time?' and why do you speak about papa?"

"Oh, things have gone all sorts of ways since you went away!" replied Jack, fidgeting more and more; "I hope to goodness you'll never go again!" and Jack turned his face away to hide his red and swollen eyes which, however, he had not been able to prevent Hope from noticing.

"What is it, dear boy?" said Hope, attempting to take his hand in hers, but he drew it quickly away, and shrank from her, still averting his face.

"In the first place, Hope, father spent the night at Mason's, I think, though I'm not sure. He seemed awfully cross and out of sorts after you and mother left; and he drank a good deal of brandy at dinner. I mistrusted he meant to go out; and so, as soon as I dared, I went down, but he was off. I went straight to Mason's, and inquired of one of the waiters if he was there; but, instead of telling me, 'What do you want to know for?' says he. 'Because he's my father,'

says I, 'and if he's here, I want to know it!' 'Is anybody sick, or dead, or the house afire?' says he, laughing and staring at me, 'that you're so anxious to find the governor just now?'

"'No,' says I, 'there isn't; but if my father's here you'd better tell me, and be pretty quick about it, or you'll wish you had!'"

"'Hallo, sonny!' says he, catching me by both shoulders and shoving me into the street; 'you're too smart by half! Now walk!' says he, 'and don't you show your face here again, or I'll hand you over to *him*,'—pointing to a policeman who was standing at the corner. So I '*walked*,' Hope; but if I live a few years, I'll smash—!"

"'Stop, Jack! that is no way to talk, or to feel! Control your temper and your tongue, too, there's a dear boy!'" and Hope took the two burning cheeks between her hands, and kissed him tenderly; but for the first time in his life his sister's kiss seemed an unwelcome thing, and he recoiled from it as though it contained a sting.

Hope felt a pang of disappointment and pain; but she merely said, "Dear Jack, try and be patient. What more have you to tell me?"

"'Too much—a good deal too much!'" muttered Jack, sullenly; "but I'll tell it, if I die for it, Hope; though I know if I do you'll never kiss me again!" and the poor boy's lip quivered, and his chest heaved; but he ruled himself in a moment, and went on:

"'I think Lee must have known where father was, for, toward evening, he came in, and, says he, 'Jack, the governor won't be home very early to-night; and I'm going to have some fellows in for the evening; so you keep mum, if you know what's good for you.' Well, about eight o'clock, three or four young fellows, about like Lee, came; and he took them up to his room, and they stayed, I can't tell how long, playing at cards and drinking."

"'How do you know, Jack, what they were doing? Were you with them?'"

"Yes, Hope; Lee asked me to go, and so did the other fellows."

"Jack! did you drink? *Of course, you did not!*" and Hope's face looked ghastly in its deathly pallor.

"Yes, I did, Hope, honest true; and, what's more, *I got drunk!*" and, bursting into tears, Jack hid his face in his sister's lap.

For a moment Hope's heart seemed to stand still, and a feeling of suffocation came over her; but, in a few seconds, she was herself again; and, laying her hand gently upon the boy's head, she said, in as steady a voice as she could command:

"I thank God, Jack, that you have not kept this from me, that you have not told me a lie! Tell me, now, how it all happened."

"I wish you'd kill me; I do, really!" sobbed Jack, more heart-broken than ever; "I ain't fit to live, nor anything else, after being so mean to you! You'll just go and break your heart again, as you did the other day about father. *But I did mean to stand by you, Hope!* and that's a fact, though, of course, you won't believe it; you'll never think me honest again! never, and how can you, after this? Oh, I never thought I should be so mean!"

"Jack, my dear, own brother! don't cry so," sobbed Hope, "for I love you just as much as ever; but tell me, truly, how it all came about."

"Why; aren't you awfully mad at me, Hope?" exclaimed Jack, lifting his head, and gazing at Hope in amazement; "I thought you would be!"

"I am very unhappy, Jack, but I am not angry;" and Hope drew her brother's head down upon her shoulders, and laid her hand upon his throbbing temples.

"I didn't mean to do it, Hope; but Lee and the other fellows coaxed me; if they'd tried to drive me, I'd have been all right, you know; but they didn't, they coaxed and flattered me up, and told me I was a fool to stick to a fussy old Temperance pledge. They said that most boys like me, who had rich fathers, drank;

and that they never kept company with a fellow that didn't; and so, finally, I took some wine, and after that some brandy, and then I got sick and dizzy, and Lee took me off to bed, and that's the last I remember."

There was silence for some time; and then Hope spoke solemnly and earnestly to her brother of the shame and sin of drunkenness, and of the aggravated nature of his own sin, committed as it had been, in violation of a solemn pledge, the nature and obligation of which he perfectly understood.

In a faltering voice she referred him to his father, once as generous and well-meaning as himself, now, through long indulgence in drink, trembling upon the verge of ruin; and reminded him that his own act had been performed with the perfect knowledge of his father's tendencies, and of the terrible consequences liable to result from them.

She reminded him of the warnings and threatenings of God's word; its emphatic declaration of what the drunkard's doom must be; spoke to him of the evil of his own heart; of the broad road that leads to destruction, and showed him that his feet were already in it; that his conduct of the previous night ought to make him realize how recklessly he was liable to run on in that down-hill road unless God should turn his feet into a safer way; and that without the compassionate Saviour who died for sinners to take pity upon him, he must perish in his sins. Then after a few minutes spent in prayer, she left him to his own reflections, saying, as she did so: "I may not see you again to-night, dear, but I want you to think of all I have said, and go to God with all your sin, and shame, and sorrow, and ask him for Christ's sake to give you a new heart, one that shall hate sin with an utter hatred. Ask Jesus to send His Spirit to dwell in your heart; for it is only by His doing so, that you can ever be safe. Pray earnestly to God not only that *this* sin may be forgiven, but that you may be saved from *all* sin. To-morrow, if we are spared, we will talk of this again.

Hope hastened to Eva, and lighting a lamp, for it was already dark, read to her awhile; and then, seeing that she had fallen asleep, stole away to find her father whom she had only seen for a few minutes since her return, except at tea, where he had seemed unusually moody and depressed.

"Your father has retired," said Mrs. Ellisson, in answer to Hope's inquiry whether he was out or not, "and he gave orders, if any one should call, to say he could not be seen to-night. Your father really looks very ill, Hope. I think this trouble with Eva is affecting his health. I shall go and look at Eva, and then go to rest too, the excitement of to-day and yesterday have been too much for me," and Mrs. Ellisson looked old and worn, as she turned to leave the room.

"Don't disturb me to-night, Hope, unless it is very necessary. You can have Norah sleep in the room next yours, she is a good nurse, and if Eva wants anything call her, and try and not overtax yourself. You look sick already;" and Mrs. Ellisson paused for a moment in passing out as if noticing, for the first time, Hope's pale face and heavy eyes.

"It's nothing, mamma," said Hope, with a flush, for she was not much used to any show of tenderness from her mother, and that, slight as it was, had touched her deeply. "I trust we shall all feel better to-morrow."

"I hope so, I'm sure!" and Mrs. Ellisson ascended the stairs with a weary step.

As she passed she noticed the light in Lee's room and also in Jack's, but she felt too sad and weary to look into either, nor did she pause even for a look at the pale face of Eva.

"Hope will see that everything necessary is attended to," she sighed, as she entered her own room; and pausing for no tender prayer for child or husband, or even for herself, that grace and strength might be given to meet the dark oncoming years that were rapidly rolling forward their burden of woe, she quickly disrobed, turned off the lights, and in a few

minutes was oblivious alike to the present and the past, as well as to the lowering future whose black shadow had already crossed her threshold, and was sending dull, premonitory lines of gloom even into the chambers of her best beloved.

When Mrs. Ellisson was gone, Hope walked slowly back and forth through the apartment, trying to compose her thoughts so as to survey calmly the position in which she was placed; but thoughts of her father, of Eva, and of the two boys crowded upon her in wild confusion; and at length she left the room, and was slowly ascending the stairs when a loud ring at the door caused her to pause, and a minute after a servant informed her that a gentleman was below, and that he had asked particularly for her.

"Did he send up his card, Norris?"

"No, Miss Ellisson, he declined giving his name, saying, 'Tell the lady it is an old friend.'"

"Tell him I will see him shortly, Norris;" and with a strange flutter of excitement, Hope hastened to her room, in order to compose herself a little before going down. But there was no quieting the tumultuous beating of her heart.

"I am too tired," she sighed at length, as she smoothed her hair before the mirror, and noticed the unnatural flush upon her cheeks, and the weary look in her eyes, "I am, indeed, too tired to see any one tonight!" As she passed out she glanced into the adjoining room to see if Eva was still sleeping, and then, closing the door softly, rang the bell.

"Send Norah to me," she said as her maid appeared, and in a minute Norah stood before her.

"I wish you to sit in the room here, Norah, until I come back; and, if Miss Eva asks for anything, call me."

"Sure an' I will, Miss Ellisson!" said the woman, smoothing her apron, and seating herself with the air of one upon whom a weighty charge had been laid, and Hope hastened away to meet her visitor.

"Gordon!" "Hope!" the next moment broke the



stillness of the drawing-room; and then Hope's overtaxed powers gave way; and, for some minutes, joy and pain were alike lost in the oblivion of unconsciousness.

Gordon did not ring for assistance, but laying her tenderly upon a sofa, waited patiently for her return to consciousness. When at last she opened her eyes, and saw who was bending over her, and as the gladness and the grief, the pleasure and the pain of the present moment became clear to her mind, she stretched her hands toward him, and, with an almost childlike cry, burst into a fit of uncontrollable weeping.

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#### CHAPTER XXXVII.

"LET me weep, Gordon," said Hope, at length, as he vainly sought to soothe her; "I have been sorely taxed of late, and it will do me good. I shall soon be composed again, and then I can talk to you."

Then followed a long, quiet talk, in which Hope told him all her troubles and anxieties, and sweet it was for the burdened heart to be able to speak at last without hesitancy or reserve.

"Hope, you have never written the half of this;" said Gordon, sadly, when she concluded. "Why have you kept so much from me?"

"How *could I write it?*" cried Hope, passionately; "how could I, after hanging upon the footsteps of this grim spectre as I have hung for years, detail its movements to one whose heart would be as deeply harrowed by the recital as my own? O Gordon! I have seen it stealing, stealing peace, purity, and love from my home, marring the manly beauty, and poisoning the whole nature of my dear father, through and through. I have seen it weaving its fatal spells around our sweet, gifted Eva; and slowly sapping the foundations of honor and principle in Lee; or rather, as I may better say, preventing their being ever laid; and now

my darling Jack, of whom but yesterday I felt so sure, has stumbled and fallen too. How could I paint the hideous picture? and how could you endure to look on it, were it painted? Oh, tell me, tell me it is all a dreadful nightmare; and that we are once again children, with life before us unmarred and fresh as it once was!"

Gordon drew the trembling form closer to his side, and for some time neither spoke.

"Hope," he said at length, "it is because I feared all this, that I am here to-night. I have come to ask you, if you do not think it time that I interfered to take you away from this hopeless task, for which you must see, by this time, that your unaided arm is quite too weak?"

"Oh, not hopeless, Gordon! *don't say 'hopeless,'*" sobbed Hope. "It cannot be, but papa will see now; and both he and mamma set their faces resolutely against this evil. Surely when they see their children drawn, one after another, into this whirlpool of ruin, they will awaken from their dream of security. I do think mamma is beginning to be alarmed, Gordon; and if so, her influence over papa will be very strong."

"My dear Hope! she should have bestirred herself years ago, and not have waited till the dogs of ruin were tugging at her children's throats! Time was, when, by laying hold of her husband as she had the power to do, this might, humanly speaking, all have been averted, and her family happy and prosperous; but now—"

"Don't speak so despairingly, Gordon, or you will kill me outright! I feel sure that out of this crisis good will arise; at any rate, I must pray, and wait, and watch for it!"

"Understand me, Hope, I am not seeking to tempt you from what your conscience clearly shows you to be duty; you long ago taught me better than that, but I wish to offer you the alternative of a change; and if I could feel it right, I would kneel at your feet

and implore you to accept it; nor would I rise until you yielded to my prayer.

"But I dare not do it. If God has given you this heavy burden to bear, He will give you needed strength; and you, not I, must be the judge. Whatever be your decision, I am prepared to submit to it; but if you resolve to toil on here, my course for the next two or three years is clearly defined."

"Gordon," said Hope, after a few minutes' thought, "I do not know what course you contemplate in the event of my deciding to remain here still, nor do I wish to know, until after my decision is made; lest the possible pain I might foresee would result from it, should make me swerve from the path in which I know I am called to walk. Perhaps you will think me obstinate and unfeeling toward you, but I tell you solemnly that, though I knew I should die at my post, I would not abandon it. God has given me my task, and no alluring prospect of happiness or ease, even at your side, shall tempt me to leave it while there is hope of saving one! O Gordon, though it should be *only one!*" and Hope buried her face in her hands with bitter weeping.

"Enough, enough, my darling!" said Gordon, his voice faltering, with strong emotion; "brave, Christian heart, I have no more to say. Possibly it may prove a repetition of the old, old tragedy which has been enacted over and over again, ever since Divine Love began its sanctifying and uplifting work in the soul of man—Innocence casting itself in the pathway of Guilt, if, haply, by suffering, loss, and even death, she might rescue some; but God knows best, and His will is best for both of us. And now, Hope, one question more; by staying near you, can I help you?"

"I think not, Gordon. You know mamma resented your interference, as she regarded your generous efforts for the family some years ago; and she would, even now, repel anything that looked like it. Papa is proud and sensitive, and feeling, as he must, that he has fallen in your estimation by having, not only violated

his pledge, but persisted in the wrong, I think he would shun you.

"If he will not listen to me, dear Gordon, and I have learned by bitter experience that he will not, he is not likely to listen very long even to you. As for Jack and Eva, there is no one can deal with them as successfully as I can; and an occasional letter from you will do more for Lee than you could do personally. Were you here, he would soon become suspicious that you were watching him, and then there would be an end of all influence for good with him."

"But I could share your trouble. Hope!"

"True, Gordon; but I am sure that were you here often, we would find our troubles mutually increased. Mamma has felt for a good many years that, somehow, I had come between herself and you, and that jealousy would be greatly increased, were you in a position to join me personally in my efforts to benefit the family.

"I think she is beginning to thaw a little toward me, and I am hoping to have her co-operation, now that she sees where we are drifting. No, Gordon, leave me to my task, and go you to yours. Our path seems a clouded one to-day, but it may brighten sooner than we dream of. The evils that threaten us may speedily be averted; we must just hope and be patient. And now that we have talked these matters out so fully, tell me your plans; or, perhaps, you will defer that till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, Hope! Pardon me, but since it is decided that we must part, I shall go to-night! my train will leave in an hour," he added, glancing at his watch.

"And not see your sister, Gordon, or papa?"

"No, Hope; I thought to have seen them for a little while to-night, but as they cannot be disturbed, I shall not delay; and as no one but yourself knows of my visit, it may be as well not to mention it, and then there will be no need of explanations. I will write them from Maine, whither I am bound just now.

And now, dear Hope, I must tell you my plans, as the time is speeding; and, in order to do so intelligibly to you, I must go back a little.

"A few weeks ago, I received a letter from your old family physician, Dr. Eberly, stating that he had met our mutual friend, Aunty Green, at the house of a patient, and that she had been telling him a good deal about me. It appears the doctor had retained a kindly remembrance of me since the time I was with your father during that long illness, Hope, which followed your thirteenth birthday, and at that time he was particularly kind to me, as you will doubtless remember.

"Learning from Aunty Green what profession I was preparing for, he wrote me, saying he was growing old, and had for some time been anxious to engage some young man as his partner and colleague, to whom he might feel glad and proud to leave his practice when he had done with it; and ended by inviting me to come and visit him. I accordingly went, and that reminds me, Hope, of what I was near forgetting; here is a small parcel from dear aunty, who sends with it an inconceivable amount of love!"

"Dear aunty!" said Hope, tears springing into her eyes, as she took the parcel from Gordon's hand; "but what is the result of your visit to the doctor?"

"It is this, Hope. He offers, if I will accede to his proposal, to keep me two or three years in Britain and on the Continent, in order that I may perfect myself in my profession at the best European schools. I entered into no engagements, but left the whole matter subject to your decision. That decision you have given; and now I see no reason why I should not accede to the doctor's plans, provided, always, that it is with your approval. If I receive that, I shall go directly to Maine for a short visit at my uncle's, and then sail without delay for the Old World. What do you say, Hope?"

"Do you like Dr. Eberly, Gordon?"

"Yes, Hope, very much."

"But, Gordon, he is not a Christian?"

"Yes, Hope, he is; and the way that came about will interest you very deeply, as indeed, it did me. The dear old doctor told me the whole story in a most touching way; but I can only give it to you in a word or two. But when you go with me to Weston, my darling, you shall hear it all from his own lips, and that will be a great deal better than hearing it from mine. He was, as doubtless you know, your dear mother's physician, and with her when she died. His own inability to pray for her in her terror and distress at the prospect of death, the tender and impressive words of your dear old nurse, and an overwhelming sense, such as he had never felt before, of the awfulness of meeting death unprepared, so wrought upon his mind that he never rested until he found rest of soul in believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. But, my darling, I must go. Are you satisfied to have me carry out my own and the doctor's plans—do you cordially accede to them?"

"Yes, dear Gordon, perfectly satisfied since you think it best," said Hope, lifting her tearful eyes to his face; "we shall meet again, if not here, beyond!" and, with a hurried farewell, Gordon was gone.

One bright, brief hour of unutterable, though tearful joy, with all the store of precious memories it had left behind, had been granted to Hope; and then the dull midnight, the silent house, the consciousness of the immeasurable sacrifice she had made, and all that lay before her in the pathway of self-denial which she had chosen, followed quickly after. It is no wonder if the strong, brave heart gave way for a little while; but soon there came a strength that was neither from, nor of herself; a strength of which she that lives for self and selfish gratification alone has no conception; and, rising from the sofa where she had cast herself in a transport of grief, Hope dried her tears, extinguished the lights, and, taking a small lamp from a bracket in the hall, went to her room.

Passing Jack's room, she paused a moment at the partly open door, and looked in. He had evidently

been some hours asleep, but his breathing was quick and short, and his face was deeply flushed. Hope saw in an instant that he was in a fever. For a few minutes she stood with one hand upon his temples and her watch in the other, endeavoring to count the rapid pulsations; but her own excitement was too great, and, dropping into a chair at the bedside, she struggled to compose herself sufficiently to decide what was best to be done. At length she took up her lamp again, and turned the light full upon the sleeper's face, hoping it might waken him; but he only moaned, and rolled his head from side to side, like one in pain.

Hope bent her head close to his face, and said, in a low tone, "Jackey, dear boy, are you very ill?"

For an instant he opened his eyes wide, and stared vacantly at her, and then turned quickly away, muttering, "No, I won't, and you needn't coax! it's poison, I know it is; don't you see it's burning me up, the horrid stuff? Let me alone, boys, I won't touch another drop!"

"Dear, dear Jack! See here; it's your own Hope that is speaking to you!"

"Oh, go away, you, Lee, and let me alone!" he exclaimed, fretfully. "Hope's gone with mother, and you've given me gallons of that fiery stuff already! Oh, how my head aches! get off me there, or you'll crush me! Let me up—you—you—oh, I am smothering!" and the boy flung his arms wildly above his head, as if seeking to free himself from some one who was trying to hold him down.

Snatching her lamp, Hope hurriedly called one of the servants, whom she despatched, with the utmost quiet, for a physician. She then hastened to her own room, where she found Norah sleeping soundly in her chair, and, glancing in, she saw that Eva was still sleeping quietly.

Stopping, she whispered a few words to the woman, who arose, rubbed her eyes violently for a minute, and then followed Hope to Jack's room. "Go down, Norah, and open the street door for Thomas and the doctor

when they come ; and then bring the doctor up quietly, so as not to disturb the house ;" and, handing the woman the lamp, Hope sat down by Jack, who was still tossing his arms and muttering incoherently.

In a short time Norah returned, on tip-toe, followed by the doctor. Hope dismissed her at once to her room, and, handing the lamp to the doctor, closed the door and sat down. The physician sat for some time at the bedside, examining the patient, carefully noting the symptoms, and listening to his broken utterances.

"Have you any clue at all to the boy's meaning?" he asked at length, turning to Hope.

"I suppose I have, doctor," said Hope, her pale face flushing painfully beneath the physician's eye.

"Please give it me, then, Miss Ellisson. If there is anything of a painful nature connected with it," he added, noticing Hope's agitation, "you may feel it is strictly confidential."

In as few words as possible, Hope told him all that Jack had told her, and explained, briefly, the cause of his bitter self-upbraiding.

"He is a proud, passionate boy, doctor, but he is honorable and affectionate, and has always been unusually fond of me. The thought of having broken his pledge, of which he has always been rather proud because of sharing it with me, and thereby, as he believed, forfeiting my confidence and esteem, has troubled him very deeply ; and his grief and mortification, added to the effect of the liquor he drank last night, have probably been the cause of this attack."

"Not quite *the cause*, Miss Ellisson," said the doctor, thoughtfully, "though, doubtless, they have materially aggravated the trouble ; but he has evidently been a fit subject for sickness of some kind for a good while. I shall leave these medicines, which you will please give according to the written directions, and I will call again early in the morning." Hope lighted the doctor down, locked the door, and, with a heavy heart, returned to her solitary watch.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE morning sun had long since risen, when Hope tapped gently at her mother's door.

"What is it, Hope?" said Mrs. Ellisson at length, appearing at the door. "Eva is all right, I trust?"

"Eva has rested very well, mamma; but Jack is ill—can you come to his room for a minute?"

"What does this mean?" said Mrs. Ellisson, laying her hand upon the boy's throbbing temples, "has he been this way long?"

"I cannot say how long, mamma, but I found him very ill last night when I dropped in before going to my room."

"Why! you've been having a doctor!" and Mrs. Ellisson glanced with surprise at the table, where tumblers and bottles were huddled confusedly together.

"Yes, mamma, he was so ill I dared not wait; and as you and papa were not able to be disturbed, I took it upon myself to send for one without consulting you."

"And you've been up all night! you should have called me! how tired you look! What does the doctor say?"

"That he has a fever of some sort."

"A fever!" and Mrs. Ellisson started back in alarm; "what kind of a fever, Hope?"

"He did not say, mamma, but he will be in again soon—there is the bell now! you had better go down to your breakfast, which is waiting, and I will remain here."

"No, Hope, I will stay with Jack while you go down; you look wearied out. What are you giving him?"

"I have just given him his medicine, you have only to keep the ice on his head. I shall soon be back. Shall I have Eva go down, or shall I send her breakfast up to her?"

"If she is ready, have her go down; she may as well

begin at once; it will be the harder the longer she is allowed to wait."

Eva was ready, and as she followed Hope into the breakfast-room her eyes ran eagerly down the table, as if looking for something she greatly desired. Hope noticed the look of intense longing, and without speaking she pointed Eva to a seat, and then walking directly to her father, who was already seated, whispered a few words in his ear.

Colonel Ellisson started, flushed, glanced hastily at Eva, and then with a heavy frown nodded assent to Hope's request. Sweeping decanters and glasses from the table, Hope thrust them into the sideboard, locked the door, and put the keys into her pocket.

Eva looked disappointed, Lee's lip curled with a contemptuous smile, but Hope took no notice, and seating herself at the tray, proceeded to pour the coffee.

"Where is your mother, Hope?"

"She is sitting with Jack, papa; he is very ill; the doctor says he is in a fever."

"The doctor, Hope!"

"Yes, papa; I was alarmed about Jack, and sent for the doctor in the night. He came again a minute ago—I met him on the stair as I came down."

"When was Jack taken ill?" and Colonel Ellisson looked pale and anxious.

"I found him very sick when I dropped into his room last night before going to my own."

"Why, he was well yesterday;—at least—well, I was not about much until near the time you came home. Was he not quite well, Lee?"

"I saw nothing amiss with him!" replied Lee, ill-naturedly; but as he spoke he caught Hope's eye as she was sternly scanning his features. The blood leaped to his temples, and he bent his face lower over his plate.

As soon as breakfast was over, Colonel Ellisson, followed by Hope, hastened to Jack's room. Mrs. Ellisson looked up quickly, and turning to Hope, inquired if she knew the meaning of Jack's incoherent expressions.

"Did not the doctor tell you, mamma?"

"No, Hope, he was asleep while the doctor was here."

In a few words Hope repeated what Jack had told her.

"I shall see pretty soon what this means!" said Colonel Ellisson when Hope had finished speaking, his face white with suppressed anger. "Lee must answer for this!"

"Don't do anything rashly, my dear!" pleaded Mrs. Ellisson, following her husband from the room. "I dare say he only meant a little fun; you know what a giddy child he is, Hugh! so thoughtless always of consequences!"

"Well, I shall see there's no more 'fun' of this sort, Amy!" muttered the father as he strode angrily away. "Young man, I want you!" he added sternly, encountering his son on the stairs, and Lee turned and followed his father to the library.

"Will you come, Amy?" he said, calling back to his wife, as he opened the door for Lee to enter.

"If you wish me to, Hugh," said Mrs. Ellisson, coming forward with evident reluctance, "but I do not think it at all necessary."

"Well, necessary or not, I want you!" and without another word, Mrs. Ellisson followed her husband into the room.

"Now, Lee," said the father, when they were seated, "I want to inquire into this interesting little affair of yours of night before last. It seems you were having a jolly time of your own while I was—was—"

"Was at Mason's, father," said Lee, with a significant smile. "I knew you were having a good time with some of your friends, so I thought I would invite in a few of mine for a comfortable evening at home. I trust there was no harm done!"

Colonel Ellisson bit his lip, and his face reddened painfully as he glanced furtively at the speaker, whose steady, impudent gaze disconcerted him even more than the covert sneer of his words.

Lee was nearly nineteen, as tall as himself, and nearly his match in physical strength; and as he glanced at the handsome, resolute face, it dawned upon him as it never had before, that his son had passed the domain of childhood, and could no longer be dealt with as a child. A chilling fear crept over him that Lee knew all that had passed in that private room at Mason's, and for a moment he was confused and agitated. But quickly recovering his self-possession he said sternly:

"It is quite true I was at Mason's, where I have a private room, in company with some friends with whom I had an engagement; and you, taking advantage of your mother's absence and mine, were at home, drinking and gambling, and, worst of all, coaxing your brother to drink—actually making the boy so drunk that you had to help him to his bed!

"This morning I find him in a dangerous fever, and you are responsible in great part for the condition he is in. If you have any apology for tampering with him in such an indecent and inexcusable way, you have the privilege of making it."

"Really, father!" exclaimed Lee, with a forced laugh, "I had no intention of making the youngster either sick or drunk; but after he'd had one drink he played the fool so beautifully—'pon my word, father, you ought to have seen him!"—and Lee laughed as though the memory of the disgusting scene was most intensely amusing.

"But," he added hastily, seeing his father's brow darkening, "I'll tell you honestly why I did it. It was to get the boy from under the influence of that old maid up stairs; and there's the sober truth! I thought he'd hung to her apron strings about long enough; and that the surest way of setting him free was to get him, by some means, to break that confounded pledge she's been holding him to for so many years. Only for that, he'd have been like the rest of us long ago!"

"Whom do you mean by '*that old maid*'?"

"Why, Hope Ellisson, of course! Whom else should I mean?"

"Keep a civil tongue, young man, or I'll pitch you out of the window!" and Colonel Ellisson sprang to his feet, his face white with passion. "Not even you shall speak contemptuously of her in my presence! Do you understand?"

"Perfectly sir!" said Lee, with a stiff bow. There was a covert insolence in the young man's tone and manner that chafed his father almost beyond endurance; but he could not define it with sufficient clearness to his own thought to find any protest against it in words; so he merely said as he resumed his seat, "Go on, then, with what you were about to say!"

"The truth is," continued Lee, "I have got tired of Jack's echoing Hope's everlasting cant about this sort of a thing; you know how it is, father I've seen her plenty of times hanging around you, whining and crying because she couldn't get you to give up your glass! It is bad enough to get her pet notions day after day from her own lips, without having them continually re-hashed by Jack.

"He has been her mouth-piece and echo ever since he has been able to peep; and for my part I was tired of it, and meant to put a stop to it! I should think you would be tired of it yourself. What an exhibition, for instance, you allowed her to make of herself this morning at breakfast!"

"Have a care what you say, sir!"

"Certainly, sir, I shall; but it does seem to me, speaking with all due deference, that I should be master of my own house, if I were in your place!"

"What Hope did this morning," said Colonel Ellisson, with exemplary self-control, "was on Eva's account. It is time you should know, if you do not know it already, that your sister is ruining herself with drink; and Hope was right in putting it out of her sight!"

"And locking the sideboard and pocketing the keys, I suppose!"

"Quite so, if I chose to allow it!"

"Well, all I have to say is, Hope alone is enough to ruin Eva, watching and guarding her, and not allowing her the least liberty or independence! It was bad enough during that abominable period of imprisonment and espionage that she underwent before we left the West; and now I suppose the old tune is to be sung again, with sundry variations according to her latest new whims!"

"Lee Ellisson! I tell you, for the last time, I shall not allow you to speak insultingly of Hope; and if you govern yourself accordingly, it will be to your advantage! Hope has never acted the spy upon any one; and if she has labored to save you children from the habit of drink, it is because she believes it a ruinous one, as indeed it is! I only wish you were all like her!"

"You see, father, we appreciate a good example too well for that!" retorted Lee, with an insolent laugh. "I am thankful that you and mother are people of better sense than Hope; and have brought your younger children up after a better fashion than old Phoebe did the eldest one. I expect, now that Hope's spell over Jack is broken, to see him following your example in the future, and not wasting his life canting about temperance, and religion, and all that! I go in for enjoying life as I go along; and that's what I rather expect him to do after this!"

"You seem rather proud than otherwise of your unnatural conduct!" said Mrs. Ellisson, severely; "and I must say I think your language particularly insolent. I expected to see you penitent and ashamed, especially when told that your brother is dangerously ill; but instead of that, you seem to think you have done a very worthy deed!"

"*'Penitent and ashamed,'* mother! why, all I did was to get Jack to give up that old pledge which you know well enough both father and you despise! Don't I know perfectly well that neither of you want to see the boy an oddity in the family, and a mark for all the young fellows of his own station to jeer at? At

any rate, I don't want to see it; and I've done what I could to prevent it, for which I am neither sorry nor ashamed!"

"Well, *I* should be," said Colonel Ellisson, "both 'sorry and ashamed' of conduct in which you seem to glory, as though it was manly and commendable. I was brought up to take my glass at home, and have never scrupled to drink in a social way among men; but I never saw the day when I would not have been ashamed of having tempted another to drink who believed it wrong to do so; and especially one young and inexperienced who was, at the same time, held under a moral restraint by a pledge of total abstinence. I flatter myself that I never saw a time when I was not too much of a man for such conduct. You have acted a mean, contemptible part, and if you are not ashamed of it, I am truly ashamed of you. And now recollect this; if I find you again tampering with your brother in regard to drink, while either of you are under my control, you shall smart for it! Do you understand me?"

"I flatter myself I can understand plain English!"

"Then you can go!"

Lee knew his father's mood too well to venture any further remark, and, with the air of one who is greatly injured, he strode out of the room.

Colonel Ellisson and his wife gazed helplessly at each other. The wily foe they had harbored so complacently for those many years was turning upon them in its terrible might—how should they face it—how cope with it? The smiling, flattering fiend, that had sat unrebuked at their board, that they had petted and caressed so long, had suddenly shown itself a giant, relentless and cruel, before whose terrible strides they trembled in abject weakness and dismay. Possibly each, at that moment, wished, above everything else, to be able to undo that chain of fatal influences which they had been winding with their own hands round and round their children—wished, possibly, they had their rosy nestlings in their sweet, pure babyhood

again, that they might try a better and safer way with them; but, if so, they neither of them said it.

They both looked old and careworn, and unhappy as they sat thus in the light of that fresh June morning, which flooded the room brightening the carpet, and the glowing patterns in amber, green and gold of the richly stained windows, through which it streamed.

But their reflections had no time to shape themselves in words, for in a moment Hope appeared at the door, to tell them the doctor had returned and was wishing to see them.

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### CHAPTER XXXIX.

"YOUR son is, undoubtedly, very sick, sir!" said the physician, in answer to Colonel Ellisson's anxious inquiries. It is a severe attack of fever, aggravated by some trouble of the brain, the result, doubtless, of the strong mental excitement through which he has lately passed."

"Then my daughter has been telling you?"

"Yes; and it may prove a serious bit of fun for those young fellows; for if this lad dies, the affair will have to be investigated! Who beside your son were engaged in it?"

"I do not know, doctor; do you know, Hope?"

"Yes, papa!" and Hope repeated the names Jack had given her, while the doctor copied them in his pocket memorandum.

"I think," he said, replacing pencil and tablets in his pocket, "it is about time some of our youth had some effectual check put upon their proceedings; this is not the first or second case of this kind that has come under my hands. If it is not the last, it shall not be my fault!"

"But, doctor, do you think my boy is really in danger?"

"Most certainly I do! and unless, by some means,



the brain is relieved very soon, the danger will be imminent!"

Mrs. Ellisson, who had been leaning upon her husband's arm, had grown paler and paler as the conversation went on, and uttering a low cry as the doctor ceased speaking, would have fallen had he not caught her, and assisted her to her room.

"O Hugh!" she cried as soon as she could speak, "don't let the doctor make this affair public! give him anything to purchase silence! Only think of having it published in all the papers, and heralded throughout the city!"

"It may not be so easily prevented as you think. If I mistake not, Dr. Bennett is not the man to be bought with money. I shall, however, prevent the affair from getting breath, if possible. Are you able to be left, Amy?"

"Yes, yes; don't delay a moment for me!" and burying her face in the cushions, Mrs. Ellisson wept bitterly.

The doctor gave minute directions to Hope, whose clear head and sound judgment he relied on almost more than his own skill, repeated the charge to keep the patient perfectly quiet, if possible; and then, for an hour or more, he and Colonel Ellisson were closeted together in earnest consultation.

"No, sir;" said the doctor at length, cutting short the conversation by glancing at his watch, and saying he must see his patient again, "my silence cannot be secured by any such means. This folly, to call it by no worse name, has occurred again and again of late, and it is time it was put a stop to. I promise you, however, that, if this boy lives, I will, for his mother's sake and yours, say nothing about the affair, further than to give each of those young fellows a private lesson they will not easily forget."

The doctor was unremitting in his attentions, coming and going, and sometimes sitting for hours together by his charge, while Hope would snatch brief intervals of rest; but for days there was very little

apparent change; still the poor head turned wearily from side to side, and the hot hands were tossed aimlessly about as he lived over and over again in wild disjointed fancies that night, and the subsequent shame and self-upbraiding it had cost him.

Eva, in the meantime, sat much alone, brooding over the disgraceful necessity of her being removed from school, and enduring as best she might the torture of that fierce craving for stimulants which, from the time Hope removed them from the table, had been not only withheld from her, but kept from her sight.

At length, as day after day passed, and all the family were absorbed in care and anxiety on Jack's account, she formed the desperate resolution of stealing out and purchasing for herself what she so intensely craved. At first she shrank in confusion and terror from any plan for the carrying out of her wish; for all the true womanliness of her nature revolted from the commission of such an act; but gradually, as again and again the temptation swept like billows of fire over her poor tortured soul, and the appetite within clamored more and more fiercely with every dream of its possible gratification, she resolved to make the desperate attempt.

Seizing an opportunity at length, when Hope, yielding to her plea of sickness had left her behind and gone down to her tea, and Mrs. Ellisson was occupied in the sick-room, she disguised herself hurriedly in an old suit of Norah's, and stealing unperceived out of the house found herself, half wild with terror and excitement, in the street.

But when she realized where she actually was, and saw numbers of elegantly dressed people who were walking in the glow of that summer sunset; saw young girls and happy children, and thoughtful, elderly people passing and re-passing; thought of her unaccustomed attire, her desperate haste, and the many eyes that seemed to be bent upon her in eager, wondering scrutiny, and then called to mind the shameful errand on which she was bent, and the disgraceful conse-

quences that must follow its successful accomplishment, her heart seemed to stand still with affright; and drawing her rusty veil more closely over her face, she turned and fled for home, nor paused till she found herself again in her own room.

Tearing off her disguise she crushed it into a closet, hurried on her own garments, and flinging herself upon a chair with no eye upon her but His who reads the secrets of all hearts, poor Eva struggled alone with her shame, and anguish, and remorse; and vowed—as what unhappy slave to strong drink has not—to overcome that fatal appetite or perish in the attempt.

Presently a soft footstep was heard in the passage, and in a moment Hope, who had excused herself from the tea-table, in order to sit with her for a short time before taking her place at Jack's bedside, was standing beside her.

"Eva, dear child," said Hope, seeking to draw the weeping girl toward her, "are you really so very ill?"

"No, Hope, I am not in the least ill; it was all a pretence for the sake of accomplishing a base, wicked purpose of which, I am thankful to say, I became ashamed; and from which I turned back in time to escape the consequences of my own folly."

"O Eva! Eva!"

"You may well say, 'O Eva! Eva!' but what would you say if you knew me as I know myself? O Hope! if I could tell you, if you *could* understand this awful craving for—for—"

"I do understand it in part, my darling," said Hope, sitting down beside her; "I know, however, that it is, and can be *only* in part; but believe me, my poor, dear girl, my heart aches for you every moment." And then, as she had often done before, Hope spoke tenderly to her of Christ, able to save unto the uttermost all those that will come to God through Him, and with earnest pleading besought her to fly to Him for strength to overcome.

"You have told me this, Hope until it has become an old story; and really there don't seem to be any-

thing in it! Don't imagine, however, that I have never prayed; for I have scores of times; but it has not helped me one bit! I tell you I want stimulants. I am mad for drink. I don't care what it is—wine, brandy, whisky, *anything* that will satisfy this unutterable craving! You look horrified at hearing me say it, but I do, and where's the use of denying or concealing it?

"I think about it, Hope, and think about it, until it almost seems as though my brain were on fire; and at such times, if I could lay my hands upon it, I'd drink, though I knew 'twould destroy me!—I would, indeed!" and a fierce light came into the young girl's eyes, revealing, almost more terribly than her words, the torture of her soul."

"Then, Eva, for mercy's sake, don't think about it. Ask God—*agonize before Him*, for help to banish it forever from your thoughts; and then *try*, TRY, with all your might, to put it out of your mind. You ask God's *help*, while it is not His *HELP* that you want, but rather that He should *force* you, *in spite of yourself*, to give it up! What would you think of me, if I would ask papa to help me lift that book-case, Eva, and when he came, and took hold of it, instead of doing my part of the work eagerly and earnestly, I should cling to it, and hold it down with all my strength? God helps those who feel their need sufficiently to struggle for the mastery; and there is no proof that you are sincere in your prayer, until you are willing to put forth your own energies.

"Then, when you are thus willing and in earnest, He will come in and with His almighty strength effect the victory for you; but while you simply *cry*, and do not *strive*, He knows, and you know that you are not in earnest!"

"O Hope!"

"It is true, Eva. When you come to pray with a *sincere desire* to be free from this terrible appetite, and then show your sincerity by earnestly striving against it, I tell you, you will get help from Him as

certainly as He has promised it; for He never fails, *He cannot fail* to fulfil His promise!"

"Then, Hope, it must be I lack either the *desire* to overcome, or the *will* to put forth a sufficient effort—possibly both, for I have not overcome, that is certain. Do tell me, Hope, why it is that I cannot be like—like, not you, for you never drank—but like papa and mamma? They take a little, and it satisfies them, and they can keep themselves steady; while I, as soon as I touch it, Hope, it seems to take away all judgment and reason. I become utterly reckless of consequences, and only care to drink and drink, until I can drink no more! Tell me, do, how it is I am so different."

"Eva, my darling, have you never suspected that you have inherited, at least from one of your parents, this inordinate passion for intoxicating drink? Through how many generations this dreadful heritage of ruin has been flowing down to you, God only knows; but it is here, working cruel retribution for the sin of others in you, the unhappy victim of their madness; and every time you yield to it, it becomes more and more your own. Eva, I know, and you *may* know, that it is possible for you to overcome it! God's grace, His Almighty aid is freely offered to you, and by it you may overcome, even with all these terrible odds against you, if you will but accept it.

"You are, however, quite in error in regard to papa. You have seen him many times in a greater or less degree overcome by drink. Time was—I remember it well, Eva—when he was far stronger to resist his appetite than you ever were; but he has gone on and on, till now there is scarcely a day that he is not under its influence. What the end will be, God only knows; but I tell you solemnly there is no hope for either you or him while you tamper with it in the least degree! You have to make up your mind not to touch it, not even to *think of it*, or you never can be safe—never!"

"I believe it, Hope; I really believe it!" cried Eva, lifting her tear-stained face toward her sister; "and

I'm never, *never* going to touch it again, *not even to think of it!*"

"Eva, Eva! don't trust to your own strength, I beseech you! It is only by help from above that you can stand! Be entreated; seek strength from God; receive Christ into your heart by faith, and He will keep you; but oh, remember that of yourself you are weaker than a broken reed!"

"Hope!" it was Mrs. Ellisson's voice at the door, "can you sit with your brother while I take my tea?"

"Yes, mamma; forgive me for staying away so long!" and pressing a kiss upon the flushed cheek of her sister, Hope hurried to the sick room.

Eva rose, washed her face, swept back the rich, auburn curls from her forehead, adjusted the pretty tortoise-shell comb that had fallen to the floor in her abandonment of grief, carefully smoothed out her crumpled collar and cuffs, and with a lighter heart than she had felt since her return from school, joined her mother in the dining-room.

Eva Ellisson had passed through a crisis. A victory, such as it was, had been gained; not, indeed, by a resolute will rising in its majesty, and sternly asserting its supremacy over the appetite that clamored within; but rather by the sudden recoil of a naturally noble soul from the vile outrage upon itself she was contemplating, and which had compelled her with flying steps to seek the safe retreat of home.

Safe! safe! Alas, alas, for the *safety* of that home beneath whose roof the demon of the wine-cup has found a lurking place! And yet, poor Eva Ellisson was a thousand times safer there than in the streets of the great city, where the *permitted* fiend sits smiling at every corner, and casts abroad his tempting baits openly and unrebuked, nay, rather, under the strong shield of *authority and law*, in the face of God, angels, and men! "Be astonished, O ye heavens, and be ye horribly afraid! be ye very desolate," indeed! when men murder their fellows under cover of law, and then, when inquisition of blood is made, take

up in culpable blindness or worse hypocrisy, the query of the first murderer, "AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?"

In that retreat, for the time being, at least, the maddening poison was kept out of sight; and as the young girl sat down at her mother's side, a feeling of security and consciousness of added strength, as of a victory gained, came to her, which made her sweet, young face look very beautiful in the soft light of that summer evening.

Mrs. Ellisson noticed the brighter look in her daughter's face, and said, tenderly, as she handed her a cup of tea:

"I am glad, my love, to see you looking so much better this evening; are you feeling so?"

"Yes, mamma, thank you! I am feeling quite well now;" but Eva colored deeply as the thought flashed through her mind, "it might have been very different had I not changed my mind just as I did!"

Poor Eva! she was really taking to herself a great deal of credit for so promptly abandoning her purpose. It was, indeed, something to be deeply grateful to God for, but how little of it had been her own intelligent and deliberate act! It was rather the stern uprising of all that was womanly, delicate, and refined in herself, by which she had been thrust back, shame-stricken and humbled, from the glare of day and coarse contact with open vice, than of anything that originated in her own feeble and half-paralyzed will.

She had yet to learn, that what Hope had just told her was awfully true, that, of herself, she was weaker than a broken reed.

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## CHAPTER XL.

IN a comparatively short time the more violent symptoms of Jack's malady had been brought under the control of medical skill; but the fever was an obstinate one; it had to run its slow, tedious course, and by the time he was able to walk a little about his

room, and sit by the open window again, the summer was gone, and the early autumn was abroad, mingling her first mellow tints with the rich, dark green of summer, and preparing the world by her own slow, quiet methods for the wondrous transformations she was about to make.

The trouble which was weighing so heavily upon Jack's mind when the darkness of delirium settled upon him, had never been alluded to since reason happily resumed her reign; whether or not the recollection, either of it or of its cause, remained, no one knew.

He sat all day quiet and reserved, saying little to any one, even to Hope, who by many gentle methods was constantly seeking to win him from his dreamy ways, but he seldom would more than smile, putting her off with—

"I don't care to talk, Hope; it seems nice to think; you know I never did much thinking!"

And Hope wisely gave him his way. It was very true, Jack never had done much thinking. Hitherto, almost wholly a creature of impulse, he had generally, in rough boy-fashion, acted out his impulses for better or for worse, as the case might be, and seldom had paused, except under Hope's influence, to consider either the right or the wrong of them.

But Jack Ellisson had reached that age, always mysterious, critical, and rarely understood either by parents or teachers, when the crude, rough elements of the boy's nature are either softened and refined at the approach of early manhood, or else hardened into the coarse, vulgar, and too often grossly sinful type which his character is afterwards to retain, unless brought under exceptionally favorable and refining influences.

The humiliating discovery of himself which he had made, as well as his subsequent severe and protracted illness, had come to him just as he reached the threshold of that mysterious stage of his boyhood; how they affected his after life and character remains to be seen.



"Lee," said Colonel Ellisson, one evening, as the former entered the library where he sat reading, "I am glad you've come in; I want to speak to you. Sit down."

"I have been speaking with your tutors to-day, and they inform me that you are well fitted for college; have you made up your mind where you would like to go? of course, you expect to go somewhere!"

"I am not particular about going to college at all; I'm about sick of study!"

"Indeed! what do you propose doing in the world? I thought an education was one of the first essentials to success!"

"Doubtless a certain amount of it is. I don't see any sense in a fellow's studying for years and years in order to fit himself to go out into the world!"

"I don't know precisely what you mean by 'going out into the world,' Lee! It is time you knew you are not going to be rich enough to live in idleness, and that when you 'go out into the world,' as you term it, I expect you to be a man among men; in other words, to have something to do by which to benefit yourself and others."

"Hang the others, say I; I go in for myself!"

"A worthy motto, certainly, for a youth of nineteen:—but, as I was about to say—the amount of culture you will require depends somewhat upon the business, trade, or profession you choose. I presume that, in common with most young men, you are setting before you some object in life?"

"As for a *trade*," said Lee, contemptuously, "if you aspire to the honor of having a mechanic in your family, you will have to set up your son Jack in that exalted position; I have no leanings that way. *Business* is too confining; and as for a *profession*, I wouldn't be bothered—besides, professional men are nearly always poor!"

"What do you say, then, to the army, or the navy?"

"Stuff and nonsense! father; do you fancy me green

enough to set myself up as a target for men to shoot at?"

"You have a very gentlemanly way of alluding to your father's profession, I must say! However, as you have in such a summary way disposed of business, mechanic-arts, professions, etc., perhaps you will have the goodness to express a wish! Would you like to go back to the farm, my son?"

"Not I, indeed; that's about the last thing; but I'll tell you what I'll do. You just give me a few thousands to start with, and I'll paddle my own canoe, and not work or study either; I know exactly how to do it!"

Colonel Ellisson started, and looked keenly at his son.

"What do you mean, Lee; explain yourself?"

"Why, just this, since you wish me to explain, that I'll relieve you of the trouble and expense of educating me any further, and find out a way not only to get rich, but to keep so, provided you'll start me with a few thousands!"

"Well, I shall *not* start you in life in any such way, do not for a moment dream of it; but I will educate you thoroughly for any honorable calling you may choose, and I wish you to choose very soon, as it is nearly time for the colleges to open again. It is my *wish* that you should fit yourself for one of the learned professions—you have ability to excel in any of them—or else return to the farm; I am not particular which. I'll not detain you longer just now; you can think the matter over, and I shall expect a decision in a few days."

"A thing you are not particularly likely to get; at least, not in the way you imagine!" muttered the young man, as he strode sullenly away. He ran quickly up-stairs to his own room, closed and locked the door, and, opening a trunk, produced a small box, from which he took a roll of bills, counted, arranged, and placed them in a pocket-book which he carefully deposited in his breast-pocket. Then, taking out a

revolver, he examined it carefully, and, seeming satisfied that it was all right, deposited it also in his pocket. Then, seating himself at the desk, he wrote what appeared to be a letter, folded and addressed it, and, putting it under a book, left the room, locked the door, and, stepping to a window, tossed the key into the street.

"Lie there till I call for you!" he said, following the key with his eye until he saw it fall; then, pulling his hat over his eyes, he ran quickly down stairs, and was hurrying from the house when his mother's voice made him pause for a moment at the door.

"I do wish you'd stay at home to-night, Lee!" pleaded Mrs. Ellisson. "We shall only have you at home a little longer, if you go away to college; stay home with us to-night, my son!"

"Do be reasonable, if you can, mother! what's the good of living, if one's always got to be kept in a chimney-corner, I'd like to know! I have an engagement, and I'm going to keep it!" and without further explanation he walked rapidly away.

Tears sprang into the mother's eyes as she watched the handsome form and proud smile of her son until he turned a corner, and was lost to view; then she closed the door, and entering the library where her husband was still engaged in reading, sat down in a window recess, and leaning her head on her hand, remained for some time in deep thought.

The truth is, Mrs. Ellisson was beginning to feel far more anxious to have her son out of the city than ever she had been to have him enter it. She was beginning to realize very sensibly that the society he was drawing around him was anything but what she would choose for her son. For several weeks he had scarcely spent an entire evening at home, and when she had remonstrated, or questioned him of his whereabouts, he had given her only evasive or contemptuous answers.

Colonel Ellisson, too, though he had said little to his

wife about it, was feeling deeply troubled in regard to Lee, whose expensive and dissipated habits had for some time been dragging heavily upon his income; and he was becoming daily more and more convinced that his frequent appeals for money had a deeper and darker meaning than the young man would admit.

He had always some very straightforward story to tell in attempting to account for his frequent applications for money—such as, this or that amusement, a friend in trouble, his pocket-book lost, or something equally plausible and difficult to disprove, and from an investigation of which the father shrank with a nervous weakness little short of timidity.

At length, finding that her husband was not inclined to lay aside his book, Mrs. Ellisson left the room, and slowly ascended the stairs. But the sound of voices attracted her attention, and she paused before the open door of Hope's room. It was a pretty scene that attracted her gaze, and for a little while she stood unobserved at the door.

Hope was sitting before an open window, reading to Eva and Jack; the former seated upon a low ottoman at her feet, with her arms crossed upon Hope's lap, and her dark, expressive eyes fixed intently upon her sister's face, the latter, with a heap of cushions about him, lying at her feet in an attitude of deep attention.

Mrs. Ellisson paused awhile in admiration of the lovely scene. She thought—and the memory of that sweet picture in all the weary after-years never faded from her mind—that she had never seen Eva look so beautiful as she did that hour, with the glow of returning health mantling her fair face, and her auburn curls falling in wavy richness over her slender neck and shoulders; and for the first time in her life, Mrs. Ellisson felt really grateful that she had one so wise, and yet so gentle as Hope, to whose guidance she could consign her beautiful but erring daughter.

"You seem very happy here, my children," she said at length, entering the room, "and I do not wish to

disturb you ; but by-and-by, Hope, when you are free, I would like to see you at my room."

"Yes, mamma!" said Hope, and, looking up, her quick eye discerned the trouble in her mother's face ; "I will be with you very soon."

"O mamma!" cried Eva enthusiastically, "you ought just to hear Hope read! She is reading us *such* a beautiful poem, Mrs. Browning's 'Seraphim,' and she explains it all till it just seems real! I did not suppose anything religious could be half so sweet!"

"That's because you never heard Hope read such things, Eva!" exclaimed Jack, with a touch of his old enthusiasm. "'Pon my word, mother, it's next thing to hearing those angels talk, to hear Hope read what they said!"

Mrs. Ellisson smiled sadly and passed on, but she did not answer. Her thoughts were with that other son who, with the sunshine upon his head, and the glow of manly beauty upon his young face, had just passed out of her sight, who should say whither? to what haunts of infamy? to what unhallowed revelry? to what soul-destroying vice?

"But, Hope," said Jack, sitting up, and sweeping the heavy mass of hair back from his forehead, "I guess if you don't mind waiting till another time, I'll go to my room ; I'm getting a little tired!"

"Dear boy! I was almost forgetting how weak you are ; you must come right away!" and handing the book to Eva, she assisted the invalid to his room, and helped him to lie down.

"You are just an old love!" said Jack, as Hope shook up the pillows and settled his tired head comfortably among them ; that was Jack's emphatic way of expressing his gratitude. "I'll do something splendid for you some day, won't I?"

"Of course you will, dear boy! you'll be a lad after my own ideal."

Jack opened his great, eager eyes, and looked earnestly in his sister's face.

"I don't know, Hope!" he said, slowly, "that's be-

ing a better boy than I ever expect to be, ever, ever!" and he closed his eyes wearily again, as though the thought of such a stretch of goodness was too much for him to contemplate just then.

Hope did not question him nor reply, she only patted his pale cheek in a tender, loving way peculiarly her own, and then hastened to her mother.

Mrs. Ellisson was sitting thoughtfully at a window, watching some great, heaped-up clouds that were rising from the south-west, their dark tops ablaze with the intense glare of sunset, while all along their base trickled and ran in countless tortuous lines the electric fires that foretold the coming storm.

"You are watching the cloud, mamma!" said Hope, taking the proffered seat. "Oh! isn't that grand?" she continued, glancing eagerly along the huge pile of clouds that seemed to hang almost motionless in the sky, while the setting sun banded their rugged outlines with a rim of intolerable brightness.

"Yes, Hope, I was watching the cloud, but I was not thinking much about it, I was thinking of Lee; and it was to speak with you about him that I asked you to come to me. Do tell me what you think of him. He has grown so sullen and unapproachable of late, that I am scarcely able to speak to him. Have you noticed it at all?"

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## CHAPTER XLI.

HOPE did not reply at once; it was such a new experience to her to be consulted, to have her opinion asked or in any way deferred to, that she was confused, and for a moment inclined to answer evasively; for she felt keenly alive to the fact that she had not one word of comfort or encouragement to give. But second thought decided her to be frank, and she answered:

"Yes, mamma, I have noticed it; and have been feeling it deeply ever since Jack's illness began. He

has never, through it all, manifested the least anxiety about him; and I am not aware that he has once inquired after him, not even while he was at the worst."

"Lee was never an affectionate boy, Hope. Jack, with all his rough ways, has a tenderer heart than he. Where do you suppose he spends his evenings?"

"I can only guess, mamma; but I fear, in very objectionable company."

"I fear so, from his manners and deportment. O, it's a pity we ever came to this city! I do wish," she added, after some minutes of painful thought, "that your father would not allow him a latch-key, and would require him to be at home at reasonable hours. I have begged him to do so; but your father is not very strong, you know, and he seems to shrink more and more from any conflict with Lee. I suppose it is because of his strong will, which was never easy to control even when he was a child!" and Mrs. Ellisson sighed as she thought, "how much less so now that he thinks himself a man!"

"We are both very anxious to get him away to college," she resumed, after a short silence, "for we think he would do better among new companions; do you not think so, Hope?"

"No doubt he would, at least for a time, mamma."

"I wish you would speak to him, Hope! You seem to get along so nicely with Eva and Jack that perhaps you might influence him. Will you not try?"

"Mamma, dear, I have tried many, many times! He used to heed my advice, in a way; but ever since our first trouble with Eva, both he and Augusta have turned against me. They seemed to consider that she was oppressed, and that I was the sole cause of it; and now, since Jack's trouble, he will not take a word from me. He believes it was at my suggestion that the doctor spoke to him; though, indeed, it was not, for I would not, myself, have advised it."

"Did he tell you he blamed you?"

"He did, mamma!" but Hope had no heart to enter

into the particulars of what had been to her a most trying interview, for she felt that her mother's trouble was deep enough already.

"Oh, I wish we had never left Weston! I do really, Hope! Your poor father has never seemed the same since we came here; indeed everything seems so different from what it used to!" and the tears gathered in Mrs. Ellisson's eyes and fell in heavy drops upon her clasped hands.

"Dear mamma!" cried Hope, distressed at seeing her mother in tears, "you may be grieving needlessly about Lee. If once he gets settled in college, he may do better. Eva and Jack are doing well now; and papa is not—"

"Is not what, Hope?"

"Pardon me, mamma! I was about to speak thoughtlessly;" and Hope averted her face, for her own eyes were fast filling with tears, and she felt that her mother's were searching her face, as if to probe her inmost thought. She did not, however, repeat the question; but clasping her hands over her temples like one in pain, sat some minutes in deep thought.

A sudden peal of thunder brought both mother and daughter to their feet; and glancing up at the cloud, each uttered an exclamation of alarm.

The red glare of sunset, that a short time before had flamed along its summit, had died out, giving place to intense blackness; clouds of dust were rolling up the street, making the dull, uncertain light more ghastly; while the wind howled in fierce gusts from the billowy masses of clouds now rolling and heaving tumultuously as they were hurried along with resistless might.

There was a rush of feet through the house, a hasty closing of shutters and securing of windows and doors, and then for long hours the tempest raged, while the lightning seemed literally to make the darkness visible by the incessant play of its terrific fires.

Eva had taken refuge with Hope in her brother's room; and while they three sat listening to the steady beat of the storm, each with hands clasped close in



those of the others as if for mutual protection, the domestics were huddled together for companionship in the kitchen, and Colonel and Mrs. Ellisson were alone in the library, sometimes listening with vague, undefinable dread to the warring elements without, sometimes talking in subdued tones of Lee—now hopefully of his future, and now reverting with anxious forebodings to his unsettled habits and wilful ways.

“Oh! when *will* this storm be over?” cried Mrs. Ellisson, at length, as the evening wore on, and still there was little sign of its abating. “If I could only know where my boy is, I could be content; why would he not be persuaded to remain at home this dreadful night?”

“Don’t distress yourself, Amy! he’s all right somewhere, my word for it! He’ll come slipping in by-and-by, when the storm is over—of course he can’t come before!” and crossing the room, Colonel Ellisson unlocked a small cupboard underneath one of the book-cases, and producing a bottle of rare old wine and a couple of glasses, filled them, and passing one to his wife, was raising the other to his lips when a peal of thunder, more awful than any that had preceded it, burst with a terrific crash seemingly directly over their heads.

The glass fell from his hand, splintered into a thousand fragments upon the marble mantel-piece beside which he was standing. Mrs. Ellisson sprang to her feet with an exclamation of horror, but her head turned giddy, and she would have fallen had her husband not caught her in his arms.

“Help me to my room, Hugh!” she said, after a moment, “I must go to bed. No; do not carry me, give me your arm, for my head is whirling, and I seem half blinded;” and leaning heavily upon her husband’s arm, she walked slowly to her own apartment.

Colonel Ellisson did not return to the library, but taking the paper retired to his dressing-room; and turning on the gas, sat down to read.

“Eva, you had better go to bed,” said Hope, at

length, as the storm lulled, and the roar of the thunder became more and more distant "I will sit with Jack until he is inclined to sleep, and then I will go too."

"I have finished this volume," said Eva, taking up a book Hope had brought her from the library a day or two before, and which had been lying on her lap during the storm—where is the next one?"

"In the library, Eva, just beside the door. Wait till morning and I will bring it to you."

"Thank you, Hope; I will run down and get it to-night; you know I like to read in bed in the early morning, sometimes, when I'm unable to sleep."

As Eva entered the library, the first object that caught her eye was the bottle of wine and the untouched glass beside it. Her eyes gleamed with an unnatural light, her breath came quick and fast, and in an instant the glass was in her hand; but the thought of what she was about to do made her set it down again.

For a few seconds she stood spell-bound, rooted to the floor; then with a desperate effort she turned away, and walked to the book-shelf. But she could not find what she sought, the rapid beating of her heart confused her, and a thousand voices of desire seemed clamoring within her for a taste; just one little, little taste; and turning to the table she seized the glass and, lifting it to her lips, drank the whole.

Oh! the delicious madness of that fatal moment! There she stood, her beautiful face blazing with excitement, and her eyes gleaming with a wild unnatural light, pouring out and drinking glass after glass of the rich old wine, until at length a feeling of giddiness came over her, and again she filled the glass, and walking to a sofa sat down.

For a time she sat very quietly, with her eyes fixed dreamily upon the ruby liquid that sparkled so temptingly in the light; then she heard the drowsy ticking of the clock upon the mantel-piece as though it had been very far away; the faint voice of the dying thunder seemed immeasurably distant; the gilded let-

Hope, at





1.8 2.0 2.2 2.5  
3.6 3.2 2.8  
4.0 4.5

10

tering of the richly bound volumes around her seemed continuous lines of light; and the gas-lights seemed blending into one broad yellow band of flame.

Suddenly she roused herself, and draining the glass she yet grasped, threw herself back upon the sofa; the glass slipped from her relaxed hand, and very soon poor Eva Ellisson was lost to all consciousness of outward things in the dead stupor of intoxication.

More than an hour had passed when Colonel Ellisson threw down his paper, and flinging open a window looked out upon the night. The storm had ceased, but great masses of broken clouds were still hurrying through the heavens in wild irregular shapes dimly seen by the light of an occasional star. The wind swept over him in chilling freshness, and closing the window hastily, he turned out the light, and was about to retire for the night, when he suddenly remembered the bottle he had left exposed in the library, and he hurried away, partly to get his accustomed glass, and partly to return the bottle to its hiding-place.

As he entered the room his eye fell upon the slight, girlish figure upon the sofa; then it wandered, first to the almost empty bottle upon the table, and then back to the wretched girl with the glass that had slipped from her hand lying empty beside her, and the whole truth flashed upon him.

Stooping over the unconscious girl, he laid a heavy hand upon her shoulder, and groaned aloud. Then a feeling of rage and shame took possession of him, blended with that unreasoning desire people in deep trouble often feel, for some one upon whom to lay the blame of their own acts; and he rushed blindly up stairs in search of Hope.

Jack had fallen into a deep sleep, and with a quiet step and a feeling of sweet content at her heart, Hope was setting things in order for the night. She had just finished reading for the second time a long, comforting letter from Gordon, telling her of the success he was having in his professional studies, of hard-earned

honors that were already his, and of others that he had in prospect; and that in little more than a year he hoped to be able to return to his own country.

But her father's hurried footsteps startled her from her pleasant musings, and the next moment he stood before her, his face livid with passion, and his whole frame trembling with excitement.

"Hope Ellisson!" he said, in a hard, suppressed voice, "I thought you could be trusted—I thought your sister was safe in your keeping; but I see I have been miserably deceived! Come here, will you?" and, clutching her by the arm with a grip that almost made her cry out with pain, he hurried her, too terrified to say a word, to the library, and, pointing out the helpless young creature upon the sofa, exclaimed bitterly: "Look there—look at that wretched, drunken girl, and see for yourself what your watchfulness amounts to!" and then, with a groan, he sunk upon a chair, and covered his face with his hands.

For a minute Hope stood speechless and aghast, staring first at Eva, then at her father, and then at the bottle upon the table; but at length the truth dawned upon her mind. Kneeling beside her father, she took one of his hands in hers, and, stroking it gently, said in a low tone:

"Papa, dear, do you know how that bottle came in this room?" There was no answer.

"Papa! will you not tell me?" Still there was no reply.

"Please listen to me, then. Eva left me more than an hour ago, to get a book from the library, intending, as soon as she found it, to go directly to bed, and I never dreamt but that she had done so. How could I for one moment think of danger for my poor girl in your library, where you had been spending the evening with mamma?" and Hope bowed her face upon her father's hand and wept bitterly.

"My child, my precious daughter, forgive me!" exclaimed Colonel Ellisson, now fully alive to his injustice: "I have been mad, cruel, unreasoning! O

what a legacy of ruin I have entailed upon you all! and now you, my one, patient, unsinning child, I have broken your heart with my cruel injustice! Look up, daughter, and say you forgive me!"

"Please don't humble yourself to me, papa; I cannot endure that! I only wanted you to see that I had not knowingly neglected my duty. My poor, dear father!" she added, checking his words with a touch of her soft hand upon his lips, "say no more, please; I know all your trouble, and Heaven knows I would cure it if I could.

"Please hide that bottle quickly, and then carry Eva to her room, and we will try and keep all this from mamma, for it will kill her to know it!"

Colonel Ellisson rose, and, without a word, proceeded to do as Hope bade him. He thrust the bottle and glass into the cupboard again, locked it, and then, lifting the limp form of his unhappy child, carried her to her room.

"There now, papa," said Hope, as he laid her upon the bed, "go and get some rest, and I will do what is necessary to be done for Eva;" and, taking his hand, Hope led him, almost as though he had been a child, to his door, bade him good-night, and returned to her dreary vigil.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

MORNING dawned, cool, clear, and refreshing; and as the sun rose earth brightened again into beauty as fresh and fair as though there were no sorrow, or pain, or ghastly death in all her fair valleys and populous cities.

It was late when the family gathered round the breakfast-table that morning, for all were weary, and each sadder than the others knew.

As Mrs. Ellisson looked round and missed Eva, she turned inquiringly to Hope.

"I see you miss Eva, mamma!" said Hope, inter-



preting her mother's look ; " she was sleeping when the bell rang, and I did not speak to her. I will have her breakfast sent up by-and-by."

" Where is Lee ? what time did he come in ? has any one seen him this morning ? "

" I have not seen him," said Hope, in answer to her mother's hurried questions, " and I did not hear him come in, I seldom do."

" My dear, I wish you would ring for Norris to go up and call him," said Mrs. Ellisson, turning to her husband, but he did not notice either her or her words. He was staring blankly at the morning paper which was lying before him, his face white as marble, and his eyes dilated as with some sudden horror ; then, springing from the table, he rushed into the hall, and seizing his hat was hurrying to the door, when a sudden thought struck him, and turning back, he seemed to forget his age in his impetuous rush up the stairs to Lee's room.

He grasped the handle of the door, but found it locked, there was no admission. " Lee ! Lee ! " he thundered, shaking the door violently ; but there was no reply.

Again the call was repeated, but there was no answer ; and with a violent wrench he sought to burst open the door, but the strong bolt resisted, and the useless knob was left in his hand. For a moment he stood undecided, then with a frantic gesture he dashed his foot through the rich panelling of the door, sending the splintered fragments to the farther side of the room, and revealing, not his boy, suddenly wakened from late repose, but the quiet unoccupied room, the carefully arranged furniture, the undisturbed bed !

" Hugh ! Papa ! what is the matter ? " in the same instant burst from Mrs. Ellisson and Hope, who had arrived just in time to see the door broken in.

Colonel Ellisson pressed his hand upon his brow for a moment, then, turning to his wife, said, with forced calmness :

"Perhaps I have been unnecessarily excited, but I was startled by a paragraph I saw in the paper; excuse me! I must go into the city for a short time," and without waiting for another word, he was gone.

"O Hope!" cried Mrs. Ellisson, sinking upon a chair, "what can it mean? O Lee, Lee! my own darling boy! what can have happened?"

"Be composed, mamma! I will bring the paper, perhaps we shall gather it from that;" and Hope ran quickly for the paper.

Glancing her eye down the page, it fell upon the following item:

"DROWNED.—Four young men, while crossing to — island, in an open boat, were caught in the storm last night and all drowned. They were apparently not more than a dozen yards from the shore when the storm struck them, and the boat was seen to capsize. Two or three persons were on the pier when they left, and begged them not to venture, as the storm was very near; but they only laughed at the warning, and pulled off in high spirits.

"A number of young men, supposed to be the same ones, have been seen several times lately to leave the pier about the same hour, and steer for the same point; but no one seems to know who they are. A search will be instituted this morning. Doubtless those who have missing ones will take the alarm. The young men were well dressed, and evidently belong in the city."

"Hope!"

It was Mrs. Ellisson's voice, full of impatience and alarm, and Hope reluctantly hastened to her.

"Don't distress yourself, mamma; I trust there is nothing amiss with Lee."

"Don't try to deceive me, Hope; I see the horror in your face; show me the paragraph!" and having pointed it out to her, Hope walked away, that she might not witness the misery she was powerless to alleviate.

Mrs. Ellisson seemed to tear out the meaning of the

words, rather than read them ; she uttered a faint cry, and before Hope could reach her, had fallen to the floor in a swoon. The usual restoratives were applied, but she recovered, only to pass from one fainting fit to another. At length a physician was called, who administered an opiate, and she sank at length into a deep sleep, and Hope went out to calm the excitement that prevailed throughout the household.

“What is the matter with everybody this morning ?” said Jack, as, much later than usual, Hope had his breakfast laid out for him in his room. It was Hope’s custom to sit down by the little table, and wait on him, and keep him company while he took his meals ; but this morning she remained standing until he was served, and then said, quietly :

“The storm seems to have done a great deal of harm in the city, Jack, and we are anxious and excited. Papa has gone out to see what he can learn, mamma and Eva are both poorly ; and now, can you excuse me, if I leave you this once to take your breakfast alone ? Norris will dress you when the breakfast things have been removed, and by-and-by, if possible, I will come and sit with you awhile.”

Jack did not object, but he looked after her so wistfully, that she turned back.

“What is it, dear ? are you not satisfied to have me go ?”

“Yes, Hope ; but you are not telling me all. I know there’s trouble in the house, and I wish you’d tell me what it is. Surely I’m not so weak now, that you need be afraid of upsetting me !”

“Dear Jack, we *are* in trouble, and I see I cannot quite conceal it from you. Lee did not come home last night, and we cannot help fearing something has befallen him. Papa has gone out to see if he can learn anything, and mamma is quite ill from fear and anxiety. Eva, too, has not left her room this morning, so you see I am needed in several places at once.”

"Eva, Hope! what's the matter with her? she hasn't been—?"

"Been what, Jack?"

"Drinking, of course!" said Jack, coloring deeply; "you knew what I was wanting to ask?"

"No, Jack, I did not suppose you knew of Eva's trouble at all!"

"Well, I do, Hope; she told me all about it, and she said she should never, *never* do so again! She hasn't broken over again, has she?"

"Dear, dear Jack!" and Hope's hardly suppressed tears brimmed over; "there's trouble all about the house, but you are not strong enough to talk about it just now. Will you not be patient and wait?"

"I'll try, Hope!" and Jack took his sister's hand in his own, and leaned his cheek on it in a tender, subdued way, quite unusual to him.

"Hope!" he said, suddenly, releasing her hand, and looking up earnestly in her face, "I want to be more of a comfort to you all than I ever have been, or than Lee is; do you think, after the way I acted before I was sick, I ever can be?"

It was the first time he had alluded to the circumstance that had cost him so much grief and mortification, and his eyes were full of eager questioning.

"Yes, dear boy, I *know* you will, if you seek earnestly from God the grace you need! But without God you can do nothing good, and you can never be *good* in the high, true sense.

"When God renews your heart, and puts His Spirit within you, *then* you will be safe in His strong keeping, but not till then. 'If you seek Him He will be found of you, but if you forsake Him He will cast you off forever.' God has said, 'I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me.' Oh, believe it, Jack, and act upon it, now that your heart is tender, and you feel how weak and sinful you are; and finding Christ you will find strength that will never fail you!"

It was almost noon when Eva awoke. Her first consciousness was of a heavy pain in the head, a burning heat in her stomach, and an intense longing for something to satisfy a felt, but undefined, want. As she looked up at the window, her eye-balls smarted with pain, and she shrank from even the tiny pencil of rays that stole in through a small opening in the shutter.

Then, slowly, with the pain, the weariness, the thirst, and the cruel gnawing of unsatisfied desire, came to her mind recollections of the past night; the fierce longing that took possession of her as the serpent that lay coiled in the wine-cup fixed her with its gleaming eye; the brief, unavailing struggle; the delirious joy of that first, fatal draught; and then her memories became more and more confused, until all that lay between that hour and the bitter, burning present, was a black waste, over whose darkness memory shed not one ray of light.

Then came thoughts of her brief exultation over a fancied freedom held only at the feeble tenure of her unaided will; and Hope's words, "*weaker than a broken reed,*" rang again and again through her tortured brain, until, burying her face in the pillows, she wailed aloud.

"Eva, dear girl!"

She knew it was Hope's voice that sounded in her ears, Hope's hand that rested so gently upon her matted curls; but she only cowered closer under the bed-clothes, shrinking away as far as she could from the one who, as she well knew, came with no rebuke, but only with patient, pitying love.

"Eva, Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost. Though your sins have been as scarlet yet, believing in Him they shall be white as snow; though they have been red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Though you have lain among the pots, yet, being washed in His blood, you shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold! Eva, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, *cleanses from all sin.*"

"Miss Ellison!"—the sharp call rang up from the foot of the staircase, and in an instant Hope was gone.

A minute after Eva looked up, and found herself alone. Had Hope really been there? Had she really uttered those words which, somehow, had seemed to drop upon her aching heart like soft rain upon the tender herbage scorched by the pitiless heats of noon?

Eva had not heard the voice that came to Hope; she knew nothing of the terrible cloud that was hanging over her home: her disgrace, her shame, her sin were the only trouble she knew of, and they were enough—dark, hopeless enough!

Yet, somehow, amidst the darkness and the hopelessness of her lot, those soothing words lingered like sweet music in the chambers of her soul, and filled her with a vague longing to hear more; or rather, to grasp the full sense of what she had heard, so as to make it her own; and as the poor, stricken young creature lay there alone, covered with shame and self-loathing, those precious words that have brought healing to so many hearts—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin"—repeated themselves in her mind, until, gradually, the sorrow and the pain faded into indistinctness; and with the precious name of Jesus floating above the stormy sea of passion and remorse, and calming the troubled waves to a temporary repose, she fell asleep.

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### CHAPTER XLIII.

"HERE is a note for you, Miss Ellison; it was left at the door a minute ago," said the servant, whose voice Hope had just heard.

Hope motioned the man to withdraw, for she saw it was from her father, and she dared not trust herself to open it until she was alone; then with nervous haste she tore it open, and read:

"Hope:—My worst fear is confirmed; Lee is among

the drowned. I cannot write, I can only beg you to prepare your mother as best you can. He will be brought home as soon as the necessary preparations can be made."

Hope crushed the paper in her hand and sank, weak and trembling, into the nearest chair. For a little while she sat quite stupefied by the terrible event; but suddenly the thought of all that rested upon her brought back her strength, and she rose to go to her mother.

"Oh, how can I? how can I?" she moaned, turning back again; "how can I tell her what must certainly kill her?" and Hope cast herself upon her knees in an agony of prayer.

Mrs. Ellisson had just wakened from the deep sleep in which she had lain for several hours; and as Hope entered, she looked up, eagerly.

"Has Lee come? have you heard any thing? Hope you have been weeping! What have you heard?"

She said no more, for the look Hope gave her told more than words; and with a groan, she buried her face in the pillows, while her whole frame shook like a leaf in the wind.

Hope sat down, and taking her mother's hand, held it in silence. She could not speak; what could any words she might say, avail to soften or to soothe such a grief as this? Mrs. Ellisson was first to speak.

"Hope, what have you heard? I think I am prepared for the worst."

"Mamma, Lee's body has been found. It will be brought home as soon as the necessary preparations can be made!"

"*Brought home!*" Oh, the leaden weight of those two little words! A little while ago—it may be only a few brief hours—one went forth from his home, followed by loving eyes, the beloved of many hearts, the centre of many hopes. He went with manhood's vigor in his step, its flush upon his cheek, its energies kindling his eye, and leaping in fiery currents through his athletic frame. But the free footstep comes no

more. With stiffened limbs, and closed eyes, and marble cheeks, he is *brought home*; and the shadow that enters with that burden of mortality is *never lifted*.

Years may come and go; the angel of patience may fold his wings in that darkened home, and meek submission set her seal upon every rebel thought; they who felt its numbing chill may wander far and long, but the black shadow with its haunting memories thenceforth must be a part of the life it darkened, and never be wholly lost till it is lost, in the bright rising of the soul's immortality.

Upon countless hearts this dread experience is written; but upon few, perhaps, has it ever been traced with such a fiery pen as upon the heart of Mrs. Ellison.

She had sunk into helpless unconsciousness before the full horror of her woe was known, but now that it was upon her, she lay prostrate indeed beneath its weight, yet not unconscious, not void of thought. Every nerve and every fibre of her heart were quivering with pain, while memory, conscience, and a thousand harrowing reflections rose in retributive wrath to torture and upbraid.

It was not alone the fact that her son, her first-born, the child of her ambition and her pride, *was dead*; that, of itself, would have been woe enough; but there was a more harrowing thought than even that. It was of the soul launched forth thus suddenly upon a long Eternity of conscious being, unfitted for its voyage, unwashed in the atoning blood of Christ; while she, to whom more than any other one, save the father, the responsibility of leading that soul to Christ had been laid, had failed—utterly and forever!

No hour, no minute of those wasted years could be recalled; God had bestowed them once—they had taken their record of unfulfilled obligations, of lost opportunities, up to the great registry on high, and they would never be bestowed again!

The jewel that had been given to her to polish for



the Redeemer's crown, had slipped from her unfaithful hands into darkness which her agonized vision was inadequate to pierce; into a deep whence no prayers or tears might avail to bring it back:

After what seemed to be a long time, Mrs. Ellisson spoke.

"Hope, I must rise; will you call Norah to help me dress?"

"Let me help you, mamma—it is more fitting that I should do it!"

There was no remonstrance, but with a face white and tearless, Mrs. Ellisson rose and suffered Hope to dress her. She had scarcely finished, when a heavy step was heard approaching, and in a moment there was a knock at the door. Hope opened it, and her father entered. He saw at a glance that his wife knew all, and without a word he sat down beside her, and took her hand in his. Hope turned to leave the room, but he motioned her to remain.

"Amy," he said at length, in a low tone, "I see you know all!"

"Yes, Hugh, I know that my boy is—" and, with a bitter cry, she leaned her head upon her husband's shoulder, and wept aloud.

Tears brought a kind of relief, and, after a few moments of self-abandonment, she raised her head, and asked: "Have you brought him home?"

"I hastened forward, Amy, to see how you were. The hearse will be here directly, and I must go down. Can you go with me?"

"I can't go!" the words were shaped by the lips, rather than uttered with the voice; Hope understood the piteous meaning of her mother's look, and, taking her father's arm, accompanied him to the door.

Half an hour later, and the spacious drawing-room, gorgeous with the costly furnishing and lavish adornment of unstinting wealth, was awed by a new presence—the presence of death.

There upon a costly marble table, and covered with a rich, velvet pall, rested the elegant casket that con-

tained the mortal remains of Lee Ellisson. Death had dealt very gently with the beautiful clay, leaving upon the proud young face no disfigurement, no stain. Faultlessly attired in garments intended for the living, as he lay there, with his arms folded upon his breast, his features composed as if in sleep, calm, placid, restful, the noble face and head looked as if the soul that once reigned and ruled within, must have been grandly endowed with all the glorious attributes of manhood.

*Once reigned and ruled, did we say? Alas! not so!* That soul neither reigns nor rules which suffers itself to be enslaved by passion, and driven by unhallowed appetites into debasing sensuality. No soul can be said to reign or rule in its God-built temple that does not, with sustained and resolute will, keep every appetite and passion within its appointed limits; and, fortifying itself with that divine strength by which alone a perfect mastery can be secured, maintain supremacy over its entire self.

Lee Ellisson, though young in years, was not young in vice; nor could he, by any means, shift the blame upon unfaithful parents, or inadequate religious training.

Whatever the faults of others might have been, light had been given him, placed within his reach, urged upon his acceptance, to which he had closed his eyes; warnings and entreaties had been offered, to which he had paid no heed; advice had been proffered, which he had scorned; and the way of evil-doers he had deliberately chosen.

No young man in a Christian land, a land of Bibles and of Sabbaths, can ever truly say, "I perish through the fault of others." Others may be to blame, and they will have to bear it; but he who goes down to hell out of the clear noonday of Gospel light and privileges, elects his own ruin.

Yes! any one looking at that noble face and finely moulded head might truthfully have said: "Surely he looks as though he might have run his race with the noblest and best of men, and ultimately have reached

a higher goal than even the angels can aspire to, even that mystic union and brotherhood with Christ, which is the glorious heritage of all the redeemed.

"Yesterday, what vast possibilities were his; what stupendous heights of possible attainment towered up before that dead youth!—to-day, the lights in this desolate palace are extinguished, the halls are silent and deserted, the windows are darkened, the chambers sealed up; and the undying soul that tenanted there has gone forth into that dim unknown whither no mortal eye can follow him, and where no pen but God's may record its irreversible destiny!"

Fathers and mothers! ye who look upon your babes nestled in the soft repose of infancy; who watch them in the exuberant fulness of their happy child-life; who follow their bounding feet along the flowery, but dangerous paths of youth; remember, it is no creature of a day that is entrusted to your keeping! Neither time, nor change, nor accident, nor death, can blot it from being. It shall outlive the great earth it treads beneath its feet. The limitless universe shall not be too vast a field for the exercise of its stupendous faculties of thought and research. The stars *may* perish, the sun faint and fail with age, all the ethereal fires that light up the nightly heavens with such unimagined glories may go out in darkness, but *that child can never cease to be!*

And it is yours! There behold the talent—haply the talents—lodged by the Master in your hands, for which He will, by-and-by, demand the reckoning. View in that fair, young soul the garden-plot which you are to make rich with flowers and fruitage for your King. In that mysterious, wondrous being, behold the young eagle whose wings you are to train to soar to the highest heights of creature attainment.

Shall that rich coinage, stamped with the King's own "image and superscription," become cankered and corrupted in your hands? Shall your beautiful garden-plot, to which the King would fain come down to gather His choicest lilies and his sweetest spices, be

overrun with noxious weeds, a lurking-place for hideous reptiles and deadly serpents?

Shall the bright, exultant wings which you should train to soar far beyond the seat of the highest seraph, and fold themselves to rest in the bosom of the Eternal One, be left, *be taught by you*, to welter in filth and defilement, until the very *impulse* to soar is lost forever?

Aye, Colonel Ellisson! cover the dead face from your own sight, from the sight of her who, from this fatal hour, must ever hear the torturing wail of *it might have been otherwise*; shut out the mellow evening light from the cold grandeur of this desolate room, close the door softly, and leave him for the "dust to dust" and "ashes to ashes" of the pompous burial that awaits him another day.

In the judgment day he will not be wanting; and ye who have been so largely responsible for the weal or woe of the departed spirit, will be there too; Eternity will reveal the rest!

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#### CHAPTER XLIV.

"HOPE, I haven't seen a bit of you to-day! Do tell me what's going on in the house! Norris will not even give me a hint, but he looks as if the whole world were upside down. I've been as lonesome all day as I could be!" and Jack looked half reproachfully into his sister's face.

"Why, Hope, you've been crying! Something dreadful *must have* happened, or you wouldn't be so anxious to keep me from knowing it. Lee's home, I know, for I heard him speak a little while ago; is mother sick, or is it all about Eva?"

"You did not hear Lee speaking, Jack; it must have been some one else you heard."

"No? isn't he home?"

"Yes, darling, Lee is home!" and covering her face Hope gave free vent to her sobs.

Jack was much distressed, but he was too weak to be demonstrative.

"Hope," he exclaimed, at length, "I know just what's up! that's the very way you went on once about father; and now I'm just sure Lee has been off all night drinking with those fellows, and father has brought him home drunk!"

"O, Jack! be still, do, or you will kill me! Don't look so grieved, my darling! I did not mean to speak so sharply!" she added, recollecting his weakness, "but how can I tell you!" and Hope threw her arms around her brother's neck, and laid her hot cheek against his.

"Dear, dear Jack!" she sobbed, "you and I must not speak of our poor brother's faults any more! He will never grieve us again with his sinful habits and unkind ways; he will never, never vex us any more!"

Jack sprang to his feet. For the instant his weakness was gone, and his face was white with dismay.

"Hope!" he exclaimed, passionately, "if Lee is dead, tell me so! I can't stand this! Is he dead?"

"Yes."

"Oh Hope!" and the boy sank again upon the sofa, and closed his eyes, as one smitten with deadly pain.

Hope laid her hand upon his forehead in alarm.

"Jack! dear Jack!"

"What, Hope?"

"Do you feel ill? are you worse?"

"No, not exactly, a little faint I guess; give me some water, I feel weak."

He clutched the glass in both hands, and drained the last drop.

"Are you better, Jack?"

"Yes, I'm all right now, Hope. I guess I won't talk any more; I want to lie still and rest. You may as well go and look after mother and Eva for a little while, they'll need you more than I do!"

Hope saw that he wished to be alone—that even her presence was a felt restraint, and she wisely left him to his thoughts.

"How is Eva, Hope?" I have not seen her to-day! did you tell me this morning she was ill? or is it something I have mixed up with this day's horrors? How is she bearing this trouble?"

"I have not told her, mamma; she knows nothing of it."

"What! she is keeping her room, then?"

"Yes, mamma."

"She must be ill, Hope! why have you not told me?" and Mrs. Ellisson started up from the sofa from which she had not risen for hours, to go to Eva.

"Please do not go, mamma; Eva has retired for the night, and I think she is asleep. I will send her to you in the morning."

"Then she is not sick, it appears! why has she been keeping her room all day? and why have you not told her what has occurred?"

"Mamma, you know Eva is not strong, and I did not like to tell her to-day. I think she can bear it better to-morrow."

"You are keeping something from me, Hope! What is wrong with Eva? I insist upon knowing!"

"I shall not deceive you, mamma, since you insist upon knowing. There has been a recurrence of the old trouble. She found a bottle of wine that had been left exposed in the library last night, and the rest you can easily infer."

"The wicked, desperate girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellisson, angrily, "to allow herself to touch it, when she knew so well what it would do for her! She deserves to be handcuffed, and fed on bread and water for a month!"

"Mamma!" and, for the first time in her life, Hope confronted her mother with a stern, indignant face, "you do not realize what you are saying! What can you know of the power of that appetite which has grown with her from childhood? nay, more, which was born with her? What can you, who have no inherited craving for the poison which is ruining her, understand of the fiery thirst that is drying up her

very life? Sinful she may be, in that she does not accept the strength Christ offers her in her weakness; but it becomes you and me, mamma, to be sparing of denunciation; and when we would resort to handcuffs and prison-diet, let us begin with those whose right it is to bear them; and not with the poor, unhappy child who is staggering under a burden laid upon her by others!"

Mrs. Ellisson looked at Hope with amazement. The honest directness of her words, the indignant flash of her eye, made the unhappy woman recoil within herself, for they not only silenced the weak sophistries with which she had been accustomed to satisfy herself, but they gave added sternness to the already accusing voices within. She had, a few times before, seen something of the fearlessness of which Hope's gentle nature was capable, and she shrank from calling it forth any further upon such a theme.

Her husband's life-long vice, and their mutual unfaithfulness to their children, were what she was least willing at any time to face; and closing her eyes with a sigh, she merely said:

"Good night, Hope! as Eva has retired, I will not disturb her to-night, I shall see her in the morning."

The next minute she was alone, and yet, not alone; for there were with her voices that would not be silenced, and memories that would not depart; and the white, still face of the dead youth below, which she had looked on but once since he was brought home, but which, in its awful calmness, seemed hovering about her pillow, haunted her torturing thoughts like a living presence.

Thus the long night dragged on, and it was not until the dawn was again paling the east, that she sank into the deep, unrestful sleep that follows utter exhaustion.

The day of the funeral at length arrived. A short time before the appointed hour, the bereaved family, with two or three clergymen, and a few friends, as-

sembled in the silent apartment of death, quietly and unobserved to take a last look of the dead, before the arrival of those whom the widely circulated funeral notices would naturally bring together.

First came the domestics, to look for the last time on one who, though little loved by any one of them while alive, had, by his untimely death, cast a dark shadow over all; then the few personal friends; and lastly, the family, with the attendant clergymen and the family physician.

Augusta, who had spent her holidays with a young friend in St. Louis, and but recently returned to the Academy, had only reached home the previous evening; and now, with Eva clinging to her arm, followed her parents and Hope; while Jack, supported by his physician, and followed by the clergymen, came last.

Then the door was closed, a brief prayer was offered, and all moved quietly forward. There was no noise or outcry. To all but Eva and Jack the face in its deathful repose had acquired a sad familiarity, but it had not been thought advisable for Jack to see him; and, until within the last hour, Eva had utterly refused to leave her room. But, at length, at her mother's earnest entreaties, she suffered herself to be dressed and carried down stairs; and now, with a face almost as white as that of the dead, she came forward, leaning upon her sister's arm.

Hope, who knew better than any one else Eva's inability to bear the trial, watched her face with breathless anxiety, as she approached the coffin, and observed the ghastly pallor that overspread it, as, with one hand pressed tightly over her heart, she stooped over her brother, and, for the first time in her life, looked upon death.

A shudder passed through the slight form; she felt her strength leaving her, and, looking up quickly, she met Hope's anxious, troubled gaze. In an instant the blood surged to her head, and, with a low cry, she stretched her arms toward Hope, staggered, and would



have fallen, but Hope's arms were around her, and the next moment her father was carrying her to her room.

"I feared it would be too much!" said Hope, bending over her; and "oh, look, papa!" she added, pointing to a tiny stream of blood that was trickling from her sister's lips, and staining the pillow upon which she lay.

Mrs. Ellisson had signed to the physician to follow, and he was already at the bedside.

"Go down, Colonel Ellisson," he said, "and let there be no alarm; I trust this is only a slight hemorrhage. As soon as it can consistently be done, send Jack to his room, if you please; and I will remain here for a little while."

A few minutes after, Mrs. Ellisson joined Hope and the doctor at Eva's bedside; an hour later a vast procession moved away from the open door to the resting-place of the dead, Colonel Ellisson and Augusta alone occupying the mourner's carriage.

It was some time before Eva was restored to consciousness, and longer still before the hemorrhage entirely ceased; but at length she fell asleep, and, with the usual caution about quiet and freedom from excitement, the physician took his leave. "Certainly, there is danger!" he had said, in answer to Mrs. Ellisson's anxious inquiries, "but it is impossible to say just now how great it may be. A few days, will, I think, enable me to form an opinion; in the meantime, let her have perfect quiet and rest."

"Is Eva very sick?" inquired Jack, as, some hours later, Hope stole in to see how he had come through the excitements of the day.

"I fear she is, Jack. She was too weak for to-day's trial; but how are you?"

"I don't know, Hope; I guess I'm no worse; but somehow, ever since I knew Lee was dead, I've been thinking and thinking of so many things, that my head just aches with thinking. Where do you really suppose Lee has gone, Hope; Lee's soul, I mean, of course?"

"Dear Jack, why do you ask? You know what we have read in the Bible about such things!"

"Of course, I do, and that's what bothers me! But say, what if the Bible isn't true? I've heard there are lots of folks don't believe it; haven't you?"

"Yes, Jack, I have; and poor Lee was one of them; think of that!"

"Hope! did he say so to you?"

"Yes, many times, when I was reminding him of what the Bible said about the conduct and language he indulged in."

"Well, he's said the same to me a great many times, only I never told you of it; and I dare say 'twas that set me off thinking so much after he was dead; because, you know, if the Bible is true—"

"What then, Jack?"

"I was just thinking about Lee. If the Bible does turn out to be true after all—"

"But the Bible is true, Jack! God says it is, and He cannot lie. The apostle calls it '*the word of God which liveth and abideth forever*;' and Christ Himself says that heaven and earth shall pass away, but His words shall not pass away. People have been trying for hundreds of years to prove it untrue; but not one of them has been able to do it. In spite of all their efforts, the proof of its being true, and the number of those who believe it to be true, are continually increasing. Unlike other books, Jack, the Bible *proves itself* to be true to all who come to love it, by the mysterious way it satisfies their minds, giving them the sweetest peace, and rest, and comfort.

"God's Spirit *reveals* its truth to their spirits in such a sweet assuring way that they would die before they would give up their belief in it. Indeed, thousands of people have let themselves be put to death by cruel tortures, rather than give up the Bible."

"Would you, Hope?"

"I have no doubt but that I should!"

"I should hope not!" said Jack, with a shudder.

"But after all, Hope, mightn't the Bible be true, and yet all folks be happy in heaven?"

"No, Jack; the whole Bible, when rightly understood, is against it. You know that even in this world there is no happiness where there is no goodness; how much less in heaven, where there is perfect goodness, without a single taint of anything impure or unholy."

"But I heard you read, just two or three days ago, Hope, 'there's none good, no, not one!'"

"True, Jack, and the Saviour Himself says 'there's none good but God!'"

"I'd like to know, then, what chance anybody has of being happy!"

"Just this, dear boy, in accepting Christ for your Saviour! When you come to see that you have no goodness in yourself; and, giving up all ideas of getting to heaven through any fancied goodness of your own, you just rest in what Christ has done for you, and trust Him for salvation, you will be fit for heaven, and not before. All the goodness we can ever have is Christ's, and that will be enough."

"Yes; but how are you to get it? that's what I'd like to know!"

"There's but one way, Jack, and that is by coming to Him, a naked, lost, justly condemned sinner, and casting yourself wholly upon Him for salvation. He took the sin of all who thus accept Him and trust in Him, and died to redeem them from it; and to all that do so, really and truly, He gives a new nature, sends His Spirit to live in their hearts, puts His righteousness to their account, and so His goodness becomes theirs just as their sins became His.

"Now, Jack, the Bible tells you plainly, and your heart tells you plainly, too, that you are full of sin—tainted with it to the very centre and core of your being; and that none but Jesus can cleanse you from it!

"Now, tell me honestly, have you reason to believe that your brother ever came to Jesus for this cleansing?"

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"No, Hope, I haven't!"

"Have *you* ever done so, Jack?"

"No!"

"Well, darling, all this thinking and thinking till your poor head aches, will not save you! Believe what God's holy book says to you so plainly, come at once to Jesus, the loving Saviour who is calling so loudly to you to trust your soul in His hands, and cast yourself, this very night, upon His mercy; for He has promised to save unto the uttermost all that come to Him."

Hope stooped to kiss the flushed face, but, contrary to his usual custom, Jack turned his head away, and Hope heard a suppressed sob.

Poor Jack, like many another, had been solacing himself with false hopes; and now his eyes were being opened to see that the refuges to which he had fled in the vain hope of safety, were only refuges of lies.

The cruel sophistries with which Satan had been trying to deceive him, and which he had only been too willing to believe, had suddenly failed; and he saw himself helpless and unsaved.

Hope waited a moment in silence, then stooping, kissed his hand, and with a silent prayer left him to his own reflections.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

"AUGUSTA, I wish you to sit with your sister to-night, and give Hope a chance to rest. She has hardly left Eva's bedside for the last two days, and, besides, in a day or two you will be returning to L——"

"What! I watch? that would be a beautiful proceeding, with a house full of servants! It won't hurt Hope; never you fear! it's just the sort of thing she was created for!" and, with a yawn, Augusta flung herself upon a sofa, and began twirling a beautiful turquoise ring round and round upon her finger, and holding it up to the light.

"You have a very beautiful ring there, Augusta! where did you get it?"

"Oh! I forgot to show it to you, mamma: isn't it cunning? It was a present to me on Nellie Anderson's birthday, from her papa; she had one just like it. Nellie's papa is awfully fond of me, the dear old chap!"

"Shame, Augusta, to speak of any one in such a way, especially an elderly person, and one who has shown you kindness!"

"What's the difference? it's only for fun, and there are no young gentlemen around to hear!"

"Augusta! are you taking leave of your senses, and self-respect both? I am ashamed of you, talking of young gentlemen at your age. I am not pleased with your reckless way of talking, and your frequent use of slang is quite shocking to me! Am I to suppose it is a part of your school-training?"

"Now don't be sarcastic, mamma, 'for my sake, if not for your own,' as Nell says; for we get enough of that at L——, the dear knows! Of course, slang is one of the interdicted indulgences there, and Mother Norton is never supposed to hear us speak, except after the most approved standards; so we girls relish a change all the more when we get alone."

"You have a peculiar way of talking, Augusta! If this is a specimen of the manners and style you are acquiring among the 'girls,' I think I shall write to Miss Norton to be a little more observant in regard to the company you keep.

"But, in regard to what I was speaking of, you really must relieve Hope to-night of the care of Eva, and you will oblige me by not speaking of her again as you did just now. However much you may dislike her, I wish you to remember she is your father's daughter, and you must treat her accordingly. As I said before, Hope is tired out, and I shall not trust Eva in the care of servants. As soon as the lamps are lighted you will take your place beside Eva, and give her the best of care. One of the housemaids will sleep in the adjoining room, and if you need anything done

that you cannot do yourself, call her. About midnight, or a little after, I will relieve you myself."

"Whew! the old lady is getting lofty, isn't she, though!" ejaculated Augusta, as her mother cut short all further objections by leaving the room; "but she'll find herself mistaken if she expects me to sit dumping over Eva till 'midnight or a little after.' It's pretty fine to expect *me* to take the place of a servant, really!" and with an air of offended dignity, Augusta threw open the piano, which had not been opened since Lee's death, and, seating herself, dashed off a lively opera with most heartless forgetfulness of the fact that death had so recently been a guest in the house.

As Augusta entered her room, Eva looked up eagerly, and a shade of disappointment passed over her face when she saw it was not Hope.

"Where's Hope, Augusta?"

"Gone to bed, I suppose. It seems to be a well understood fact that 'your father's daughter' is extremely tired, poor soul! so I am expected to take her place. Are you satisfied?"

"I am sure Hope *is* tired, Augusta, for there is no end to the trouble and care she has had lately. I am sorry so much of it has been for me!"

"So far as she is concerned you need not care if there had been twice as much!"

"Oh, but I do care, Augusta! Hope is good and kind to me, and has been *so* patient with my folly! She has taught me what, if I had heeded, would have saved me from this trouble which I have brought upon myself!"

"Well, well, don't bother your head about by-gones. I want you to hurry up and get strong, for I expect you to be one of my bridesmaids!" and Augusta held up her jewelled finger. "Do you know what *that* means?"

"Oh, Augusta! you don't mean to say that you are engaged?"

"You'd like to know, now, wouldn't you? but didn't I fool the old lady splendidly a little while ago!"

"Who, Augusta?"

"The old lady; your mother, of course, you innocent! She actually asked me where I got it!"

"Of course, you told her, Augusta?"

"Did I? not much! I told her Nell Anderson's papa gave it to me on Nell's birthday, an awful fib, but I don't care, she needn't ask me such a question. She might know I wouldn't wear it on my engagement finger, if *he* had given it to me! but she took it all in with the most charming credulity!"

"Oh, please Augusta, don't deceive mamma, or allow yourself to say what is not true to any one! Oh, I'm sick, sick of those old sinful ways we used to encourage each other in! If I ever get well, I shall lead a very different life from what I used to. But there! why do I talk about getting well? I shall never be well any more!"

"Nonsense, you stupid little thing! yes, you will get well! You are down in the dumps now, and no wonder, having Hope at your elbow night and day, pouring her doleful moralizings into your ears, the silly, canting thing! But I am reminded I must have a care what I say about 'your father's daughter.'"

"Hope is a dear sister, and you need be ashamed to speak of her as you do!" exclaimed Eva, her eyes flashing indignantly. "She isn't at all what you used to try to make me believe she was. But for you, I should always have loved her; and since she has told me so sweetly about Jesus, and the love He has for poor sinners, I love her as I do my life, indeed, I do."

Eva had raised herself upon her elbow, her eyes were radiant, and the deceitful hectic flush that burned upon her cheeks, lighted up her face with an almost unearthly beauty.

"Oh, that's the string you are harping on!" said Augusta, with a sneer, "but I'll forego the music just now, if you please; so lie down again, and when I've tucked you up, you can take a nap while I write a letter."

"Augusta, do let me speak to you a little while, if

it is only a few words; I may never have another chance; let me tell you—”

“No, I won’t; I’m in earnest. You are not going to serve me up a dish of Hope’s cooking to-night, for I won’t listen to you! Besides, your mother told you to be quiet; and if you’ve turned pious, you know it’s your duty to obey your mother. But there’s no use shamming, Eva. You’ve had your attacks of piety before now, and you and I know what came of them. I know you of old, you are no more pious than I am; and if you were up, and out of this, and away from Hope, you wouldn’t be a whit better than you used to be. There you are, now; and all you have to do is to sleep like a top while I write my letter.”

That old, imperious will! as ever, the weaker bent before it. Augusta shaded the light from her sister, seated herself to her writing, and Eva, hiding her face in the pillow, wept in silence.

There was much she longed to say to her sister, but her words, “You wouldn’t be a whit better than you used to be,” had silenced her, and thrust her back, weeping and almost broken-hearted, to the very brink of despair.

“‘You wouldn’t be a whit better than you used to be!’ those were her very words,” thought Eva; “and I dare say I shouldn’t be. Oh, how foolish I have been, to think Jesus would ever care for, or think of me! Even Hope said I was ‘weaker than a broken reed;’ what, then, have I to live for? Go where I will, in all this wide world, the old temptation awaits me; and the moment I meet it I shall fall. Oh, I thought, before my last failure, I was strong; but now I see plainly I shall fall again, for, even thinking of it, sets my brain on fire. No, no! it’s best I should die! Just to think, for one moment, of living to have people point their fingers at me and say, ‘*that girl is a drunkard!*’” and, with a shudder, she buried her face in her pillow, with bitter weeping.

A half-hour before, she would have almost confessed that Christ had accepted her, and given her the wit-



ness that she was forgiven; now, with despairing anguish, she turned back to her sinful heart, her weak will, her inability of herself to resist the cruel demands of appetite, and all the light, and comfort, and peace, she would have spoken of, seemed lost forever.

"Afraid to live, and still more afraid to die! no security in life, and no hope in death! oh, why, why was I ever born?" Thus her torturing thoughts ran on, while her sister's volatile pen glided with rapid motion over the white pages.

"And now, my dear Herbie," such were the concluding words of her letter, "I shall expect you, according to arrangement, to visit me at L—, where I shall be, a week at least, before your return from Boston. I told you it would be a little difficult for us to meet, if it were known just what were our relations to each other, as young ladies are not allowed to receive visits from any gentlemen, except fathers and brothers. But I shall tell Miss Norton, as soon as I return, that I am expecting a visit from my brother at such a time; and when you come, all you have to do is to send up your card as Mr. Herbert Ellisson, and ask to see your sister. Then we shall be allowed a nice long visit in the Reception hall."

Augusta's letter being finished, she roused the bewildered housemaid, and, charging her to 'take the best of care of Eva,' hurried away to her own room, and was soon fast asleep.

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Herbert Warren, the young gentleman to whom Augusta had been writing, was a "vacation" acquaintance, whom she had first met in St. Louis during her short stay in that city. He was the son of a merchant, supposed to be immensely rich; and this casual acquaintanceship rapidly matured into a marriage engagement. Augusta expected to "graduate"—though what that means in many schools is more easily asked than answered—and Herbert to be admitted to a partnership with his father not far from the same time; they, were, therefore, looking forward to a speedy

marriage. But, for reasons not very clear even to themselves, they had resolved to keep their engagement a profound secret; and yet, with the usual amount of consistency, had already entrusted it to an almost unlimited number of "confidential friends," who had, in turn, each committed it to the keeping of other confidential friends, until there were few, who had any interest in either of the parties, that had not been put in possession of the momentous secret, except those most deeply interested—the parents of the happy lovers themselves.

The night wore heavily on, and the unconcerned housemaid was sleeping soundly in her chair, alike unconscious and regardless of her unhappy charge; while Eva, who had not slept at all, was tossing and muttering in the delirium of fever, brought on by nervous excitement and mental suffering.

"Yes, I will have it!" she exclaimed at length, springing from her bed, "I am dying of thirst; and I will go myself and get it—I know where they keep it!" and, snatching a night-lamp, she darted out of the room.

Colonel Ellisson, who had been spending the evening out, had just returned; and, in a half-intoxicated state, entered the library for yet another draught from his secretly-hoarded supply.

It was the first time he had spent an evening from home since his son's death; but, weary at length of the sorrowful quiet of his home, he had made a pretence of business, and returned to his former haunt and the more congenial companionship he found there.

Just as Eva, in her delirium, reached the library door, where she seemed to expect to find what she wanted, she encountered her father.

It was a sad picture—the half-drunken father, and his young daughter hastening in her wild delirium to find relief from her torturing thirst in that which was already setting his own brain on fire.

"Girl! girl!" he shouted, regardless of the deep

silence that reigned throughout the house, and forgetful of the impossibility of her being there, except as madness had given her strength, "where are you going—what do you want?"

"I want wine, papa—I must have wine!" and Eva's eyes glowed with a frenzied light. "I have come for it, and I will have it! It's there—there in that room—there's where you keep it, you know! give it to me this minute! Don't you hear me? give me wine, I say?"

Colonel Ellisson stared vacantly at his child standing thus in his path, and repeating her cry of "Wine, wine—give it to me!" his bewildered mind toiling vaguely for some explanation, when Hope, who had heard the first sound of voices, appeared on the stairs.

"Eva, Eva!" and in a moment Eva was at her side. "They told me you'd gone, and never would come back again; and oh, I'm so thirsty, and my head aches so dreadfully! But you'll take me home, won't you; and you'll give me wine—gallons of wine! for you are good; you are always good!"

"Poor child! poor child!" sobbed Hope, taking the trembling young creature in her arms, while her father stood by in speechless bewilderment, "come to your room—come quickly!"

"Perhaps this isn't the most suitable place or time," maundered the father, thickly, "to demand an explanation of this affair; but I shall require it in the morning—depend upon that, girls. Your conduct is, I must say, unusual—quite so! You—you will please understand, this thing mustn't be repeated. Go straight to your room, Hope! good night, Eva!" and, with a strange mixing up of ideas, Colonel Ellisson shuffled away to his own room.

Mrs. Ellisson, who had been roused from sleep by the sound of voices, had just risen and thrown a dressing gown around her, when her husband entered.

"You're up late, Amy," he said; "been out?"

There was a mixture of anger, contempt, and grief in the face of Mrs. Ellisson, as she glanced at her hus-

band, and the disgusting truth flashed upon her; then, as though they had been uttered but an hour before, her father's words came back to her from the buried years like the far-off wail of a breaking heart:

"O Amy! the time must never, never come, when you can look back from the dreary desolation of a drunkard's home, and from the degradation that inevitably falls upon a drunkard's wife, and say, 'My father never warned me of this!'"

With a groan, Mrs. Ellisson rushed past her husband, and would have fled from his presence; but in an instant the woman, the wife, suffering, stricken, yet ever strong in the might of her affection, asserted itself; and, turning back, she assisted him to undress, smoothed his pillows, and helped him to lie down; then, without pausing to weep or to pray, she hastened to her daughter.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

HOPE and her mother passed the remainder of the night with Eva, striving to quiet the excited nerves, and allay the fever. At length, as the sun was rising, she fell asleep, and Mrs. Ellisson went to her own room for a little rest. But in vain. Her recent terrible bereavement, Augusta's unfaithfulness to the trust she had reposed in her; Eva's alarming prostration both of mind and body; the dreadful certainty that her husband's evil habit was strengtning daily, and its only too obvious effect upon his health and temper, all crowded upon her mind at once, and, struggle as she would, she could not escape from them.

At length, springing from the bed and dressing herself hastily, she left the room, and walked slowly along the halls, glancing first into Eva's room where Hopc was still keeping her patient watch, then pausing for a moment at the bedside of Jack, who had not yet wakened from the quiet sleep of boyhood and eturning health, and then, with a sigh, as she remem

bered that he who had never been her favorite was now her only son, she passed on till she reached the room that had once been Lee's. It had never been entered since the fatal night he left it, and as she drew near the door whose splintered fragments were still scattered through the room, she turned shuddering away, but an undefined impulse to enter caused her to turn back, and, pushing open the mutilated door, she entered the room. Sweeping back the curtains and raising the window, she flung open the shutters, and the morning sunshine burst into the room, pouring a flood of golden radiance over the undisturbed bed, and flashing back from the tall mirror opposite with intolerable brightness.

We realize many things most keenly by being brought into contact with their opposites; and thus it was with Mrs. Ellisson. The horrors of that dreadful night, and all the ruin and desolation it had brought to her heart and home had never seemed so appalling as when the rejoicing sunlight burst into that desolate room, streaming over the bed where her boy had once lain in peaceful slumber, flashing along the pictured walls, flaming back from the mirror, and bringing out into almost life-like beauty the exquisite designs of the rich carpet and ottomans, and of the rare and costly ornaments that adorned the mantel. For a moment she stood half paralyzed in the intense brightness, then like one in haste to escape from some intolerable torture she sprang forward and closed the shutters again, crushed back the heavy curtains into their place, and with a despairing cry cast herself upon her son's bed, and gave way to the anguish that for hours she had been sternly holding in check.

"Yes, yes, my father!" she moaned, "you did your duty by me, and you went to your rest! Oh! let me alone now, you bitter, bitter memories! I have enough to bear, heaven knows, without your torturing voices! O my son, my son! cut down in the flower of youth! O my husband, reeling upon the brink of ruin! why have I lived till now? what have I done? oh, what

have I done to be so chastened? Why should *my* life be blighted, and others have only prosperity and happiness? Why should my son be snatched away thus, and other mothers' sons live on, honored, and praised and admired?"

"Mamma! mamma!"

Mrs. Ellisson heard the call; she knew it was Hope's voice, and sprang from the bed; but her head grew giddy with the suddenness of the movement, and as she clung to a table for support, her eye fell upon what seemed to be a letter, partly hidden by a book. She snatched it up, and saw it was addressed to her husband in Lee's handwriting. Again the cry, louder and more imperative than before, sounded through the house, and, thrusting the letter into her pocket, she ran to see what was wanted.

She found Hope supporting Eva with one hand, and with the other holding a sponge to her lips.

"Send for the doctor quickly, mamma, the hemorrhage has returned. O! I think Eva is dying!"

Eva, who was quite conscious, looked up, and there was an expression of wondrous joy in the bright eager eyes, as her gaze rested upon Hope's face, which seemed to say more plainly than words could, "Yes, yes, dying! and I am glad; oh, so *glad!*"

The physician was quickly called, and again, after much effort, the more alarming symptoms were controlled, and Eva was pronounced better. But the hectic flush was gone, and with a face as white as marble she lay upon her pillow, like a pure lily, its loveliness undimmed, its fragrance unspent, yet speedily to wither and decay.

"No, Mrs. Ellisson, I regret to say I can give you no encouragement," said the doctor, as he was leaving the house. "Your daughter has never had much constitution, and what she had has been giving way for years, as you are doubtless aware. Her stay with you is now only a question of time: it may be a month, it may be only a day. In the meantime, nourishment

and quiet are all I shall prescribe—medicine can be of no permanent use in her case.”

“Where’s Hope?” said Colonel Ellisson, in a surly tone, as he pushed aside the dessert that had been set down for him at dinner, and drained his second glass of brandy. “It seems to me we are never to have the family together at table again! I’m tired of all this moping and crying! Go and call her, Augusta!”

Augusta glanced at her mother.

“Hope is with Eva, Hugh; she had her dinner sent up.”

“With Eva, Amy! One day she is with Eva, and another she is with Jack! She is just killing herself with all this nursing, and I will not allow it any longer. Eva must bestir herself and get out of that; she has shut herself up long enough!”

“Hugh!” said Mrs. Ellisson, tears springing to her eyes, “don’t speak so unkindly of Eva, she is really very ill!”

“I tell you, Amy, it’s all humbug! what Eva wants is a little more energy. No wonder she is ill, shut up in her room for weeks together! and as though that was not enough, Hope must be killed with nursing her. I’m not going to put up with it another day; not another day, Amy.

“Eva must have air and exercise, and I am going to insist upon her beginning this very afternoon.”

“Augusta, I will excuse you, if you have finished your dinner,” said Mrs. Ellisson, turning to her daughter, for when the reaction after excessive drinking set in, Colonel Ellisson was occasionally harsh and unreasonable, and she shrank sensitively from having even her children present at such times.

“I did not ask to be excused, mamma!”

“I know, my dear, but you will oblige me!”

Augusta was far from willing to leave the table at that stage of the conversation. Nothing would have gratified her more than to hear, as she believed she was about to hear, Hope’s actions called in question by

her father; and to be assured that Eva was less ill than she had been led to suppose, would have helped to quiet the slight self-upbraiding she could not but feel for her cruel neglect of her the previous night.

Her father noticed her hesitation, and turning toward her, he said, sharply :

“ You heard your mother’s request, I presume ! ”

Augusta colored, and hastily left the room.

“ I think that was quite uncalled for, Amy,” he said, with increased irritability, when Augusta was out of hearing ; “ the girl isn’t a child, you know.”

“ Hugh, I wished to speak to you alone about what you are even now scarcely in a condition to hear ; can you listen to evil tidings ? ”

“ What do you mean, Amy ? ” he said, in a changed tone, touched by his wife’s evident sorrow.

“ The doctor has told me to-day, my dear, that Eva can never recover ! ”

“ Amy ! ”

“ Yes, Hugh ; she has had a return of hemorrhage this morning, and is very low ; she may leave us any moment ! ” and covering her face with her hands, Mrs. Ellisson burst into tears.

“ Why did you not call me, Amy ? Is my child to be dying, and I not know it ? ”

“ I think I need not tell you, my dear, why you were not called ? ” Mrs. Ellisson’s tones were those of sorrow, rather than upbraiding ; and her husband shaded his face with his hand in shame and self-abasement.

“ Why, Amy ! ” he exclaimed at length, with a start, “ I recollect now, I met the child at the library door last night crying out frantically for—”

“ *For wine, Hugh !* ”

“ And did she get it ? ” is that the—the cause of the trouble ? ”

“ No ; she was delirious from fever. Augusta, whom I had placed in charge, left her in the housemaid’s care ; and Eva took the opportunity while the girl was asleep, to go to the library, hoping to find there



what she wanted. Possibly she took cold, I cannot say, but this morning she was seized with a coughing fit, which ended as I have told you. By the way, my dear!" she added, suddenly recollecting the letter, "here is a sealed paper I found in poor Lee's room this morning, addressed to you. I should have given it to you at once, only you were sleeping."

"Say *drunk*, Amy! that's considerably nearer the truth, and I know it was in your thought. I tell you there's no use shamming any longer; we may as well call things by their right names. O Amy! why did I not stop—why did you not *make* me stop!" he continued, fiercely, "years and years ago when your influence over me was stronger than this accursed appetite? Why did you not follow up Gordon's work, and bring me to your level as you might, instead of sinking yourself down to mine?"

"Hugh!"

"I know I am desperate, unreasonable, cruel; but the truth is, Amy, I'm a slave, self-doomed, ruined in body and estate. Don't tell me I rave; I am speaking sober truth. God help you when you come to know it all as I know it!" and with a look of desperation on his face, Colonel Ellisson filled his glass to the brim, and drinking its contents, stretched out his shaking hand for the letter.

"Here, give me that paper, I'm able to read it now;" and tearing off the envelope, he read:

"So you'll not trust me with a few thousands, eh! I could easily win them from you in spite of your teeth, if you'd only play a game or two with me, instead of some others that you and I know of. Doubtless you think I'd make a bad use of money, but let me assure you that when I can't play without losing my ten thousand a night, as some one you and I know of has been doing of late, I shall try some other way for getting rich. By the time you have read this I shall be hundreds of miles away; when you see me again I shall not need to ask you for money. I expect then to be able to *favor* you with a few thou-

sands, if you need them, as doubtless you will at your present rate of progress. I shall spend the evening with some of my particular friends, and before daylight shall be a hundred miles from New York. You need not try to follow me up, as I shall not be easily traced.

“LEE ELLISSON.”

With agonized impatience, Mrs. Ellisson had watched the rapid changes of her husband's face as he read, and when the letter was finished, stretched out her hand eagerly for it; but he crushed it in his own, and thrusting it into his pocket, said in a husky voice:

“No, no, Amy, this is not for you to see!” and without another word, he hurried to the library, locked himself in, and was seen no more until the following day.

When he appeared again in the midst of his family, he looked as though weeks of suffering had passed over him. His form was bent, and his face wan and haggard. The secret of that long night's agony remained untold; but the dark shadow it left upon him was never lifted. The burden of its unuttered woe bent the already drooping form lower and lower, blanched the already whitening locks still whiter, and gave added intensity to the cruel thirst that preyed upon him more and more fiercely continually.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

“I WISH you would be persuaded to remain at home, my child,” said Mrs. Ellisson, on the morning of the day that had been set for Augusta's return to L—. “It seems a heartless thing for you to leave home while Eva is in such a critical condition.”

“My staying or going can make no difference as to the result of Eva's sickness,” replied Augusta, coldly, “but if I fall behind my class it will put me back for

a whole year. If I do not graduate this year, I shall not do so at all—that is settled.”

“But Augusta, you are very young; a year can make no difference—”

“It will make all the difference in the world with me!” interrupted Augusta, snappishly, as she glanced furtively at her engagement ring; “I have my own plans!”

“What plans do you allude to?”—and Mrs. Ellisson looked anxiously at her daughter.

“All my plans for the future. Do you suppose I have reached my present age without any plans for life? If you think so you are much mistaken.”

“Augusta, there is no call for any show of temper in regard to this matter. I thought your own sense of propriety, to say nothing of affection for your sister, would be sufficient to guide you without any interference on my part.”

“My sense of propriety, however, dictates quite another course, as it happens!”

“I said there was no occasion for any exhibition of temper, Augusta! You may go if you choose; but remember this: whatever occurs you will not be sent for. Do you understand?”

“Yes; and I accept the condition. I tell you Eva is in no danger, nobody can make me believe it. The idea! it’s too absurd to think of! If you’d keep Hope Ellisson away from her, with her solemn croaking about religion and all that, Eva would be well in a fortnight. But you just give in, and let Hope hang over her with her owlish face and solemn nonsense, and then expect me to stay at home and take care of her! I do like consistency!”

“That will do, Augusta! you have said quite enough in that strain. I hope you will not force me to command you to keep a civil tongue while speaking to me! If you go away, there is no probability of your ever seeing your sister again. Now, answer me once for all, will you not stay and be a comfort to us in

this time of affliction ? or will you go back when it is not in the least necessary ? ”

“ I shall go back, if it's all the same to you. I don't believe in anticipating trouble that is not at all likely to come ! ”

“ You know it is *not* all the same to me, Augusta ! I wish you to stay for Eva's sake, and for your own credit's sake, to say nothing of any other motives. ”

“ Well, the short of the matter is, mamma, that I shall go if you do not forbid it ; if you do, I must submit, of course. ”

“ I shall not forbid it, Augusta ; but you will bear in mind the condition I named just now, and also the fact, that, in going, you carry with you my serious displeasure. You can take your choice ! ”

Mrs. Ellisson had expected that, as a matter of course, her daughter would yield when it came to that ; but she had the mortification of finding herself mistaken.

Three hours later, Augusta was sweeping on toward L——, thinking very little of the aching hearts she was leaving behind, and intent only on the “ good time ” that awaited her, and the grand consummation that was to follow her graduating triumph.

“ Hope, is the sun shining this morning ? ”

“ Yes, Eva, it is a very beautiful morning. Why do you ask ? Would you like the sunshine in the room ? ”

“ Yes, if you please ; I am wearying for the light. Oh, that is lovely ! ” she exclaimed, as Hope threw back the shutters, and the softened beams of the Indian-summer sun streamed into the room. “ Lovely ! ” she repeated softly, stretching out her thin hand for the light to fall over it, “ I am so glad the morning is beautiful—shall I tell you why, Hope ? ”

“ Yes, Eva, if you think you are strong enough. ”

“ Well, I have been thinking since my last attack—for you know, dear, I have not once seen the sunshine, and hardly been allowed to speak even to you—that we do not know how to value the commonest things

and the commonest privileges until we are deprived of them.

"I am sure I never did. I never realized what a delight it was to walk about in the sunshine, and talk, and laugh, and sing, until I couldn't do so any more. Last night, as I lay here awake, I got to thinking of the beautiful city you were reading about, where there'll be no darkness, and no need of the sun or moon because of the greater glory it will receive from the presence of God and the Lamb; and I thought, 'Well, I shall soon be there, where the sweet light of God's face will forever shine around me, and I'll never be sick, and never be closed up any more in a darkened room.

"And then I thought I should like to see our own dear, old sun once more—not that I am sorry to go away from this world which it makes so beautiful—but, somehow, I thought I'd like to see it just once more. So I said to myself, 'Now, if I stay till morning and it shines, I'll ask to have the shutters opened so that I can see its beams for a little while; and then I'd bid it good-bye, till I wake up in that other light which will be so much lovelier.'

"Please, Hope, let me speak a little more," she urged, seeing the protest in her sister's face; "it will not hurt me; and besides I shall soon be away, you know."

"I hope not, Eva. The doctor expressed himself much pleased last night to find you so comfortable. He says that if you keep on strengthening, after a little, perhaps, we can take you away to some one of the warm, sheltered valleys of the south-west, and so keep you some years with us. It has made me feel very glad and hopeful, Eva."

"O Hope, dear, darling sister, don't say that! Worlds could not tempt me, if I might choose, to remain any longer in this world!" and a terrified look came into the poor girl's face. "Oh, I can never, *never* stay to fight that old hopeless battle over again! I see you are not willing for me to talk, but please listen to me just a little while, for I have longed so much to have a little

talk with you before I go away. That's right, lift my head a little higher; and now sit just there, where I can see the sunshine rippling over your hair—it makes me think of that glory-crown you are going to wear up in Heaven by-and-by. There, that's so sweet! and now hold my hand so, between your own, and I'll rest a little, and watch the sunshine in your hair, it is so beautiful.

"It is true, Hope," she resumed, after a few minutes' rest; "it is true, as I have told you several times already, that I am resting in the love of Christ, of which you have told me so much. The dreadful doubts and fears that came to me that night Augusta was with me, are all gone now; and I am happy all the time, only when I think of the possibility of my staying here; for I know just what that means.

"Of course I do not doubt but that if God wants me to stay, He will help me through the trouble I know I shall have; but, oh, Hope! if He *will* but take me away from that terrible craving which from my earliest childhood I have had,—if He *will* but set me free, and take me to Himself, I think I shall be like the poor woman you read to me about—I think I shall want to go and lay my head down on His blessed feet, and weep floods of tears upon them, just for joy and gratitude.

"But, there, Hope, I will not think of staying in this world, for He's not going to leave me here; I know He's not! He sees just how weak I am, and what a hard fight I'd have, and how I'd be almost sure to give way! He knows, too, how awful my terror and dread of relapsing would be. At home, and probably away from home too, temptations would be always assailing me, and how could I escape?

"Dear Hope, it is only a little while since I realized the shame and misery of the course I was pursuing, not to speak of the sin of it, and in that little while you can never, never know what I have suffered! Oh! what will become of me, if He does not take me away?" A look of unutterable terror came into Eva's face as she spoke, and she clutched Hope's hand with an energy that alarmed her.

"Eva! Eva, be calm, my darling! you are safe in the Good Shepherd's care. Has He not said, concerning His sheep, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of My hand?' Rest assured that if you are His, there is nothing within yourself, or without either, that can divide you from His love, or take you from under His protection! He who gave Himself for your redemption will surely complete His own work in you, and bring you off conqueror at last. You believe that, do you not, Eva?"

"Yes, I believe it, Hope," she murmured, as Hope wiped the tears from her pale face, "but oh, sister darling, don't ever say again you hope I'll stay here, and I so weak, so powerless to resist! you won't, will you?"

"No, my precious one, I will not. It would be selfish and wrong for me to wish you to stay, if God is pleased to take you!"

"Thank you, Hope; and now I would like to thank you as I ought for your dear, patient care of me, and for your teaching me about Jesus, and helping me to come to Him. I wish I could tell you, but I never can, how sweetly those beautiful texts you repeated came to me as I lay here in the dark, lonely room, shrinking from the light like a disgraced and guilty thing, as indeed I was, and how I repeated them over and over again after you went away, until I fell into such a long, sweet sleep. It did really seem to me when I woke as though Jesus had given me rest. Then I remembered that sweet 'Come unto me' that Aunty Green taught you, and you taught me, years and years ago, when we were wee, little girls together in the old home at Weston. Do you know, Hope, I have never felt the same as I did before you spoke to me that day, except for a little while that evening Augusta was with me. Everything seems so new to me, and what you read in the Bible so full of meaning."

A slight movement behind her made Hope look

around. It was Jack, who had entered the room unobserved at the beginning of the conversation, and had heard it all.

"That puts me in mind, Hope," he said, coming round and seating himself on the edge of the bed, "of what you said to me, a few nights ago, about the Bible proving itself like, to them that get to love it. But, Eva," he added, abruptly, "you mustn't talk so about not wanting to get well; I wanted awfully to get well after I got over being light-headed, and it helped me to try. Now, you just try to get well, and you'll see you'll be all right."

A look of suffering passed over Eva's face, and for a moment she turned away her head. But the emotion soon passed, and releasing her hand from Hope's she laid it upon her brother's.

"No, dear Jack," she said, almost in a whisper, "it is different with me from what it is with you. You will grow to be a strong, self-reliant man, while I—oh, Jack, I should be a source of endless anxiety to you all, and, perhaps, in the end, should fall beneath the power of a dreadful appetite! You do not know—oh, pray God you may never know in your own experience—what I mean!"

"But you'll get over that, Eva," said Jack, choking back his grief. "You say—you just said, that—that God would help you if He wanted you to live; now you just try to get well, and you'll see He will! Hope and I will do all we can to help you along, won't we Hope?"

There was a long silence. Hope's tears were falling silently, unseen by Eva, and try as he would, Jack seemed unable to find the right words to fit the occasion. Eva was the first to speak.

"Hope, I used think I should like to live a long, long time in this beautiful world. I seemed to love everything, the flowers and the birds, and all the grand and wonderful things I saw around me; and as I grew older I thought I'd like to be a poet, and discover, as poets do, the sweet inner voices and melodies of nature.



"While you were reading that charming poem of Mrs. Browning's, I listened to the things she fancied the angels saying about the Saviour and His death on the cross, and I thought to myself 'Oh, if I could only write like her!' and then I said to myself, 'If one woman could think and write like that, why may not I?' You see, Hope, I did not think just then what a weak, ruined thing I was, and always should be, and I resolved to become a great scholar like her, and see if I, too, could not be a poet—not a great one, I was not vain enough to expect that, but I thought it would be *such* a joy to be able to sing my thoughts out in sweet, tender, melodious verse that people would be better and happier for having read.

"But that very night, oh, Hope, my dream ended!" and the poor girl broke into convulsive sobs.

"Hush, Eva, hush for mercy's sake! I must not allow you to say another word!" and Hope was hastening to shut out the light and enforce quiet, but Eva pleaded for just another minute.

"Stay, Hope; please let me have one word more, and then I will stop. I was going to add, but for this childish weeping, that just there Jesus found me, and forgave my sins, and gave me a far higher and nobler ambition; and now He is going to let me realize all I dreamt of, and more, I think, in that blessed home to which He is bringing me. And to you, darling Hope, next to Himself, I owe it all! Think of that, dear love when I am away, and let it gladden your whole life! You are the one, dear, precious teacher who told me of Jesus, and led me to Him; and with all my heart I thank you!"

Jack rose hastily, went to the door, turned back again, and then with more than his usual awkwardness, managed to say:

"That's just about what I'd like to say, Hope, only I can't say it like Eva, of course. I've been waiting for ever so long to tell you that I've come round, well, just about where she is, I guess. I've got into the way of praying since that little talk you and I had

about the Bible, and it comes easy now. I've found out, too, that what you said about the Bible proving itself true to them that like it, is a fact. I like it now, and believe it, too, and I'm not ashamed to own it! There's a lot of things in it I understand now, that I couldn't have got a bit of meaning out of a month ago. But the fact is, just as Eva said, if it hadn't been for you, I shouldn't have found out these things for—for—well, most likely I never should. I'm not much good at thanking anybody in the proper sort of way; but there, I do thank you, Hope, and I want you to know it!"

Hope had listened to Jack with amazement; now with a joy that had no words for its expression, she caught him to her heart, and wept for very gladness.

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#### CHAPTER XLVIII.

EVA had not long to wait. The terrible dread of ever again having to renew her fierce struggle with the cravings of appetite, or ever again falling beneath its power, of ever losing her conscious hold upon Christ, and finding herself anchorless upon the wild sea of temptation, was never to be realized.

She had fled to Christ for refuge, and her trust was not to be disappointed.

"I am as one whom his mother comforteth," she would often whisper to Hope, as she turned the heated pillows, and helped her to change her position during the unrest of the last few days of her life; "and surely no mother ever comforted her child more tenderly than my Saviour comforts me! It seems so strange, Hope, so marvellous that He should stoop to *me*, and lift me from the utter ruin in which I was sinking, up to such a place of privilege at His feet! Oh! is He not good—*inexpressibly good?*" she would repeat with loving emphasis, as though words were utterly inadequate to convey her sense of that goodness, "so to pity my weakness as to be willing to take me at once where

I shall be quite out of the reach of the temptation I fear so much, and be forever safe from sin? And you will come too, darling Hope! I shall see you again, and shall thank you as I never can hope to here for helping me to find Jesus, or rather, for helping me to realize how lovingly He was seeking me—seeking to gain admittance to my sealed-up heart, that so He might enter in, and make it His own temple where He will dwell and reign forever. And oh, to think He found me at last!" she would repeat, with a look of unutterable joy, "a wandering sheep, blind and wayward, and far away; and drew me into His own sweet, safe fold; and now is bringing me nearer the beautiful mansions He is preparing for His saved ones!"

It was one of those autumnal evenings when winter seems lingering far beyond his time, as if loth to disturb the dreamy quiet, and nature is basking in a luxury of repose unknown to any other season of the year, that Eva closed her eyes upon earth, and opened them upon the beauties of the heavenly land.

The change came so gently, so imperceptibly, that while they thought her musing, she had passed away.

Hope bent over the sweet, pale face, closed gently the eyes whose wondrous beauty had passed with the happy spirit that had irradiated them, and, turning to her father and mother, said gently:

"Dear Eva has gone! Papa, mamma, we have no Eva now on earth; but I know she is where there is no sin or temptation or pain! Shall we follow her there, or is this parting to be eternal?"

Colonel Ellisson came quickly forward, and laid his hand upon the white forehead; a shudder passed through his frame, but he did not speak; he gazed upon his child's face for a moment, and then, with an unsteady step and flushed face, he left the room.

Mrs. Ellisson stood for some time with clasped hands and dilated, tearless eyes, gazing on the beautiful clay; then, stooping, she kissed the placid brow, and with a passionate outburst of tears, followed her husband.

Hope drew her brother to her side, and, leaning her head upon his shoulder, repeated softly: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

The sister's arms tightened around her young brother; he felt that the question was intended for him, and for a moment he stood silent and pale, looking down into the calm face of the young sleeper before him; then, lifting his head, he answered, in a low, steady voice:

"Yes, Hope, I believe it; though I'm not quite sure I understand it all. I know Eva believed in Jesus, and because He rose from the dead, I suppose she will rise, too, when He comes again."

"Yes, dear Jack, and God has made her resurrection so sure in Christ, that He looks upon her, even now, not as dead, but alive. Jesus has really *abolished* death for those that believe in Him, by Himself overcoming it; and, by His own resurrection, He has proved that, as death could not hold Him in its chains, neither can it hold them that put their trust in Him. My darling, you are not afraid to die, are you?"

"Me, Hope?" exclaimed the boy, a shudder running through his frame.

"Yes, Jack."

"I'm not afraid Jesus will let me be lost; not that, Hope, but somehow it seems awful to die!"

"I understand you, my darling; we all shrink from dying, and the love of life is strong. We have to be raised above the shuddering and dread death naturally causes, before we can think of it calmly, as something we must ourselves pass through. But Jesus has taken away the sting of death, and transformed the terrible foe into a messenger of mercy to His people. He has not only redeemed their souls, but their bodies; and He is going, in His own time, to raise them up out of their graves, all glorious like Himself; and then our Eva will again inhabit this beautiful house she has

lived in so long; and we, if we, too, are God's own children, shall see her, and talk with her, and she will never again be parted from us."

Augusta was not summoned home to her sister's funeral.

A telegram announced the fact of Eva's death, and this was followed by letters from both her mother and Hope; but there was no intimation that she was expected. She had fully believed, notwithstanding her mother's assurance to the contrary, that, should that event take place, she would be called home; and at first she was grieved and disappointed. Eva's death touched her more deeply than anything else ever had, and for a little while she wept bitterly; but, giddy and volatile always, she was soon engrossed in preparations for a fresh mourning outfit, and, by the time it was complete, the cause of her mourning was half lost sight of in the hollow gratification of appearing in the costly attire which was to proclaim her bereavement to others.

That long-delayed visit, too, the speedy expectation of which had prompted her unseemly haste in leaving home, was now near at hand; she, therefore, solaced herself by writing home a pathetic letter, full of shallow sentiment, and thus, in a few days, had laid aside all outward show of sorrow, except what was suggested by her dress; but for which, no one would have dreamt that death had ever cast his dreary shadow across her pathway.

As soon as Eva's funeral was over, Colonel Ellisson absented himself more than ever from home, sometimes spending whole days, and even nights, away, and seldom returning without being more or less intoxicated.

Hope watched his downward progress with an almost breaking heart; but any attempt on her part to check or prevent it was no longer of any avail. Sometimes he was sullen, sometimes violent; and at

length, as his brain became maddened more and more, he repelled her approaches with harshness, bordering upon cruelty. The old generosity and tenderness of his nature was fast giving place to the moroseness and violence engendered by excessive drinking, until even the wife who had loved him with blind idolatry shrunk from him with dread and apprehension.

Sometimes for a little while his better nature would assert itself, and he would weep bitter tears of shame and humiliation; but these hopeful symptoms gradually grew less and less frequent, and every lapse was more hopeless always than the last.

Added to all these came financial perplexities, of which, a few months before, Mrs. Ellisson had scarcely dreamed.

Hardly a day passed that did not bring bills she had no money to pay, and when she appealed to her husband he met her appeals either with harshness, or a sullen indifference almost harder to be borne. The winter was thus wearing slowly away amidst ever-increasing perplexities, when one morning a servant handed her the mail, and she was startled by seeing a letter postmarked "L—," and which she instantly recognized as being in the handwriting of Miss Morton, Augusta's preceptress. Hastily opening it, she read:

"MY DEAR MADAM,—

"I deeply regret the necessity under which I am placed of communicating unpleasant tidings to you, knowing, as I do, the deep afflictions with which you have of late been visited, and that what I am about to say will be a source of intense grief and mortification. The circumstances of the case are briefly these:

"Some time ago a young gentleman, an utter stranger to me, called and asked to see your daughter, announcing himself as her brother, and giving his name as 'Mr. H. Ellisson.' When I showed his card to your daughter, she was in raptures at the arrival of her 'dear brother,' whom, she said, she had been look-

ing for for months; therefore, not dreaming of any deception, I granted the desired interview; and after spending an hour or two in her company, the gentleman left.

"I thought no more of the matter until a few weeks after, when he called again, saying he was on his return to the West from New York, where he had been visiting *his parents*, and from whom he was the bearer of some messages to his sister.

"Not long after this second visit, some things occurred that excited my suspicion that all was not right, and after some delay I ascertained that the gentleman was one whom Miss Ellisson met last summer in St. Louis, and to whom she then became engaged.

"At first, she stoutly denied having deceived me, and insisted the person was really her brother, but at length, finding concealment impossible, she boldly announced her engagement, and boasted openly of the 'good joke' she had had at the expense of her teachers; and, when remonstrated with, became so insolent and defiant as to make it necessary for the good of others, as well as herself, that she should be removed from the school.

"Learning in some way that she was going to be sent away, and probably believing that she was to be publicly expelled, she hired one of the servants to aid in carrying out her plans, managed to send a telegram to her intended, and last night, before we had fully decided upon our wisest course in regard to her, he arrived in town, and, aided by the servant girl and her room-mate—who was in her confidence—they effected a meeting, and were privately married. This morning I received a note from her, a copy of which you will find enclosed. Awaiting your commands in regard to the things she has left, I remain,

"Yours very sincerely,

"E. MORTON."

The enclosed note was as follows:

"MADAM,—Before you will have read this, I shall be

married and away on my bridal tour ; thanks to your unjust treatment of me, which has resulted in bringing about, sooner, by a few months, than it could otherwise have been, a consummation very ardently desired both by ' *my brother* ' and myself.

" You can write to my mother, and tell her we shall spend a few months in Europe, and then return to beg pardon of her and dear papa, receive their parental blessing, and then settle down to the felicity of domestic life.

" Doubtless, mamma will notify you in due time what disposal to make of the trunks, band-boxes, etc., I am leaving on your hands ; meanwhile, I trust they will be no serious inconvenience to you. I shall write my parents from London or Paris, to inform them that I am well and happy. Deeply sympathizing with you in your severe disappointment in not having the opportunity to *expel* me, as I know you intended, I remain, as ever,

" Your (dis)obedient

" AUGUSTA."

Mrs. Ellisson read the letters two or three times over before she seemed able fully to comprehend their meaning ; then handing them to Hope, she walked to a window, and gave vent to her grief and mortification in tears.

" This is so strange, so utterly incomprehensible ! " she said as Hope returned the letters. " I knew Augusta was wayward and rash, but I did not dream of her being capable of such conduct as this ! O Hope ! how am I ever to tell your father of this ? he is so broken already by our late afflictions ; so—so unable to bear any more ! " and Mrs. Ellisson rose and paced the floor in deep distress.

Hope strove to comfort her, but in vain.

" No, no ; poor child, you can't help me ! It would be hard enough to bear, if your father were able to share it with me ; but as things are I have no one to turn to but you, and you are breaking down, too ; I see



it more and more clearly every day, under our accumulating miseries, some of them such as you ought never to have been called to share."

"Don't say that, mamma; whatever concerns papa and you must always concern me; in the past I have only done my duty, and if I could do more I should."

"I know, I know you would; *you* at least, were always a good child, and a comfort!" and with bitter weeping Mrs. Ellisson hurried to her room, and locking the door, gave way to the bitterness of her grief.

Later in the day a servant tapped at the door, to say that Colonel Ellisson had brought some guests to dinner; and as Miss Hope was too ill to go down, would Mrs. Ellisson please come down, and give some directions.

It was true that Hope's strength, so long overtaxed, had at last given way. Her mother's fresh trouble, and the despairing way she had alluded to her husband—a thing so unusual to her—the anguish of seeing that even she was beginning to lose courage were more than Hope, already so deeply crushed beneath her own sense of her father's deplorable condition, could bear; and Mrs. Ellisson, as the girl had said, found her ill—in a burning fever; while Jack, in trouble and perplexity, was bathing her head, and doing all in his power to give her relief.

"Don't be anxious mamma," she said, seeing Mrs. Ellisson's look of dismay, as she bent over her, "I think this will prove only a sick headache, and you see what a splendid nurse I have, he is taking the best of care of me. See this!" she added, with a bright smile, holding up a letter she had just been reading, "it is from Gordon, and he will be home in three or four months! Here, Jack, lay it in my desk, if you please, and then give me a drink of cold water. Thank you, dear; and now go and see if you can assist mamma in any way; and when I have had a nice sleep, I shall be quite well again.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

JACK complied with Hope's request, but he did not remain long away; and Hope, who was unable to sleep, was not sorry to have him with her. He would not go to bed that night, but insisted upon lying on the sofa in Hope's room, so as to be ready to do anything for her that was needed. But, with all his good intentions, he was soon fast asleep, and neither saw nor heard anything more until late the following morning, when the first objects that met his gaze were the doctor, sitting by Hope's bedside, anxiously noting her symptoms, and his mother, with a pale, careworn face, bending over her pillow.

Three days later, Mrs. Green was standing at the door of the old parsonage cottage, Weston, reading a telegram that had just been placed in her hands. She ran thus:

"Can you come to us without loss of time? Hope is very ill, and in her delirium is constantly calling for you. Do come!"

Phoebe Green was the woman for an emergency. Patient, plodding, and disposed to keep the even tenor of her way with no very rapid tread, she was, nevertheless, quick to resolve and swift to perform whenever it became necessary; and, in this case, all her native force and energy were brought into immediate action.

"I say, Thompson," she said, thrusting her head into the dining-room where that personage was eating his dinner, "you harness Ben as quick as ever you can, and drive me to the station. 'Taint a minute morn'n half an hour before the train's in, and I must catch it, if I have to fly. My dear little girl down to New York is sick, and all the time a-callin' for me, and I must go to her this very minute! Here, Jane, you come quick and put up my best gown and cap, and mebbly two or three other things, while I dress;" and the next minute she was tossing together the things Jane was

to pack, dressing herself at the same time, and talking incessantly, yet, with singular self-possession, and never making a mistake or false move.

"I'm awful glad I hain't got to borrow money!" she soliloquized, producing a plump wallet from a drawer in her bureau; "this comes of always keeping a sharp lookout after the small change; as the old saying goes: 'Take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves.' There, that'll do; here's Thompson and Ben; good-bye!" and the next minute Ben was tearing away at a furious pace for Weston.

The station was reached barely in time—not a moment even for purchasing a ticket; but nothing daunted, she flung her good-bye at the bewildered Thompson as she ran, saying, "I'll pay on board, or else they'll have to take me for nothing, for go I will!" and, springing upon the steps while the train was already gliding away, she found herself, she scarcely knew how, panting and excited in one of the seats, and rushing away with the speed of the wind toward her destination.

But, oh, how slowly to her impatient mind the train moved on! "Nearly a mile a minute!" she exclaimed, as the conductor, with a suppressed smile, replied to her repeated entreaties that he would "hurry up," by informing her what was her present rate of travel. "Nearly a mile a minute! dear me, that's awful fast! but, after all, it don't seem so very much when you think that half the folks in New York might be dead before you could reach there even at that rate."

"Well, aunty," said the conductor, with a dash of impertinence in his tone and manner, "you'd better try and be comfortable as you are; for if we should drive our iron horse much faster he might fly to bits, and where do you think you'd be then?"

Mrs. Green was herself in an instant; and with a quiet dignity, not unmixed with haughtiness, cut off all further approach to familiarity by saying:

"I beg pardon, young man, if I've bothered you with my nervousness! Of course you can't under-

stand how one feels whose nearest and dearest lies a dyin', I might have known that myself;" and turning her flushed face to the window, to hide her tears, she was not long in reasoning herself into her wonted calmness and composure.

Arrived in New York, however, she found herself in dire perplexity; for though she had repeated street and number to herself scores of times, she had no sooner stepped from the train into the noisy, jostling crowd, than they were gone; nor could she recall the faintest suggestion of either. While she was walking up and down, and vainly racking her mind for the vanished clue, a light hand was laid upon her shoulder, and the next instant she found herself caught by both hands, while her captor cried out:

"I knew you'd come, though mother thought very likely you wouldn't. I saw you the moment you stepped off the cars; but I couldn't get near you for the crowd. Don't you know me, aunty?"

"I dare say mebbby you're Jack, by your knowin' me so well!"

"That's who I am, aunty; yonder's the 'bus I ordered, it will be here in a minute."

"And you're Jack! well I never should have known you in the wide world! Dear me, how you have spindled up! but how's Hopic?" she added, her voice tremulous with anxiety and fear.

"She's awfully ill, aunty! The doctor said this morning if you didn't come he was afraid of the consequences; for she frets so for you; and besides she cries and raves so much about father and Lee. Isn't it odd she never says a word about Eva? what do you suppose is the reason?"

"Because, my dear, her mind's at rest about Eva and you too, so she told me in her last letter. Poor little love, she's had that much to comfort her along of all her troubles, thank God! But as for the others, it's no wonder, no wonder!"

The last remark was lost, as she intended it should be, amidst the mingled sounds of voices and vehicles;

in a few minutes more they were moving rapidly away, and very soon Mrs. Green stood by Hope's bedside.

"My precious lamb!"

The large, brown eyes opened wide at the old familiar word, and a look of recognition swept like a sunbeam over Hope's pale face, but in a moment it was gone, and the darkened mind was again wandering amidst its bewildering fancies.

But from that hour her mind became calmer, her delirium assumed a milder type, and her symptoms slowly but steadily changed for the better.

Two months! how swift their flight! how sweet their memories to the happy! but how different to those whose days and nights drag on under the burden of a hopeless sorrow like that which was darkening the home and crushing the heart of Mrs. Ellisson. The long two months which elapsed before Hope could fairly be called convalescent, seemed to her an age of suffering.

Until Hope was laid aside, Mrs. Ellisson had never realized with what a weight she had been leaning upon her uncomplaining child; and now the thought of losing her, just as she was beginning to realize how dreary life must be without her, was almost more than she could endure. She felt appalled at the recollection of all Hope had done and endured, and the little importance she had ever attached to that unwearied and unobtrusive service.

"Oh! I might have spared her more!" she exclaimed again and again, as she watched the progress of the remorseless fever, and saw how the fragile form grew weaker and weaker every day. "I might have taken more of this upon myself!" she would repeat, with ever-increasing bitterness of self-upbraiding, as she took up the burden of domestic care and the oversight of her household, and found herself forced to sustain alone the anxieties of the sick-room, and the increasing querulousness and irritability of her hus-

band; "but indeed I could not have believed she was so sorely burdened as I find now she has been. If she recovers, it must never be so again—never, never!"

Added to all this anxiety, there was a great and ever-increasing one in regard to her husband. Scarcely was the crisis of Hope's sickness past, when Colonel Ellisson, who, during its more alarming stages, had kept himself comparatively sober, relapsed into even more than his former excesses; and the gloomy shadow that had been only temporarily lifted, settled down upon his home blacker and more hopeless than ever.

For some time this was carefully concealed from Hope, but as she improved it became daily more and more difficult, and Mrs. Ellisson finally resolved to send her back to Weston, as soon as she should be able to travel.

"Do you not think, Phœbe," she said one day when they were alone, "that it will be advisable to send Hope back to Weston with you, at least for a few months, or until she is quite recovered? Of course I should expect you to remain with her, as she will need care and attention for a long time."

"It *might* do her good," said Mrs. Green, a little doubtfully; "of course you know the house, 'taint what she's been brought up to, but it's just as comfortable—more so, even, than it used to be when you was there."

"Why, it's a lovely place, Phœbe, and you know we left nearly everything undisturbed; besides, it's been taken the very best care of. She might be a little lonely, but there is every comfort and convenience heart could wish for."

"To be sure! to be sure, there is!" said Mrs. Green, brightening instantly. "I felt a kind of afraid, just for a minute, she'd feel the change, but of course she needn't, so very much. I'll give up the parlor and parlor bed-room, all to her, and I'll go back to my old room alongside of the study, you know; nobody uses it now, and it'll be real comfortable for me. Thompson and Jane—"

"Whatever are you talking about, woman?"

"Why, the cottage, of course; your old home! I've been a livin' there, you know, ever since you came here, along of—Thompson's folks!"

"What nonsense! I am speaking of Prairie House! I hope you don't imagine I am thinking of sending Hope back to that old hovel! you must have taken leave of your wits!"

"Why, my dear child! don't you know?—of course you must know!"—and Mrs. Green's face turned pale and red by turns, and her breath came quick and hard.

"Know what, Phoebe? I'm sure I don't understand you!"

"My child! Prairie House and farm are gone! sold, gone into other hands! A Mr. Parker owns them now; they moved in a month before I left! Of course you knew it, but you've just forgotten it, along of so many troubles, poor little dear, 'taint no wonder either!" and Mrs. Green's sympathizing heart overflowed in tears. "Don't look at me so, dearie! Why, whatever is the matter?" she exclaimed, as Mrs. Ellisson staggered to the nearest chair, and sank into it.

"Nothing serious, Phoebe, I was a little giddy for a moment, but I am better now. You had better go to Hope; she may be wanting something. I will speak to you of this again."

As soon as Mrs. Ellisson was alone, she pressed her hands tightly over her temples, and for some time sat quite still; at length, rising, she staggered, rather than walked, to a sofa, and sank heavily upon it.

"Surely it cannot be;" such were her thoughts; "there must be some mistake! Hugh can never have sold Prairie Farm without my knowledge!"

Presently it flashed upon her mind that, not long before—no, it could not be *very* long, though it seemed an age—her husband had asked her, in the presence of a stranger, to sign some papers which he said related to the transfer of property; and she did so; yes, she was quite sure of it; but then, it was not necessarily

*that* property. Hugh would not practise any deception upon her, she knew that very well.

Mrs. Ellisson rose and walked the room in great excitement. Fight her doubts as she would, they would still return. Had he really sold Prairie Farm, and wasted the money? If so, possibly other property had also gone; possibly he had wasted what belonged to Hope in the same way. Then the ugly recollection came back to torture her, of that old letter Gordon had almost forced her to read years and years before, and of revelations therein made, which she had always set down as scarce worthy of a thought, a trifling indiscretion, perhaps, speedily repented of, and never afterwards repeated. Now things wore a changed aspect, and the spectre of want and ruin once raised, was not so easily dismissed. Had she really found an explanation of the unpaid bills that were pouring in upon her, and her husband's irritability when his attention was called to them? But no; that surely could not be. There must be plenty of money in the banks. She knew he had had large amounts there, the income from which had far exceeded their yearly expenditure. No, no; there would still be plenty left, though half a dozen estates like Prairie Farm had been wasted. But, however, it would do no harm to speak to Hugh about it, and have her mind set at rest, as, of course, it would be.

At first Colonel Ellisson evaded his wife's inquiries; then he became angry; and, finally, admitting the truth of what she had heard, angrily demanded, in reply to her remonstrances, to know what concern it was of hers.

What if he did not tell her? Was he not competent to attend to his own business? What call had she to know his private affairs? And, besides, had she not said she should never return to Prairie House again? Why, then, should she be so displeased at finding it sold?

Yes, she had said so; Mrs. Ellisson could not deny



it. She had left Prairie House with scarcely a shade of regret, in the vain confidence that a brilliant career for herself and her family awaited her; now how gladly would she hide her aching head in the shelter of a home no longer hers.

And what was there that was hers? Possibly the roof that was over her head might not shelter it another month! Yet poverty itself would be welcome, more than welcome, if with it she might receive again, not her children, alas! *they* were gone forever! but her husband, even as he was when she, blindly and against his wish, drew him with her into the excitements and temptations of the great city.

Mrs. Ellisson looked upon the bent form, the blood-shot eyes, and the shaking hands of the man before her; she saw how vain it was to attempt to reason with him, at least until sleep had quieted his irritability, and dissipated the fumes of recent drink, and she did not attempt it further.

Hours later, as she sat at his bedside, weary, sleepless, wretched, listening one moment to his heavy breathing, and the next to the audible beating of her own heart, her thoughts reverted to that evening when her resentful spirit so rebelled at her father's warning, and again she seemed to hear, as though it had been uttered but a day, "Oh, my child, I am haunted by the torturing dread that this poor youth is moving on, slowly it may be, but none the less surely, to the drunkard's doom—ruin in this life, ruin in eternity!"

"Eternity!" Mrs. Ellisson started in dismay. How little she had thought of it for either herself or him; yet there he lay, a wreck, physically, intellectually, morally. And she, *she* the child of that father's prayers, herself once professedly a Christian, one who had once taken the vows of Christ upon her, *she had abetted that ruin!* Ah, that dreary hour of remorse! how those years of pride, self-seeking, and sinful conformity to her husband's vice, swept with accusing memories before her! How shrivelled and distorted her life seemed! How utterly mad she appeared in

her own sight to have been! How voice after voice, and memory after memory, came back, each with its separate reproach, and would not be put aside; while, with a meaning deeper and more awful than ever before, as she listened to her husband's heavy breathing, her father's voice sent back from the vanished past the long disregarded cry, "*Ruin! ruin in time! ruin in eternity!*"

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## CHAPTER L.

A FEW days after the events narrated in our last chapter, Colonel Ellisson, his wife, the family physician and a visitor were seated in the library, consulting in regard to a matter in which all seemed interested, some deeply so.

The visitor was no other than Mr. Leeds; and the matter under consideration was the propriety of Hope's returning home with him, for the more speedy restoration of her health.

Business had brought Mr. Leeds to the city, and he had embraced an early opportunity of calling upon his niece. Her reception of him had been cold and constrained, but, without seeming to notice it, he had continued to come and go with his usual quiet dignity, until at length she had laid aside much of her reserve, and had even received his proposal, that Hope should accompany him home, with undisguised satisfaction.

Colonel Ellisson had at first refused his consent; but at length he had yielded, so far, at least, as to submit the matter to the decision of her physician.

"I have already," said the doctor, "expressed the opinion, both to Mrs. Ellisson and the young lady herself, that, if it were at all practicable, she should leave the city for several months. For some reason, she does not mend beyond a certain point; and I very much doubt if she does while she remains here."

"I am not willing," said Colonel Ellisson, with a look of disappointment not unmingled with displeasure,

"that my daughter should leave home. It strikes me very forcibly that there is no place like home for an invalid; besides, I do not see how we are to endure the loss of her society. She has shown herself a true heroine during our late troubles, and if she goes, we have no one to take her place."

"The truth is, sir," said the doctor, "she has been too much of a heroine for her own good. In her devotion to what she calls duty, she has forgotten that she is mortal like the rest; which is a kind of heroism that can be carried too far, as we see clearly proved in her case just now. You may be very thankful that it has not carried her to a premature grave. Of course, I can only advise in this matter; but I think her remaining at home, under existing circumstances, an extremely hazardous thing!"

There was something in the doctor's tone and manner that seemed to chafe Colonel Ellisson's temper, for he asked sharply:

"What do you mean, sir, by existing circumstances?"

"Simply this: that she enters too deeply into family troubles of every kind; and at present she is not strong enough for it. This intense sympathy and anxiety have been too long continued already. I hope my meaning is clear."

Colonel Ellisson reddened under the doctor's eye. He knew well that there was much more implied than expressed in his words, and he shrank from eliciting further remark.

"She must go then, if you say so," he replied, at length. "Is she able to travel just now?"

"She will require her nurse, sir; with her care and that of your friend here, she may set out to-morrow."

And so to-morrow it was. Colonel Ellisson carried Hope in his arms to the carriage, and seating himself beside her supported her with the tenderest care. Jack took the vacant seat between Mr. Leeds and the nurse, while Mrs. Ellisson, who had already taken leave of her uncle and Hope, waved adieu from an upper window. She watched them through blinding

tears which she neither cared nor sought to repress until the carriage disappeared ; then, turning away, she walked slowly back to the room Hope had just left ; and sitting down on the edge of the bed she had so long occupied, gave unrestrained vent to her grief.

Hope was, indeed, far more to her than she had ever dreamed of, until, deprived of support and sympathy, she had been forced for long weeks to endure the terrible dread of seeing her, too, removed by death. It was not until her own daughters were both gone—Eva to return no more forever, and Augusta never to be to her again what she once was—that she woke to a full sense of Hope's true worth ; and realized that in losing her she was losing the truest and tenderest friend she had on earth. •

But, after all, it was not so much seeing Hope go away, for would she not return in a little while ? nor Augusta's rash marriage, for time would, doubtless, set that matter in a less objectionable light ; nor yet the death of those she had lost, hard as it had been to bear, that wrung the bitterest tears from Mrs. Ellisson that day.

Willingly, at that hour, would she have yielded up her dead, gladly have welcomed poverty—no matter how abject—could she have seen her husband set free from the enslaving vice of drink. But where was the power that could effect this ? Where the arm that could bring the needed help ? She had failed to use her influence when it might have availed somewhat in his behalf, failed to seek help for him from above, failed even to set before him a worthy example ; and now her power was gone, her home desolate, and her husband, shutting his ears to every remonstrance, hurrying whither she dared not think ; and, springing to her feet, she hastened to escape from thought in the excitement of work.

Arrived at the quay, Colonel Ellisson again lifted Hope in his arms, and carried her on board the steamer, and would not release her until he had borne her to her state-room, and laid her in a berth.

"Good-bye, my own darling papa," said Hope, still clinging to his hand, "please think I would not have left you, if the doctor had not insisted; but I shall come back just as soon as I am able."

"Yes, I know you will, daughter," he said, as he stooped to kiss the pale face. "Brighten up, now, there's a good girl, and hurry and get strong, for we shall miss you, you know," and, without trusting himself to look back, he hurried away.

Ah! could Hope have known that she had looked for the last time on the face that had been so dear to her; that she had leaned her head for the last time upon the breast she would have died to shield from danger; but it was mercifully hidden from her.

"Oh! well for us all is the shadow that lies  
Twixt us and the future, and hides from our eyes  
In gloom and in darkness the weal or the woe—  
We sigh but too oft in our weakness to know."

Jack lingered a moment after his father had gone, to hear Hope's whispered request, "Write to me every-thing about *him*, Jack, will you—*everything*?"

"That's altogether too huge a promise, Hope!" said Jack, with a forced laugh; "but I'll do my best to be interesting and instructive. Good-bye, and hurry up your roses!" he added, playfully pinching the pale cheek, "good-bye, old girl! good-bye, auntie!" and Jack walked quickly away; making a vain effort to hide his too evident pain.

Then came a clattering and grinding of ropes, a hurrying to and fro, a confused din of jarring enginery and discordant voices, and the boat glided gently from her moorings and swept out gracefully into the deep; and Hope found herself swiftly receding from the great city which had been the scene, at once, of her deepest sorrows and her sweetest consolations.

An hour later Mr. Leeds took his seat beside Hope, who was still weeping in spite of her nurse's efforts to cheer her, and gently drawing her thoughts away from her cares, led her mind by easy and natural steps into more cheerful themes.

Then he proposed a little walk on deck, and wrapping her in warm shawls, led her out into the fresh air. The novelty of the scene, the pleasant conversation, the cool breezes, and above all the sense of freedom and rest, to which she had so long been a stranger, acted like a charm upon her spirits. Her home-sickness was for a little while quite forgotten, and at length, when warned by her nurse that it was time to lie down, she could hardly be convinced that nearly two hours had elapsed since she left her room.

"It really seems as though I had been guilty of a wrong in being so happy," she exclaimed, as Mrs. Green wrapped the shawls more closely around her, and settled the pillows carefully under her head. "It was so delightful listening to dear Mr. Leeds! He seemed to take me right away from myself, and carry me along quite unawares with his quiet talk about things that were all so new to me, and so full of interest. Indeed, I could not choose but be happy listening to him. No wonder Gordon learned so easily to love him!" and with her mind pleasantly diverted from her life-long burdens, Hope soon fell into a quiet, refreshing sleep.

Colonel Ellisson went home that night perfectly sober, and as soon as tea was over retired to the library, and, locking himself in, sat for hours endeavoring to gain from a huge pile of papers that lay before him some definite idea of his own affairs.

Documents of many kinds and various dates were examined, compared, and then tossed aside as if in despair of ever reaching any satisfactory conclusion in regard to them, and all the while the trembling hands grew more unsteady, and the pale face grew paler and sadder as he pored wearily hour by hour over another and still another paper drawn from the mass of hopeless confusion before him.

At length, long after the clock had told the midnight hour, he rose with a look of utter weariness in his face, and sweeping the papers again into the

drawer from which they had been lifted, walked back and forth through the room, occasionally pressing his hand over his brow as if trying to collect his thoughts, or unravel a mystery that still baffled and evaded him.

"I can't make it out," he muttered, at last; "I can't comprehend how it is that all that property has slipped through my hands, or where it's gone, or what shape my affairs are in now. To think of my being obliged to borrow money to send Hope away, when the child ought to be mistress of thousands in her own right! Heaven knows how I'm to face her when she returns, and tell her she's a beggar!" and pressing his hands tightly over his brow, he sank again into a chair, and burst into tears.

Presently he rose, and with a look of desperation in his face, walked to the other side of the room, opened the little cupboard which had become his nightly resort, and taking down a decanter drank long and recklessly, then locking the door and replacing the key in his pocket, he hastened to his room, and flinging himself upon the bed fell into a heavy slumber.

The journey seemed all too short for Hope who, had steadily mended from the hour she first suffered Mr. Leeds to conduct her from her state-room into the open air, and by the time she was set down at the parsonage gate, she was able to walk to the house without assistance.

Hope's coming was not unexpected, for Mr. Leeds had sent a telegram ahead of them, consequently every preparation had been made for her coming; and, instead of the dreaded ordeal of 'getting acquainted,' Hope found herself in an atmosphere so home-like, and yet so unlike anything she had ever enjoyed before, that at first she hardly knew how to adapt herself to a state of things so new and strange.

Instead of feeling called upon to think and plan for others, and rack her weary brains to devise ways and means by which they might be aided, or encouraged,

or made more happy, she now saw each one vieing with all the rest in their efforts for her comfort and ease, and what were even more soothing to Hope than the attentions lavished upon herself, were those she saw bestowed upon her beloved nurse, who, weary of long sick-room toil, and the care and excitement of the past weeks, stood in special need of the kind offices of others.

Very grateful, too, to Hope's weary heart, was the delicate, motherly kindness of Mrs. Leeds, whom she had long seemed almost to know personally through Gordon's frequent and affectionate mention of her. Hope had always had an ideal of what a true mother should be; an ideal, vague and shadowy, indeed, yet intensely sweet, of what her own mother would have been to her, had she been spared; and, as she looked at Mrs. Leeds' sunny face, and received the varied attentions she lavished upon her, it was with difficulty she could restrain herself from throwing her arms around her neck, and weeping there in childlike abandonment.

At length the tea-table was spread; and Hope thought she had never seen so bright a table or such sunny faces as those that surrounded it. What a rest it seemed to her to sit there so cosily beside Mrs. Leeds, wrapped in a soft, warm shawl, and listen to the cheerful conversation into which all, even herself and her nurse, were drawn as by some irresistible social magnetism.

And then how pleasant was the hour that followed, when the curtains were drawn, and the lights brought in, and she found herself the one object of interest and attraction to all, and yet every attention so delicately paid as neither to embarrass nor weary her. No longer herself the ministering genius of the hour, she was now the one to be ministered to, the one whose individual happiness seemed to constitute the separate aim of all the rest.

At length the Bible was laid upon the table, and, in the hush that followed, Mr. Leeds opened it, and read, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, be-

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lieve also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." When the chapter was finished, all joined in singing that old "Evening Hymn," with which many a weary Christian has calmed the perturbation and unrest of toil:—

"The day is past and gone,  
The evening shades appear,"

and then lain down to rest under the soothing influence of the blessed trust which breathes through the closing stanza:

"And when our days are past,  
And we from time remove,  
Oh, may we in Thy bosom rest,  
The bosom of Thy love!"

and then Mr. Leeds commended the kneeling group and all their absent loved ones to God in prayer.

To Hope, who had never, except once or twice in her pastor's house at Weston, been present at a season of family worship, it was a season never to be forgotten. Every word of that most precious chapter, of the hymn, and the prayer, was full of new sweetness to her, and fell like a healing balm upon her weary spirit.

An hour later, when Mrs. Green had given Hope her final "tucking up" for the night, and was herself asleep in an adjoining room, Hope heard a light step approaching, and, looking up, she saw Mrs. Leeds bending over her.

With the strong yearning for a mother's love ever warm in her heart—a yearning which had been a part of her very being, and which, thus far, had found its warmest and tenderest expression toward her faithful nurse alone, Hope threw her arms impulsively around Mrs. Leeds' neck, and burst into tears.

"Are you not comfortable, my child?" said Mrs. Leeds, laying her hand tenderly upon Hope's forehead.

"Oh yes, dear Mrs Leeds, I am more than comfortable; you are all so good and kind, and have made me feel so much at home—so very happy. But tell me, will you let me love you the little while I stay as you do your own daughters; and sometimes kiss you just as I would my own precious mother, who died before I could know what it was to be loved by her, if she were with me?"

"Yes, dear child, you may love me just as much as you will, and express it in your own way; only I shall stipulate beforehand that you allow me to love you just as warmly in return. But what do you suppose I have come to tell you? You cannot guess, I am sure; and if you could, I am sure you would not. Well, then, it is this: Mr. Leeds has been out for the evening mail since you came up stairs, and he has brought a letter! ah, I know now by the light of your eyes that you are guessing!"

Hope glanced eagerly at the letter Mrs. Leeds held playfully up, and it needed no second glance to reveal to her that it was from Gordon.

"You need not flush so my love. I know all that dear little secret of yours; and I have come to tell you that *somebody* is coming home soon—expected to sail in two or three days, go straight to New York, where he hopes to see somebody who is now in Maine for a little while; and then hurry on to Weston, whither Dr. Eberly has summoned him to attend to important business; and he more than intimates that, as soon as it is over, he expects to return to New York, to attend to more important business *of his own*. What, crying again? What a naughty girl to repay me in such a way for all this good news. Now, my dear, I am going to admit you into a little secret, which is this: You are occupying the very same old rooms which that same somebody once called his, and where he began the new life of faith in Christ, which has made him the true, noble man he is. By the way, I was forgetting to tell you that a letter of the same date as this has gone to New York to find you. It will probably be here

about to-morrow evening. Good night, my dear, and pleasant dreams."

A kiss fell like sunshine on Hope's forehead, and the next moment she was alone, and the soft moonbeams stealing in through the parted curtains, and a new gladness at her heart which held her waking long after the others were asleep, and which filled her dreams, when at last she slept, with more of brightness than they had known for many weary years.

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## CHAPTER LI.

HOPE was very happy. Days glided swiftly away, each filled with new charms and varying pleasures.

Naomi Leeds, who was an excellent driver and pleasant companion, often took her for long excursions through the quiet country places in the vicinity; and Ella walked with her, as she grew stronger, about the town, and showed her the various objects of interest; and when she was weary, and preferred to rest, Mr. or Mrs. Leeds read to her from interesting books, or entertained her with cheerful conversation.

The early summer with its singing birds and countless blossoms had come, the world was full of beauty and rejoicing, and with returning health Hope felt her whole nature expanding into freer and gladder life.

A day or two after the arrival of Mr. Leeds' letter, there had come a much longer one to herself, forwarded from New York, in which the writer, after detailing all his plans, concluded by saying:

"I have been thus minute, because, as I can stay only a few hours in New York, there will not be time to say all I want to say then; and because I want you to be thinking of it in the meantime, particularly of what I have yet to propose.

"As soon as I can settle up the business Dr. Eberly has in hand for me to attend to, I intend to make a special effort to induce your father and my sister to return to Prairie House; and I think, after

all their late experiences, I shall not find it hard to accomplish. When that is done, it seems to me there will be no valid reason why you may not quietly establish yourself in a home which I hope then to be able to offer you; where, in the immediate neighborhood of your father, whom you can see any hour you choose, you may be free from the care and anxiety which have already so nearly sent you to an untimely grave.

"In conclusion, let me entreat you to add your influence to mine, to bring about a change which seems, from every point of view in which we can regard it, so very desirable both for ourselves and them."

To this Hope replied at once, directing her letter to New York, in order that it might be awaiting Gordon on his arrival, and thus lighten the disappointment she knew he must feel at not finding her there.

"I shall gladly, dear Gordon," so the letter concluded, "use all my influence to effect the change you propose; and that I may be beforehand in the matter, and so prepare the way for you, I shall write to my dear father to-day, and ask him to make speedy arrangements to return to the dear old house we ought never to have left.

"I know mamma will be more than ready to add her entreaties to mine, for she deeply regrets ever having come to New York—a step papa never approved of—and this makes me the more confident that the matter can easily and speedily be arranged. I am more happy here than I can tell you, with this dear family; but as soon as I am a little stronger, I shall return home, for I cannot think of staying away from my poor father a day longer than is necessary."

To this letter Hope received no answer; and as the days glided into weeks, and the weeks measured out nearly a month of waiting, her anxiety became so great that she resolved, after one more day, if no letter came, to start for New York. However, on the even-

ing before this decision was to be carried into effect, Mr. Leeds, on returning from the post, handed her a letter, and retired at once to his study.

Closing the door he turned the key, and seating himself by a window, took from his pocket a telegram and a letter. Glancing at the former he laid it on the table beside him, and hurriedly opening the letter was soon absorbed in its perusal. The telegram ran thus:

“Expect a letter by the first mail. Read, and give such details to Hope as you may deem prudent.”

Hope glanced eagerly at the letter she held, and instantly recognized, not the handwriting of Gordon, but that of Jack. A cold mist seemed creeping over her face, for her first thought was of shipwreck and death for Gordon; her terrified imagination went no further than that. There was a slip of paper folded around the letter, and hastily removing it she read:

“DEAREST HOPE,—Before you open this letter, fortify your heart by prayer for what it contains. Look to God, and He will give you strength for this, the bitterest trial of your life.

“With deepest solicitude,

“Your own GORDON.”

For a moment Hope was bewildered; but as the terrible import of Gordon's note began to dawn upon her, she felt her strength giving way, the various objects in the room grew indistinct, and realizing that she was about to faint, she snatched a glass of water that was standing near her, drank it off, and flinging open a window, stood for a few seconds in the fresh air, and then went quietly to her room.

Clasping the letter tightly between her hands, she walked two or three times across the room, and then dropped upon her knees—but not to pray. The swift rush of distracting thoughts and fears, the tumultuous throbbing of her heart, the utter inability to hold her mind to any definite request, prevented her purpose; and with a helpless glance to heaven she sprang to her feet, and tearing open her brother's letter, read:

"MY OWN SISTER HOPE,—I know you will forgive my long silence, and take back all the hard things you may have thought about me when you read this letter. I would have written you sooner, but mother and Uncle Gordon would not let me; for they said you were too weak to bear the news, and that suspense would do you less harm than certainty.

"But, dear Hope, I must not keep you in suspense. Poor, dear father has left us, never to return any more. In a little more than a fortnight after you left home, after less than a week's illness, he died. The day before he was taken sick, Uncle Gordon came; and it just seems as though God sent him to take care of poor father, and be with us through those long days and nights of suffering before he went to rest.

"He and mother and the doctor were with father nearly every minute after he was taken ill; but it seemed nothing could be done for him. He was out of his mind most of the time, though I do not know much of what he said or did, for I was not allowed to see him until about an hour before he died, when he had grown quiet and fallen asleep. The doctor and mother insisted I was not strong enough to be in the room with him, though I am sure I feel as well as ever I did; still, I suppose they knew what was best.

"About midnight of the fifth day he quieted down, and mother thought he was better; but it proved otherwise, for in a little more than an hour he was gone. I don't know why, but they had a very quiet funeral. I asked both mother and my uncle, but they did not give me any special reason, and I thought they did not like to have me ask. They buried him beside the others; and oh, Hope, I cannot tell you how dreary the house seems! Mother has dismissed all the servants but Norris and Norah, and Norris is to go next week. Uncle Gordon is here yet, but he is occupied night and day; mother says he is trying to settle up father's business. I think he finds it pretty troublesome, for he seems perplexed and anxious, and often has long private talks with mother.

"Poor mother keeps up wonderfully, though I cannot understand how she does, for some days she looks as though she would die, and I begin to fear she will when things are settled again, and she has more time to think about her troubles.

"Since the servants were dismissed I find more to do, and I am not sorry to have it so, for it helps to pass away the long, dreary days. Dear Hope, if you were only well and strong again, and could be at home, how glad I should be; I can never, never tell you how much I miss you!

"Augusta and her husband came home about a week ago; they knew nothing of the trouble here until they were in the house. Augusta acted like one beside herself, but it seemed to me before she left that it was less on account of poor father's death than the confused state of his affairs. I heard her tell mother that Herbert's father was a bankrupt, and that she must and would have money. I don't know what mother told her, but she seemed much distressed, and Augusta very much displeased, and soon after they started for St. Louis. I don't think Augusta bade mother good-bye; I'm sure she didn't me or Uncle Gordon.

"Dear Hope, I want to tell you I do not forget what you have taught me. I have learned in this time of trouble how grand it is to have a Father in Heaven to whom I can tell everything, and feel that He helps me, not only to bear the trouble, but to trust in Him for a way out of it. Mother sends love, and says she will write to you very soon.

"Your loving brother,

"JACK."

As Hope finished reading, Mrs. Green, with a face full of solicitude, entered the room. She had just learned of the arrival of letters, and hastened to find Hope, in order to learn the tidings they had brought.

"Oh, aunty, aunty!" cried Hope, as her nurse entered the room, but she could add no more. A chill

mist seemed creeping over her pale lips, and the room swam in darkness before her; the next she knew she was lying in a dimly-lighted room, and her nurse and Mrs. Leeds, with sad and anxious faces, were hanging over her. For a moment she wondered what had happened, then the dreadful consciousness of it all came back, and with a wailing cry she buried her face in the pillow and sobbed convulsively.

In his letter to his uncle, Gordon wisely omitted the harrowing details of Colonel Ellisson's death, leaving them mainly to be supplied by the imagination of his reader. As we have already learned, he arrived in New York the day before the terrible delirium set in, and in the deep gloom of which Colonel Ellisson passed away. His disappointment at not finding Hope was at first keen, but when he looked into her father's face, and saw recorded there, in characters that could not be mistaken, the tale of that father's ruin, he felt secretly glad that she was gone, that for a little while, at least, she could not see the bloated and besotted face of the parent to whom she had clung with such unwearied devotion.

"I had intended to proceed at once on my journey," so the letter ran, "but seeing how matters stood, I resolved to stay over a day or two, and try and induce my brother-in-law to leave New York at once, and return with me to Weston. I knew by a letter from Hope, which I found waiting me, that she had already prepared the way for my effort by proposing the same thing; so I flattered myself it could be easily and speedily arranged. But the moment I spoke of it I noticed a look of distress pass over my sister's face, and before I had finished speaking, she rose, and left the room in great apparent agitation.

"Colonel Ellisson seemed confused and uncomfortable, and, after a good deal of stammering and evasion, he said, glancing at his watch, as though pressed for time:

"Well, Gordon, I will think about it; in the meantime you are tired and need rest, and, as I have some



writing to do, you will be kind enough to excuse me for the remainder of the evening, and we will talk of this again. If you think it too early to retire, you will find your sister in the parlor, and you can talk up this matter with her.'

"I knew he was putting me off, but I thought it best not to urge him just then. I found my sister evidently in deep trouble; but she was either unable or unwilling to explain the cause; and, finally, pleading what was only too apparent, severe indisposition, she retired.

"Early in the night she came to my room in great alarm, saying her husband was ill and in a strong delirium.

"I hastened to him, and saw at once what was the trouble. It appears that his asking to be left alone was simply an evasion, to get rid of explaining a state of things of which both Hope and I were ignorant, but of which my sister was well aware; and that, as soon as I left the room, he had sought to drown thought in drink; to what purpose you may judge, when I tell you that, after five dreadful days, exhausted nature sank under the horrors of that terrible delirium, in the thick gloom of which his spirit was wrapped, until he passed away without one conscious look or word!

"I shall not dwell upon the scene; it was the first of the kind I had ever witnessed; God grant it may be the last! Oh, I thought, could all young men stand here and witness the end of the once moderate drinker, would they not be warned!

"Poor, dear Hugh! once so manly and chivalrous, so truly noble, with a clear intellect, a great, loving heart, and a generous, open hand; I thought, as I saw him going away in the darkness of such a death, that I would gladly lay down my life to restore him his wrecked manhood and the glorious possibilities of his wasted life.

"Oh, sir! I shall never forget the hopeless anguish of my poor sister, as those dreadful days dragged on. You know something of her power of will and endur-

ance; but you cannot possibly picture to yourself adequately the frail woman in her unutterable agony, white, tearless, silent, uttering neither cry nor moan through it all, unless it was in the silence and solitude of her own room; and, when it was all over, taking up the burden of her ruined fortunes with an outward show of calmness that, to me, was more dreadful than the wildest paroxysms of grief.

"Immediately after the funeral, she took me aside, and told me that the Weston estate was sold, and the money gone; she could not say how or where; and then the mystery of my first night in the house needed no further explanation. At her urgent request, I at once proceeded to an investigation of my brother-in-law's affairs; and, aided by the best counsel I could secure, I have reached this result: The vast wealth with which Colonel Ellisson began life is utterly dissipated; and with it all that was Hope's in her own right through her mother. I got an unexpected clue to this appalling waste, by means of a crushed and crumpled letter that I came upon among a lot of old papers—a letter which it appears Lee left in his room on the fatal evening of his death, and which my unhappy sister destroyed as soon as it was read.

"I knew years ago that Hugh was addicted to the vice of gambling—a vice he once most pathetically warned me against; but I had no idea to what lengths it had carried him, until I read that letter; sad proof, at once, of the ruinous habits of the father and the unrestrained recklessness of the son.

"In the meantime, a great many debts are coming to light, which can only be met in part, I fear, though my sister insists upon selling everything that can be converted into money, even her jewellery, in order to meet every rightful claim; a resolution, by the way, from which I do not attempt to dissuade her; for I cling strongly to the once honored and honorable rule, that every honest debt should be paid, whatever be the self-denial and self-abnegation it may cost.

"I hope to be through these entanglements in a few

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days; and then I must hasten to Weston; unless, indeed, Hope's condition should be such as to demand my immediate attendance upon her, a result of which I am in agonizing dread. I have allowed Jack to give her a sort of outline, in his own way, of things, so far as he knows them, poor lad, which is not far; still, Hope must never know the details of this sad history, even to the extent I have outlined them to you. I need not say be careful of her, for I know what tender and loving hands she is in, but I shall look with intense anxiety for daily information concerning her.

"Yours faithfully,

"GORDON."

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## CHAPTER LII.

FOR many days Hope never left her room except when, at the urgent entreaty of her nurse, or Mrs. Leeds, she suffered herself to be led out upon the sunny balcony, upon which her window opened, for a little while to breathe the fresh air, and look out upon the beauties of nature just bursting into the life and animation of the early summer.

But she soon wearied of the gladness that filled all the voices of nature, and begged to return and lie down upon a couch from which she could gaze up through the open window into the soft blue sky beyond.

The thousand kindly attentions lavished upon her were gratefully received, but she seldom smiled or spoke, except in reply to what others said. Even Gordon's frequent and affectionate letters failed to rouse her; they were read, wept over, and carefully put aside; and then the sad, longing gaze would wander away from all the anxious faces around her up into the deep blue of the summer sky, or, at night, where the stars kept silent and solemn watch above the changeful scenes of human life, as if seeking to pierce the universe in search of something too deeply loved, too surely lost.

At length the physician became alarmed. "Something must be done," he said to the anxious family, who always crowded round him when he came from Hope's room, "to rouse her from this state of despondency, or her reason will become fatally impaired; and I confess I don't know what that something is. Cannot you, sir, suggest something? It certainly is not in the power of medicine to reach the source of Miss Ellisson's trouble, for it is purely mental. Physically, there is nothing wrong with her except weakness."

"I know of no more I can do, sir," said Mr. Leeds, despondingly. "I confess I am baffled. Both Mrs. Leeds and myself have exhausted our powers of invention in trying to devise some new methods for diverting her mind. I think I will write to Gordon to-morrow to come and spend a day or two before he goes on west. Perhaps I have delayed longer than I ought; but this business in New York has been taxing him so severely that I have shrunk from adding to his burdens. But, if you say so, I will telegraph in the morning."

"Do so, sir, by all means, if there is the least hope of his presence and influence doing anything for Miss Ellisson—I, for one, can do no more."

Mrs. Green had followed the doctor down stairs to see what he would say to the family about Hope; but, as she listened to the sorrowful utterances of one and another, her heart swelled with inexpressible pain; and at length, feeling she could endure it no longer, she fled to the garden to be alone.

Casting herself down upon a rustic garden-seat, she sat for a long time in deep thought. Then, looking up to the evening sky, she repeated slowly, as if carefully weighing the meaning of every word:

*"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."*

Again and again she repeated the same words slowly and deliberately; and, at length, dropping upon her

knees, remained long in silent prayer. When she arose, her face was very pale, but there was in it such a look of settled peace that even Hope noticed it when she took her place beside her, and, looking up, she said languidly :

"Why, auntie, love, how sweet you look ! what has happened ?"

"Nothing, my darling, except that I have been out in the garden talking to God about you !"

"Aunty !"

"Yes, dearie, that's just what I've been doing ; and I think I've got my answer."

"Aunty, tell me about it ;" and Hope's sad eyes grew almost eager in their interest.

"Well, my precious child, it is just this : I have been feeling very bad about you, for a good many days ; because I couldn't help thinking you was doing very wrong—really sinning against God by acting as you've been doin' since you heard of the trouble at home.

"I've often felt as though I ought to tell you so ; but somehow I didn't feel as if I could, I really didn't. You were so crushed and heart-broken already that I kept a-sayin' to myself, 'Tain't of no use, 'twould kill her and done with it, if I was to tell her just what I think of her conduct.'

"I see you're astonished, my child, but let me finish, now that I've begun, for it's laid on my heart to do it to-night, and you mustn't interrupt me. Well, this evening I followed the doctor down stairs, just to see what he would tell the folks about you ; but I couldn't stand the way they all talked. Really, it seemed to me that Mr. Leeds, minister though he is—and mebbly I shouldn't say it—but it did seem to me he hadn't one speck of faith ; and I got out of the hearing of the talk as quick as ever I could. Of course you don't need that I should tell you 'twas about you they were talkin'—the melancholy way you are allowin' yourself to get into, and how you are ever goin' to get out of it.

"Well, as I was sayin', I got away from it as quick as ever I could ; and after thinkin' a good deal, and

praying a good deal, I've come to do my plain duty towards you, Hope, and let God take care of the consequences, as I know He will, if I do what's right.

"Now, it's clear to me, my child, that you're doing wrong; really sinning against God; and if you realized what your conduct implies—as of course you don't to the full extent—acting wickedly in His sight."

Hope raised herself slowly upon her elbow, and fixed her eyes wistfully upon her nurse's face. But she did not interrupt her; she was listening solemnly, heedfully, as to a voice from heaven.

"It's just this," continued Mrs. Green, a little disconcerted by Hope's earnest gaze, "you ain't reconciled to God's will; you ain't satisfied that the Judge of all the earth has done right; for if you was, you wouldn't, you couldn't, lie there a hugging your grief, and turning your face away from the clear shining of His blessed countenance, down into the shadows of the dismal, dark grave. I say you *couldn't*, for if you had believed in your very heart that He had been right and just—hadn't made any mistake or done any wrong, you'd get right up and go to Him like a loving, affectionate child, and let His dear love make you glad, as of course it would.

"I ain't findin' fault with the way you *endure* trouble, 'tain't that, dearie, but simple endurance ain't all; you may endure with the fortitude of a dozen martyrs, and yet not have a crumb or grain of submission in your heart. Trouble taken in that way don't do a bit of good, to yourself, I mean. Of course it makes the folks around you more comfortable, and, so far, it's just as it should be; but there ain't any service to God in it; for He who sees the very secret intents of the heart sees it's all for the people around you—not a bit for Him. Mebby in some cases it might be called a kind of outward service of the life, all right of itself, but 'tain't the inner service of the heart, and both have to go together if we expect to please God.

"Why, dearie love, our gracious heavenly Father don't expect us to clutch the treasures He's lent us so tight

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that He's got to wrench them away from us, and leave our poor hands all torn and bleedin'! He wants us to hold them in our open palms, so to speak; and when His time comes to take them, just we be quiet and submissive, like children who know their father loves them too well not to seek their good, even when he does what he knows will grieve them.

"Isn't God good? isn't He just? isn't He 'too wise to err, too good to be unkind?' Are you wiser, or better, or more to be favored than your blessed Saviour was? and yet His Father laid on Him the whole chastisement of your peace and mine! Oh Hopie, darling, your trouble, great as it is, ain't worth namin' beside of His; for God hasn't hid His face from you as He did from His beloved Son, you know that!

"But He was submissive in His heart of hearts through the whole of it, never a murmur, nor yet the spirit of murmuring; but it was—'Even so, Father!—not My will, but Thine!'

"Now, dear child, I tell you solemnly, you won't be right or act right till there ain't but one will between you and God; and that not your will, but His. Believe me, there won't be but one will in Heaven; and there oughtn't to be but one on earth; and there won't be, either, with the true Christian when he gets into his proper place!"

Mrs. Green ceased. She had spoken rapidly, earnestly, and her words had not been in vain. Hope rested her pale cheek upon her hand, and for a long time there was not a word spoken. At length Hope broke the silence.

"You are right, aunty, quite right. I see it all now; and oh, how blind I have been! Will you help me to rise?"

Mrs. Green did not question, but obeyed in silence.

"Now bring me my dressing-gown and slippers."

They were brought, and put on.

"Now leave me alone, aunty!" and Mrs. Green obeyed.

As soon as the door was closed, Hope sank upon her

knees, and she did not rise until the victory was gained, and 'Even so, Father,' became the conscious breathing of her chastened yet submissive spirit.

How long she had been in prayer she did not know; but when at length she raised her tearful face, she saw her nurse, who, after long waiting, had stolen into the room unobserved, standing patiently beside her.

"Is it all right, my love?"

"Yes, auntie, it is all right!" whispered Hope. "O dear, dear friend, more than a mother to your weak, erring child, how shall I ever thank you as I ought for the lesson you have taught me to-night? Now help me to undress and kiss me, and leave me, for I shall sleep to-night in the arms of that infinite love which so sweetly enfolds me. Yes—

'My heart *is* resting, O, my God!

I will give thanks and sing!—

My heart *has* found the secret source  
Of every precious thing!'"

The next morning all were surprised to see Hope enter the breakfast-room leaning upon her nurse's arm, and sought eagerly to know what had brought about such a pleasing change. Hope said but little until the meal was over; then in a few words she gave the substance of what has just been narrated, and begged that special thanks might be offered to God on her behalf.

When devotions were over, turning to Mr. Leeds, she said:

"I think, sir, from some things I have gathered from your remarks, that you know more about my dear father and his affairs than I do; but I have never had the heart to ask you any questions. If there is anything you think proper to communicate that I do not know, I can hear it this morning."

"Are you strong enough, my child?"

"Strength will be given me according to my need,"



said Hope, meekly; and folding her thin hands across her lap, she listened silently and with bowed head to the little Mr. Leeds thought prudent to tell her.

"Poor, poor mamma!" she sighed, when Mr. Leeds ceased speaking, "how will she bear all this? O, sir, we must pray for her! Gordon has told me she once professed to love Christ, but she has long worshipped at other shrines than His. Dear Mr. Leeds!" she added with sudden energy, as though a new thought had dawned upon her, "to study, and labor, and pray for her restoration, must be much, *very much* of my future work! Will I, do you think, ever see her brought back?"

"My child, *'if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth!'*"

"True, true," said Hope, thoughtfully. "Oh, sir, my life must be a different thing in the future from what it has been in the past. I have lived too low; I have been too fearful and half-hearted in all I have ever attempted for Christ. Will you pray for me that my life, if spared, may be one of greater progress?"

"Yes, Hope, but you must not disparage the work God has already permitted you to do for Him. You have already seen some precious results from your prayerful service of your Lord. You do not forget, do you, that He has given both Eva and Jack to your faith?—the one, a poor, trembling, tempted lamb, safe in the blessed fold above; the other to be, as we trust, a laborer in some capacity for many years in His vineyard below."

Hope did not speak—her heart was too full. At length she said, softly, yet more to herself than to her listener, "Dear, dear Jack! my own only brother! how glad—how thankful I am, that his feet are set in the safe way; perhaps he, too, may aid in bringing back his poor mother to the way of obedience!"

That evening, when Dr. Leonard called on Hope, he was amazed to find her sitting with her portfolio before her, writing a letter.

"Why, how's this?" he exclaimed, seating himself

beside her. "Only last night we were all down in the dolefuls about you; and to-night you're not only out of bed, but at work! Give me this portfolio, if you please, Miss Ellisson;—there!" he added, smilingly, closing, and tossing it under the table, "let that lie there at least three days and three nights before you even venture to pick it up, or you run the risk of my severe and lasting displeasure.

"And now, be so good as to inform me what has wrought this marvellous change. You look as though you had taken a new lease of life, except that you have no color yet."

Dr. Leonard was not a Christian, not even a believer in the Bible; and though too well bred to scoff at religion openly, he was nevertheless averse to its teachings, and made no secret of it. Hope knew this; she knew, too, that his aversion to the religion of the Bible had been the one barrier to his becoming more closely allied to the family of Mr. Leeds; and it was because Laura Hastings would not trust herself in the neighborhood of the fascinating infidel whom she loved, and to whom she well knew she was as dear as his own life, that she had again returned south, whence he had followed her on her coming north two or three years previously.

Hope had more than once observed a smile flit across Dr. Leonard's face when their conversation had taken a serious turn; and he had once ventured in her presence to express his regret that Gordon Leeds, his "old friend and pupil, should have thrown away his splendid talents upon such a medley of inconsistencies as the Christianity, so called, of the Bible."

Hope had not replied to this, but she now felt that she was called upon to answer Dr. Leonard's inquiries frankly and without any disguise. For a moment she felt she could not gain courage to tell him the simple story of her last night's experiences, and of the surrender of her own will to the will of God, which He had then enabled her to make; but a consciousness of her duty to Christ and to the man before her was too

great to allow her to be silent; and looking up timidly, she replied:

"Doctor Leonard, if you would only believe that what I have to tell you is *real*, as real as the setting of the sun yonder in the west, as the singing of that bird outside the window, as your own existence, I should love to tell you—but—"

"But what, Miss Ellisson? I am surely not so blind as not to see that a great change of some sort has visited you! Be so good, then, as to explain this 'miraculous interposition' of whatever kind it is; for I am impatient to hear!"

The doctor's light words, the slight tinge of irony that characterized them, but above all, the half amused, half critical look with which he regarded her, embarrassed and disconcerted Hope; but after a momentary hesitation, she proceeded with what she had to say.

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### CHAPTER LIII.

AT first Hope spoke slowly and hesitatingly, as she recounted some of the sorrows that had preceded her late illness; spoke of her parting with her father in the expectation of only a brief separation; of the crushing weight with which the tidings of his death had fallen upon her, and of the abject despondency, bordering upon despair, to which she had so long been yielding herself a prey.

"But last night," she added, "I was made to see that I was acting the part of one who had lost confidence in God; or, more properly, as it seems to me, of one who had never had any; virtually calling in question His wisdom and goodness, as well as His right to do as He would with both mine and me!"

She then very briefly and concisely gave the substance of what her nurse had said to her, of her repentance and humiliation before God, and of the victory of faith He had given her, by which she was able to leave everything in His hands, trusting un-

questioningly to His unerring wisdom and perfect goodness in regard to all the events of His providence.

"I am very glad, Miss Ellisson," said Dr. Leonard, gravely, for he had evidently been a deeply interested listener, "that your spiritual enthusiasm—for I can call it by no higher name—has been aroused by some means, and while I gravely question your conclusions, both in regard to yourself and the nature of the help you have received, I congratulate you none the less upon the results, mental and physical. You are evidently in a better state in both respects, and as long as you keep in your present tone of mind your health will improve.

"But you must beware of reaction; and I advise you to hold frequent conferences with that wise nurse of yours, for she evidently possesses a subtle skill 'for ministering to minds diseased,' to which I lay no claim. When you are strong, however, I intend to wage war with some of your notions; you see I do not call them *theories*, for they will hardly bear the name; perhaps, in the meantime, you will devote a portion of your leisure to furbishing your weapons for the conflict!"

There was a look of pain and disappointment in Hope's face, but she answered, quietly:

"There is none of the enthusiasm of a vain superstition in all this, Dr. Leonard. The reality of what I have been speaking of is no matter of conjecture, is the result of no meaningless, spiritual ecstasies. I trust, sir, you will sometime realize, as perfectly as I do, the truth of these things, by a consciousness of certainty that admits of no question. I shall not need your advice further as a physician, I trust, but I shall always think of you as a friend; may I beg your acceptance of this little book, as a token of the interest I feel in your happiness and welfare?" and Hope took from the table an elegantly bound copy of the Scriptures, and extended it toward him.

It had been a parting gift from her class in the

Sunday-school at Weston, and in it she had marked many precious texts; it was hallowed by a thousand tender memories of Eva, under whose pillow it had lain for many weeks her constant companion and study; but notwithstanding all that, she offered it freely, yet with trembling dread lest it should be refused.

Dr. Leonard colored, hesitated, and at length shook his head.

"Pardon me, Miss Ellisson, that old history has no charms for me. I have no faith in it as a religious guide, or as a correct exponent of truth. I would rather not accept your gift."

"Doctor Leonard, I entreat you to accept it! Oh, sir, the universe cannot purchase its treasures from you, if once you make them yours!"

The doctor took the book mechanically from her hand, and for a minute stood balancing it upon his finger.

"And you expect me to read this book, Miss Ellisson—possibly to believe it?"

"I shall certainly pray, sir, that you may be led both to read it and to believe it, as I do!"

"*As you do*, Miss Ellisson!—ha, ha!" and Doctor Leonard laughed his merriest laugh, as he still poised the little book upon his finger. "Now, listen! I *will* read this book; and in one year, if we both live to see the day, I shall undertake to disabuse your mind of two things—first, of its power to change my opinions, much less my heart; and, secondly, of the efficiency of your prayers in bringing about the result you intend to pray for!"

Doctor Leonard slowly placed the book in his pocket; the smile had faded from his face, and there was a sternness on his finely formed lips that Hope had never seen there before. But it passed as quickly as it came, and, with a pleasant "Good-bye," he was gone.

"I tell you, Mr. Leeds," said the doctor, as he encountered the minister at the door, "your power of

influencing and persuading is completely overmatched. Here you have been doing your best for the last two or three years to accomplish what your fair enthusiast upstairs has accomplished in little more than the same number of minutes. Look here, sir!" and Doctor Leonard held up the Bible. "I am actually committed to two things—first, to *read this book*—think of that! and, secondly, to prove to Miss Ellisson, within a specified time, its powerlessness to change my opinions; and, also, the powerlessness of her prayers to bring about the result for which she has promised to pray!"

"I can assure you, then, Dr. Leonard, you are very bold! Now, sir, beware! You are entering the lists not simply against that book and Miss Ellisson's prayers, but against the Holy Spirit of God, who will accompany them both!"

"You think, then, I stand a chance of being defeated?"

"I do, sir!"

"Well, we shall see!" and Doctor Leonard slowly replaced the book in his pocket. "Your friend, sir, is much better; keep up her spirits now, and she's all right. Good-night!" and the next minute the doctor's quick, energetic footfall was heard along the sidewalk as he hurried away to make his round of professional calls.

That evening, in spite of the doctor's prohibition, Hope finished her letter to Gordon, and, by due course of mail, received the following answer:

"You will have seen, by the post-mark, before opening this, that I am not, as you supposed, in New York; having been summoned to Weston by an urgent message from Doctor Eberly, who felt he could not spare me another day, and I could not lay his patience under any further tax by asking him to do so.

"I left my sister with her business nearly closed up; and, as you now know of her changed circumstances, I may speak freely to you in regard to them. She had resolved to sell everything, even to her jewellery; and

was about making arrangements to do so, when her creditors interposed, and insisted upon her keeping all articles that had any special value to her through association with those she had lost, such as family portraits, keepsakes, books, etc., together with many other articles which I need not stop to enumerate, but which will be to her of inestimable value. I should not dare tell you of this, my darling, but for the precious assurance I gain from the dear letter before me, that you have at length found the Rock of Strength; and, with your feet firmly planted there, can bear the dashing of these stormy waters with Christian calmness and fortitude. My own heart is overflowing with thankfulness for this; and I now feel that for you, at least, the worst is past.

"My sister has realized enough from all sources to satisfy, though not fully to remunerate, her creditors; and they have generously allowed her enough to make her comfortable for the present. I left her and Norah who, I think, would have died of grief if she had been separated from her mistress, at a boarding-house; having, not, however, without great difficulty, secured my sister's consent to return to our old parsonage home at Weston, as soon as I can get it fitted up for her reception.

"Jack I brought with me, for I need his help; and a good fellow he is, Hope, true as steel, and honest as the day. Poor Amy! it was hard for her to consent to go back to the old cottage, with the roofs and towers of Prairie House looking out upon her, day and night, from their embowering green. My heart ached for her; but what could I do else? I would have said, go to Augusta, if you can be happier with her; but as you have learned from Jack's letter, the Warren's are bankrupt. Herbert has taken a position as bank clerk on a very meagre salary; and, from what I saw of Augusta, I am sure her mother could never live with her. Poor girl, she was well-nigh furious when she found the property was all gone! I think my sister felt it a relief to have her go away, and I

am sure I did; for, as there was no help for the trouble, her ceaseless murmurings were peculiarly hard to bear.

"My sister, at one time, had her mind made up to rent a house in some country village, and go back to her old occupation of dress-making; and it was only when I assured her that, unless she returned to Weston, I could not possibly carry out my plans for Jack, and when he united his entreaties to mine, that her resolution seemed at all shaken. Indeed, I greatly doubt if she would have given way even then, but for something I have yet to speak of.

"'But what of Hope?' she said to me, one evening, after we had for some time discussed the question of her return to Weston; 'I tell you plainly, Gordon, I can never ask her, after her all is gone, to sit down with me in that dreary place. I want to go among strangers; and endeavor, with my own hands, to make some amends to her for the ruin that has been brought upon her.'

"'Hope,' said I, 'belongs to me, Amy. My home is to be her home!'

"'Never shall I forget the look she gave me! 'Gordon,' she said, 'do you mean to tell me that Hope is to be your wife?'

"'Yes, Amy, that is precisely what I mean! Hope has been my very own ever since that sad, June night, when she opened her eyes in the dear old cottage-home in Weston; mine by solemn troth since the day she was eighteen; and she is coming to be the sunshine and joy of my home, as soon as I can get one prepared for her.'

"My sister looked at me until I almost feared she was going to faint; then she came quickly, and, sitting down on a little stool at my feet, leaned her head upon my knee, and wept as I never saw her weep before. And I let her weep, my darling, for I had sometimes feared that her reason would give way under the stern, tearless self-restraint she has imposed upon herself since your father's death.



"After a long time, she raised her head, and, wiping away her tears, said, with somewhat of her old staidness of manner :

"Gordon, am I to understand that all these years, since Hope has been betrothed to you, you have, of your own free choice, left her in my house, knowing all she was doing and suffering, all the risks of every kind she has been running ?"

"I confess to you, Amy," I said, "that when I knew the troubles that seemed impending, I tried hard to induce Hope to come to me, and let me provide for her an easier and happier lot. But she refused. I will give you her own words, for they are indelibly fixed in my memory. After refusing to leave home, while she saw any chance of doing good there, she wrote :

"Write to me, comfort me in my loneliness, encourage me in my toil, soothe me in my bitter grief if you can ; and, above all, help me with your stronger faith to cling to Christ, or I shall die under the burden that comes rolling on, and which, unless God interpose, is as inevitable as doom ! I have never told you, I may never tell you, all that seems impending over my beautiful home. You know, in part, what I refer to, you know my darling father's frailty, and oh, if the anguish might stop there ! But it is not likely to ; and in all this great household, I alone seem gifted to see !"

"Dear Hope, it may seem to you cruel that I should have repeated *this* ; but I did, and I do not regret it. It was well, it was only just to you, that my sister should know *it* ; and I think it will do her good.

"There, Amy," I said, "you have the secret of all these years of waiting. You see how deliberately Hope took up the *task* to which she consecrated herself with such a heroic will ; tell me, Amy, do you not think she has done her duty, and deserves her reward ?"

"My sister did not answer. She buried her face in her hands, and for a long time seemed struggling for composure ; at length she raised her head, and in an unsteady voice, replied :

“Gordon, I have wronged you, and wronged Hope. I was jealous of you both; and, blinded by that jealousy, I misjudged you both. I knew you were very fond of each other, though I did not dream of what you have just told me, and I made myself believe that, in caring so much for each other, you did not care as you ought for me and mine.

“And this, this daily sacrifice on the part of you both, but particularly of Hope, has extended over all these heart-breaking years; consuming your youth and eating out the freshness and buoyancy of both your lives!

“Dear, patient Hope! dear, uncomplaining child! Gordon, do you think she will ever forgive me? will you, *can* you forgive me?’ and my poor sister dropped her face again upon my knees, and wept bitterly.

“Do not name it, Amy,’ I said, as soon as she could hear me, ‘do not name it, knowing us both as you do! And now, what of Weston?’

“I will go, Gordon, if you will allow me to! I will go, if it is only that I may now and then see my dear husband’s best beloved child; and sometimes kiss her hand; Heaven knows, Gordon, it is more than I am worthy to aspire to!’

“Thus it was at last arranged. I have been here only three days, but I have workmen already at the old parsonage, freshening it up, and making some additions, and I expect, in a month or so, to have it in readiness for my sister to come to. In conclusion, I have a favor to ask of you, which I beg you will *not* grant, if it is going to be at the least self-sacrifice or inconvenience. If, when you get a little stronger, you can spare her, I should like much if you would send Mrs. Green to me. I shall need her wise counsel, and, perhaps, a little of her help; and, as she is to live with us, I am sure she will be willing to help me plan the details of *our cottage*.

“And now, my own little love, I foresee that you are going to get strong and well very fast; and in the early autumn, if God will, you are going to *come home*;

and, leaving the sad, sad past, with all its burdening memories in our Father's hands, we two will, with His blessing, begin a new life and a new work for Him."

## CHAPTER LIV.

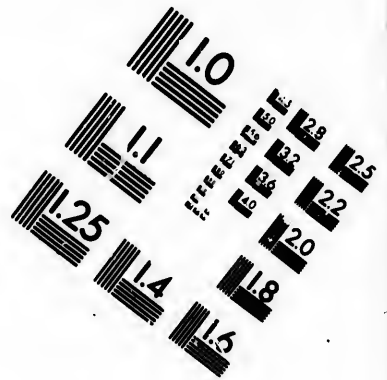
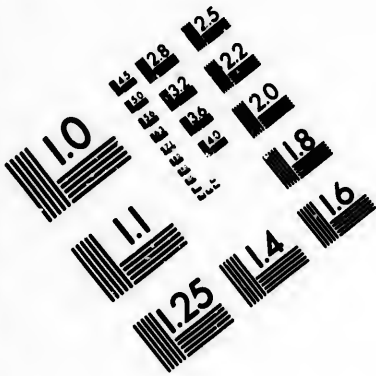
"AUNTIE," said Hope, re-folding the letter and laying it on the table before her nurse, "here is a letter from Gordon which I wish you to read. It contains particulars of my home, and of poor dear mamma, in which you will be painfully interested, and of which I cannot speak. Doubtless, too, you will find a surprise in it, but I trust, not an unpleasant one. While you read, I will rest myself a little," and Hope walked to the other side of the room, and throwing herself upon a sofa, buried her flushed face in the pillows.

Mrs. Green adjusted her spectacles, and turning up the light, unfolded the letter and began to read. Presently she pushed up her glasses, looked eagerly at Hope, but her face was not to be seen, and as if comprehending that she was not to be disturbed, again, though evidently greatly excited, lowered her spectacles to their place, and proceeded with her reading.

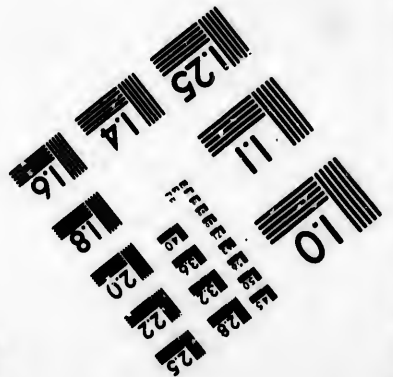
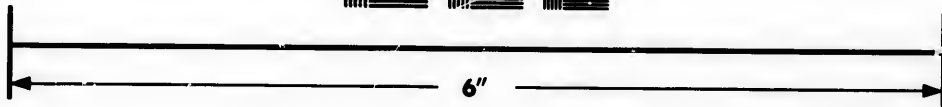
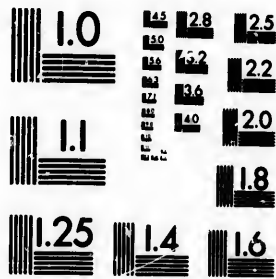
But at a certain point she stopped short, and dropping the letter, lifted her hands above her head, but once more the fear of preventing Hope from sleeping checked the exclamation she was about to utter, and again seizing the letter, she read on, alternately wiping her eyes and her glasses, now tapping the floor with her foot, and now shaking her head or nodding and smiling, as if under the pressure of some extraordinary emotion.

At length she could withhold no longer; but throwing down the letter she ran to Hope, and clasping her closely in her arms, hugged and kissed, and cried over her as though she had really been the babe she so many times called her.





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"It is so funny I shouldn't have thought of it, havin', so to speak, brought up both of you. But there, I never did, and that's a fact! Dear me! dear me! and I'm to live with you—right in the very house with my two own darling children! Why, dearie love, it's more than I can bear!" and the tender heart broke down in hysterical weeping.

"Go and help the dear boy fix up a home for my own sweet girl! I guess I shall, as quick as ever the car'll take me there!" she exclaimed, at length, wiping her eyes; "I guess I shall! that's to say if you can spare me!" and checking her transports suddenly, she looked anxiously at Hope.

"O yes, auntie," said Hope, smiling through her tears, "I can spare you, if you feel inclined to go."

"You are perfectly sure, now?"

"Quite sure, dear auntie! you may dismiss all anxiety on my account!"

"Then I shall pack up to-night, so as to be off by the first train in the morning. Let me see; the folks here have breakfast at seven; and the cars go at half-past eight, don't they? That'll give me plenty of time; so I'll hurry right off, and get my packing done as quick as ever I can, for it won't do to keep you up late after all this excitement, you know!" and away she ran, leaving Hope, at once too sad and too happy to talk, watching from the cozy nest of pillows and cushions where she lay, the rapid movements of the excited woman, and smiling with genuine pleasure at the various expressions of wonderment and delight with which she hurried through her task.

In making his accustomed visits among his patients, Doctor Leonard had quite forgotten the little book he had placed in his pocket while passing out of Mr. Leeds' gate. The night wore on, and at last, as he paused at a street lamp a few feet from the door of his boarding-house, he was surprised at the lateness of the hour.

"Past one o'clock," he muttered, as he applied the

latch key to the door of his lodging, "and perhaps half a dozen calls betwixt this and daylight! If this isn't a dog's life, I'd like to know what is!" and turning the key again in the door, he ran quickly up the dimly lighted staircase, and entering his own room began to make hasty preparations to retire.

"What's here?" he exclaimed, half aloud, as his hand touched the Bible which had lain for so many hours forgotten in his pocket. "Oh, I see, Miss Ellisson's Bible! Aren't you a precious fool, Dick Leonard," he soliloquised, turning up the lamp which had been dimly burning and nearly blinding himself with the sudden glare, "aren't you a precious fool to pledge yourself to read that bundle of myths? But you know, Dick, you've bound yourself to it, so there's no escape. You've thrown down the gauntlet, too, for something further, and there's no receding from the conflict! And so, my fair Laura, your worthy step-father calls me '*bold*,' does he, and thinks I'm pitted against more than my match? Doubtless, if you knew I had committed myself to such a perilous undertaking, you, too, would be on your knees pleading for my defeat!"

"Miss Ellisson wields a dainty pen," though, he continued, following Hope's delicate pen-strokes along the margin of the leaves, and before he was aware he was reading verse after verse that had been marked for other eyes than his; eyes that had read and re-read them, and had at length closed upon the fading and perishable things of earth, haply, to open again upon that fairer, brighter land of which many of those passages spoke.

Dr. Leonard grew interested, and seating himself continued to read. Here was a verse that spoke of Jesus as the succorer of the tempted; there was one setting Him forth as the exalted High Priest who can have compassion upon the ignorant and them that are out of the way, for that He also was compassed with infirmity; and here, again, was one naming Him as the Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering.



Sometimes he would follow those penmarks through the Old Testament, and sometimes through the New; now among the ringing melodies of the Psalms, and now among the, sometimes plaintive, and sometimes triumphant, strains of prophecy; but everywhere there was Christ, now as the Atoner, then as the Sin-bearer, stricken, smitten, afflicted; Christ the Prophet, the Priest, or the Sacrifice, the Redeemer and the Life, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

Little, indeed, had Hope thought, as often in the still night-watches she beguiled her weary vigils by marking those precious portions of God's word, of doing it for any eyes but those of her poor, tempted, yet repentant Eva.

Little had she dreamed of the strong man—strong in the pride of intellect and opposition to the truth, yet weak as weakness itself, without divine aid, to escape from the thralldom of unbelief, who, in another solemn midnight, would sit alone, regardless both of weariness and time, reading, some of them more than once, those sacred texts from God's word.

What subtle power was it that held Doctor Leonard that night to such an unwonted task? that drew him on through the pages of that despised book, keeping him all the time face to face with Jesus, the One who had been to him, more than all others, "a root out of a dry ground?" What subtle power, do we ask?

What, indeed, but His from whom that Bible came, and whose word it is. His who made it all instinct with His own life; "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

And thus it is, often, with true Christian effort. The seed may be sown with no thought but of one perishing soul; but lo, as it springs up, there is the germ of a mighty harvest!

At length the lamp paled in the rosy flush of morning, and Doctor Leonard looked up wistfully from his

book, pressed his hand for a moment upon his brow, and then, extinguishing his useless lamp, dropped the heavy curtain, and still holding the little book, threw himself upon the bed and was soon fast asleep.

"Good morning, Mr. Leeds! and good-bye, as well!" said Doctor Leonard one bright morning about a month afterwards, as he paused for a moment at the minister's gate. "I am on my way to the station, bound for the South."

"For the South, doctor! this is sudden; no bad news, I trust!"

"None, sir; I am going to see Laura."

"No, Leonard, surely not!"

"Why not, sir?" what do you see unreasonable in it?"

"Nothing specially unreasonable, still I should not have expected it. Have you any word from her?"

"Of course not, Mr. Leeds; Miss Hastings is too pious a lady to correspond with an infidel!"

"Leonard, my dear fellow, I do not like to hear you speak of yourself in such a way; much less to hear you using sarcasm in speaking of Laura. If ever a woman acted conscientiously, she has acted so towards you; and she has done right."

"True, sir, true; Miss Hastings is a noble lady, and has acted out, as I fully believe, her honest convictions of right, and I beg your pardon if my remark seemed in the least disrespectful. But I hate a religion, sir—mark you, *I hate it*, I say—that can draw such lines between souls that love as we do!" and for a few seconds the proud man was white with passion. "Yes," he added at length, in a softer tone, "I am off to the South, to be gone a month or two. I trust you are all well?"

"All well, thank you! but what of your practice in the meantime?"

"I have a good man installed; you may consult him with confidence."

"Doctor Leonard, pardon me, but indeed I wish you

would not go! You are only running into the teeth of another disappointment; I speak as a true friend to both yourself and Laura."

"Be so kind, my dear sir, as to spare both yourself and me any further remonstrance. My mind is made up, and I am not to be turned from my purpose.

"Pardon my giving you the trouble, but will you oblige me by handing this to Miss Ellisson; and please remember my compliments both to her and the other ladies. Good-bye, sir; my time is short, I see," and glancing hurriedly at his watch, Doctor Leonard walked rapidly away.

Mr. Leeds stood for some time watching the receding form. "Poor fellow," he said with a sigh, "I was hoping he had given up all thoughts of Laura. His visit will only be a renewal of the old pain to both of them, for he need not dream of her ever altering a decision based upon such considerations as hers is. Laura has too much of her mother's nature not to follow her own convictions of right, no matter what sorrow or heart-aching it may involve. But what is this? Really, it is the Bible Hope gave him. What of his promise to read it, I wonder, and to convince her of the powerlessness of her prayers."

Mr. Leeds walked thoughtfully to the house, and handing the book to Hope, retired at once to his study.

"Why, it's my Bible!" exclaimed Hope, as she removed the paper in which it was loosely wrapped, and as she did so a note fell upon her lap. Unfolding it she read:

"MISS ELLISSON,—Please pardon my returning this little book, but I see by the inscription that it is a present which I am sure you must value very highly; and therefore I cannot consent to keep it.

"But that you may see I do not return it from unwillingness to read it, allow me to assure you I *have* read the greater part of it already; and shall—remembering my promise to you—promptly purchase another,

and finish the perusal. Whether I ever redeem the remainder of my pledge, remains to be seen.

"Yours,

"LEONARD."

Hope was disappointed. She had prayed much that the Bible Doctor Leonard had so reluctantly accepted might be made a great and lasting blessing to him; and she had believed she was praying in faith.

Was this all that was to come of it? Had God failed to hear her prayer? If so the fault must be hers, not His; for He had promised to hear the prayer of faith. Perhaps she had been placing more confidence in the written word she had placed in Doctor Leonard's hands than in the power of the Holy Spirit, without whose gracious influence that word would be ineffectual to reach the proud man's heart.

Hope was deeply humbled. She went to her room with a sad heart and there laid the case before God in prayer. When she rose from her knees it was with comfort and renewed confidence.

No one knew, till long after, how Mr. Leeds had spent that long summer day; but at evening, when he rejoined his family, Mrs. Leeds read in his face the records of a day spent with God, and she believed it had been in prayer for Doctor Leonard.

"The doctor is evidently in trouble," he said to her, later, when they were alone. "I never saw him looking so care-worn and unhappy, and there was a tinge of bitterness in his language that very often betrays a burdened heart."

"We must still trust our heavenly Father to guide him," said Mrs. Leeds. "Many prayers have followed him for many years, and I cannot suppose they will be lost. Gordon does not forget him we may be sure, and poor Laura will never cease to pray for him until she ceases to live.

"And," added Mr. Leeds, with solemn emphasis, "*the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much!*"

## CHAPTER LV.

DOCTOR LEONARD did indeed carry with him a burdened heart. His reading of the Scriptures had not led him to repentance ; had not, indeed, convinced him of his lost state and his need of salvation, but it had disturbed and unsettled him, and forced him upon trains of thought which for years he had persistently avoided.

Questions of momentous interest had again sprung up in his mind, each demanding more sternly than ever before, a solution that should satisfy his reason. Yet toil as he would amidst the unsatisfying theories in which he had entrenched himself, he could find none.

Nature, man, the universe, God, each, all, confronted him with baffling mysteries, yet mysteries from which he could find no escape. At length, disgusted with himself, dissatisfied with his surroundings, and angry with God, he resolved to leave home for a while, hoping in change to find peace of mind.

For many days he fought the hunger of heart he felt to see the woman he loved, and make one more desperate effort to shake her resolution never to marry a man who was not a sincere follower of Christ. He loved her deeply, but he just as deeply hated her religion, and he felt that in making her his own, he should at once achieve a triumph over that religion, and secure the happiness he had so long coveted.

But as he stood on the deck of the steamer in which he was to sail for New York, where he intended to spend a few days before proceeding South, and heard on every hand the murmur of cheerful voices ; as he looked out upon the placid waters, and up to the glowing sky, he realized that change, of itself, can give no release from torturing thought. He felt deeply conscious of being out of harmony, not only with his surroundings, but with himself and the

whole universe of God, and turning away he sought a retired place where he could nurse, undisturbed, his gloomy and dissatisfied thoughts.

Presently a young man approached, evidently intent, like himself, upon finding some quiet retreat, and taking a seat not far from where he was standing, took from his pocket a small book, and, opening it, was soon absorbed in its perusal.

It was no ordinary face that engaged Doctor Leonard's attention for the next half-hour, and in which he felt himself every moment growing more and more interested. It was a pale, delicate face—one which bore unmistakable evidence of disease, yet one almost faultless in outline; the broad, white forehead, and the clear, spiritual eyes, bespoke a mind of the highest order. "A student, no doubt," thought Dr. Leonard, as he turned away, and walked slowly up and down the deck, yet unable to quite withdraw his attention from the stranger, he could not go far away, and at length approaching him, he remarked with a smile:

"You are very studious, sir; may I ask what it is that engrosses you so much?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the stranger; "do you read Greek?" And, handing the doctor the little book, watched, with curious interest, the expression of his face, as he turned leaf after leaf, alternately glancing from the text to the pencilled notes along the margin, and back again to the text.

"A Greek Testament," he said, at length, returning the book; "it seems to possess a peculiar fascination for you! I hope it is the inexhaustible riches of the grand old language in which it is written, rather than the stupid story it tells, that attracts you so much."

Doctor Leonard felt, rather than saw, that those earnest eyes were searching his face with a sad, surprised expression; he bore it for a few seconds, and then, looking round, said, with a forced laugh:

"I see, sir, you are surprised, perhaps shocked, at my remarks; but, if you are, why, so be it; I have only spoken what I feel!"

The stranger rose quickly, and, bringing his chair in front of Doctor Leonard, opened his Greek Testament, and laying it on his knee, entered at once, not into a *defence* of the Scriptures, but boldly and fearlessly assuming their truth, as a revelation from God, in a calm, earnest, and loving spirit, proceeded to unfold to his listener the wondrous plan of salvation therein revealed, and to entreat him, as under the just condemnation of the Divine law, to flee to Christ for refuge and eternal life.

Doctor Leonard listened with amazement. It was the first time in his life that anyone had dealt with him thus. Instead of grappling with his objections, and seeking to match argument with argument, as others had done, the stranger quietly, but firmly, waived all controversy, and, turning from everything of the kind to God's Word, he preached to his surprised and attentive listener the cross, Christ crucified and risen from the dead, as the only hope of perishing men.

From that hour the two young men were inseparable; and, long before they had reached New York, Doctor Leonard, almost without intending it, had opened his whole mind to his new friend, and heard from him, as something of which, till then, he had had no real comprehension, the Gospel of Christ in its fullness, in its simplicity, and in its complete adaptability to all the wants of man.

"Do you stop in the city?" said the doctor, as they two stepped upon the wharf.

"No; I proceed west by the first train."

There was little time for conversation; they exchanged cards, with mutual assurances of interest each in the other, and promises to correspond; and in a few minutes one was gliding swiftly away toward a distant goal and an early grave, the other, walking slowly and thoughtfully along the thronged streets of the city, with a strange, new gladness at his heart, as yet incomprehensible to himself, but soon to be revealed to his consciousness as the perfect rest of faith in the finished work of Christ.

Soon a crowd of persons, moving toward the open door of a large hall, attracted his attention; and he heard one say to another, "Will you come to the prayer-meeting?" Instantly his resolution was taken, and he entered with the rest.

The brief reading of the Scriptures, the singing of the hymns, the prayers that followed, the impromptu bursts of praise, and then the brief but stirring recitals of individual experience; how strangely, yet how sweetly they stirred his soul!

Now, a sailor rose to his feet, and told how God had found him far out upon the ocean, and had there put a new song into his mouth, even praise to His own holy name.

Now, the son of a widowed mother, long a profligate and scoffer, told how and when Christ had found him, and, lifting his feet up out of a horrible pit of miry clay, had set him upon the immovable rock.

Now, a little child told in sweet, simple utterances of Jesus' love to him; and now, a hoary-headed man, in faltering tones, and with many tears, told of the Divine love which, even at the eleventh hour, had found him away off upon the mountains of unbelief, and brought him and set him among the sheep of His own flock.

Suddenly, in the momentary hush which followed a burst of sacred song, a tall, manly form rose, and, while all listened with breathless attention, told a story of almost life-long unbelief and opposition to the truth; of a little Bible, reluctantly accepted, and read under the pressure of a hastily-uttered promise to do so; of the unrest, the hostility, the bitterness of spirit it had stirred up within him, in the heat of which he had fled from home, seeking relief in change of scene.

Then he spoke of a pale stranger who, instead of seeking to match him in wordy argument, as so many others had, told him the simple story of the cross, at which he had long scoffed as something in which to believe was dishonoring to man's intellect, and stultifying to his reason; who had fearlessly set before him



his ruin, and held up to his gaze Jesus Christ crucified as the only hope and refuge of the perishing.

Then he spoke tenderly yet joyfully of the hope, the trust, and the confidence he felt springing up in his soul, the sweet assurance that the Saviour, so lovingly set before him, had indeed revealed Himself to his faith as his Saviour from all sin; and as he sat down, the whole assembly, as by one consent, burst forth into the grand old song, old, yet always new—

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow!  
Praise Him all creatures here below!  
Praise Him, above, ye heavenly host!  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!”

Then the large assembly quietly dispersed; and amidst affectionate greetings and words of warm welcome, Doctor Leonard passed out again into the busy city, with a calmness of mind and a sweet peace pervading his whole being, to which he had hitherto been a total stranger.

“I shall not attempt to fulfil the rash promise I made you, Miss Ellisson,” so he said to Hope, a few hours later, in a letter which filled all that quiet parsonage with rejoicing, “for I *know* now somewhat of the power of prayer; and I realize that it is in answer to the prayers of many earnest souls that I have been disarmed and brought, a willing captive to constraining love, into the peaceful fold of the Great Shepherd.

“I have just turned from the perusal of the story of the demoniac who, freed from his merciless tormentors, sat lovingly down at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind; and as I laid down the book I said, ‘that is just a portraiture of myself!’

“Not many days ago I rushed from the presence of Mr. Leeds like one goaded on by tormenting fiends, as doubtless I was. But Jesus met me in the way, showed me His love and His compassion, opened my blind eyes to see Him as He is, and now, like him of whom I have been reading, I can only sit at His feet and plead that I may be with Him forever!”

## CHAPTER LVI.

MRS GREEN'S promise to go to Gordon as quickly as the cars would take her, was literally fulfilled; and as she stepped upon the platform at Weston, Gordon, to whom Hope had sent a telegram to be expecting her, was waiting to meet and conduct her to the old parsonage.

It had undergone many changes since she left it. The old foundation had been removed, and a more substantial one had taken its place; partitions had been taken down, thus making larger and pleasanter rooms; a suite of apartments had been added for Mrs. Ellisson's private use; every window that commanded a view of Prairie House had been closed up; the whole interior had been freshly plastered or papered; and there remained very little, either without or within, to remind one of what it had once been.

Only one room was changed in nothing except in the freshness of a newly plastered wall and carpeted floor; and that was the study. The little book-case stood in its old place, the books retained the same position as in former years, and the chairs and tables kept their old-time positions about the room.

"This," said Gordon, "I could not have the heart to change. It is the only room that will speak to my sister of the past; and I hope the memories that cluster here will do her good; the rest of the house will have little to remind her of what has been, or to awaken vain yearnings for what is not.

"This room, Jack," he said, turning to his nephew, "was your grandfather's study. It was here your mother learned her alphabet at his knee; and here I learned mine at hers; and here I used to bring Hope when she was tired of play, and rock her to sleep in that old chair, in which, years before, your mother rocked me."

"And where I will now rock myself by way of a

change," said Jack, laughing and seating himself. "But what will you say, Uncle Gordon, if, in after years, I should make this my study as my grandfather did before me?"

"Why, bless your heart, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Green, turning sharply round, "don't you know your grandfather was a minister?"

"Of course I do, auntie!" said Jack, his face suddenly assuming a look of deep seriousness; "and what's to hinder my being a minister too? Mr. Harvey told me only last night that he was beginning to feel the need of a young arm to lean upon. You don't begin to know how much work he gives me to do even now!"

Gordon watched with genuine amusement the varying expressions of the good woman's face as she glanced first at Jack and then at him, as if to ask what it all meant. At length he said quietly, "Jack is very fond of his old pastor, auntie, and his pastor of him, I think, for I often see them walking arm-in-arm from prayer-meetings and Sabbath-school to Mr. Harvey's study, where they spend long hours together. What will come of it I cannot certainly predict; but I know this, that Jack seems bent upon thwarting my plan for his education; and spends an hour or more every evening at the parsonage getting lessons in Greek and Latin."

"Well, I know, if *you* don't!" said Mrs. Green, impressively, wiping away the tears that were already filling her eyes; "I know just exactly what'll come of it. Oh, how little I ever dreamed of *her* son's becoming a preacher of the Gospel! *Her* son, *his* son!" she added, in a half whisper, as she walked to a window. "I ain't never again goin' to limit the grace of God by my weak faith, if I can help it! Our Jack a minister! well, well, if that don't beat everything!"

In a few weeks the work of repairing and re-furnishing the cottage was finished, and Gordon had written to his sister that everything was ready for her arrival.

"No, my dear, I won't go to meet her," said Mrs. Green, in reply to Gordon's question; "you and Jack will go, and I will just meet her here as quietly as possible. Poor, little dear, it'll be hard enough for her without me to witness her trouble! No, I'll just stay and help Jane about supper; and see that everything is as comfortable and cheerful as it can be for her when she comes."

The sun was sinking in the west when the train arrived; and as Mrs. Ellisson, followed by her faithful Norah, stepped upon the platform, its almost level beams dazzled and blinded her for a moment, and before she had time to recover herself, her brother's arm was around her waist, and Jack was stooping to give her his kiss of welcome.

"This way, mother!" he said, leading her to a carriage which was standing near; and, almost before she was aware, with Gordon and Jack on either side, and Norah and her parcels in front, she found herself rapidly driven away.

So skilfully had all been managed, that they were out of town and whirling rapidly along the quiet country road before she fairly realized she had been in Weston; and at last, when the carriage halted before her old home, she looked at Gordon in surprise and asked:

"Why, what place is this?"

"Only our old home in a new dress, Amy!" said Gordon, cheerfully, as he lifted her from the carriage; and leaving Jack to look after Norah and her parcels, he led his sister through the gate, and ushered her into the house.

"This way, Amy," he said, as she paused on the threshold, with a perplexed and doubtful look, "you see the old house is all wearing a new face for you. Here are the rooms I have fitted up for you; aren't they cozy?"

Mrs. Ellisson lifted her heavy mourning veil, and looked around. It was a quiet, pleasant room, large and airy, and though all the furnishings, from the

carpet on the floor to the little bronze clock on the mantel, were of the plainest, yet they all wore an air of studied elegance which none but those who knew well her tastes and preferences, could have given them.

Mrs. Ellisson looked eagerly around her; she seemed to take in at a glance the generous care and thoughtfulness it must have cost, and, turning to Gordon, she said, falteringly: "O Gordon, I am not worthy of all this consideration!" and, dropping upon a chair, she covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly.

Gordon waited until she was calmer, and then, leading her through a sleeping-room into a little dressing-room adjoining, untied her bonnet, and brought her water to bathe her face, all the while talking to her so kindly and so cheerfully that, by the time Mrs. Green came to call them to tea, she was composed—almost cheerful.

The tea-table was laid out with its old simplicity, and much of its old furnishings; besides these, there was little to remind Mrs. Ellisson of other days. Gordon took the head of the table, Jack sat down at his left, and Mrs. Ellisson mechanically took her place at the tray where her own tea urn, as faultlessly bright as in the days when Gordon sat in his high chair at her elbow, stood before her just as it stood then; Gordon waited a moment, then, lifting a small bell, rang it gently; Mrs. Green appeared at the door, and Gordon motioned her to take the place at his right.

"I insist," he said gently, as she hesitated and drew back a step; and, without a word, she came forward and took the vacant seat.

A look of surprise, almost of displeasure, passed over Mrs. Ellisson's face; the next instant, with uplifted hand, Gordon was asking God's blessing upon the food.

The meal passed pleasantly. Gordon possessed much of his uncle's rare ability to keep others cheerful and at ease. Jack, who was naturally and habitually talkative, found no difficulty in following his uncle's lead, and Mrs. Ellisson, though quiet and subdued, was evidently an interested listener.

Mrs. Green alone was silent and uncomfortable. But she knew that Gordon's will, on the present occasion, was law, and she quietly acquiesced.

"You are no longer my sister's servant," Gordon had said, "and you must never again take the position of one, either in her house or mine. As long as I live, if I have a home, you are to be an honored member of my family; there to take your well-earned place as a mother to both Hope and myself; and when my sister comes, it must be the same as long as we are in this house—which will necessarily be until our own house is in readiness. Any chagrin my sister might feel will be but momentary; her good sense will show her, on a moment's reflection, the propriety and the justice of what I propose."

When tea was over, Gordon opened a small Bible that had been placed upon the table, and reading a short lesson, motioned to his nephew to engage in prayer. As they rose from the table, Mrs. Ellisson looked around her in amazement, hesitated, and at length, scarce knowing what she did, sank upon her knees with the rest.

Many years of worldliness, carelessness, and alienation from God had passed over her since she had bowed at family worship; and now, in the old house where her father had prayed while she knelt by his side, she was kneeling again, and listening to a voice she had never heard before in prayer; to one whom she had never taught to pray; to one whom, until that moment, she had supposed unaccustomed to prayer—*her son!*

No wonder the beating of that mother's heart was audible to her own ears! No wonder the blood surged in swift currents to her face and brow, and her whole frame trembled with irrepressible emotion! No wonder that from the depths of her heart came up the mental wail, "Oh, I have had no part in all this! If my boy is a Christian, it is not I that have taught him! *not I!*"

Jack was sorely embarrassed, and at first stammered

and faltered painfully; but after a moment he gained courage, and, forgetful of those around him, poured forth his heart in simple and earnest petition. Gordon followed briefly, giving thanks for the way in which they had all been led through years of sorrow, and pain, and loss, back to the home of other days; besought God's blessing upon his sister, that she might find her way through sorrow and bereavement back to the cross and the Saviour, whose love is unchanging, and ended by invoking the Divine blessing upon the house thus renovated, and restored to its former occupants, and entreating that thenceforth it might be a home where He would condescend to dwell, sanctifying every heart and every life to His own service and glory.

And thus the old house was re-dedicated to God, from that day forth for many years to be a place where He should be daily worshipped and His name reverently feared.

When devotions were over, Mrs. Ellisson retired at once to her room, where Jack soon joined her, and Gordon, after bidding them both good-night, hastened to town where several professional calls were yet to be made, and several hours of office-work to be performed before he could, himself, think of rest.

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## CHAPTER LVII.

"Do you really suppose now," said one Weston gossip to another;—for, though Weston Society had greatly improved in later years, there was a goodly number of that class remaining—"do you really suppose that old Doctor Eberly, after living a bachelor for nearly seventy years, is going to get married?"

"Why, I shouldn't wonder at all, now! I never thought of it before, but I shouldn't wonder one bit! It's likely that that's the meaning of the new house he's building up on Park Street. It's a lovely spot, isn't it?"

"Yes, and a love of a house he's building there, too; they say there's no end to the old doctor's money. Somebody that gets it may thank her stars, though it be with the incumbrance of an old man!"

"True enough! I thought it queer the old doctor should be giving up so much of his practice to Doctor Leeds; but that's just it, you may depend. He's going to give Leeds the practice, get married and retire. I'd give a good deal to know who the lucky woman is who is coming in for that gem of a cottage."

"And I, too; but I can guess."

"No!"

"Yes, I can; and if my guess does not come true, you may set me down as a bad observer of the signs of the times."

"Whom do you mean, now?—I'm just dying to know!"

"Well, I must say you *are* blind not to have discovered that for yourself weeks ago! You haven't made as much capital as I have out of Leeds' fixing up the old cottage lately, and bringing his sister back to it; of course he must set her up with some little show of style, poor thing, until other things are put in train for *the* great event; all that, however, is just for the sake of appearances and nothing else. They all know what they're about, you may be sure of that!"

"Well, I must say you *do* see deeper into things than I pretend to; but isn't it all clear enough? I don't see how it is I have been so blind!"

"Nor I, either. I've seen through the whole thing from the first."

"As of course one might! Well, all I have to say for the old doctor is, he's a precious fool! He might marry any woman in Weston; and now to go and take up with *her*—as poor as poverty, and as proud as she is poor! But I've always said that all the fool of human nature comes out when a man makes up his mind to marry. Ellisson proved it once, and now old Eberly is going to confirm it!"



While this conversation was going on in one part of the busy town of Weston, quite a different one was in progress in the back parlor of a pleasant house not a stone's throw from Mr. Harvey's residence, where a group of girls of varying ages was assembled, each busy at work; and as the nimble fingers plied deftly their several tasks, the quiet talk kept even flow with the busy hands, except that now and then a silvery laugh rippled musically above the undertone of talk, or some exclamation of "Isn't that sweet!" "Isn't that just lovely!" caused every head to turn, and every voice to chime in with the general buzz of admiration.

"Wasn't it good of Mr. Harvey to tell us she's coming, and give us a chance for all this?" said one; "I wouldn't have missed it for anything!"

"Nor I," "Nor I," ran round the room, and still the busy hands worked on—some at bead-work or embroidery, some at a dainty pair of slippers, and some at exquisite bits of point-lace; while mats, ottomans, rugs, tidies, and a dozen other pretty things, ornamental or useful, which ladies are so quick to devise and skilled to make, were to be seen lying about in every stage of incompleteness, or else finished and spread out to view on a large table in the centre of the room.

"I'm so glad she's coming back," said one, holding up to the light a gossamer-like piece of point-lace she had just finished; "I hope she'll be my teacher again. I was just a little girl when she went away, but I loved her more than any other teacher I ever had!"

"And I, too!" said another.

"But, Nellie dear, she can't teach us all, you know, for some of us will have to be teachers ourselves very soon," said one of the older girls, as she folded up the last piece of an elegant toilet set she had expended her highest skill upon; "but we can all love her just the same!"

"Mr. Harvey," said Nellie Ames, a rosy girl of fifteen, looking up from a "WELCOME" she was weav-

ing in the centre of a wreath of moss-roses and lilies of the valley, "said she would be sure to have the young ladies' Bible-class when she comes, and next year I am to be sent up, so of course she will be *my* teacher for ever and ever so long!"

"Do you know, girls," called out a new voice from a distant part of the room, "that Miss Wild and Miss Grey, who have just returned for good from Rock-bridge Seminary, are painting a pair of companion pictures for her dining-room? My teacher says they are perfectly lovely!"

"Miss Wild and Miss Grey," replied another, "were in her very first class, so they told me. They were little bits of girls then, not bigger than Rosa Allen, here, but they love her dearly yet, as I wonder who doesn't that ever knew her as we did!"

And thus, through that long summer afternoon, the work went quietly on; a labor of love for the coming of Hope, to whom such a reward would be as new as it would be sweet and comforting; and still the ripple of silvery laughter with its quiet undertone of talk kept even flow with the young fair hands, till the shadows, darkening round them, warned them it was time to disperse.

"Here is something for you, my dear," said Mr. Leeds to his wife, about a week after the receipt of Hope's letter from Dr. Leonard. "It is from Laura, I see, and doubtless we may guess at its contents without risk of being very wide of the mark. I trust the bitter pain of those many years for both her and Leonard is now drawing to a close. Here, Hope, is a letter for you, too, and I am pretty sure it is the bearer of good tidings, for I have one from the same hand, giving what, doubtless, will be the most welcome item of news you could receive."

Hope blushed deeply, as she took the letter, and hastened to her room to read it unobserved.

Mrs. Leeds hastily broke the seal of her daughter's letter. It ran thus:

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I have many things I want to tell you, but my heart is so full of thankfulness and joy that I scarcely know how to begin; I will, however, hasten to tell you what is of the deepest interest to me, well knowing it will be to both papa and yourself a source of gladness second only to my own.

"Last Sabbath, when our pastor had finished his morning sermon, he came quietly down from the pulpit, and, without dismissing the congregation, said:

"There is a gentleman present, well known to many of you, who earnestly requests Christian baptism at the close of this service. He does not shrink from telling his story thus publicly before the church and the congregation, and I have great pleasure, dear friends, in affording you this opportunity of hearing from his own lips of the gracious dealing of God with him. He needs no introduction here. You nearly all have known him as a gentleman of probity and high intellectual attainment, but a radical and out-spoken foe to Christianity. He comes now to tell you a new story, and to recommend to all, who were once like-minded with him in his hostility to Christ, the religion he once despised and denounced; and I know the church will most heartily unite with me in bidding him welcome to its ordinances and its fellowship."

"He motioned the stranger to come forward; and now imagine, if you can, my surprise and joy to recognize in him no other than Doctor Leonard, whom, until that moment, I had believed to be following his customary pursuits in your town.

"In his relation of Christian experience, he went back to his childhood, to impressions received at his mother's death-bed, and which, for some time, were deepened by sorrow for her loss.

"Then came a long, sad story, the outlines of which you already know—and it is the history of thousands of young men—the fatal drifting away from truth toward error in its ten thousand forms, and which, in his case, as in that of many others, is the work, not of one year, but of many, until his early impressions were

either stifled or wholly lost, and he was ready, boldly and defiantly, to avow his hostility to the Bible, and his contempt to the God whom it reveals, fondly believing he had not only cut loose from Christianity and its restraints, but was never again to be fettered by its supposed delusions.

"But at length, in an unguarded moment, he accepted a Bible from one of his patients—I now know from whom—and, with vain temerity, pledged himself, not only to read it, but to prove to her its powerlessness to change his opinions, as well as the powerlessness of her prayers to lead to his conversion.

"He did read the book; and the old unrest of soul, from which he had fancied himself forever set free, revived, and with it all the bitterness of which his nature was capable toward the religion it revealed. At length he resolved to travel for awhile, hoping that change would give him back his lost peace.

"On the steamer in which he sailed for New York, he met a stranger—and, while he spoke of him, I think there was scarcely a dry eye in all that congregation—who, without wasting one precious moment in useless controversy, into which Doctor Leonard had always been able to draw others, and in which he had ever taken such pride, he boldly and fearlessly told him of his ruin, and the just condemnation that rested upon him; and, with a faithfulness and tenderness never to be forgotten, pointed him to Christ as an All-Sufficient Saviour.

"In New York they parted, probably to meet no more on earth; but, for him, the meshes of unbelief were rent away; the spell with which Satan had so long held him was broken; and he went on his way, rejoicing in his newly found freedom.

"Then followed his baptism, an event which brought joy to every Christian heart present; but oh, my mother! can you imagine what it was to me, who had waited and prayed for it until both faith and hope—I blush to say it—had well-nigh died out of my heart, and I was fast yielding to the dreadful belief that he

was going to drift farther and farther from the truth, until, at last, his feet would slide into irrevocable ruin. Dear mother, if you and papa loved and esteemed Richard so truly when he was an enemy to Christ, how much more will you now, when he is meek and lowly in heart, a true and sincere believer, and, like Paul, a bold defender of the truth he once despised!

"And now, my darling mother, you have, I am sure, already divined what is soon to follow this blessed event. I have resigned my position in the academy, and in about a month you may expect me at home.

"Richard will leave to-morrow for the North, and be with you in a few days; my coming must be delayed until the new teacher, who is to take my place, is a little familiarized with her work. Richard will make you acquainted with our plans, although you will already have anticipated them.

"Knowing that you and dear papa will rejoice with us in all we look forward to, and trusting to see you very soon, I remain, as ever,  
"Your own LAURA."

"And here is another face that is eloquent of good news!" said Mr. Leeds, as Hope took her place at the tea-table.

"Read this, my love," said Mrs. Leeds, handing her Laura's letter, "and you will find the sequel of the little story of your Bible, over the return of which you grieved so much."

Hope took the letter, and with a deep flush handed her own to Mrs. Leeds, saying, as she did so, "and you shall read mine, dear Mrs. Leeds; it is only due to you and Mr. Leeds that I should give you my fullest confidence."

An hour later Mrs. Leeds read the letter quietly with her husband; while Hope, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, was reading another which told her of the double joy which had come so unexpectedly to two lives in which she had long been deeply interested, and of the almost equally unexpected answer to her own prayer.

"And so our Gordon is coming soon!" said Mr. Leeds, as his wife replaced the letter in the envelope. "Well, he has waited long and patiently for his 'little love,' as he always calls her, and I'm sure his weary waiting will be amply rewarded in the possession of such a treasure!"

There was not much sleep that night for Mr. and Mrs. Leeds and Hope; the former, too happy in a happiness which so nearly affected their own home and hearts, were wakeful for joy and thankfulness; while Hope's unselfish thoughts were occupied less with her own sweet hopes, so rapidly nearing their fruition, than with the sorrows of the lonely heart-stricken mother, far away in the old parsonage at Weston; and among her most fondly cherished hopes that night, was that of soon being able to shed some gleams of sunshine over her desolate and blighted old age.

"And there, too, is dear Jack," she thought, "my own only brother! what a joy it is to know that his purposes are settled for a noble and useful life! that he is not going to float for a number of years aimlessly on with the current of events, ready to take any direction it may give him; but with comprehensive and far-reaching aims, is starting out in his early youth for an earnest and useful life."

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## CHAPTER LVIII.

It was a quiet morning in the dreamy month of October, when the hills were sleeping in the uncertain purple of autumn, and the woodlands were flushed with her richest and rarest tints, and while a cloudless sun was pouring its softened beams through the blue haze of an Indian-summer sky, that the four young persons whose history we have so long followed, stood side by side in Mrs. Leeds' pleasant drawing-room, and were united in marriage bonds.

This double marriage did not take place as a pre-

arranged event, but came to pass through one of those happy coincidences which not unfrequently occur in life, and are none the less pleasant because seemingly accidental.

Gordon had arrived just the evening after Miss Hastings reached home; and as it was necessary that he should return to Weston with as little delay as possible, it was settled that the marriage of herself and Dr. Leonard should take place at the same time with that of Gordon and Hope.

Accordingly, on the morning of the fourth day after his arrival, the minister's family assembled to witness an event which was to fill every heart present with gladness. There was no parade of dress, no ostentatious display of the trappings of wealth—for not one of the little company was rich, in the modern sense of the word but all were happy; and as the two fair brides, in their soft gray travelling dresses, took their places beside the men they so truly revered and loved, we may well believe that neither of the happy husbands, as he looked into the face of his bride, wasted an instant in regrets that diamonds and gold and costly laces had no place in her simple and tasteful attire.

The wedding breakfast differed in very little from what was ordinarily served at the minister's table, and the conversation was even more subdued and quiet than usual, for all felt deeply that in a few hours their happy circle was to be broken, and one who had long been in the minister's family as a brother and son was, with the sweet bride whom they loved scarcely less than he, to leave them for a distant home, in all the coming years to be but rare and occasional guests in their houses.

Breakfast over, Mr. Leeds engaged in prayer, commending all, especially the two who were going to leave them in a few short hours, to the gracious care and keeping of God; and then they all walked to the pretty cottage, not a hundred yards away, which Dr. Leonard had made ready for his bride, there to spend

the remaining time until the hour arrived for Gordon and Hope to leave for their western home.

After some time spent in conversation, and looking over and admiring Laura's pleasant new home, and its simple but tasteful furnishings, a family prayer-meeting was proposed.

"It is only meet," said Mr. Leeds, "that a portion of the time that remains before we are separated should be devoted to the worship of Him who has given us this auspicious day—a day so long deferred, so wearily waited for, and so often almost despaired of. I think we should show ourselves indeed unworthy of the gladness this day brings, did we not as families and as Christians, humbly and devoutly acknowledge God's goodness in a special and united service of prayer.

The suggestion was felt to be wise and timely, and all united in it with glad and thankful hearts; after which Dr. and Mrs. Leonard led the way to the dining-room where they sat down to a lunch provided for the occasion.

But the hour of parting came at length, farewells were spoken, and the carriage which bore Gordon and Hope from the circle of loving and tearful friends was driven rapidly away. Mr. Leeds and Dr. Leonard joined them at the railway station just as the train swept in—there were a few minutes of waiting, followed by affectionate adieus, and Gordon and Hope were gone, leaving no happier or more grateful hearts behind them, than those they bore away towards the setting sun of that cloudless autumn afternoon.

It was drawing toward evening when Gordon and Hope reached Weston. As they stepped upon the platform the first face they saw was that of Jack, who, flushed and eager, was making his way through the throng of people to meet them.

"My own sweet sister!" was all he could say, as he caught Hope with both hands; and then the true, loving heart gave way, and he turned aside to hide his tears.



"You're more welcome than June roses!" he exclaimed, a minute after, coming back to kiss her. "Uncle Gordon, welcome home, long life and happiness to both of you; though I am slow to say it, I mean it a thousand times over! Here, you dear, old love, how handsome you are! If there weren't so many folks about, I'd pick you up in my arms and carry you to the carriage; as it is, allow me to carry your shawl. This way," he continued, rapidly threading his way through the crowd, while Hope, who, between laughing and crying, had hardly uttered a word, at once too much touched by Jack's tenderness, and amused by his awkwardness to speak, followed, hardly keeping sight of him as he strode excitedly on.

"Where is mamma, Jack?" said Hope, at length, as she caught up with her brother. "I was hoping she would come to meet us."

"You'll have to excuse her, Hope," said Jack, slackening his pace; "she did intend to come till this afternoon, when she fairly broke down, and begged me to take her home; and I did so."

"'Home,' Jack; where has she been?"

"She's been at your house, Hope; every day since Uncle Gordon left, arranging and re-arranging so as to have everything just as she thought you would like to see it. But this afternoon, when all was done, she gave up; and I thought she'd just break her heart. You know she does not give way easily, and when she does, it means a great deal. She left her love, and said she'd see you to-morrow."

"Poor mamma!" cried Hope, her tears falling fast; "Gordon, cannot we go to her to-night?"

"Yes, my love, if you are not too tired; but first of all you must have your tea at home. Auntie would break her heart if you were to disappoint her in this."

In a few minutes they were at the door of their own house, where Hope was overwhelmed with welcomes from her fond, old nurse.

"How well you look, my darling child!" she said, as

she conducted Hope to her dressing-room, and helped her to get ready for tea, which, she said, was already waiting for her; "and you look as happy as you do well, blessings on your sweet face! I am sure if any one is happy, it should be you; for you have got just the noblest husband in the wide world, though I do say it! you ought to see how tender he is to his poor sister—if she was a baby he couldn't be more so."

"I can understand that," said Hope, "knowing what he is to me. But aunty, dear, you may give us our tea right away, if you please, for I must see mamma as soon as it is over."

Mrs. Green bustled away to look after the bringing in of the tea, and Hope rejoined Gordon, who was waiting to show her the house; for he had said, "I want you to see it while there is plenty of light to show things to advantage."

As he led her through the house he felt more than repaid for all his care and painstaking by her enthusiastic approval and admiration of it all. On every hand pleasant surprises awaited her, for in every conceivable place she came upon the work of her girls; and when at length a little work-table in her sitting-room was uncovered, exposing a collection of wedding gifts, all the work of those loving hands, she could no longer restrain her tears.

"Dear girls!" she exclaimed, looking them over one by one, "how kind—how thoughtful!"

"But what does this mean?" she exclaimed, as Gordon ushered her into the drawing room, and paused before a superb, almost life-like portrait of Colonel Ellisson, "O, Gordon, where did you get this?"

"It is not my gift, Hope. It was placed here by Doctor Eberly—there is his card in the corner, begging your acceptance of it as a token of personal regard. Ascertaining that my sister had a likeness of your father, he obtained her consent to have it copied for you; and he brought and hung it there with his own hands.

Hope gazed on the picture for a few seconds in

silence, and then burying her face in her husband's bosom, wept bitterly.

After a little she raised her head, and said, sadly—

"Forgive me, Gordon, but it was so unlooked for, so unexpected; and papa was so very dear to me."

"I understand all about it, my darling," said Gordon, wiping away her tears; "there is no need of apology for such tears as these. But come away, now, and we will think and talk of other things."

Their tea-table was charmingly laid out by Mrs. Ellisson's own hands, and bright with floral offerings—gifts from many who had thus soon learned to love "the young doctor," as he was called.

Over the mantel-piece little Nettie's pretty "WELCOME" peeped out from its wreath of roses and lilies, and every object in the room seemed to repeat the word to the gentle bride, as she sat down for the first time at the head of her own table.

By the time tea and worship were over, the sun had set; and as Hope did not care to ride, she and Gordon set out on foot to visit Mrs. Ellisson.

She was not expecting them that night, and as Hope stole unannounced into the room where she was sitting alone in the twilight, she caught her in her arms with a cry of unutterable love and grief, and leaning her head on Hope's shoulder, wept long and bitterly.

An hour later Gordon and Hope left her with her spirit calmed, and her heart soothed and comforted by their kindness and affection.

"I shall send for you in the morning," Gordon said, as he bade her good night, "and you must expect us to claim you at least one day out of every week, and as many more, of course, as you can afford to give us."

"We shall never consent for Jack to have you altogether," said Hope, glancing fondly at her brother, who had just returned from his evening lesson, as she kissed Mrs. Ellisson good night; "for my claim, mamma, is older than his by several years, you know."

As Gordon and Hope returned, through the sweet moonlight, to their own home that night, they mutually pledged themselves, whatever might be their own joys or sorrows, to make it their special aim not only to try and help Mrs. Ellisson to bear her griefs, but, if possible, to lead her back to the "Fountain of Living Waters" she had long ago forsaken for the "broken cisterns" of earth.

"Jack," said Gordon, "will be a great comfort to my sister, and more and more so as he grows older. He has as generous and noble a nature as I ever knew; he is really a diamond, in the rough, one that only needs time and polish to make him all our fondest wishes could desire.

"Is he not growing singularly like papa, Gordon? I used to think that Lee was more like him; but Jack is himself over again—the same genial face, manly figure, and easy, unaffected gait."

"Yes, Hope, and I think that in character, he is as much like him as in person—just what your father would have been, had grace come in early to elevate and purify what was naturally so noble and manly;" and Gordon sighed deeply as he drew his wife closer to his side.

They walked on in silence for some time. Gordon was the first to speak.

"Speaking of Jack, Hope, I am satisfied that after him, my sister's earthly happiness will depend almost exclusively upon us. Augusta's querulous and dissatisfied letters are breaking her heart continually. She writes every week, and there is not a letter that does not contain a fling at both my sister and you as being the authors, in some way, of her troubles. But for the money her dear father lavished upon you two, she might now be in a position to set up her husband in business again, and have a handsome income of her own.

"Indeed!" There was a touch of scorn in Hope's quiet response, but she said no more. A moment after she added, with sweet earnestness, "Let us hope, dear

Gordon, that even yet some influence may be exerted by which to soften and improve Augusta's character. She has some noble traits, if we may but reach them through the crust of selfishness and pride that overlies them all. I cannot but feel that God in His own time will answer prayer in her behalf, and bring both Herbert and herself to trust in Christ, as we do!"

Gordon stooped to kiss the sweet, tearful face that was lifted toward his own.

"True, true, Hope," he replied. "I am glad I have your faith to help and strengthen mine, for I find it sadly needed when I have to deal with such people as Augusta. We must not only pray for it, but, as we have a right to, expect it in answer to our prayers; and so far as we may be able, in the future, we shall labor for it. God has answered too many prayers for you and me, for us now to despair of *anything* we may ask Him.

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Reader, our task is done, but these *records* are not finished. It might not be unprofitable to trace these lives and fortunes a little further; to follow Gordon and Hope for a few more years, as they go forward hand in hand to their united work of Christian effort and usefulness; to accompany Jack Ellisson through his years of preparation for the Gospel ministry up to the day when he stands before a synod of grave, earnest men, and receives solemn ordination to his great and responsible work. But it is not necessary.

Enough has been written to show that, whether men sow to the Spirit or to the Flesh, as they sow, even thus must they expect to reap; that much of the harvest of every life is gathered here; that they that sow to the wind must reap the whirlwind; while those that go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, may do so in the confident expectation of returning again with joy, bearing precious sheaves with them.

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