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NOTHING LIKE

BLACK ON WHITE

— BY —

MISS E. F., - - - OTTAWA.



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PREFACE.

THIS Story may be very properly called a narrative of facts; the authoress having done little more than narrate what she has seen and heard, and, with a touch of fiction, linked fact with fact, so as to form a continuous narrative. It is different from other stories, because the facts make it so, and have not before been published. That it may prove pleasant and profitable to all who may read it, is the sincere desire of the

AUTHORESS.

Approved of and recommended by the following gentlemen:—

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NOTHING LIKE BLACK ON WHITE:

— BY —

Miss E. F., Ottawa.

My starting character will be Jack Barten, returning from school, with his books and slate strapped and hung on his back; nearing the house, Jack quickens his pace, and, by way of shortening the distance, clears the gate at a bound, then into the house with a whistle. He stops short, perhaps for want of breath. "My! but the house is quiet! where are the folks gone to? Is tea over, Aunt Hatt?" he said, peering into a small room, where sat an elderly lady, dressed in grey lustre, sewing and reading by turns.

"First question, first answered," replied Aunt Hatt. "The house is always quiet when the folks are out. Taint the walls that make the noise; Ned and Posie are feeding their pets. Your mother has gone to Uncle William's. So now, put away your books and go down to your tea."

Jack soon obeyed this order by sliding down the bannisters instead of going down step by step.

"Cook! cook! Aunt Hatt, I can't see the cooking apparatus, is she gone too?"

"No, Jack. Mary is putting out the clothes. Just look in the oven and you'll find some nice baked apples and meal cake. The tea-pot is on the stove, so hunt up and tend yourself. See that you give Jack enough to eat."

In a little while Jack came up stairs not quite so fast as he went down.

"That job's over, Aunt Hatt."

"That's right, Jack, and now, have you any news to tell me?"

"No; not anything that you would care to hear. Oh! Aunt, do you know, I saw a boy drunk down at the mills. Would you like to see me drunk, Aunt?"

"No, Jack, I would'nt. What boy was it?"

"It was young George Langford; his father is dead. You know the woman that washes here sometimes? Well, she is his aunt."

"But tell me, Jack, how did he get drunk?"

"Why, see here, there is a man boards with them, and he is foreman over the men at the works. George's uncle has something to do with it too. So when pay-day comes they treat the men, and, of course, Georgie has to be there whether he is wanted or not. His father had some cash sunk in that brewery, and they get so much a year for it."

"But, Jack, surely they don't give him a treat like the men?"

"Oh no, Aunt Hatt, but Georgie's heart is in the concern, and when pay-day comes he thinks it so manly to go round with a can of whiskey helping to serve the men. Then sometimes some of the hands won't drink unless Georgie takes a little too. They think a pile of Georgie, so they do. They say he has a heart large enough for a king. But, oh! Aunt Hatt, the fighting, and cursing and swearing that they have sometimes, man! it is awful!"

"But, Jack, does his mother know that he frequents such places?"

"Perhaps she knows something about it, but he is such a favorite with all the men at the mill that every one tries to shield him, and hide his faults. And the old cook won't hear of him going home till he is as sober as a judge."

"Well, Jack, you ought to talk to him in a friendly manner about it."

"So I did, aunt. I had a long talk with him once, and he listened attentively; then he turned round to me and said: 'Jack, I won't thank you for that speech, for I heard it all before, from my cracked aunt.' Then he walked off in high temper. So, that is all the news I have to tell you."

"I am very sorry, indeed, to hear such news; and now just stop, Jack, till I tell you something. Your intended uncle will be here in a few days, to take away his Lucy. Perhaps, I may have to go home to mother, for she can't live alone. How will you like that, my boy?"

"In some ways I would like it very well, and in some ways I would not."

"In what way would you like it, tell me?"

"'Cause, replied Jack, sometimes, when pa and ma, are out we could get up a fine game, only you won't let us make a noise. You always watch us so. Tell you what, we don't like it a bit. I would like you far better, Aunt Hatt, if you were not so cross."

"Well, Jack, you are very candid, at any rate; but can't you help, or teach me to be better natured."

"No, indeed, aunt, me to teach you! You're too old. You could not be taught now. So, as ma says, we must just bear with you. But, still, I would not care about you going either, for everybody knows that lame aunts are a useful institute, for they are always in the house, when everybody else is out, or wanting to go out, and you are real handy to sew on a button, or tell me where to get my lunch. Oh! here's Ned. Ned, Aunt Hatt is going away, to stay, perhaps."

"You're not tho', are you? said Ned, "If you do go you'll be sure to come back, when we want you to stay with us, won't you? And I'll be your little boy, Aunt Hatt."

Kind reader, I had almost forgotten the time-honored custom. I will now introduce you to my friends. Grandma Barton, as she was usually called, lived in a neat little stone cottage of her own. She had two daughters unmarried. One well up in years. She was the aunt Hatt, already mentioned, and had lived with her brother James for years. She was almost a cripple. Lucy, the youngest,

was about to get married and go away. Then William, the eldest son, was a farmer, and lived near at hand, but the poor man had just buried his wife, about six weeks before the opening of our story. He had six children,—Jim, the eldest, nearly fifteen, next to him was Robert and Robina, the twins, next was Nelly, next to her was Willie. We must not leave out dear little Lottie, the baby, and pet of the house. James Barton lived about two miles distant in the village of Lowry. His eldest son, Jack, was about fourteen.

Kind reader, come with me, Jack is going to grannie's to walk home with his mother. They are holding a consultation to-night to decide what is to be done.

"Well, grandma, is mother here?"

"Yes, Jack, but she is not ready yet to go home. Go into the sitting room, and talk to your uncle. He seems very low spirited to-night, thinking of his poor dear motherless children. Their cousin, Rebecca, went home the week before last, taking the baby with her. Lucy and I will be done with the tea things in a few minutes."

So whole-souled Jack joined his uncle and chatted away with him as cheerful as he could. "But, said his uncle, your pa is not home yet. Was it safe for you to leave at night? Will they not be afraid?"

"Afraid! no. Why, uncle, no drunken person or robber would come to a preachers house, or where there's an old lame aunty, they're afraid to."

"Why, Jack, do you think that she is as good as a watch dog? Oh, no, uncle, I did not mean any harm; but wait till I tell you what our girl Mary did one night when we were out to meeting. She saw some chaps prowling round as if they wanted to come in. So what do you think she did? She let up pa's study window, and the dining room too, then she drew on a pair of pa's big boots, and went about whistling the tune old hundred. But if the rascals had known it was only Molly, they would not, I guess, have gone away as quietly as they did. Why, uncle, there is pa coming; he has been to your house. Good evening. Good evening, William; I just drove up to your gate, and Norah called out that you were here, so I did not go in; are the children all well, William?"

"Yes, they are all nicely. James, I am glad that you have come, as we did not like to do anything without you."

Reader, we will now look into the neat sitting-room of the old home nest, where you will see a rather old fashioned round centre table, on which lay a few good, well preserved books. On a small mantle shelf, over the fire-place, were arranged a few china ornaments, and such like, flanked by a pair of bright brass candlesticks filled ready for use; also snuffers and trays, things almost discarded nowadays.

At what we call the head of the table sat Mrs. Barton, in black stuff dress, her serene and pleasant face surrounded by a widow's cap; on one side sat James Barton with his wife Jessie, on the other side sat poor William. Lucy and Jack had gone over to William's

to the children, and returned just in time to light the candle. Lucy then, sister-like, drew her chair close to her bereaved brother, and talked to him of her own future prospects. Jack was enjoying himself in teaching a little dog to sit erect, and beg for something to eat, and thus it was, my friends, the Bartons had been talking for sometime of the approaching marriage and parting with Lucy, also the bereavement of poor William.

Hardly eighteen months had passed since James' eldest daughter had departed for a better land, a more enduring portion. She was well provided for, her spirit with God, who gave it, her body in the storehouse of mortality.

They sat quiet for some time, then James spoke. "Well, mother, what are you going to do? Lucy will soon be away, and well provided for, but you can't live all alone. How would it do for Harriet to stay with you?"

"I do not know, poor Harriet is so lame, she would fret to see me working about the house and garden. She would try to do all she could to save me, but it would hurt her more than it would help me. No; I have thought of getting a little girl to assist me, and that would give me time to look into William's children, and then Harriet might come and go between us as she liked. Jessie, what do you think?"

"Me; I really don't know what is best to be done. She ought to be here herself to-night, instead of me, but you see James had the horse away, and she could not walk so far. You see Aunt Hatt has been with us so long, ever since Cecilia was born. She and I are just like sisters. I would'nt like her to leave us, but if you and she wish it, I have no right to oppose you."

"William, my son, what do you say?"

"Oh, mother, if you would only come to my poor children." I wish you could dispose of your cottage and orchard to advantage and come and live with me. It would be my greatest happiness to make you comfortable the rest of your days. You then could train my children as you trained us."

"I would like," said she, "to think of that a little while."

"What do you say, James, to William's plan?"

"I say it would save you a great deal of care and trouble, mother. Not to mention the comfort it would be to William and his little flock. Aunt Hatt has been one of our family so long, and she may live with us twice as long, and still be welcome."

A knock at the door here interrupted the conversation, and Jack, returning from opening it said, in a low voice, "Grandma Miss Langford wants to see you just a minute, if you please."

"Oh, Mrs. Barton," she called out, "I'm 'feared I'm imposing on ye, but can I bide here the night?"

"Yes, Maggie, yes."

"Oh, then, thanks, Mrs. Barton."

"No, no, Maggie, don't say a word, but just put the thanks into the stocking leg you were knitting the last night you were here. See, there it is on the kitchen shelf, where you left it. Lucy will get you a warm drink bye and bye, and your rug and pillows."

Maggie, thus welcomed, as usual, took off her dirty boots and laid them beside the wood-box; then taking out of her satchel, which she always carried with her, a pair of slippers, put them on, and a clean checked apron, also a clean kerchief, which she pinned around her neck, then folding her shawl and putting it in her satchel, she hung it, with her sunbonnet, on a nail. So careful was she to keep her work clean and to take up little room. Thus equipped, Maggie took the aforesaid stocking, sat down on the kitchen settle, and dexterously set to work. Jack passed into the sitting room, with both eyes and ears open for business. After considerable talking, the old lady agreed to give up her cottage and garden to her sons. She was to receive a small sum of money yearly, while she lived.

James said, "How would it do to buy them from you, paying you what we can just now, and the remainder as we are able?"

"That will not stand law," said Jack.

"What do you know about it?" queried his father.

"My dear boys," said the old lady, "I don't wish you to pay me. I know I'll be well cared for between you."

"Father," said Jack, "I heard my teacher say 'a bargain is not lawful unless written black on white.' Now, as I mean to be a lawyer when I'm big, I would like this job just for practice. There is paper inside the large Bible, and Aunt Lucy will get me pen and ink."

Jack's proposal drew a hearty laugh from his audience, and the cry arose, "Who's to pay the lawyer's fee?"

The boy, however, nothing daunted, drew his chair forward and adjusted the light.

"You understand," said he "this sale, present, or transfer, must be regularly writted out, and each of you must have a copy of it."

Some of them objected saying "That they could trust each other without paper binding them."

"But," insisted Jack, "I mean to do business."

So, to please him in his scheme, the papers were dated and commenced. The first contained a few mistakes.

"Father," said he, "I will write it on foolscap first, then copy it on better paper after it is corrected."

In a few minutes afterwards Jack, clearing his throat, read out what he had written.

"This is to certify that we, the undersigned, on this the— day of— entered into or made an agreement, by which Cosie Cottage becomes the property of (whom did you say grandma?) William Barton?"

"Yes, Jack, and the orchard to James Barton. I think the one as much worth as the other. I know, Jack, you like apples, and, William, my son, what do you say about taking your mother and the old cottage?"

Poor William could not find words to express himself, his heart was full, thinking of the comfort his mother would be to him and his children.

"Well, grandma, what price do you put on them?"

"I think one hundred pounds for the cottage, and the same for the orchard."

"Is it to be paid right down, grandma?"

"No, no, Jack, I will give them up now, and their own time to pay me the amount. Say twenty, or fifty dollars, just as they can."

Poor Maggie Langford had been listening in sad amazement. At length she ventured to stand in the door, looking towards young Mr. Barton. She said, "If ye please, will ye let me say a word or two? Aunt Hatt, that bides wi' ye, is she wastrife (ill-behaved), or does she drink?"

"Oh! oh!" cried Jack. "Why, Maggie, none of us is that bad. What put that into your head?"

"Nothing, Jack, but queer things come into my head, whiles."

"Well, Miss Langford, the sooner you comb them out the better," whispered Jack.

"Hush, boy," said his mother, reprovingly.

"I beg pardon, and now to business. Here, grandma, is the paper about the house. You see, I have stated what sort of a house it is, and that there is no debt or claim on it. Is that right?"

The old lady looked at the paper he had drawn out, feeling not a little proud of her grandson. "This," said she, "is very good for the first attempt," handing them to his father.

Mr. Barton looked pleased too see what a business tact his son had. "Ah! Jack," said he, with a smile, "you have much to learn of this scribbling, before you can take it up as a trade, my boy."

"If ye please," said Maggie, again interrupting them, "Mr. Barton, will ye wait a wee, for I feel strange the night?"

"I know what your uneasy about, Maggie, but cheer up. You can come to my son William's, where I'll be, and where you will find a stocking on the needles, and a settle in his big kitchen to rest on."

"Thank you, thank you, my kind friend; for two years you have allowed me a resting once a week in your kitchen."

"Now, you sit still," whispered Jack, "and put your thanks in the stocking leg, like a good girl, as my grandmother told you."

"Are you about through?" said Uncle William, "for I suppose we have to read over the agreement first, and then sign it. Eh, Jack?"

"If ye please, will ye let me say a word or twa," again pleaded Maggie, "before ye conclude the matter?"

"Just wait a minute," said Lucy. "These are family affairs, Maggie; it would be better for you not to interfere till they are all through."

"Yes, yes, Maggie," said Jack, "if you just wait till I get these papers signed."

"Oh, sirs, will ye promise to let _____"

"Amen to that, Maggie. I promise to let you put your name down, too. Just a few minutes, Maggie. Don't interrupt us while we look over this, and put our names to it. Then you may speak for half an hour, and I promise to draw up a paper for you, too,

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which will secure you one night's lodging at my Uncle William's every week for a twelvemonth, for which service you will knit me a pair of socks. Now, sit down by the kitchen fire, like a sensible girl, till I call you. Mother, ain't I getting into business? My! I'll be a lawyer before bedtime."

Poor Maggie stood in the door-way, between the kitchen and the sitting-room, trembling with excitement and nervousness. She let the stocking fall to the floor, clasped her hands together, and looked so sad that, at a sign from Mrs. Barton, they stopped, saying, "Speak, Maggie, tell us what troubles you to-night?"

"An' what for did I come here the night?" said she. "An' what for am I dressed in this auld threadbare druggie? Why have I to lie on your floor instead o' my ain feather bed? feathers that I helped to gather when I was a young lassie! What for do I go out wat days an' dry days? Why not bide in my ain comfortable room, by my ain fireside, where I had my good books an' my nick-nacks in the days that are gane by? Wherefore am I no' there noo? Why do I wanner aboot in such a stealthy manner, afraid to be seen; as if I carried a guilty conscience? Why do I sometimes hear the remark, '*She's no fricht in her mind,*' or '*she should be in the wark-hoose.*' Bear wi' me a little longer. There is one dark spot in my history that my Scotch pride made me hide fra' the world; but this night strange things pass through my heed. Maybe, I'm no lang for this world. My mother died before we came to this country. I was the suldest girl, an' so the care an' wark fell most on me. After a number of years my faither died, an' that without making a will, though he told us how he would like to divide things. 'Maggie,' he said, 'you will sleep in this room when I am gone; keep it, and all its furnishin', unless you get married. It would be a poor house without you, my woman, for you have been like a mother to the rest. And you, George an' Bessie, see that you give her due respect, an' live in peace wi' one another.' My brother had learned his trade as a joiner, under faither, and though left very young, yet, with the help an' guidance of a man that warked with faither, he got on very well. Soon after faither's death, poor Bessie sickened, and after lang nursing and watching on my part, and sore sufferin' on her part, she died. After that my brother was all the more to me. We felt as if we could not do enough for one another. My brother hired a bit of a lass to assist me in the garden, bring in the cow, and feed the geese. The man Brown I spoke of before, still warked and lived with us, an' we were real snug. But, oh! how uncertain is all human friendship an' love! In a few years my brother's affections seemed to cool. He cared less for my comfort, and often, if I hinted this to him, he would turn me away with a short, and even a sharp answer, as if I did'n't deserve common civility. In my trouble I spoke to the auld man in the shop, for I feared something had gane wrang there; or could it be possible George was drinkin'?"

"Oh, Maggie, lass, you don't know much about the world," said Brown with a smile. "George is no worse than other lads. He is tired of his plain old-fashioned sister—hard-working though she is—"

and longs for the society of one with more gayety and life. He'll be bringing home a new sister some of these days, and, of course, she'll be the mistress. Take my advice, and for George's sake, as well as for your own peace, try to love and respect her.

"A few days after this, George was looking round the house, passing from one room to another. 'George,' said I, 'is there anything you want me to do, or to ask me?' 'Maggie,' said he, 'when I want your advice or assistance, I'll ask for it, and then it will be time for you to speak.' I burst out crying, 'Oh, George! I want—I want—to be—' 'What are you blubbering about? Maggie, what do you want? To be a grand lady, eh?' 'I want to lie down with dear father and Bessie.' Now, you are getting tired of me. Maggie,' said he; 'you're at liberty to leave here if you wish, for I am going to get married.' Then he walked out into the workshop. The next night George being out as usual, the lassie was in the cellar for apples; I was baking pies; the old man was sitting in the kitchen, making a chisel-handle. 'Maggie, he said to me, 'you make a thrifty housekeeper; but you'll not hold office long here; you seem to settle down like that, I don't think you'll ever get married. You must get George to make some provision for you, for your father made no written will.'

"I replied, Father did not leave this property to George any more than to me. It can't be his any more than mine, unless from this, that George was working in the shop a few years, and is older than me; but have I not been working in the house ever since I have been able to dust a chair?"

"'Yes; that is all very true, Maggie,' replied Brown. 'But, my woman, I have seen more of the world than you. Take an old man's advice, and have it written down, 'black on white,' what your claims are, and when you are to receive it. You can, at least, claim a servant's wages.'

"'Black on white,' didn't I tell you?" said Jack. "Hush, Jack," said his father. "Maggie take that chair."

"I'm, sure," said Maggie, "I should beg your pardon for making so free, and for taking up your time so long; and, what takes me longer, I try to keep down my Scotch tongue, and speak so as ye'll understand, but I must hasten me."

"No apology, Maggie, no apology," cried several voices. "We are very much interested. Go on."

"Well, soon after this, George brought home his wife. I did my best to have everything in good order, and meet them with a hearty welcome. My new sister looked pretty, and acted pretty, but my coarse hands ill-contrasted with her lilly-white fingers. I retired to my room that night holding communion with my God and myself, praying for a blessing on my new relative. The next day, and the next again, I went about my work as usual, neglecting to consult the new mistress, although treating her with every mark of respect and kindness.

"My brother meeting me alone in the kitchen one day, laid his hand gently on my shoulder. His manner softened towards me. 'Maggie,' said he, 'you and I must not think less of each other,

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because there is one more to love; and I wish you would bear in mind that she is, for the future, mistress of this house, and, therefore, you ought to consult her, and yield to her wishes.

"'George,' I answered, 'I admit that she has the right to be mistress, but she seems to know so little about work, though, I don't like to notice it before her; and, dear me, the work must be done. You can't afford to keep a big girl, and you wouldn't like to have her white hands grow as coarse and brown as mine, would you, George? However, I am glad you mentioned it, and will mind better for the time to come. And, dear George, (for his unwonted kindness gave me courage to speak) in case of our not agreeing, will you make some provision for me, what you consider my rights, so that afterwards I may neither be a burthen, nor a dependent?' 'Yes, Maggie. I will bye-and-bye.' But that bye-and-bye never came. Years came, and years went. Nieces and nephews came, and my heart was drawn out to love them for their ain and their father's sake. All went kind and evenly till about four years ago, when I fell sick of a fever; and, knowing that the bairns would be exposed to it, I went to the hospital. When I recovered, I returned home to find my brother at the point of death. 'Well, Maggie, he said to me, 'you are spared, while I am to be taken away. Oh, comfort your poor wife and children; stay with them.' Then recollecting himself, 'Oh, I have forgotten you; I have just made my will, and all in favour of my wife and children. Can you forgive me?' 'Yes, yes, I do, my dear brother.' 'Susey,' he cried, 'Susey, for my sake, be good to our Maggie.' 'George,' said his wife, 'don't worry about her; she has only herself to provide for. She never wanted yet, and why should she now? Keep yourself easy about her.' My brother died. 'Oh, Master Jack, 'a death bed's no' the best place to make a will, an' it's no' the best time to prepare for yer Maker, mind ye that my bonnie laddie."

"I must hasten. Shortly after my brother's death, Susey said she would be obliged to have the room I occupied fitted up, as she expected to have some friends on a visit for a few days, and that I could have my things carried up to a garret room, where there was a straw mattress that I could lie on for a wee while; when I could get back again. Well; there was no way left for me but to submit wi' as good a grace as I could; besides, I thought it would only be for a short time, but the visitors are there yet, and likely to remain. They have rented the room, and are paying their board; and how is it with me now? I live, work and eat there yet, and sleep in the garret. But it is plain to be seen the young folk look on me as a burden on their widowed mother, and some of them are no blate to tell me so."

"But, Maggie, why do you go out so in bad weather, and at night?" said Jessie.

"Oh!" replied the poor woman; "must I tell you that too? My good sister does not allow a penny for clothes. For two years I have slept in that garret room, with scanty furnishin' an' little heat. I had to take some of my own clothes to make bedding. My Scotch pride prompts me to leave the house in this hidden, stealthy manner,

staying here, on my way up to the little town of Lowry, where I get plenty of work—spinnin', washin' an' ironin'—for which I get my meat and fifteen pence i' the day, for at least two days i' the week. But, if this comes to the ears o' the young folk, my nephews, they would take me to task. Oh! keep my seeret, I beg of you. How do you know but Harriet, your own daughter, may be servod the same way, or as bad, when you and her brothers are laid in the grave? Not that I have any cause to think ill o' Mrs. James;" and Maggie looked towards young Mrs. Barton with a sort of deprecating glance. "I feel as if I should really speak, and warn ye all from my ain experience, hoping ye will, each one, pardon my boldness."

While Maggie had been concluding her speech, the brothers, each in turn, held a folded piece of paper in the flame of the candle until nearly consumed, and then threw it in the grate.

Poor Jack looked rather mystified to see his first attempt at law so soon reduced to ashes.

"Now, Maggie Langford, see what you have made us do! What else would you have us do?" asked old Mrs. Barton.

"Keep a grip of this property while you live. At your death resign it to your unmarried daughter; to be hers while she lives. Then let it go to your grand-children. That's my poor advice; an' it need na' hinder you sharing wi' the others in the meantime, but keep your claim on it. I am sure you have allowed me great freedom to say a' this."

Then poor Maggie rose up to go into the kitchen. She stooped to pick up the stocking she had dropped; but, lo! a piece of the blazing paper had fallen on it, and burned a hole in it.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Barton; "no use knitting more on this. It will have to be ripped back. I'll lay it away for to-night; and you had better get to sleep; it's pretty late."

Maggie retreated to the kitchen, closing the door of the sitting-room; where we leave our friends to discuss their affairs, and see what conclusions they will come to after poor Maggie's voluntary advice and timely warning.

We will now look into Uncle William's comfortable house, within sight of the old homestead. Granny Barton has a fine large room, which is considered by all in the house as sacred to herself. She preserved enough of her own furniture to furnish it. The remainder, some she sold, and some she sent to Uncle James, and poor Maggie Langford's bare room was not forgotten. Lucy has had her share, and gone away with one who is well able to add more, and before going away they left a small sum in the hands of James Barton, to be expended for Maggie's benefit, and in this, perhaps, they were actuated less by pity for Maggie than to show that they harbored no ill feeling for the turn things had taken with regard to the property. Some weeks have passed since Maggie's sad tale, and again the two brothers and Granny Barton have confidential talk.

"Mother, do you know, I have got a tenant for your cottage and garden?"

"Well, William, I am glad to hear it. I hope they will be good neighbors."

"Well, mother, they ought. When I was on my way to the works this morning, who should I meet but Rebecca. She heard your cottage was to be let, and was coming to enquire. She says aunt is going to pull down the old house, and build a new one upon the same site. So they will have to take a house for a year. Their family is small, and your place could not be in more careful hands, and I don't think you'll be hard on them."

"No, William, they may have it for fifty dollars, and then we will have little Lottie near us. Surely God has heard our prayers and sent His blessing already. Don't you think so, James?"

"Yes, mother, God is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all. Oh! by the way, mother, I have got an appointment to preach once a fortnight in the Bay Settlement, where the Langford's live, and as I like to visit among the people once in a while, I called in Mrs. Langford the other day. She appears to be a nice sort of a body. The young people seem to be very gay, and fond of dress; so much so, I am afraid. I asked her if she had not an unmarried sister, or sister-in-law, living with her, she said 'yes, she had a sister-in-law there who was there before she came at all.' I told her I had been making enquiries several times for a Bible woman, that is a woman to take Bibles around to sell, and said she would be paid according to what books she sold, or what ground she went over. I said I had seen her sister-in-law a few days before, and the thought occurred to me that she might be a suitable hand; but of course, I must know what sort of a character she is. Is she honest, and of temperate habits? 'Well,' replied she, 'I can hardly say. She is honest I know, but is of such a turn, and so independent, that I fear her Scotch pride would not let her stoop so low. Indeed, I think people can buy all they want in the stores, without taking them into their houses.' 'Yes,' said I, 'but when they go to a store, they may, perhaps, see other good books with more gilt, and stories, and it may be cheaper too, and so the Bible is left on the counter. No, my friend, the Bible must be brought down in price, and brought into the house too, by persons, if possible, who have a knowledge of its value; and as to its being a law, or mean business, my good woman, it is anything but that. Kings and Queens might be honored by such work.' 'Well,' said she, 'I would advise you to look some other place, Maggie is subject to fits of anger, and ten to one but she would throw the Bibles at the people if they refused to buy them.' 'Well,' I answered, 'I am very sorry to hear that,—was she always so?' 'No,' said Mrs. L., 'she was not so bad till about the time she had the fever, and her brother's death.' 'I am sorry,' said I; 'very sorry to hear this of her. However, it may be all the effects of grief. Can you tell me how she acts? When those turns come upon her, does she laugh, or cry, or sing? I hope she does not drink.' 'Sir, I can't say she drinks, neither does she laugh, cry, or sing. But she does worse, she rages, and acts furiously, and seems to think that every body and every thing is against her, and seems

so thin-skinned about every thing we say of her. Then, when she gets tired out she rushes into her own room, where she remains for a long time; when she comes down her eyes are bloodshot and swollen, but her voice and manner quite calm. 'Well, Mrs. Langford, it's my impression her unhappy spirit is all the effect of circumstances. Has she anything of her own, or is she entirely depending on you? Or, it may be she is suffering from some disease. However,' said I, 'I must be going. But here is my address, and if Miss Langford will call at my place, I will be better able to judge, after conversing with her, whether she will be a suitable person for this business or not.'

"I am truly glad you thought of her, James. I have not seen her since that night she told her sorrowful story."

"Nor I either, mother. I dare say some of your woman folk will see about her dress, both for warmth and decency. Have you got everything out of the cottage, mother?"

"No, James, there are some things there yet, and, as Becca is going to live there, I'll just leave them. They are not needed here. Norah, William's girl, is fixing up my room very nice, so I'll feel quite at home."

"Is Norah going to stay on mother?"

"Yes, I think so. The children and she agree well. She is very honest and accustomed to the house, and she seems so attentive to Jim and Robert. Some girls are forever finding fault with boys, which, of course, helps to keep out of home, but not so with Norah. She never seems tired of waiting on them and on the little girls too."

"Oh! pa," said Nellie, "I saw a man with a monkey to-day."

"Did you, Nellie, and were you afraid?"

"No, pa! Oh! I want to ask uncle something!"

"All right, you are in for it, James. The children think you know everything."

"Robina wants to know as well as I, uncle, if there will be animals in the next world."

"That is very unlikely Robina, we have no proof in Scripture for that."

"Uncle! has monkeys got souls?"

"No, Nellie; no more than other beasts. God breathed into man the breath of life (not into beasts), and man became a living soul."

"Well, they look very wise."

"Yes, girls, I must say they are very imitative. Only a short time ago I heard a missionary say he had preached to a congregation of monkeys."

"Oh! uncle, did he think they were people?"

"No. I'll tell you how it was. In India, where the monkeys are very numerous, the houses are small and built so as to form a court; each house has a balcony, and very useful trees are allowed to grow, filling up the space between the buildings. It was in one of these courts that a missionary stood and preached to the natives who, at a given signal, gathered together, took their places, sitting

standing under the balcony. Soon a noise overhead caused the preacher to look up. He was amused to see the monkeys leaping from tree to tree, then on the roofs of the houses quietly taking their places on the balcony, overhanging the court, just like so many pigeons on the eave-trough of a house. There were far more monkeys than natives. Some brought their babies with them. Just fancy a mother monkey carrying her little ones to meeting, holding it tight under her arm. Sometimes the little creatures would want to play. But the old dame would check their mirth by a good shaking, or a slap. The gentleman said it was really laughable. The monkeys looked so demure and attentive, as though the sermon was for them. One poor fellow got tired and was making tracks, but was observed by others, of the monkey tribe, who pursued after him, forced him back, and held him quite a while on the balcony."

"Did they come regular, uncle?"

"No, Nellie, it was only as the notion took them. They are as troublesome as a lot of wild cats, always in some mischief."

"Then why don't they shoot some of them, uncle?"

"The natives would not kill them, Robina, for they believe the souls of their departed friends go into monkeys, and for all the natives know they might shoot their own great grandfather."

"But in time the gospel will dispel this darkness, and the heathen will be converted to God. James," said William, "there is one man, not many miles from here, that I would like to see converted."

"You are very moderate in your desires, William, I must say. I would not be so easily satisfied. I would like to see every man, woman and child converted. What man do you mean?"

"I mean Jim's boss, the saddler. He is a Roman Catholic, but a more upright man I never met. He is so very liberal in his views and sentiments. There is spiritual-mindedness about him that is not often met with."

"Then, William, according to your statement he is a Christian already. What more do you want?"

"I want to see him into a Protestant Church. He is too good for the one he is in. Indeed, I wonder that a man of his knowledge should remain there."

"Tut, William, better if there were more like him in it; leave him where he is. What would you expect of any church if all the good ones are taken out of it? No, my brother, for he may have an influence over others that we have not. Leave him where Providence has placed him."

"Oh! here comes wee Willie; come my poor boy."

"Uncle James, I used to wish I was your son, but I don't now."

"Why don't you now; or, rather, why did you before?"

"Cause your boys had a mother and I hadn't, but I have now."

"Why, Willie, I am not going to be your mother, just your grandma, the same as ever," said Mrs. Barton.

"Well, I know some boys get step-mothers, and you would make a splendid one. Don't you think so, uncle? Pa, will you let

Sissy and I go with uncle for a ride this afternoon? We haven't been up there for a long, long time, pa."

"No, my son, I think not; but, if your grandma sees fit, you may perhaps go on Saturday and remain till Sabbath."

"Oh! thank you pa, that will be so nice, and perhaps we will go to church with them, and hear Uncle James preach, and we will be in black clothes like them. Won't that be nice?"

"Ah, Willie, Willie!" said uncle James.

"A short prayer before you go, said William.

"Perhaps," added grandma, "it would be as well to call them all in and have worship at once, although its early—for my part I would like to go to bed early to-night. This has been a busy day with me."

"Very, well, mother, I know you are tired. Willie, ring the bell for the rest.

This was a little silver bell that had its place with the large family bible, and was never used for any other purpose. Indeed, the children looked upon it as something belonging to the bible and psalm singing. However, the children came in and sat down."

"Did Norah not hear the bell, Willie; said grandma "that she has not come in too?"

"Norah didn't want to, granny. She says servants can do without prayers."

"She used to come in with the others," said William, "until lately. I don't wish to compel her; it is a privilege free to all."

After prayers, James went home, and soon grandma rose to go to bed. There was only one bed-room on the first flat, and that was what used to be the spare room. It was there their mother lay sick. It was there she died. And, after that, William slept there with his youngest darling in his bosom. There were four rooms on the upper flat. Norah's room was at the stair landing; next to it, on the same side, was the boys'; opposite it was what used to be their mother's room. It was now to be grandma's; and one next to it was the little girl's room. Grandma is loitering at the foot of the stairs, looking wistfully at the children: "Which of you is going to take me to my room?"

"I will; I will;" and soon four pairs of little hands and willing feet are at grandma's service.

"Wait, children, till I speak to Norah."

"Norah, lass; you have to put another handful of meal in the pot to-morrow morning."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Good night, mother;" said William. "And, children, don't be noisy. Willie, you come down again."

"Yes, papa."

At the head of the stairs stood Jim, a soft, good-natured lad, holding out his hand to grandma, as she kissed him.

"Oh; that was on the wrong side, granny; that was just a common kiss," said Nellie.

"Well, well," said she; "you'll have to teach me."

"It was mama who taught us, grandma, She said the kiss had three words in it, and if we were angry or pouty with one another, she would not let us use that kiss; but it should always be on the right cheek."

"And what were the words, Robina?"

"They were, 'Peace between us.' Do you know, grandma, we gave ma that kiss every night while she lay sick; and after she died we did not like to go to bed without it. So pa said we might still kiss her every night before worship; but it was only for two nights."

"Poor ma; I wonder if she saw us?" said Nellie.

"Well, now, children, I want you all to remember your dear mother; and give me that kiss in memory of her. Come, Jim; I'll begin with the eldest."

Jim, with a firm step, walked up to where she sat in the cosey chair, and kissed her. Then each, in turn. Afterwards they ran down to get papa's good night.

"See, granny, our room opens right into yours," said Robina.

"Yes," said Nellie, "and we are going to sleep in our own room to-night."

"Don't you always do so?"

"No," said little Nellie, in a low voice; "we all slept in the boy's room after cousin 'Becca left. Norah said we would be company for one another, and it would be one room less to do up."

"Oh! Nellie, Nellie," said Robina; "you have told a lie. You promised—you know Norah made us all—that we wouldn't tell."

"But," said Nellie; "she meant not to tell pa or any strangers. You won't laugh at us, grandma?"

"No, my children; I will not laugh at you; but you must sleep in your own room for the future."

Next morning, after breakfast, some were gone to school, Jim was gone to his place, and Mr. Barton was about to follow, when his mother asked him to remain a few moments.

"William," she began, "what do you know about Norah? Is she a pure-minded girl?"

"Really, mother, I never like to call any girl's virtue into question. I have not the least doubt but she is as good as the rest of girls; when there is no temptation. She has no company coming to see her, and I think she is thoroughly honest."

"But, my son; are you aware that she has been having the girl's bed in the same room with the boys, under pretence of keeping them from being lonesome, and to save herself the doing up of one more room?"

"No, mother, I didn't know that. The day Rebecca left, I told her she had better sleep in the girl's room, or else have them sleep in hers. She said she would do so; although both Nellie and Robina said they were not afraid to sleep alone."

"Where did she come from, William?"

"Near K—, I think, about twenty miles from here; but mother dear, if you find fault with her, she'll very likely go off in anger,

and blame you for her dismissal, and what are you going to do without help?"

"That, of course, will be inconvenient, but still bearable, 'out of evils choose the least.' A little fable, bearing on this, has just come into my head. An Angel and a Sage, were walking together when they came to a carcass, and as they were hailed by the smell of the putrid mass, the Sage put his hand on his nose, turned his head to one side and walked hastily away. The Angel only smiled. A little further on the road, they passed a harlot sitting in gaudy attire. The Sage looked at her and smiled, but the Angel turned his face away, and fled from the place.' However, I must only watch her words and actions a while. By-the-bye, James and Jessie are going that way next week. I believe they could find out more of her character from the people there whom she lived with, before she came here."

"Yes, it would be just as well," replied William.

In a few days after the above conversation, Norah came to Mrs. Barton saying: "Please ma'am, I wanted to ask a favor from you."

"And what may that be?" said Mrs. Barton.

"I want a week's holidays, if you could spare me next week. I'll do all the work I can before I go, and be sure to come back at the end of the week."

"Very well, I'll let you know to-morrow, if I can."

After consulting with her son, the old lady gave her leave, and up to her word, the girl got as much of the work in advance as possible, then she left.

It commenced raining the morning Nora left, so she asked for an umbrella, saying she would see a chance to send it back from the station with somebody. During the day a man drove up to the door with a cart. He brought back the umbrella which Nora had borrowed, and said she had asked him to bring her trunk down in his cart, as she might get a chance to repair some of her clothes while away at her friends. "She told me," continued the man "that I would find it at the head of the stairs all ready." Mrs. Barton allowed him to take it away, thinking, at the same time, that it was strange the girl had not mentioned this idea before she left; but she was too honest and honorable herself to suspect the girl's design.

CHAPTER II.

We will now return to Willowvale, where our story commenced James Barton, finding that preaching did not bring him in enough in a scattered settlement to support his family,—in order to add to this, he devoted his spare hours to book-keeping for some of the business men of the village. To day he has brought up a ponderous ledger, and has been busy over it for the last hour. Jack is sitting at the window with his school bag beside him, working some very

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knotty questions. The boy looks out of the window, then at his father and the great ledger. You may see now, by his face and manner, that he is determined to try something that will bring in money faster than either preaching or book-keeping. Suddenly he exclaimed: "Oh! father, there's that queer woman, Maggie Langford, at the gate; what is she coming here for?"

"She wants to see me, Jack. Call me up when she comes, and you take this ledger down to the office."

"Please, sir, did you want to see me?"

"Yes, Maggie, you're not very busy, are you? Sit down; sit down till I have a talk with you. We want a woman to sell bibles, and I thought to employ you; but I am told, Maggie, that you have a very violent temper. Is that so?"

"And who knows or feels it better than I do myself?"

"But, my woman, you should try to rule your temper. It is a terrible sin to indulge evil passions, you know."

"Oh! sir, the spirit is willin', but the flesh is weak."

"Maggie, do you ever pray to God for strength to resist?"

"Yes, sir, every time I loose my temper I fly to the cross."

"What! Not while you are angry, surely?"

"Oh! yes, sir, its then I need it. You see, sir, young folk will, whiles out o' fun, an' whiles out o' spite, say hard things to me when I come in tired an' cauld. I just leave the kitchen, as soon as I can, an' go up to my ain room, an' then, O! sir, I want to tell you that I feel like one possessed, an' what can I do, but cast myself down on my bed, or on the floor, an' beg the Lord Jesus to take the devil out of me, an' O, sir, He does hear my prayer, an' sometimes afore leaving the room. He gives me a taste of his sweet peace."

"But do you never tell them this, when you meet them again?"

"Ah! what for would I cast pearls about to be trampled on?"

They think me a miserable, wicked woman; an' the're no far wrang either; but O, sir, I wadna change wi' them."

"But, Maggie, you say God hears your prayer, I wonder you don't pray for a change in your circumstances, so that you would not be a burden on your sister-in-law, nor exposed to the taunts of your nephews and neices, for surely you ought to take more pleasure than anything else in being a help."

"Aye! aye! I would; I would; but, O, sir, I have told all this to Jesus many a time, an' I believe if it was for my good, I would have been differently placed; but, sir, you see, I have so many blessings, maybe it wadna do for my soul's good to have more."

Mr. Barton surveyed her for a moment, then lowering his voice, said, in a pitying tone:—

"Maggie, one wouldn't think you possessed many blessings. I dare say you count them one by one, and can tell which is least and which is greatest.

"No, sir," replied Maggie, in a firm tone, "they are more than I can number; nor have I any small blessings, mine are all great, some exceedingly great. O! sir, I'm richly weel off, though I dinna' look much like it."

Mr. Barton was silent for a moment, and this was his thought. How much further will Scotch pride and independence go? "Well Maggie," said he, "it is good to feel all this, so long as it keeps us humble."

"O! Mr. Barton," said she, as she wiped an unbidden tear with the corner of her shawl, "when I think of the sufferin' an' trials o' some, an' the troubles o' others, I feel so confounded like, that I could hide my face in the dust for very shame at my murmurin'. You see there are some troubles that I stand in no danger o' meetin', although it may be selfish o' me to speak this way. I mean some lasses marry, an' their husbands turn to drinkin' an' that aye brings a host o' ills wi' it. Some get jealous o' one anither an' their hearts get parted, an' they have a little o' the ill place while they're here. Then, again, children whiles grow up to be a curse rather than a blessin' to their parents, by willfu' headstrong disobedience, an' even the best guided death will sunder them. That is a trial I'll be spared. Some lose their property, an' that's a thing I need'na fear. I ha' health, judgment, sight an' hearin'—that's what some has na'—O! sir, only for them dark hours that come on me I might be the very happiest woman in the world."

"Maggie, I would advise you not to think of these dark hours. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.' Take care of your health, if possible, eat well and sleep well, and do not work too hard. You know we are creatures of the earth, and so constituted that the mind affects the body, though some do not believe it."

"Oh! sir, I feel sometimes as if I were a slave to the devil, an' it does seem like presumption to call upon God in prayer, for no matter how much I try, my temper will get the better o' me. I fear it will be my ruin."

"Then, Maggie, do not try so much to resist."

"What," said she, "what do you mean? Not to try to subdue my failin', my own spirit. Surely you are not in earnest. Why! I would get worse, no one could live wi' me."

"Listen to me, Maggie," said the minister. "In some cases we are called on to resist the devil, and he will flee from us. In others we are to chase the enemy. In some cases we are only required to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. In others the victory can only be won by prayer and fasting, but in your case none of these will do."

"What do you mean, minister? Am I a castaway?"

"By no means," he replied. "Just undermine the ground your temptation rises on."

"Kind sir, you are the first that ever took such interest in my spiritual welfare, an' I have told you more of myself than ever I did to anybody. Now, if you would just make my way clear afore me, for, indeed, I whiles think I'm borderin' on insanity."

"Then listen to me, Maggie. Think not so much about yourself, good or bad, but set your brains to work to make others happy. Think of the perfect bliss of Heaven. The peace, the joy, the security from temptation there. Think of the perfections of the Deity. Let not your frequent failings come between you and Christ, and,

Maggie, you owe a duty, remember, to your mortal part, as well as to your soul. You were telling me you suffer from rheumatism and indigestion. Now, do you know this is telling upon your nervous system, and is helping to make you both irritable and low spirited. But, as I have some medical knowledge, I will give you something to take home with you, which, I think, will do you good. Depend upon it, your gloomy forebodings will vanish, when your prospects brighten, and your health gets better. But, Maggie, you have not said whether you are able and willing to enter this mission as Bible woman. Every Christian owes a duty to the rest of the world, and surely you might find, among all God's gifts to you; you might find one talent that you could trade with in His kingdom upon earth."

"I will try it willingly, Sir," said Maggie, "if you think me fit for the post."

"I know what you mean," said Mr. Barton, "and think you will be justified in commencing. And now my sister Harriet has a pair of strong boots that she will never wear, and which she said you might have. My wife and she went out to see a sick person; just wait till I see if they have returned."

As Mr. Barton left the study, the hall clock began to strike, and he paused a minute to count the hour. Maggie, who had contracted a habit of talking to herself from being so much alone, whispered just loud enough to be heard, "Surely the good Lord will bless them for all this kindness; but the praise is all Thine, Thine, Thine," and slipping down on her knees, said, "Let Thy presence come with me." She rose suddenly to her chair, as she heard the minister re-entering the room, followed by little Neddie with the boots.

"Here pa, pa—pair boots."

"Give them to her," said his pa.

Then another pair of little feet entered, and a fair-haired little girl held up another parcel. "This is for you, Maggie. Did my pa convert you yet? Mind, you must go to church now, but not in that old, ugly dress."

"Hush, hush, Sissy, don't talk so much," said Mr. Barton.

Then going to the book-case he unlocked a small medicine chest, and taking something out of it, gave it to Maggie, saying, "Use this according to directions; and if you have time, go to my mother's, to-morrow sometime, and she will see about your clothes."

"To-morrow is our own washing day," said she "but the day after I'll be at Mrs. Lunt's, and I'll go over in the evening. When would you like me to commence with the bibles?"

"Oh!" he said, "in about a week from this will do. It will not take all your time; one day or two in the week will do, I think; and I will give you a book to keep your accounts in. The prices will be marked in each bible, and here is a dollar to get a good, covered basket to carry them in.

Maggie rose to go, her heart too full to speak her thanks.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Barton, "I will trust to your Scotch face that you'll do what is right and honest."

So Maggie Langford went home, sat up a good part of the night trying to fix over her clothes. Next day she washed and scrubbed

all day, as her sister-in-law's girl was not able for all the work, and Maggie was used to it. But that night she did not feel well. Next day she ventured out to Mrs. Lunt's to wash. In the afternoon she felt very sick, and obliged to give up and go home. Two or three days passed and she came not. The Bartons were getting uneasy concerning her. At last Mrs. Lunt volunteered to go and see how she was. She was admitted by a little girl.

"I called," she said, "to ask if your Aunt is getting better yet. She left me a few days ago, right in the middle of my washing, so she did. Is she in just now? Just find out, little girl, if she can come and finish my washing? Or can I see your mother?"

"Ma," said the little one, running towards the dining-room, "here's a woman wants Aunt Maggie."

"Well, do take her up to her room, and don't stand gossiping there."

So the child led her up-stairs.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Lunt; "if the creature has to climb these stairs every night, before reaching the bed, I don't wonder she is sick."

"Please," whispered the child, "don't say any more about aunt washing out, for if Georgie or Maud hears it, they will be awful angry."

"Very well, I won't hurt their feelings, poor little dears."

"Oh," said the child, "they're not little; they're big."

"Yes," said Mrs. Lunt, "but the minds are little, I see."

As they got to the stair's head, the little girl said that her aunt had been very sick, but was getting better. Then opening the door about an inch, called through to her, saying:

"Here's a woman wants you to go and finish the washing."

"Tut, no!" said Mrs. Lunt; "go in, deary, and say a friend came to see her."

Thus reassured, the child went in, followed by Mrs. Lunt.

"Poor creature," said she, "are you suffering much?"

"No," replied Maggie, "not now; I was very ill for the last two days, but to-day I feel better, and hope to be about again to-morrow."

"The Bartons were uneasy about you; so I volunteered to come and see how you were."

"Oh, they are kind, kind; and so are you. How will I ever repay you all?"

"Have you not heard of one who can repay all for you?"

"No," said Maggie; "who is it?"

"It is Jesus."

"Oh, yes," said Maggie, "and he will openly confess them. 'Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these, ye did unto me.'"

"Oh! ma'm, I wish I could do something for Christ. I fear I'm only a cumberer o' the ground."

CHAPTER III.

"Well, well," replied Mrs. Lunt, "that reminds me of a little incident that happened during my stay in Quebec. I kept a boarding-house, and wanted a girl badly. At last one came, bringing a recommendation as a great worker. I said to myself 'I am all right now.' After breakfast, I told her to wash up the dishes; and, when the kitchen was done, I would show her the bed chambers to be done up. About one hour after, on going to the kitchen, I found her sitting on the door-step, with her hands folded.' 'Louisa,' said I, 'are you through?' 'Yes,' she answered; 'I washed every dish.' 'Very well,' I said, 'come up to the beds now. Make them up nicely, and sweep up.' In a little while I found her again standing with her hands folded. 'Louisa,' I said, 'why are you standing idle?' 'Because,' said she, 'I've nothing to do; I wish I had.' She then followed me into the kitchen, where I found the dishcloth and towels lying on the table unwashed, and the stove and kitchen in a perfect litter. 'Louisa, you have not finished here; you haven't tidied up at all.' 'No, ma'm,' said she, 'I don't do little things; I do all my work in lumps like, if you please, ma'm.' 'Well,' I exclaimed, 'I am afraid my house will never suit you, for all the work is in items.' So the girl of heavy work left me to look for a place where the work would be in lumps. Now, it often occurs to me, that God's people are like Louisa, too often they want to work for God, but it must be something big. They don't know anything about the little items and duties of daily life. Now, my friend, I do not say that this is your case, but see to it yourself that it is not so. Little daily worries at home, may all turn out for your good, if you can only look upon them in that way, remembering that you too have faults."

Mrs. Lunt, after a little more talk on secular matters, rose to leave although still seeming to have something on her mind. She left Maggie in much better spirits than she found her. Arriving at home, she threw off her broad-rimmed straw hat, and sat down on the first chair she came to. There she sat as still as if in a Quaker's meeting; so much occupied were her thoughts, that she never heard a footstep at the door; but with a heavy sigh, and giving expression to her thoughts, "I am so sorry."

"A penny for your thoughts, Becca," said the cheery voice of Mrs. Barton, "but first tell me how did you find poor Maggie? Was it her sickness that made you give that sorrowful sigh?"

"No, not altogether that; she has been quite ill for a few days past, but to-day she says she is much better. She was partly dressed too, sitting on her bed when I went in."

"Then tell me, Becca, is her room comfortable?"

"Well, the room is not so bad, but it's hard to get to it, her stair is so steep. It is an attic room, large and well enough lighted, but it must be very cold in the winter. It is evidently used as a lumber

room, although her part is very clean. The farther end was littered with old stove-pipes, broken boxes, and such things."

"Then, wherefore that desponding sigh, Becca?"

"Because, I must say I felt the smell of liquor; I cannot say whether it was gin, brandy or beer, and she neither looked nor acted as if she had been using anything of the kind. Still, who knows but that may be the reason she stops up there, and also the reason of her sudden outbursts of curious temper; because when I had bidden her good bye, and turned to her door, I fairly started, for there behind the door was an old cupboard with a door broken off; the bottom shelf full of bottles, some beer, some gin, and some whiskey. Now, what are we to do? What is the use of trying to help one that will just throw all away in drink?"

"Well," said the old lady, "I am very sorry indeed. I remember, now, of James telling me that Mrs. Langford implied as much as just left room to doubt. It may be, who knows that drink is the cause of her unhappy state of mind. Solitude and liquor have driven many a wise head crazy."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Lunt, "and I remember her telling me, the day she was washing here, that the minister had given her a dollar to buy a basket to carry the books in. Will it not be too bad if she has used that money. Dear, oh, dear! But the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Oh! did I ever tell you the trouble I had in Quebec with my French cook?"

"No, Becca, you began to tell me once, that your girl broke more dishes in one day than a month wages would pay for, and I have been thinking since, that it would be a good rule to establish, that a girl pays half the cost of all the dishes she breaks in one's service. It would make them more careful, I am sure. Why, really, some girls break and waste enough of their employers property as might cause poverty. They are so obstinately careless and thoughtless."

"Yes, gran'ma, that's all true, but my cook Levoy was not careless, only that one day. Some company were coming for dinner, a few extra dishes were required, and so I got a little girl to help my cook. About three o'clock I looked in. Everything was going on nicely. About five the little girl ran up to me saying, 'Please, mam, I am going home.' 'No,' said I, 'you can't go yet, you must help Levoy.' The child burst out crying 'Levoy chased me with a carving knife, and said if I came back she'd stick it in my heart.' 'Child,' said I, 'what did you do to vex her?' 'Please, mam,' was her answer, 'I didn't do anything; she—she's drunk.' 'Nonsense,' I said, 'how could she, I haven't even a drop of cooking brandy in the house.' It seems one of the boarders had ordered a small jar. It caught her eye, she smuggled it off to the kitchen, drew the cork, tasted enough to want more, then at it again, until the bottle was nearly drained. After a while I went to the kitchen. But, oh, such a sight. The demon of alcohol was at work. Levoy's face was purple, her eyes like balls of fire, as I entered she sprang at me, thinking I was the girl, I took the knife from her, bidding her fix the fire. I waited to watch her movements; looking

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about I saw the fowl that should have been roasting, was cut up in pieces and put in the swill pail, the vegetables she had put in the tea kettle, and filled it up with coal oil. Swearing at the fire, because it would not burn, she took a roll of butter and dashed it into the stove. I could stand it no longer. 'Levoy,' I said, 'go at once to your room.' As she turned to go, she passed a side table, where the dishes were piled. With one wild sweep of her arms she cleared the table, and my beautiful dinner set lay in a thousand pieces on the floor."

"'Becca, I wonder you allowed the boarders to bring liquor into the house."

"Dear me, Mrs. Barton, I am just as much against liquor as you are; but people who have the means will find a way to obtain what they desire. Why, I had a real accomplished lady boarder once, that could not be trusted with the money to pay her board. Her step-son paid me. Was that not sad? However, after Levoy's spree, I got a card for every room in the house. I had the rules printed, and in large capitals. 'No liquor allowed in this house in any condition whatever.' I had peace then. But Levoy filled a drunkard's grave, and I fear Maggie Langford will do the same. Oh, dear, I do!

"Yes, 'Becca, I fear so, too. Oh! it is bad for a man to drink, but ten times worse for a woman."

Kind reader, we will now leave the women to nurse their sorrows, while we hunt up old Brown. You remember we had him in our story before George Langford got married: we'll need him sometimes to help us along with our narrative. Of course we have to go back a little.

It is New-Year's eve. Suppose yourself in one of the large cities in Canada. The shops are beautifully lighted up. The streets are so crowded that one has to elbow their way along or they might be pushed off the sidewalk. And to-night, of all nights in the year, we may tell by the countenances of the passers-by what their circumstances are, and, often; their disposition, too. But never mind. Here is one jumping off a wood sleigh, who looks as happy as any.

"I thank you for the lift," he says to the driver; "and you'll be sure to bring a good load of wood?"

"Wee, wee!" said the man as he drove off.

Brown, for it was he, stood looking in one of the windows of a large grocery; then, taking out his pocket-book, he, with a pencil, took note of something in the window; then pushed his way into the shop. While he stood taking a keen survey of the display inside, a dapper clerk addressed him with: "What can I do for you, sir?"

"I want a pound of tea."

"Here," said the clerk, "are our samples."

"I don't know good from bad myself," he said; "but give me the very best."

"Will you try some of our coffee?"

"Yes; I'll take one pound of your best. And I want four pounds of soda biscuit, your very best mixed; nice fresh ones."

"Here they are," said the man with the linen apron.

"Now, half a stone of oatmeal; your very best, please. Four or five pounds of crushed sugar, and two pounds of old cheese; your very best, mind. Now one dozen herrings; the very best you have."

"I see you have a list," said the clerk, "just see if it is not sardines that is marked; they are far more in demand than herring by our ladies these times."

"No," said the customer, "she wouldn't be bothered with those gnats of things. There is more sense in common herring, only I must have your very best."

"All right," said the clerk, giving a wink to his boss, who just then appeared; "I shouldn't wonder if these groceries are for some 'very best' body."

"You are right there," said Brown, in a firm voice; "they are for my very best mother."

A number of other articles were chosen, and when the bill was made up it amounted to twelve dollars, which Brown cheerfully paid, and stood waiting till they would be put up.

"You are entitled to a compliment," remarked the clerk, "for your bill."

"What did you say?" asked Brown.

"A very best bottle of brandy," said the boss, putting down a bottle besides the parcel.

Brown shook his head. "You mean this for kindness, but, Mr. Graem, if I took it it might hinder me from bringing you another twelve dollars; so please put it on the shelf again. It doesn't agree with my prospects, neither for this world nor the next; but, if you want to treat me, I'll willingly take a few nuts and raisins for some little folks in the house."

"All right," returned the boss; and, taking a paper bag, he filled it with nuts, raisins and sweeties. "Now, you don't need to carry any of these things, our sleigh will be going out directly, and will deliver your parcel safe and sound. Just leave your address."

CHAPTER IV.

So while the parcel is on its way, and while John Brown is in the barber's shop, which he entered after coming out of the grocery, we will precede him to his mother's. There she is, the dear old lady, how anxiously she listens to every footstep, how hale she looks, notwithstanding her years.

"Your son has not come home yet, enquired Mrs. Crane? "Do you think he will come to-night?"

"Oh! yes," she answered, "my son will surely be here to-night. I only hope he will come straight home, for there are so many traps and snares to get people's money in the city."

Just then a man sang out "a box of groceries for Mrs. Brown."

"Who ordered these?" said Mrs. Crane.

"Her very best son," called out the man, as he walked away laughing, for he had overheard Brown's orders.

Just then Brown himself appeared.

"Well, mother," he said, as he passed his arm lovingly around her and imprinted a kiss on her wrinkled face. He then lifted up the box and followed his mother into her own room. After a few minutes' rest, and enquiring for one another's health, he took off his coat and turned to the box of good things, to see if all were there. "These are for you, mother. Come and see if they are good."

"Tell me first, my son, how is the conscience?"

"It's clear, mother."

"And the tobacco-box, John?"

"Smells as sweet as a nut, mother."

"Thanks to Almighty God for such a son. And I hope He will put it into the heart of some one to care for you, when you are old and feeble, for your care of me, John."

"Don't trouble about that, mother. I might go first and leave you to die of old age. See, here, mother, is some goodies for you to treat the little folks with; it's new year times."

"Give them some yourself, John. They will like it from you, and leave some for another time."

"Mother, I think I could put hinges on this box. It would do nicely to put things in, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, my son, you are always doing and contriving something to make me happy."

Just then a tap at her door, and Mrs. Crane appeared, with a well filled tea-tray.

"Oh! thank you; how kind of you," said Mrs. Brown. "Now we shall have a cosey cup of tea. Sometimes I feel as if the best part of my days were only coming, everything is so good, and everybody too."

When they had finished and were just enjoying a chat, "Please, ma'am," said two little girls coming in, "mother said that we might take out the tea things, and wash them for you."

"You may, and I'll be obliged for your kindness, dears."

"Ah! here you little squirrels, are some nuts for you to crack," said John, giving them each a generous share.

"Now, tell me, John," said his mother, "when did you see or hear from the Langfords?"

"Not for some time past, mother; but they were all as usual the last time I heard."

"Is Maggie with them yet?"

"Yes; she was last spring, anyway."

"I often wish you and she would marry. You might have done worse, John."

"Marry! marriage is the last thing in Maggie's thoughts, mother."

"It would be well for Mrs. Langford if the young folks had some of Maggie's sober solidity."

"Oh! by-the-bye, mother, I have something else for you. Why where can it be? It is not in any of my pockets. I must have left it—, or lost it."

"What was it, John?"

"It was a newspaper, mother. I subscribed and paid for it for one year, and brought a copy of it to let you see it. I'm sorry I have lost it."

"And I am sorry you wasted so much money, John; what do I want with a newspaper? Dear me, do I care for politics? It's as much as I can do to read a bit of a sermon, or a chapter in the bible. Why, John, half of the newspapers is scandal and murders, and the other half lies. I wish you could get back your year's subscription, so I do."

"Ah! mother, don't be vexed; I think you'll like the paper. There is a great deal of religious reading in it—some taken from books, some present writers, some poetry, some receipts for cures, and for cookery—besides, you'll be able to know the news of the day, both here and in foreign countries. It will keep you from being lonesome, and when you have read it you can give it away, or use it for lighting the fire. It is a good Sunday paper, so it is, mother."

"Well, John, it's a pity they didn't make you an agent, you're such an advocate for newspapers—but if people will circulate good reading, why don't they put it in books instead of newspapers? But you did not tell me the name of this newspaper you are so full of."

"It is the *Witness*, mother; it was called, I believe, the *People's Magazine*, but now it is changed. I heard say the reason they put religious reading in it, was just because a great many look upon books as dry reading. Newspapers are the only thing they care about reading. So, on Sunday, also, they take up the paper, and there religion is brought right under their eye, without their knowing it, or yet intending it. And, another thing that is in favor of newspapers or magazines, I have often thought, is that when you buy a book you can sit down and read it right through, and it's done. But with them it's different; you get a little to-day, and a little another day, and keeps spinning out, just enough to read for an evening. And they do say that this is the best family paper in the place. There are some nice stories in it too."

"Well, John, I hope it will come regular, since you have paid out your money for it."

"Oh, yes, it will come regular, I dare say."

"Mother, what would you say to a sleigh drive; it's lucky to-morrow's the Sabbath instead of Monday, as I am under orders to finish a stable then."

"We'll see when to-morrow comes," said his mother.

The next day was fine, and not too cold, so John hired a sleigh and drove out with his mother. It was the first drive she had that winter, and it would likely be the only one before spring. It cost John a shilling or two, but it seemed to put new life into the old lady, she enjoyed it so. Reader, was it wrong for them to do so? In most cases it would be so.

"Well, John, I would like to go to church if you would take me—the day is so fine, and I feel kind of stronger after that airing, but I dread going alone in winter—that hill is so slippery."

"Well, mother, you just rest yourself, and I'll turn cook to-day. It's a long time till two o'clock; I am glad the sleigh drive done you no harm."

After dinner they started for the kirk. She, poor woman, like a good many other old country folks, thought there was very little religion in any other. However, they had only gone a few blocks when they got among a number of people going into a small sized, plain looking church.

"Mother," said Brown, "I think we would save a long journey by going in here."

"What!" said the old lady, opening up her eyes in astonishment. "What! go into an unorthodox Methodist church. I never was inside of one of them in my life."

"Why not, mother, there is good there as well as any other church. Indeed, they are far more friendly there than in those large established churches."

"Very well, John, I'll go in to please you, and you'll come out to please me, and that may be before the second prayer."

"It's a bargain, mother," whispered John, and in they went.

They took a seat back near the door, and the old lady watched with a jealous eye each one as they come in.

"I wonder if they are sincere in their devotion," she whispered to her son. "But here is the minister going into the pulpit."

He was middle aged, and rather plain looking. He knelt down for a few moments in silent prayer.

"Dear me," whispered Mr. Brown, "but he is unlike a clergyman; neither gown nor bands, not even a white necktie."

He left the pulpit and came down, and now stood warming his hands, and rubbing them. She could not help noticing, however, that he had a kind word for everyone as they passed him, and a pleasant smile for those in the distance. But ere he turned to go into the pulpit, he called out "If those sitting near the door would come forward, they would be warmer."

A few came, but John and his mother sat still; at last the preacher came round to them and addressing himself to Mr. Brown, said, "Would you mind coming farther up? It is rather too near the door for this aged sister."

"Indeed, you are wrong, Sir, I am his mother and he is my son," said the old woman, quite offended like.

"I beg your pardon," said the preacher, "and I would like to take you to a better seat. People up in years do not hear quite as well as others, and I like to have them near me."

Now, how could they resist such kindness? So rising they followed him, and were soon sitting in a nice comfortable pew near the pulpit. Service commenced, the singing, the prayer and the reading, and the second prayer were over when John nudged his mother and whispered, "We will go now, the second prayer is ended."

"Wait a minute, John."

And John did wait a minute; aye, two or three of them. Then giving his mother a nudge, whispered, "we'll be late to hear the sermon in our own church. Will you come now?"

She gave an impatient little jerk, "saying, "Oh! we'll just wait and hear their sermon; I've heard nothing wrong yet.

"Very, well," whispered honest John sitting himself back. "You'll come out when the rest of the congregation leaves."

It was neither a very lengthy sermon, nor what some would call a deep one, but it was an earnest appeal to the unconverted to come to Christ for salvation; to begin at once a new life, pressing on to perfection. After the benediction the people passed along in such a crowd, that John, out of consideration for his mother, waited till there would be more space. Very courteously the preacher waited to speak to her.

"You are welcome to that seat any time you find it too far to your own place of worship, as the family are away for the winter. And now tell me, friend, how did you enjoy the service."

"Oh! very well, I thank you," returned Mrs. Brown, but she answered hesitatingly, "Perhaps I didn't catch rightly what you said in your discourse, sir. You seemed to lay great stress on the sinner's doing. Now, I look on it in this light, Christ takes the soul as it is, and makes it as he would have it; of course a person can do a great deal to help themselves, after they know more."

The preacher smiled and said, "I am sorry I failed to make things clear, but I thank you for telling me so. I wish all my own people would be as open and candid with me, it would help me in my studies greatly."

"Oh! but, sir, your own congregation, very likely, understands you better; you see, sir, your way is a little different from ours; and another thing, I am an old woman and not so smart at hearing."

"Yes, said the preacher, "but you seem very hearty, and may outlive many of us yet. You remind me greatly of my own mother." The preacher thus changed the subject, by asking if this was the first time she had ever been in this meeting house?

"I think I have been here before, but not for some years past."

"I daresay, my good woman, both place and people have changed since then. This house shows signs of decay, as well as you and I. I suppose you did not hear me when I called you or any others who were sitting near the door to come up to the upper end? It was so cold down there."

"Oh, yes; my hearing is not so bad as that, sir, quite, sir," said John. "You know we're strangers, and did not know as if you meant us to go up. It might be intrusion, but it was very kind of you to come the way you did."

"Why, you see, I was so anxious to have all the aged people near me, particularly strangers, that I could not help going to you and inviting you cordially to a warmer part, but another plan has just come into my head while talking to you."

"What do you mean," asked Brown, "by another plan."

"I mean that it has just occurred to me that I might have taken you on my back and carried you forward."

"Carried me?" exclaimed the old woman, gazing at him. "You would have had a deal to do. Pretty thing, indeed! Carry me on

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your back as if I were a sheep, or a log of wood. I want to let you know, sir, that I am not doting to such an extent, but I can take an insult. Stop your laughing, John. How can you see your mother spoken to in that way?"

The preacher was trying to keep on a long face, but it was not so easily done, and he was very glad to find some excuse for going into the vestry for a printed circular, asking them to wait just a minute, as it would let them know the hours of service and the meetings during the week.

No sooner had he turned his back than Mrs. B. began. "Dear me, but these Methodists are a very irreverent set, groaning and praying one hour, and then fooling and jesting the next. Who ever heard our good Scotch minister doing the like?"

"Hush, mother," interrupted John, "here he is. Don't get angry; show him you know better."

"Here," said he, "is a printed card, stating our weekly meetings and hours of service on the Sabbath. So you don't like the idea of me carrying you, and yet a great many think that God should take souls out of the depths of sin and degradation; wash off the filth without their feeling it; that God should break them off the habits of sin without the least effort on their part; change and renew their nature, and they know nothing about it; in fact, just carry them without their feeling a jolt by the way right into Heaven. No, God does not use us like pieces of insensible machinery. He deals with souls, so to speak, as man would deal with man. He persuades to be saved, but forces none. But here we must part, so good bye for the present."

The Browns walked home in silence.

Next day John was preparing to leave. His mother had prepared for him a good supply of warm things for winter, socks and mitts included.

"Just give me what you have in your carpet bag, and I'll fix them over, and have them ready the next time you come home."

"Why, mother, you have made so much for me, I'll hardly want another thing this winter. Oh! here is the newspaper in my carpet bag all the time—*Montreal Witness*—I'm glad I found it."

"Oh! John, before you go, tell me about that church. Tell me, John, so that I may know whether to go again or not. You see it's so much nearer than the hill church."

"I am not sure mother, whether they are Baptists, Congregationalists or Bible Christians."

"Aye, John, I'm thinking they are Bible Christians, for he has the matter at heart, though he takes a droll way of telling it. He makes a deal of the bible; there is sense, too, in what he says, and if he only had a gown on, he wouldn't be a bad looking man that. But, John, these half learned preachers were not much thought of by our Kirk ministers in the old country. I'm not saying, mind, that this man is not learned. I mind long ago they used to have what they called field preaching on the hill's side, and our good minister would stand on a rise of ground and preach the real gospel to the people. But one day one of the unlicensed preachers took the

stand, before their own pastor came on the ground, and he was laying down the law and the gospel to them in rather a homely way, but very earnestly. Then he opened a Wesley hymn-book, and read out a hymn to be sung. When lo! and behold! who should come along but the Rev. Mr. W——n, pushing the people right and left. He made straight for the preacher and knocked him off the stand saying he could not tolerate such proceedings, nor allow his people to be led in their devotions by no vagrant, and then he preached such a sermon as they had not heard the like of for many a day before."

"So, so, mother, if the vagrant preacher failed to edify the people, he roused their minister. I met one of these would-be missionaries once in Cobourg, he looked so conceitedly proud of his talent that I asked him one day, how he could stand up and face a congregation, without preparation for he never studied his sermons? 'Oh!' said he, 'I look over them all as so many stumps and keep uppermost in my mind, that I know more than any of them. That's the way I get on.' But he was a bad man, as I found out afterwards. He was too lazy to work, and imposed upon the people, trying to pass himself off as a good lecturer. Oh! mother, I wonder how any one can be so wicked."

"Why, John, there is good and bad in all trades and professions too; you'll find it the case in every country. The Presbyteries have much to contend with sometimes, for often young converts with little learning, as soon as they get a little spiritual knowledge, nothing will do but they must away and tell everybody what they know, and too often they treat others as if they were as ignorant as they themselves once were, and so they do harm."

"I dare say that's true, mother. If they would just wait till they are established in the faith somewhat, and can practice the rules they recommend to others, they would not make so many blunders. But mother dear, it is time I was off; take care of yourself, and see that you want for nothing, and you'll read the *Witness*. won't you?"

"Yes, yes, John, I'll read it if only for your sake. I see there is a story commenced in this one, and they will be handy to light my fire with too. Good-bye, my son. God bless and keep you."

"Good-bye, mother."

Mrs. Brown then turned in to have a chat with her tenant. "John's off again," she said, then stopped short. "Dear me, Mrs. Crane, why don't you sew up your skirt? It is getting worse every step you take. I don't want to vex you, but really you ought to have more self-respect. Just you think, your husband comes in from his business, where he sees other women neat and clean. Ain't you afraid his love will cool?"

"No, Mrs. Brown, my husband's love aint so weak."

"But he may think your's is. However, that is not what I came in to talk about. Can you tell me about the Bible Christians? Are they sound on the faith or not?"

"I can't say much about them," was her answer. "The way I came to hear them is this: Our folk used to tend the kirk, and some-

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times the Independents near at hand; I was a slip of a girl then. For a long time I was very unhappy, and longed for some one to talk to me about the world to come, but, like a great many, I was too backward to say so. The kirk minister never took the least notice of me, good or bad. I met him and the Congregational pastor many a time on the street, and with a heavy heart saw them pass by."

"Why, why, Mrs. Crane, if you had given the slightest hint he would have conversed with you any time. My good woman, it is there we get the real marrow of the Gospel."

"Yes, ma'am; I know it was my own fault. Do you know that kirk is standing yet with its sounding board and cell-like pews? One night I went into the Wesleyan chapel. It was beautifully lighted up with sperm candles, and a storm was coming on. The people were all on their knees, some praying, some crying, and some groaning. The preacher raising his voice above the others prayed, 'Holy fire come down from Heaven and melt our hearts!' Just then a flash of lightning came, followed by a roll of thunder. Trembling with fear I came away, for I thought, perhaps, the church would be struck with lightning as a judgment for their want of reverence. Their manner was something I was not accustomed to. So different from the solemn order of the kirk. A few weeks after that I stepped into a small building, their service was very simple and quiet, I noticed an old woman up at the farther end, who had a peculiar way of rising from her seat and walking about. Then she would stand for five minutes, sometimes facing the people, and sometimes with her back to them. Her hands always clasped across her breast, swaying herself backwards and forwards. One evening she came down the aisle to me, laid her hand on my shoulder, saying: 'Friend, seek the Lord now. Now, He will be found.' Then went up into the pulpit."

"Oh! Mrs. Crane, she had no right there."

"Perhaps not, but with her hands clasping the bible she began, 'Hud is ill to night, so I will address you, my friends, as the spirit moves me, I feel in me to speak to you from these words, 'Man dieth and wasteth.'"

"Mrs. Crane, did you really listen to a woman preaching?"

"Yes, ma'am; I did. Her sermon was nice enough, of course; not much of a get up. I met her next day on the sidewalk. She caught my hand looking earnestly in my face, said, 'Youth is the time to serve the Lord, my friend, serve the Lord now.' Then passed on without another word. Many a good sermon I heard from the Independent, the Kirk and the English Church; too, sound orthodox, well studied, I only heard them, but these few words from that old woman I felt. 'Friend, seek the Lord now; 'Now, He will be found.' 'Do you believe it?' That night I lay crying, fearing I had committed a great and unpardonable sin. For I knew not how to seek or serve the Lord. That woman is dead now, and Hud, too."

"She must have been a Quaker, Mrs. Crane."

"I don't know ma'm; they were called Bible Christians, though in dress and manner they looked like Quakers. Every one

wore broad hats and all dressed in black or gray. I saw no other colour there, not even a ribbon or flower. The women looked like nuns."

CHAPTER V.

"Talking about dress, I once heard a dear old lady tell the way some of the early settlers had to dress. I think the place was about Merrickville. The men wore jackets and breeches made of deer skin, and many a time came to meeting bare-footed. The women wore short gowns and petticoats of blue and yellow drugget, and, like the men, were often bare-footed. The old lady, who told me, said the want of better clothes did not keep them at home, because the word of the Lord was too precious, in those days, to miss hearing."

"That is true," replied Mrs. Brown. "We think we have hard times, but, dear me, it is really nothing compared to what the early settlers had to endure. Why, away up the Ottawa, where stands the grand capital of the Dominion, their forefathers slept under their canoes, and kept up a fire all night, for fear of wild beasts. Where now there are good churches, men and women have worshiped under trees, and where now there are good roads and railroads, men, with blistered feet, have walked, with a bundle on their backs; the horse, too, carried more on his back in those days than any other way. It is changed times for the better, thank God. And now, while I think of it, Mrs. Crane, how is it that you have never connected yourself with any denomination since you came to live in Montreal."

"Why," she answered, "just because none of them are what they ought to be."

"Such an excuse!" said Mrs. Brown, indignantly. "Are you and I what we ought to be. If it is perfection you look for, you will have to go to another world, or else start the thing yourself."

Just then Mr. Crane came down stairs and said:

"If you two are not too tired worrying about churches I will give you another case to analyze, for I too heard a strange preacher in New York, last week."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, lifting up her hands. "How horrid, was it another woman?"

"No, ma'm, it was a man preaching down at ^{Other} clergy; his own the strangest doctrine I ever heard. He says the wicked will not live hereafter, only the righteous will become immortal. The wicked will be burned up with the weeds, and be no more. He thought he was making an impression on the audience, as two young men kept turning over the leaves of their bibles. But he was mistaken, for when we were all coming out one of them confronted him. 'Sir, if the doctrine of future punishment has not been made plain enough in the bible to suit your comprehension, you had better leave it alone.'"

"Dear me, Mr. Crane, would Jesus so often have spoken of eternal fire if there were none. Jesus warned people of God's wrath far more than any of the prophets or apostles did. Excuse me for saying so, but I don't think it is right of you and your wife to

man after every strange doctrine. 'Itching ears make aching hearts.'

"Very true," said the other, without taking the hint. "The fact is, the people are getting so wise and go-ahead, that they think if they could only get retribution out of their creeds, they could live as they like."

"No end to creeds, ma'am. I once heard a doctor's widow declare she would never die, her faith was so strong, and all who could get to that certain pitch of that certain faith, would never die, could walk on the water, or——"

"Stop," said Mrs. Brown, quite horrified; "the good Lord save me from such a silly faith."

"Load of wood for Madam Brown," was now called out.

"Oh!" said she, "my son ordered it on Saturday."

After unloading, the man came asking for his money.

"Why," said Mrs. Brown, "he told me he paid you."

"No," replied the carter. "he gave me dat bit paper for to find your number, but no money. I want my money."

Crane took the paper, looked carefully over it; "Yes, bonum, that is the right number, and something more; so clear off, or I will have you in the lock-up.—It is well for Madam Brown you could not read. See there; paid ten shillings. 'Black on White.'"

The Frenchman, after muttering a few *sacrés*, walked off.

"Good day; good day, Jones! We're lucky to drive so near together.

"Yes, Collins; and tell me, are you nearly fixed up? Let me know when you are? I want to have my granary in something of the same style. And, say! isn't that man blind of one eye? Is he a good worker?"

"Oh, yes; he is a good tradesman; but, of course, very slow; takes him a long time to get through with anything. You see the whole place was so out of repairs; I have had him working for the last three weeks; and, really, Jones, I could find him other three weeks' work there yet. Of course his charges are low."

Now, reader, we will suppose these two farmers living near Colburn and within sight of each other, and now that they have arrived at the gate of Mr. Collins' establishment, they are saluted by a whistle from Joe, a sharp youngster of nine or ten years.

"Come down, you young rascal," exclaimed his father. "What are you doing up there, riding fences? Come down."

"Don't speak to me that way, dad. You know you made me boss afore you went away this morning."

"And a nice boss you are, leaving your men, riding the gates, and scaring the crows," said his father.

"The crows are not a bit afraid of me, dad; I'm just watching for the doctor, so he won't ride past."

"Ah! is that it? And, pray, what do you want with the doctor?" added the farmer. "To mend your old jacket, eh?"

"No; not to mend my jacket; but Mr. Brown has cut his foot awfully."

"But, Joe, the doctor mightn't pass this road for a month."

"Ah! but he has passed already. It's to your house, Mr. Jones. Your Janet is awful sick, and turns somersaults all over Mother's up there, too. See, there he comes! I know'd he'd gallop down. Dad, who's right now?"

And the little fellow stood up on the gate, waving his straw hat and bawling, "Stop here! Stop here!"

"What can all this mean," muttered Jones to himself. "I left them all well in the morning;" and he drove forward a few paces to meet the doctor, who, in a low tone, gave the required explanation, adding, "I will call to see her to-morrow."

"And what—am I wanted here too, my boy?"

"I guess you be; you see we want to kill two dogs with one bone, doctor."

"Ah! you are," said the familiar doctor, "and you want me to help your skin and cut them up."

"No! no! Sir; but just after you rode up to Jones', our carpenter cut his foot awfully, and he told me to watch for you. Dad'd gone in to see him. There's dad; he's looking for you to come."

The wound was stitched and bandaged; and the doctor's orders were that it must be kept as easy as possible, and no pressure laid on it for some time. Brown (for it was he) was at a loss for some one to wait on him. Now, Joe was a quick, obliging lad, and moreover, a favourite of Brown's. So he coaxed his folks to let him attend the patient. One morning after he had brought him his breakfast and done up his room, for the boy took credit to himself for fixing up, said:

"I'm going to the village with dad, and if you want anything more, you'd better say so now, as I won't be back till after twelve."

"Thanks," said Brown. "Will you unlock my trunk over there, and give me my pocket-book and pencil?"

"Here they are," said Joe. "What a funny little box you have in your trunk. May I look at it?"

"Certainly; you may take it to the light, and turn it about. Joe. There's nothing in it that will bite."

"Oh," said the child, "that's a nice box. Have you had it long?"

"Yes, Joe, I've had it a long time. Would you like to have the history of that little box?"

"I guess I would," said the little boy.

"Well, Joe, I'm going to trust you like a little man. Here is two dollars to give to the doctor when you go to the village; and will you bring me a bottle of some grog. Do you ever drink any yourself, Joe?"

"Yes," said the child; "only I like whiskey the best—toddy with plenty of sugar in it. It doesn't burn so nor make me so dizzy like."

"Very well, Joe, bring me some whiskey, or any kind you like. It's all the same to me."

In the afternoon Joe returned with his hands full and his heart light, and immediately went to the kitchen for hot water and sugar.

"Here they are," said he; "and mind about the box."

"Yes, yes," said Brown. "Sit down on the bed here, and I'll tell you, for it's a precious relic to me, and my old mother thanks that box for many a New Year's gift."

"Why, is your mother alive yet, Mr. Brown?"

"Indeed she is, and as cheery and as comfortable as woman can be. Why, Joe, it would do you good to see her in her cosey chair, with spectacles on her nose, and her gray hairs covered with a snug white cap, sometimes knitting socks for me, sometimes reading an old bible in large print. Every time I go to see her, she is sure to talk about the tobacco box."

CHAPTER VI.

"Well," interrogated Joe, "You don't smoke either, leastways never seed you smoking or chewing either."

"Few have seen you smoking either, Joe, and yet you do it for I that."

"Ah! see here Brown, the water is getting cold, I'll run back for more."

"Never mind, Joe, can't you take it once without water?"

"No, I couldn't take it without, why it would nearly take away my breath. My brother Benny could, though. Why, he could drink it like water, could you, Brown?"

"No, my boy, I must say I don't drink it like water. How does your brother Sam take it?"

"Him? Oh, he don't take it at all. He used to be so mad with Benny lying about the barn drunk, that he wouldn't taste any: you see it was just contrariness for he likes it well enough. But not a man, if you seed all the pipes and tobacco he uses. My sister says she can tell by the smell which of them are in. But I ain't going to be like either of them, I'm going to smoke a little, chew a little and drink a little, for I get sick so easy, so I do."

"Poor boy," said the carpenter, "I feel for you. I was once a boy myself, and used to be awful sick too. I didn't know then that was poison in that that made me so sick and dizzy, but I know now."

"Why! Brown, don't you use tobacco or drink now?"

"No, not for many a day."

"Then why did you tell me to bring you a bottle?"

"Listen Joe, and don't get angry. I sent you for it just to get an opportunity of talking to you about it. So listen my man. It's all of three weeks since I came to work for your father, and during that time I've taken a great liking for you, and wish with all my heart that you may grow up a healthy, happy man, useful and respected. But, if you take to drinking, you run a great risk of losing both your health and your money. A drunkard is not a very useful man, a slave to tobacco or snuff, always carries with them a smell of what they are."

"But, Brown, what makes you think there is poison in them?"

"Why, Joe, that's plain enough. Now tell me, if you were to take a drink of tea or coffee, and become quite dizzy or sick after wouldn't you say there's something wrong in it? Of course you would; or if you were to get sick at the stomach repeatedly after eating a piece of bread, wouldn't your father and mother, as well as yourself, say there was something wrong in that bread? I'm sure they would, and very likely have the baker taken up for it. You are rather young, Joe, to understand such big talk; but, Joe, if I wanted to kill you to-night, I would drink first, or if I wanted to kill your father, I would drink first to make me frenzied, to spirit me, to drive out fear of being detected, to give what we call false courage."

"But what do they put poison in these things for?"

"Joe, that's too big a question for me to answer. Indeed, what's the use of me trying to tell why the poison is put in, or what it is? It's quite enough for us to know that the deadly thing is there, and, as for only taking a little as you speak of doing, dear boy, you will become so used to it, that you will not know when to stop. Shall I tell you what made little Jennet so sick the other day?"

"Why, I know," said Joe; "they said it was fits or worms."

"Joe, I'll tell you a secret. It was whiskey that made her sick and nearly cost her life. Don't talk about it."

"No, I won't; but how could a baby get drunk?"

"Listen to me, Joe, and think what a dangerous thing it was. Mrs. Jones had sent one of the children down to the cellar to draw a jug of whiskey out of a gallon jar, and have ready for the father when he would come in. Well, it was left standing on the table, and little Janet, thinking it was water, climbed a chair, caught hold of the jug, and hastily swallowed some of it. The mother went out milking, and, being alarmed by the child's screams, she hastened in, and found she had regained her breath, but acted strange and wild. They sent, as you know, for the doctor. When he arrived she was almost gone. You have heard, over and over again, how raving mad she was, and how they had to pump her stomach empty. Now, Joe, I've been telling what a bad thing it is to drink. Now I'll tell you what a good thing it is not to drink. When the doctor looked at my foot, and mind you it was a bad cut, he said, you will have no trouble with that foot, for I see you are a cool-blooded man, but, if you were a drinker, it would be a hard case."

"Were you ever drunk?" said Joe.

"Yes, Joe, many times. I had hard work stopping, but I did stop, though, or I would likely be in the drunkard's grave now, for I had got over the dizziness you speak of, and could tip my glass like the worst of them. My greatest trouble was not how to swallow it, but how to get it without the knowledge of my mother; for our means were very limited, and she watched me as none but a mother can watch. She often told me that dissipation was undermining my health and my future prospects; but I heeded her not. It happened one day that I was working on a high building, and, having taken a glass too much, I lost my footing and fell to the ground, bruised and stunned."

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"It's a wonder you were not killed."

"It left me a slight twist in my neck and shoulder, making me as ever since for an old man. I tell you, Joe, that fall sobered me. I saw mother was about right, and made up my mind to take care of that dangerous stuff. But I found that a harder matter than bargained for. I'll tell you what, Joe, if young chaps when they're trying so hard to get used to tobacco and drink, only knew how desperate hard it is to break off taking it in after years, when their health is endangered by it, they would save themselves a great deal, say the least of it. I remember I was in an awful fix. So some person told me that I had better keep a quid of tobacco in my mouth, and there would be no danger of my getting drunk on that, and that a man must have something to wet his whistle with. Perhaps you are tired listening to me, Joe?"

"Not a bit tired; but didn't you have a father?"

"Oh, yes; but he died when I was a young chap. Then mother and I were alone, and lived together, for I had no brothers or sisters like you. I was a strong, hearty chap till I took to drink. When times got hard, my health began to fail; my poor mother did grieve about me; bill after bill came in to her, and how were they to be settled. At last one day—I mind it as if it was yesterday—she laid her hand on my shoulder, and said in a kindly tone: 'John, I want to ask your advice about what is to be done.' 'What about?' said I. 'Sit down, my son,' she said. 'You know there are a great many bills to pay. I was just thinking if we could sell our lease of this house, and sell what furniture we have, we might manage to pay our just debts, though nothing more. Now, what do you think about it?' 'But, mother,' said I, 'what would you do for a home?' 'My boy,' she answered, 'you will be going up to S—the first of the month. I think you will do well with the Langford's; they're a quiet, kind family. The doctor says a change of air will do you good; but don't be alarmed when I mention the workhouse, for here my home will have to be, unless I get strong enough to take a situation.' 'Oh, I cried, 'don't say so. Is there no other way to be done?' 'There is only one alternative,' said she, 'and that I have got the courage to speak of, as I fear it would fail. I must now go to work fixing your clothes, while I have a house to do it in. My own things will do.' 'Mother! mother!' I said, 'you must tell me the alternative. I will do anything you ask me.' 'Well, John, if I must, I will. It is this. That you, my stay, my joy, give up drinking, smoking and chewing; keep better hours, rest more and eat more. The doctor has told you more than once that nothing else will save you. Tobacco is draining your system, and drink is burning your stomach and liver.' 'Mother,' said, 'God helping me, I will drink no more.' 'John,' she said, looking me in the face, 'God helps them who help themselves.' We were silent for a few minutes, 'But, mother,' said I, 'it may be that stopping all at once may upset me. Might I use up slowly what is in the house?' 'I can hardly tell you,' she said, hesitatingly, 'if there is only one bottle you may, but if there is more you must throw it out, it will be better.' Well, Joe, in desperation I

went to see how much there was. I found three bottles on the shelf, but only a little in each, but mother had said I might only keep one. Just then a bright thought, though a mean one, struck me, I could easily put it all into one. I did so without minding that it was of different kinds. Namely, whiskey, gin and porter, and what made it worse, the little mug I used to fill it in with had chamomile in it, that I was to have taken that morning. So all went together. It was well that I did it myself and not my mother. I would have been real angry; but as it was John Brown did it, John Brown must e'en take the matter quiet, and would you believe it? The bottle did more towards curing me than all the doctor's medicine. But, I tell you, Joe, it went slow enough, I was so disgusted that from that time till now, I can't bear even the smell of grog."

CHAPTER VII.

"Well, Brown, that's a splendid story. Most as good as a speech, or a book, only you hav'nt said a word about this little box."

"Oh! I have not. Well you see I was too sick for a long time to work, but not ill enough to be in bed, and time hung heavy on my hands. So I used to sit whittling and carving little things, sometimes for use and sometimes for fancy. This was one of them, cut and carved it out of a piece of curly maple. The lid you see I made to shut with a spring. This way. You see there are two divisions, one I intended for my knife, pipe and tobacco. The other for buttons, thread, needles and pins, as my work often took me away for weeks together."

"But, said Joe, what is up in the inside of the lid, here covered with something?"

"Hold on, my boy, and I'll tell you. I think it was a week after the bottle affair, that I took a little before breakfast, and it did make me so sick, that I said: 'Mother, I'll be pretty well weaned from drink before that bottle is done.' Then I up and told her of the mixture I had made. 'Mother,' said I, 'it would sicken a dog to drink it.' 'Well, John, you are about right, only there is not much danger of the dog taking it, or the pig either. They have better taste than you, my son, and I would advise you to take these animals as a pattern of sobriety.' 'Ah! mother,' I said, 'I have not spent a great deal on drink. I have carefully counted every penny, and the very highest it is not five shillings a week, sometimes not two.' 'Are you sure,' said she, 'for I have been keeping an account too, but make it out far more than you say. I have it as high as five dollars, sometimes.' 'Oh! mother, mother, you have made a mistake! Dear me, I have not spent that much all my life for smoking, drinking and all.' Well, Joe, my mother, without saying another word, went to the little cupboard, took down a little china cup from a high shelf, and taking out some bits of paper, gave me one, saying: 'There is one account.' I took it, and what was it."

at a piece of a burnt ten shilling bill. 'I got that,' she said, 'on our floor, one day.' 'But, mother, how did it get burnt?' he said, 'that is just what I was thinking about, and was very anxious to find out. I thought, maybe, John gets up in his sleep, and does things, and who knows but he may burn down the house some night. So every night after that, when I would hear you strike a match, I was on the watch; and one night, John, you lit the candle, got a drink of water, looked what time it was, and then lay down again with the candle in your hand, and falling asleep, I dropped it on the bedclothes, which quickly caught fire. Quietly and quickly I was at your side and put it out, and went back to my room to thank God for appointing me your guardian angel that night.' My mother then took another bit of paper out of her little cup. 'Here,' said she, 'is the remains of another burnt bill—a five dollar bill. But whether to charge it on drinking or smoking, I leave you to decide, as I found it sticking in your pipe.' 'Give them both to me, mother,' I cried, 'the sight of them may do me good. I thought you had taken that money long ago, mother, to pay for wood.' 'No, John, it is not paid for yet.' 'Well, Joe, for me, to make my story short: I got a good tenant into your house, my mother keeping one room for herself. I went to work, and in a few weeks was able to send home twenty dollars to my mother.'

"Well, now, what are all those little shiny dots upon the box lid for?" and then I'll be satisfied.

"Turn it up the other way, Joe, and you'll see for yourself. It's words formed with these tacks. See there, 'God helps them who help themselves.'"

"Oh! that's a real handy box, Mr. Brown, and you have buttons, thread, needles, pins and scissors, all safe and clean. Well, now, you have told me a real splendid story. You should write it all down on paper."

"Well, now, Joe, what are we to do with this bottle? I have done all I wanted with it. You had better throw it out. What do you think?"

"Will you give it to me for nothing, Brown?"

"No, Joe, I would rather you would throw it out at once."

"Oh; but, Brown, you might put something bad in it, so I'll never drink it."

"Listen to me, Joe. I'll make a bargain with you. Here is a gold coin worth two dollars and a half. Now, I will put it in the savings bank for you. It will keep growing, and will be yours on condition that you use neither liquor nor tobacco in any shape till you are twenty-one. Will you agree to that?"

"Yes, sir, I will," said the child, "and you're a real good man, so you be, and I most wish you'd been my brother."

"I am your brother, Joe. Don't you know all who have charity, and love one another as they ought, are children of one Father in Heaven. Now, smash the bottle over the stair door. There's something bad in it already."

Joe did so, but soon returned, crying, "Oh! oh! you know

what? Mick is chasing his boy with a big whip handle, and he's awful angry."

"Call him, Joe. Call 'Mick, come quick, Brown wants you.'"

Joe called as desired, and Mick ran up the open stairway, exclaiming, "What does he want? Are you worse, eh? I thought you had burst a vein, Joe called so."

"Close up, Mick; come, close up; sit on my bed. Why, you are all in a heat."

"So would you, Brown, if you had a boy to torment you like mine; but never mind, I'll make him feel the weight of this stick, the young rascal."

"It would take a crowbar to conquer him. Mick, it's a bad way to correct when you are in a passion."

"What cool talk you use, Brown; why, that boy won't mind me unless I get angry—that's so, and I have often to make believe I am angry. He watches me with the corners of his eyes, and he knows when I am going to make a dart at him. But, man dear, old maids and old bachelors know nothing about raising children. I have a right to bate my childer, and I'll do it, that's more."

"Look, Mick," said Brown, "do you see that eye?"

"In course I do. I'd need to be blind of both eyes not to see that ugly hole in your face, where an eye ought to be."

"Mick, father did it, my own father; I was his only boy; he loved me, too, but he forgot to rule his own spirit when he went to punish me; he had a saw in his hand at the time; I never knew whether he threw it at me, or struck me. And, listen, God corrects people; we call it trial or affliction. And often prayer is made that he would sanctify affliction, that is, bless it for their good, making the people better christians than they were before. Now, Mick, I do think it would be a good thing for you to ask God to give you His own blessing on the correction you give your boy, and go about thrashing him in a calm way. Sit still, I am not done. The old fashioned book says: 'He that spareth the rod hateth the child.' And don't forget Mick, it says in another place: 'Fathers; provoke not your children to wrath.' And, in another place, 'Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city.' And, remember——"

"Ah! Mr. Brown, it's fine and easy to lay down rules, but you'll not find them so easy to keep yourself, if you had it to do."

"It's true, I never had it to do, myself, Mick, but still it does seem to me that it is a duty, a prerogative ordinance, or whatever you like to call it, that is sadly abused. Some punish too much; others don't punish enough, but instead are constantly threatening or promising, and that is only so much waste of breath. Children soon get used to it. Sometimes one parent takes the child's part against the other, which has a contrary effect. Some won't slap a child unless they are angry at it, and that is a dangerous time. Look at my poor eye; what a proof I carry through life. Sorrow for that helped my father to the grave. I would have left this sad truth buried with my father, only to save you from hurting your son."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I smell something," said Mick, as he snuffed and looked around. "I say, old boy, have you a bottle here? A taste of good stuff always puts me in good humor. That's a fact, sir."

"I had a bottle here, Mick, but I've just had it thrown out. That's it you smelt."

"You're fooling, Brown, you didn't."

"Yes, it's gone; Joe threw it over the stair."

"Then its bad manners ye have, and not a bit of christian about ye, I say. Throw it out, and meself a choken' with the drouth. Say the truth, Joe, did you?"

"Yes, Mick, I did. Brown, you tell him that story, and he'll never drink again."

"Bah!" cried Mick, "go to pot with your stories; am I a child? You couldn't say anything to convince me that good stuff is bad. There, now."

"If I tell you a true story, Mick, will you listen?"

"It's all I'll do," was his answer, as in a moody way he stuck his hands into his pockets and turned away his face.

"Well, Mick, I want to show you that good stuff, as you call it, can turn a wise man into a fool. Bob Cannon was as fine a man as you could meet with in a day's travel—clear-headed and open-hearted, like yourself, Mick. He would not see anyone wronged if he could help it, or want if he had it to give. And, as for learning, he was fit for the bar. He kept a drug store at one time, and was doing well. It was a black day for him when he gave it up for the wine importation business. His was a place of trust in the Company, you may be sure, and part of his work was testing the liquors. Of course this testing was only done——"

"Its myself would like that part of it, tasting the liquor," muttered Mike, to himself.

"Testing, Mike, not tasting."

"Sure, and what's the odds, Brown, it's done by tasting any how."

"Yes," replied Brown, "partly so, partly so. You see, Bob had such a keen sense of taste and smell. It was like a gift with him. The rest of the Company could depend on him. He could tell whether the stuff was adulterated or not, and tell what amount of logwood, opium, or other ingredient was in it."

"I wish you would hurry up," said Mike, impatiently, "and tell us what became of the lad."

"Well, he had left the Company for some time, and a friend had him at a quiet country house on the banks of Lake Erie. You hurry me so, I forgot to tell you that he became a drunken sot. Well, some say the really pure brandy will hurt no one, or yet gin, and again, they say a drunkard can't tell the pure from the adulterated; I believe Bob Cannon could. He would sell the coat off his back,

but he would have the best. His thirst for drink consumed the love of friends and home."

"Its a lecture entirely, and not a story at all, sir. I'd sooner listen to a French Priest. I used to like a bit of ghost story, now and again, that's about all, and man dear, you'r too slow entirely, I must go."

"Wait a bit, Mike, its like a ghost story, any how. It was ghostly enough to keep me awake more than once. Kept us from working to watching. When we first noticed him wrong he went searching about the out-houses, then came into the field, the boss had laid his coat on a stump, Cannon looked at it most wickedly, then ran back to the house, got hold of a gun loaded with peas to shoot squirrels. He got up into a tree and fired at the coat, then came running to me. 'Brown, do you see that man? Well, he wants to rob the place. Come! Sir, we must chase him. He'll not leave a potato or turnip in the field.' 'Nonsense,' said I, 'Bob, you just walk up to it, and you'll see its just a coat hung on a stump.' But not a foot would he go without me. So on we went, Bob taking the lead. He touched his forehead in a respectful way, saying; 'I beg your pardon, and I want to know your business. Tell me. You must, and you will. You won't, eh! you audacious rogue, you want to steal turnips. Don't you think to fool me, sir. Go from this field. Bob Cannon is my name, and I'll not see my master robbed, and insulted. None of your grimaces with me, begone!' Then whispering to me. 'No, that's no stump. You watch this side, Brown, and I'll go round and stick my knife in his throat.' He went, then stopped short. 'Hold on, Brown, the villain has a hogshead of rum secreted in his pocket.' 'Bob,' I said, for there was no use contradicting him, 'don't strike just yet. If you do you'll make him run away with it. Come into the house to supper,' For a wonder he came, but he could eat nothing."

"Sure, Brown, if ye had got him to take a strong cup of black tea, and eat a bite he'd a felt better."

"Perhaps so, Mick, but his stomach was all wrong and his liver burnt up. Yes, sir, it was perfectly frightful the way he carried on. At night we asked him to take the medicine and go to bed; but no, I must go with him and be his bedfellow. Soon I missed him out of the bed, and looking up, there he was creeping round the room like a cat after a mouse. Coming to the foot of the bed, he poked his head under the clothes, and worked himself up head foremost. Come, Bob,' I said, 'can't you sleep.' 'Sleep,' he repeated. 'Sleep! sleep! I would give five hundred dollars for one hour's sleep. How can I sleep in such a noisy den. Don't you hear them villains out there, Brown. Listen to them singing, drunken Bob Cannon, drunken Bob Cannon. Brown, you may have my gold watch, chain and seals and all, for a glass of pure brandy. Look! look at the horrid creatures, with their thin monkey faces, creeping all round and spitting fire at me.' At one time, thinking he was asleep, I looked up to see if I could get the knife from him, but there was Bob sitting bolt up in bed. The horrid knife drawn ready to plunge at some fancied imp. 'Be still,' he whispered, 'they're crawling all over the bed,'

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Then plunged the knife into the pillow, close to my head. Up I started. 'Hold there, Bob, till I get a light.' I ran out, bolted the door and got a light. Just then a large covered carriage drove up to the door, and I knew it was for poor Cannon. It was good stuff did that Mick; only too good to use as a beverage, and too powerful as a stimulant.

Mick walked out without saying a word, but soon returned. "Have you ever a bible or prayer-book here, or a bit of white paper, pen and ink."

"I'll get some at the house," said Joe. So jumping up off the floor, he ran and returned. "Here Mick, be you going to write that story on paper?"

"No, I can't write; but here, Brown, you write that Michael (that's my name) drinks no more. Then you know now that's X my mark. Won't me wife be glad," and brushing off a tear with his coat sleeve he hurried out.

CHAPTER IX.

Now, reader, I will trouble you to accompany me over to Watertown, or thereabouts. Our station will be a first-class hotel. Under one end of the verandah sat some of the boarders talking on politics, of course, while others were sauntering about. Some of them were from Canada, some from the interior States, some from the mother country, across the salt water. While each party was giving in their verdict, the clock in the hall struck eight, and all went in for breakfast. Just then a fresh arrival was added to the well-filled house. Rev. Mr. Silby and wife took their seats at the table. Opposite to them sat two young ladies, whom we will notice in due time; beside them sat the young Fields. At the head of the board sat a Mr. Glen—he had been a boarder for some time. Very affable and courteous, and also witty in his remarks, was this same Mr. Glen. At the foot of the table was a Mr. Joint. He, too, had been there long enough to know all the rest, and, like him, he was all attention to everybody but himself. The strangers were the first to be served, then the others in turn. But though they were the first served they were not the first to begin eating.

"Guess you'r from the old Island," remarked one of them, "but you'r in the land of Yankeedom now."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Silby, "but I don't quite understand you."

"He means," said Mr. Glen, "that Mr. Egerby gives his boarders license to eat as soon as they like, as much as they like, and what they like."

"Very good," said Mr. Silby. "Let us first ask God's blessing."

At that all eyes turned towards the strangers, who were now the butt of their criticism. The Silbys were too tired to eat very

hearty, and so were done first, and waited till the rest were through. Then raising his hand he said in a calm voice, "Let us thank God now." Then all cleared off to their own apartments.

"Mr. Egerby, a word of caution to you if you please," whispered Glen: "Keep your eye on that black coat, he don't mean to pay you."

"What does the fellow say," exclaimed Egerby, as he watched the retreating figure of Glen.

Then young Arthur Crossby came forward with mock gravity, saying, "Perhaps I can give you the desired information. Our friend Glen means that the Reverend in black don't mean to pay you, as he settles all his accounts with invisible coin."

"How does Glen know that?" enquired Egerby.

"He saw him—we all saw him, and heard him, too—sending his thanks up, nobody knows where, and, of course, it will not be necessary, he'll think, to make you any return for the grub. But don't you tell my mother I said so, for she might scold me," continued Arthur, "or perhaps lay me across her knee, and give me a sound thrashing gratis."

"That's true," said old Joint, coming forward. "Neither of us would like to see mamma take her well beloved son to task for talking disrespectfully of the clergy, when she remembers her own father stood in the pulpit."

Reader, does this conversation shock you? Well, it shocked me too, but I heard more than I would dare write, and I wonder that any parent or guardian could leave sons or daughters in such an atmosphere, for certainly Joint and Glen were distilling their spirit among the young in that house. Fancy the above conversation taking place in a small room at the end of the hall, known as the gentleman's smoking room.

"Hallo, Jerry Field! you're just in time to hear the amen."

"Why, what's up?" asked Jerry.

"Not much replied Arthur. Here's my cigar; now come boys let's try by all possible and impossible means to have this 'ere verandah done for to-morrow. Ah! here you are Glen. It don't take you long to brush up. Come, now, let's see what effect four of us will have on the man-of-trade. We will both coax and threaten. Good day, Carpenter Jackson.

"That's not my name," replied the carpenter.

"Well! well! we'll leave off the Jackson, and see here, carpenter, we four have come to bind you by a solemn promise to have these repairs completed for to-morrow.

"I will do all I can without binding," replied the carpenter, "but you see its a tedious piece of work, and as I have not tools enough here I can't get on as fast as I would like."

"Are your tools on the vessel," enquired Fred.

"No," said the man, "I was supplied with tools by the captain, for what he wanted done, and I only stay here for a few days. But Mr. Egerby failed in getting all that I wanted, still I think I will finish it soon."

"Well see now, Jackson, you have got to have it finished by ten

to-morrow morning," said Jerry, "so you won't object to drive in a few nails to-morrow; will you? 'Cause you see as some of us young chaps want to promenade here with our gals. So can or can't, you must have it finished or we will lynch you; see if we don't."

"Young man," said the workman, "what is not done to-night will remain undone till Monday."

"What tame talk you use, old boy," said Joint. "Why don't you sprinkle in a few oaths? Jerry's not you're boss. If I was you I would curse him for his interference."

"Cursing and swearing are best dispensed with, I leave that for the ignorant," replied the Carpenter. "I see nothing to swear about."

The Silbys spent most of the day walking out, seeing the place and enjoying the air. The day passed as might be expected in such a mixed company.

In the evening some of them went to a theatre, and, of course, did not return till one or two in the morning, disturbing everybody with their noise. Indeed, it would seem as if done on purpose, because a Christian minister slept under the roof. Nor was it Glen and Joint, whose views were Deistical, but Arthur Crossby, Fred and Jerry Field. Such a noise they kept up, whispering, slamming of doors, and loud talking enough to be heard all over the house. Poor chance of rest for the wearied domestics. Well, about eight o'clock breakfast was all over, all except the three youths. About ten they came down one by one. Now, what chance was there of getting to church, either by housekeeper or domestics, after such a morning's work? And yet the parents of those youths were within the pale of the visible Church, and considered themselves good enough Christians. But, alas! they were just as anxious that the lads should enjoy life, and gain a respectable position in society, as that they should be kept from vice. A poor example from those professing a belief in God before those who believe not.

But we must hurry on. As soon as they had swallowed their breakfasts they looked to see if the verandah was finished. It seemed all right. Under a shade tree stood the carpenter talking to Silby, who sat on a rustic seat with a book in his hand.

"Hallo! you there," called Arthur.

"Yes," said the other, coming forward.

"I say, you are really a most obliging fellow, carpenter Jackson, and must have worked both late and early to get this through so slick."

"No," replied the man, "I did not work early, but I did hammer away till late last night, and it is not all done yet. However, it is secure under foot, and I'll finish it to-morrow morning."

"Thank you! thank you!" said all four.

"And now tell me, would you have time to fix the lock and hinges on my trunk; and how much would it be?" asked Glen.

"I guess we'll all want a little work out of you if you have tools," said Jerry; "that is, if you don't charge too much."

"I'll do it; it won't be much. I'll charge a condition each. I am going to church now. You are, too, young gentlemen, are you not?"

"No; I guess not this morning," said Arthur.

"My ma will say or read prayers for me; and our pa will hear sermons enough for us," said Jerry.

"Yes; and some of the young lady boarders will sing psalms for me," chimed in Fred.

"You're very green, mister, not to know that most of the pretty girls were at the theatre last night, and are too tired to appear at church this morning. They may in the evening."

"So you go to church to see the ladies, do you?"

"Of course we do," said Arthur. "A pretty thing if the ladies go to such trouble fixing up, and nobody go to admire them. They'd soon stay away, I reckon."

"Well, Mr. Joint, I dare say you and Glen are like me; out of your sparking days; what if we three——"

"No use," interrupted Fred; "no use your trying them two; they won't go,"

"Gentlemen," said the carpenter; "do you ever think of the future? Have you no fear of the world to come?"

"There's nothing in the future to be afraid of," said Joint. "I don't believe in a place of punishment."

"Just let me explain things," put in Crossby. "Our friend Joint thinks he is sure of going to heaven, whether he goes to church or not, and I am inclined to favour his opinion; that is, that everybody will be saved yet. It is a more comfortable faith than Glen's. He don't believe he has a soul at all, poor fellow."

"Is that so," exclaimed the carpenter, in amazement. "I never heard such talk before. Why! don't you believe in the bible? I am sure the minister in the house could convince you. I am a poor hand to argue with; but, gentlemen, I do wish you would have a talk with Mr. Silby."

"Tut! tut!" said Joint, "what about it? You believe what you like, and I believe what I like. I have a better opinion of the Almighty than you have. He is a God of love, and our sins neither affect nor offend Him at all. You professors think, although God is love, still He takes notice of and is angry with men's misdemeanors, and punishes them in everlasting fire. And more; you believe that all the trials and troubles of this world are His sending. Now, I have a higher opinion of God. He has nothing to do with these things at all. These trials and sufferings are the natural consequences of our wrong doing. All the punishment or retribution will be in this world. That's my creed—no hell."

"Why, then," said the carpenter, "did Jesus the Son of God die, if there was no sin nor no hell?"

"I want to tell you," said Joint, "that Jesus was an imposter. Nay, that I will not believe for you nor any man living."

"Mr. Joint, if——"

"Say, Carpenter Jack," interrupted Arthur, "have you ever seen this Jesus?"

"Yes, young man, with the eye of faith; I see him clearer than I see you now."

"Don't get so excited, my good fellow," said Joint; "I, too,

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believe in a great first cause or creative power at the head of affairs, but I don't believe the human and Divine were united. In fact, I don't believe in any of those mysterious doctrines, and as for the Bible, its only a priestly affair, got up to make money. We had a proof of that this morning, Glen, hadn't we?"

"Yes, Joint, I endorse what you say; but, still, in my heart I say there is no God at the head of affairs. All is by chance. I have good reason for saying so."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" said the carpenter.

"Aha! aha! ain't it though," returned Arthur.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed the man. "I have lived nearly forty years in the faith of the bible, and—"

"And wonderful to relate," interrupted Jerry, "your faith is kicked overboard by two Yankees at last."

"Not at all, young man. My faith is not so easy to kick overboard. Your friend, Mr. Glen, here, has furnished me with additional proof of the veracity of the Bible. Have none of you noticed it, gentlemen? Though written centuries ago, it foretells about you. Yes, Mr. Glen, it describes you minutely. Then (in a warning tone) you must beware of him, young men. Why, this is King David's fool; you will find him mentioned in the fourteenth Psalm, first verse; and if you incline to follow him, your fate is mentioned Proverbs, 13th and 20th verse: 'A companion of fools shall be destroyed.'"

"There is nothing said in the Bible about us small-fry, is there," said Jerry. "A little fast, you know—like to enjoy life, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, yes," was the answer. "You are not forgotten. You are particularly addressed in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes, ninth verse."

"No doubt you find something good about yourself, Mr. Jackson," said Fred Fields, "though you are not a perfect man, either, since you are both blind and lame."

"Hold! there," interposed both Joint and Glen; "don't be too fast nor hard on him, boys; he can't help being blind and lame."

"These," he replied, "have never stood much in my way. I read in my Bible that all things work together for good to them that love God."

"Yes," said Arthur, in a quizzing tone. "Can you say right out, without blushing, that you love God?"

"Gentlemen, I am not ashamed to say I love God, and what I glory in most, that he loves me."

"Well! well! it's the first time in all my life, that I have heard such a confession," exclaimed Arthur.

"Shouldn't wonder if you are right, after all, and that we are all wrong, eh, Arthur Crossby?" whined Jerry.

"To tell the truth," said Arthur, "the word love has always seemed to be associated with something weak or feminine."

"I am sorry for you, Arthur," said the other, "for so long as that is your opinion, you will be proof against receiving the love of God."

"I think if I were in your company for a few years, I would imbibe your spirit, and feel like you," said Arthur.

"You would like to get into his shoes," said Glen, "if there's a world to come, eh?"

"I should not wonder, Glen, but you would like to change places with him yourself, all but the blind eye."

"I would rather enter heaven with one eye and lame, than have all, and go to hell," said the carpenter.

"Hear! hear! we'll all have the blues after such a sermon. So now, Carpenter Jackson, you can go to meeting and hear one for yourself. I hope it will be as personal, too. Fifteen minutes to eleven, and there is brother Silby on the street."

CHAPTER X.

The carpenter went on, and the young men tired of waiting for the ladies to come out, as usual, at length turned into the house, where they met the landlord. "Mr. Egerby, we would like to have the carpenter dine with us to-day, you always have something tip-top on Sundays, and charge to our account."

"All right, gentlemen," said Egerby, "and no charge at all. The chap must have a decent dinner any-way."

"Oh! won't we have rare sport out of such a greeny," they whispered to each other as they passed through the hall.

Then Glen and Joint asked Mrs. Egerby to set a table for the clergy party by themselves. "For," said Glen, "they are too sanctimonious and grave for us, and we are too fast and jolly for them."

"Just so," said the good-natured dame, as she went to give the orders.

At the end of the house, where Glen, Joint and the three youths had met, a pile of new boards lay up against the house. Some sat upon and some stood leaning against these boards while they carried on the discussion already recorded.

In a small sitting-room upstairs (where, through an open window every word could be heard) are two young ladies, Clara and Annie Lee. Their parents were dead, and an uncle and aunt, having no children of their own, took the girls to their homes and hearts. But, as they had occasion to cross the sea, shut up their house, so their nieces were boarders here, partly for a change and partly for convenience. They sat this morning one at each side of a small table, at an open window, with clasped hands, swaying themselves as only women can do, when shocked or grieved.

"I wonder if the Silbys could tell us whether there is, or is not? Let us ask them as soon as they come from church. Indeed, I have a mind to talk to these gentlemen at dinner myself."

"No, Annie, don't say a word about it. It will only bring on an argument, and excitement is bad for you."

"Dear me, that attorney is so—I don't know what to call him, he ought to be ashamed of himself to talk so, and he the oldest."

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"It would do no good you trying to reason with them, they are too sharp, Annie. We will take our dinner as quiet as possible and come up again."

"Very well; let us go and fix up, Clara, for we have trifled all the morning. I'll shut this window, and you put the tracts in your pocket. What's that one about?"

"It is 'All things work together for good.'"

"My! that's just like something that man said to Fred."

"Indeed, Annie, I think all things are working together for bad rather. It was so unfortunate that we came to this open window when we did——"

Just at this the gong sounded, and they went down to dinner. Mr. Egerby stood by the dining-room door, seeing that all found their places. "Mr. Silby," said he, as that party was entering, "there is a small table at one side, if you please, for you. Perhaps you would like to be by yourselves."

"I am much obliged to you, indeed," said Silby, and passed on.

The carpenter, who, till now, had eaten in the kitchen, was, to his surprise, ushered into the dining-room. As he took his seat he looked with astonishment at the well-furnished table. It may be he never sat at the like before, for even the neatly-folded table-napkins did not escape his eye.

"Why, what's that?" whispered Fred to him across the table.

"A lady's pocket handkerchief, eh!"

"Most likely it is," said the carpenter. "They seem to be all round the table too."

"That's one of Mr. Egerby's," said Jerry.

"There's Egerby's on the corner. Be careful and don't soil it, Jackson. But what do you suppose she put them down for?"

"Oh, let them settle that themselves, and there's no fear of me soiling it." And he removed it to a safe distance from his plate.

After the ladies were served, Glen tapped him on the shoulder. "We want your assistance to consume this turkey, or do you prefer trying some fish chowder?"

"Anything you please," said he.

"Perhaps," suggested young Field, in a mocking tone, "he would like a little grace first."

"Oh!" said Jerry, "if he had been here all yesterday, he would have had enough to do him for a week, I guess."

"Boys," said Mr. Field, "I am sorry to say that your manners are not what they ought to be. Have some self-respect, at least, if you have none for others."

"Let each one be their own dictators in religious matters. In my young days, I was used to it," said Mrs. Crosby, "And I do think that grace before meals is a good thing, that is in private families. But, of course, it is dispensed with in boarding-houses and hotels."

"Is that so!" exclaimed the carpenter.

All were eating hearty, and the table was growing lighter. When Arthur whispered "Just leave room for the dessert."

"And now what will you have to drink," enquired Glen. "We have the real stuff in Egerby's house; just as good as you can get in Canada. Come, Jackson, try some. Nothing to pay for, your fish must have a swim, too.

"I thank you all the same, Mr. Glen, but I'll take water. never take liquor."

"I guess you belong to some society, eh, Mr. Carpenter?"

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Joint."

"I mean that this decanter is in the programme. Come, my good fellow, try a drop, unless you belong to the Cold Water Club."

"No; I belong to no Society, but liquor makes me sick; I dare not take it."

"Poor fellow," exclaimed Jerry, "is that so? How I pity you!"

They chatted away for a few minutes, then the carpenter, recollecting himself, said, "Gentlemen, I beg your pardon for keeping the dish of chowder close to me all the time. Perhaps you, at that end of the table, would like some, it's very nice."

"No, no!" was the answer. "Nothing but bacon for this end of the table, and that's why we take something to drink besides water."

"Do take some," said the carpenter, "I never tasted any so good. I know you would like it."

"Just keep it there," was the answer. "Don't want the smell of it at this end of the table; it would sicken me. Wouldn't give this nice roast bacon for all the fish in the sea. If you, carpenter, had taken this instead of chowder, you wouldn't need to drink water alone clear, of course; fish must swim, dead or alive."

"Well, you're about right," he replied. "I remember my father saying that you couldn't offend a pig worse than by giving it clear cold water. So it may be that you belong to that Society without knowing it."

"Not so green after all," whispered Arthur to Jerry. "We're taken down a peg."

"Well, ladies, your not doing much with the dinner to-day," said Mrs. Crossby. "I hope you are well."

"Yes, pretty well, thank you," replied Clara.

"Well, that's more than I can say," laughed Arthur. "I missed you sadly all morning, Clara; these two Fields picked at me like two hens. If you had been there you would have saved me. I know you would. Oh! oh! just wait till I finish my pudding, and I'll tell who the hens were, and who they were pecking at, too," said Jerry. "Won't I Annie?"

"Please excuse us now," said the girls to Mrs. Crossby, as they both slipped away up to their own room, and shut the door.

"Annie, I do wish we had a table to ourselves. Or, perhaps, the Silby's would let us eat with them next week."

"I don't know, Clara, but somehow I would like to have a talk with them. They certainly ought to know more than us. I think Glen will shew us that book he has."

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"Annie, I'd rather hear Mr. Silby's explanation, and I mean to ask him, even if we do show our ignorance. What did Glen call the book?"

"I don't know, Clara, but he said it proved all Christians in error and all religion a delusion. I'll get all our books out of the trunk, and look through them, rather than get Glen's."

"Annie, we might go to church with the Silbys? It would give us an opportunity to talk to them about things. But, really, I don't know what he is after all, though we met at Portland once. I wonder ministers don't talk more about God, when they are around that way, and tell about the future. Oh, dear, I feel as if I never could think the same of Arthur Crossby after this morning."

"I am sorry," said Annie, "for I am sure aunt would never let me have anything to do with Jerry Field if she heard him. I am glad they were not present at the time; the young man handed me the tracts, though, in the morning."

CHAPTER XI.

But you were not, either, reader, so we will repeat the morning incident, which caused the girls so much annoyance. They had risen from the breakfast table, and were passing through the hall, when a young man handed in a lot of tracts, saying, "For the boarders, please." Annie took them, and turned back into the dining-room. She was about to keep one, and lay the others on the table, when Glen, who was standing by, said:

"Oh! these are the programmes or advertisements for the new play, I reckon?"

"No," said Annie, "they are tracts for the boarders. Won't you take one?"

"Let me see," said Glen. "What are they about? 'Believe in God.' 'Where are you bound for.' 'All things work together for good.' I beg your pardon, Miss Lee," said Glen, "but as I don't believe there is a God, there is no use for me to read those tracts. They would do to light my pipe, or put my lunch in. Indeed, its only the fanatic or weak-minded that get these printed and circulated. The fact is, I can always get enough of the seen to interest me without hunting up the unseen—what never was, and never will be."

"And is it possible," exclaimed Mrs. Crossby, "that you are an unbeliever, sir?"

"Madam," was the answer, "I wish I had ground or foundation to believe. But I see virtue goes unrewarded, vice unpunished; in fact, the whole creation a jumbled up mass; good and evil so unevenly divided. How can I believe that there is a great ruling power of equity and justice at the head of affairs? And I tell you, my good woman, that very few of you professing Christians believe this any more than I do. Then, leaning towards her and lowering his voice, he continued, in a confidential tone, and you, Mrs. Crossby, don't believe there is an endless state of bliss or woe, or that, that—

"You seem at a loss for words, Mr. Glen," said the lady, "but I can assure you, I do believe that there is both a Heaven and a hell."

"Then," said he, "I beg your pardon, but to which of these places are you bound?"

"I do not know," was the answer, "but I hope to be saved."

"You do not know," said Glen, "and you take it very cool, too, madam. When I was a lad I associated with a family of free thinkers, and soon became one myself. I have watched carefully since, to see if Christians lived up to what they professed; but instead of that, I have found them just as careless, and as greedy for gain, as if there was no greater good for them. If I had observed them exhibiting a Godly spirit, and living consistently, I don't say but I would have joined them. If you like, I will lend you my book. It proves all Christians in error, and all religion a delusion."

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Crosby; and as she walked away she muttered to herself, "I wonder what Silby would say to this. Pity they didn't hear it," and, somewhat humbled, she walked away to her own room."

The Misses Lee had, with some tracts in their hands, already betaken themselves to their quiet room. It was two hours after this, that they sat by their open window and overheard the conversation of the six gentlemen by the pile of boards, which were corded a few pages back; and can we wonder that they made so short a stay at the dinner table that day? Tell me, reader, do you wonder that those young ladies should be roused to anxiety by the deistical expressions they heard?

Remember, God can bring good out of evil. Who, but Omnipotence could do so? Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man with clay mixed with spittle: a very unlikely thing, one would think. But the Lord is Sovereign in His choice of means, and who will dictate to Him? Surely Satan's kingdom is divided against itself; and so surely will it come to naught.

"Yes; Annie," said Clara. "Somehow I like these tract societies. Couldn't we contribute a little to it? Annie, dear, a blessing might follow us for doing so. But, oh! What if there is no God?"

Just at this moment they were startled by a tap at their door. It was Mrs. Silby.

"Good afternoon, girls," said she. "I noticed you looking dull to-day, and so made bold to come and see you."

"Thank you; thank you, kindly," they returned. "Please be seated, ma'm."

"Were you to the meeting this morning, girls?"

"No ma'm; though, perhaps, it would have been better for us if we had gone."

"Ah!" said the lady, "I hope it was not indifference kept you."

"No," said Clara, "not altogether; but we did not sleep well last night, and so did not feel like going out this morning."

"I understand you, dears, and can sympathize with you. That man did make a noise for a while, on the verandah, hammering; but that was nothing to the noise the others made, when they

returned from the theatre. Why, from one o'clock till near three; such a din! My poor husband thought they were just acting the whole play over again. Everyone in the house must have been waked up. Do they often go to the theatre?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; they usually go once or twice a week, and particularly on Saturday evenings."

"And do you sometimes go, girls?"

"No, ma'am; our uncle charged us not to go to any kind of plays till they returned from England."

"Well, are you going to church to-night?"

"Yes, ma'm," said Annie; "we are thinking of going to-night."

Just then a little messenger came to say that if the girls were not too tired, or otherwise engaged, Arthur and Jerry would like them to come for a walk.

"No," said Clara; "not this evening. Tell them we have another engagement."

"I want to look at a book," said the little fellow.

"Well, you can; come up again," said Annie, "and I'll lend you one full of pictures."

"Do any of the boarders go to church with you?" enquired the lady.

"No," said Clara; "we are going alone."

"But, my dears," expostulated the lady, "it is neither safe nor prudent for you to go alone. Had you not better come with us, and then we will be together coming home. But first tell me what church you go to?"

"We have gone to no church yet, ma'am. We have only been here three or four weeks."

"Dear, girls! all that time, and been to no place of worship yet; how is that?"

"We never thought much of it before," said Clara.

"And how did you think of it now," said the Christian lady.

"Please, Mrs. Silby, we have reason for doing so. We both wish we had gone this morning, for, had we gone, we would not have had to listen to what we did this morning; but that is past. We will go with you this evening."

"Very well, girls, and I hope you will sleep better to-night. The bible says, 'He giveth His beloved sleep.' Ask him for it girls. It was want of sleep, in a king, that saved a nation once. For the great God can make all things work together for good to you, and His own glory. And remember, dears, that these Sabbath days are golden opportunities for doing and receiving good."

"If you please," said Clara, "could you lend us a bible concordance?"

"Certainly," replied the lady, as she went to fetch it.

She returned in a few minutes with it, and gave it to them. Then, as she turned to go away again, she laughed pleasantly, saying:

"We Americans don't always wait for a formal introduction, so I hope you will take the hint, and just make as free with me. My

ows with. Our Lucky keeps one in the cow-house to slash bossy with; and sometimes when the flies are stinging her all over, and bossy stamps to frighten them away, then won't Lucky slash her with the gad. I wish God would make the flies leave bossy, and sting Lucky, while she was milking, then poor bossy could be quiet, and Lucky Smith would find out what makes cow bossy so restless. There, I hear my papa asking for me. I'll come up again."

"That's right, child; obey your parents. Shouldn't wonder, if bye and-bye you should be president, Bub."

"No, ma'am; not President Bub, President Egerby."

CHAPTER XII.

Now, my dear reader, we have dismissed young Egerby, and will now return to the Misses Lee, as they sit by a little table, on which lie a few tracts, some good books, a bible, and a concordance.

"Now Annie, you take the bible, and I will turn up the number of chapter and verse in the concordance. Dear me, we read the bible so often, we might have had it off by heart. Yet I can't now tell where to find a thing in it."

"Yes, Clara; but we were not in earnest then. Now we are. 'All things work together for good.' Find that verse, we heard it over the window. Then we saw it in the tract, and now that lady repeated it. Now, find out 'He gaveth His beloved sleep.' But, Clara, what do you think of that queer remark of hers? To ask God for sleep."

"I don't know, Annie, it seems a small thing to pray for. God is so great for us to use such homely language. I think such prayers would be unworthy of him. Oh! Annie, if we get our souls saved it will be quite enough."

"Well, we'll want to find proof of the existence of a Supreme being, or the immortality of the soul. We will take the old Testament first."

For a long hour they searched together.

"Well, Clara, there is a great deal that would prove the existence of God in the old Testament, language awfully grand, but really there is little to prove the immortality of the soul. People seemed to think more of their property than they do now."

"Yes, Annie, that's true; they seemed to have no idea of the future state, nor yet of the resurrection of their bodies. It always appears to me they thought more of their great conquests by the sword than they did of glory. They thought a deal too of a long line of successors, also of a long prosperous life; but I do wonder there wasn't more said about the soul. Perhaps they didn't know."

"Here, Clara, is a passage that will, perhaps, help us. David when told that his son was dead, said: 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.'"

"Well! I don't know, Annie, I think it was just a saying, or a Jewish phrase, intended to convey the idea that no more could be done for the child, and that the child could no more act in the affairs

of life or of the world. He was dead, and David too would die. However, it may be that the king was then thinking of, and referring to the state beyond death, or, it may be, that we do not understand the language of the old Testament."

"Do you know, Clara, when I was a little girl, I used to think perhaps women and girls had no soul."

"Why did you think so, Annie?"

"Because, in the bible, it is always he, him and his."

"Ah! well," replied Clara, "I suppose everybody has their own original ideas, when they are young, which might go to prove our soul's reality. I had my own thoughts, too, when I was a slip of a girl."

"A very dear friend of mine was talking to me one day about our obligations to God. She said 'God's law was just and holy, and everyone in the world was bound to obey every command in that law. That all the disobedient would go to hell, and that hell was a horrible place. The bible said its fires would never be quenched.' 'Ah!' said I, 'it ain't true anyway; nobody believes it.' 'Yes,' said my friend, 'it is true, child; none dare deny it; and everyone has a conscience within them warning them not to sin, and urging them to do what is right.' 'What,' said I, 'men and women too?' 'Yes,' she replied, 'men and women too. Repent and pray and love one another. So think more of God and turn from sin.' I remember looking round at her and saying: '*And why don't they?*'"

"Yes," said Annie, "I was at Farmer Jones for a few weeks, and one day we young folks were all out over the rocks gathering nuts. I ran on ahead of the rest, looking for a good tree; when I gave a start, and stood staring at a great long snake-like root stretched away over the rocky surface of the ground: it looked so life-like. Cousin Lena came to me, and I silently pointed to the ground. She looked, then took my hand and led me away, saying in a serious tone, 'Annie, that is a spirit. Keep quiet; don't step on the rock; spirits know our thoughts; come away.' Well, Clara, do you know? I never see a great gnarled root but that scene is present to my mind. However, Lena did not say whether it was a good spirit or a bad one."

"So much for early influences, Annie; but this will never do. We must hurry and look through the New Testament. Look for that place where it is said 'It is better to enter heaven blind and lame.'"

"Yes; Mr. Jackson Carpenter repeated that verse this morning, Clara."

"Jackson Carpenter is not his name. Why do you call him that?"

"I thought it was," replied Annie.

"No; it is a way they have here; all tradesmen are called Jackson. You'll hear them say Blacksmith Jackson, Shoemaker Jackson, Tailor Jackson and Carpenter Jackson. They know his name well enough, and I think he is a good man that, though he is neither learned nor pretty; he seems so contented and good-natured. Now, turn to the second chapter and seventh verse of Romans.

Then 2d Corinthians fourth chapter and three last verses. Now, the next chapter; is not this beautiful, Annie, where it tells of the future plainly. I like the New Testament better than the Old, there are so many bloody wars and sacrifices in the Old Testament, and yet they say the New Testament is incomplete without the Old. Here is a nice verse:—'God is a Spirit, and those that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth!' Clara, I think the first chapter of John is a very instructive one; but, perhaps, we have been wrong in wandering about through the bible so. We would do better to read one chapter, don't you think so?"

"Yes, Annie; I think that would be a good plan, to read a portion every day, commencing at the beginning, and we will both learn by heart any remarkable passage."

"Yes, we will do so, and help one another all we can. Oh! Clara, I wonder grown-up people don't talk more about their souls."

"Oh! I wish I were a real Christian, so I do. I mean to ask Mrs. Silby if she is sure of going to Heaven when she dies, and if she thinks it possible for me to get there too."

"Hold your tongue, Annie; don't you mind what auntie said, that it was very presumptuous and daring for one to say they were sure. She said that people who had lived very strict lives, and did not sin for a long time, could say so before they died; but such cases were very scarce, and, besides, she said it was not necessary for us to know when our hearts were changed or if our sins were forgiven. Such a confident feeling was apt to make people proud and careless."

"Clara, is Mrs. Silby proud? Auntie might not be right in saying that. Indeed, I know she was not right in a great many things she said."

"Annie! Annie! don't talk so. Auntie had great reverence for Divine things."

"I know it, Clara; Auntie had too much reverence."

"Annie! you astonish me; to say that Auntie had too much reverence. What do you mean?"

"I mean—Oh! there's the tea bell. Come, come on down, Clara."

As the young men had been out for a long walk, they did not make their appearance with the others at tea, and so the meal passed off very quietly.

The girls, on returning to their room, resumed their conversation:

"Annie, what were you going to say about Auntie?"

"Why, Clara? Did I frighten you, or vex you? I did not mean to."

"No, Annie; but I don't like to hear you say a word against our dear Auntie. What would we have done if it had not been for her? Just you think of last year. First I took sick with the measles; then you, before I was well and strong enough to take care of myself. For days I was not expected to live, and Auntie was our constant nurse."

"But, Clara; if you had died?"

"If I had, Annie, it would not have been her fault."

"I don't say it would, dear sister—but did she talk to you of the next world—about God? Or did she ask you about your soul."

"No, Annie; but it was just care for me that made her not do it. For fear it would hinder my recovery, she would not say 'or do anything that would excite me."

"Well, well, Clara; that's one way of showing love. That might be expected among the heathen. But still, as I was going to say, it seemed a kind of veneration, as far as talking goes, for you know yourself, as well as I do, that religion is a forbidden subject at home."

"Oh! Annie, don't get so excited."

"It is true, Clara; and it was just for fear we would talk in too familiar a way—at least I think so. I remember asking uncle and aunty something about the Sacrament and the Saviour, but I was stopped in a moment with: 'Hush, child, don't ask questions—you shouldn't talk about things you know nothing about.'"

"Ah! Clara, Clara, why can't religion be talked about, as well as prayed about. Why is it made such a bug-bear of?"

"Annie, darling, what you say is true, and our uncle did have such wonderful prayers. Oh! if he had only lived according to those prayers after he had done praying. Now, we had better get ready for church in good time."

"Yes; and Clara, mind you, I am going to speak to Mrs. Silby the first chance."

"I think, Annie, you might wait till you are better acquainted."

"And when will that be?"

"Just when you and I have exchanged speeches," said a voice behind them.

The girls turned round, and there stood Mrs. Silby.

"I beg your pardon, girls, but your door was ajar, and I stepped in to say that service would commence at half-past six, so we will be going soon. I am not sure whether it will be my husband or Mr. Owen who will preach. So, now, Miss Annie, if you want to speak to Mrs. Silby, now is your chance, only don't be too hard on me."

At this the sisters exchanged glances; then Annie, in a firm voice, said:

"Are you a Christian, Mrs. Silby?"

"Yes," said the lady, "I believe in Christ and trust in Him for salvation."

"I am glad you understand me; and tell me, are you quite sure of going to heaven when you die?"

"Perhaps, dear girl, my answer would be clearer if I said Jesus died for me, and by His Holy Spirit takes hold of me, applies to my soul the benefit of His death, and thus fitting me for Heaven."

"And have you nothing to do for yourself at all?" said Annie.

"My dear girl, I have work to do that no other can do for me. work that even God does not do for me, with reverence be it spoken."

"How is that, ma'am?"

"My corrupt nature still leads me into evil. God does not subdue it. No; he gives me grace to do it. The world or the devil tempts me. God does not resist the tempter. He gives me strength to do it. You see, girls, God honours us by making us fellow-workers with himself. Still, in this department, Christians only work for themselves. But there are other departments in which Christians work; one is bringing others into the fold of Christ. That is a good and noble work. The believer gathering in the Lord's revenue. Angels cannot work in a higher calling. But, come, girls, we will be going. Mr. Selby is away before us, and we can talk on the way."

"I think," said Clara, "I know what you mean by the Lord's revenue. It is to collect money for the missionaries, is it not?"

"No; I didn't mean that," replied Mrs. Selby. "The revenue I speak of is God's declarative glory. You both have seen the little bee gathering honey from all sorts of flowers—yes, even from the dirty door-yard—and take it to the hive. Even so will the believer in everything around see cause of praise to God. Every object in the world will be a subject that will help to sound his praise. Thus we gather, sometimes, in silent contemplation; sometimes in speaking to others of God's attributes and glorious perfections; sometimes in songs of praise. Yes; anyway and every way. Thus the Christian gathers. God takes a deep interest in my welfare, and I have His interest at heart."

"Oh! ma'm, I would give all the world if it were mine; to feel like you do. -Oh! I would! I would! give all."

"If you had it would not be accepted," said Mrs. Silby. "The Gospel is preached to the poor. God does not sell His gifts. Salvation is free. Christ paid a high price for it. Now it is free. Do not doubt it. He is an all sufficient Saviour. God is love."

"Dear me," said Clara; "it was only this morning that we were tempted to believe there was no God; no heaven; no hell, and that Christ was an——"

"I know it, dears; I know it," was the reply; "and I know, too, who were your tempters. Don't forget to thank God for making a way by which you escaped that terrible temptation."

"Oh! Mrs. Silby," said Clara, "I fear these three young gentlemen will be ruined. They are so much in the company of Glen and Joint. I wish you or Mr. Silby could do something for them."

"It is a great pity," said the lady; "and what's more, neither Mr. Field nor Mr. Crosby seem the least caring or anxious about them; and they are just at the age when the character or principles are formed in the soul. Six or seven years after this they would not be so easily influenced. I am afraid they are on the downward road; but we can pray for them. My husband remarked to a friend the other day, that he feared we were pressing through the crowd of heathen at our door, in order to reach with our prayers, our entreaties, our money, the far-off heathen, and I fear that is true."

"I will talk to them every opportunity," said Clara.

"No; my dear I would advise you first to make sure of your own salvation, then your influence might do some good."

CHAPTER XIII.

The next day Clara, with the Concordance in her hand, tapped at the door, saying, "Here is the book we had, and thank you."

"Just wait a minute, Miss Lee, would you like a talk with my husband, a little friendly chat."

"I hope you are well," said Mr. Silby, rising and taking her hand in a kindly manner.

"Very well, I thank you."

"How did you enjoy the service last evening?" he asked.

"Oh! sir, I never heard such a sermon before. I wish I could always remember it."

"Do you remember the leading points? What were they?"

"Yes; it was God's goodness and claims upon us, and our obligations to God. Then he spoke very earnestly on the necessity of repentance."

"I am glad you listened so earnestly, Miss Lee, for Mr. Owen is a very sincere preacher, and I hope you will profit by what he said."

"Oh! I don't know, sir, my heart is very callous. I wish I could repent and believe. My sister is very uneasy about her soul too."

"What makes you so uneasy? You have, both of you, lived a good virtuous life. You say you wish you could repent, but what have you to repent of?"

"Sir! we have done nothing very notorious, but we have been very vain, careless and worldly, and thought so little of anything good. We seldom read our bibles except for pastime, and never went to church only for some foolish end. Oh! no sir, we have not lived as we ought to have done."

"Then you think you would not like to live that way over again. You wish you could live like a child of God, do you?"

"I do," replied Clara, "I do."

"But what wrong have you done, Miss?"

"Oh! sir, I did not expect you would make so little of sin."

"Just bear with me, Miss Lee. Do you mean to say that you are sorry for having lived so worldly and vain? And you really wish you could truly repent and live better."

"Yes; I am sorry for the past. Many a thing I did that I wish I could undo. But it is too late now. Oh! if I only knew how to repent and believe. But everything seems so dark and entangled somehow. Ah! you are smiling at my weakness, as you will call it."

"Not at all, my dear friend, but the very opposite of weakness, for I am glad to see that you are exercising the grace of repentance, for repentance you must know is just a change of mind, a turning from something you used to like and sincerely desiring something you didn't like before; yes, the blessed Spirit is leading you to the Saviour. See that you yield to Him. The bible says, 'if any one draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him.'"

"Oh! sir," said Clara, I fear your opinion of me is too favorable to be true. Oh! if we could only feel more."

"Then," said Mr. Silby, "come without feeling, feeling is not faith. Just think a moment, my dear girl, the spirit may be even now erecting a throne for the Saviour in your heart. See that you do not pull it down. See that you do not undervalue the work of the spirit. Come to Christ, He is exalted to give you repentance. He will wash away your sins. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, sir; but oh! if He did forgive me and wash away my sins, I could not keep from sinning a single day."

"That," replied Mr. Silby, "will ever be a cause of humility. But, just think, He cannot keep from forgiving not a single day, and remember, as grace increases sin will decrease. Christ was crucified for you, you must crucify your lusts and your passions. I have been asked to make a sick call, and will have to leave you this morning. I will be happy to resume our conversation some other time. Good morning." So the minister taking his hat walked out while Clara returned to her own room.

"Why, Clara," said Annie, "what a time you stayed. I have been turning over the leaves of the bible ever since you left, and just listen to verses I found, and no concordance. I'll read them. 'And God breathed into man the breath of life (breath of God) and man became a living soul.' And here is another: 'For in Him we live, move, and have our being. We are also his offspring.' So you see that points to the origin of the soul. Here is another: 'Then shall the body return to the dust, and the spirit to he who gave it.' It may be that long ago people did not understand that truth as well as they do now. Here is another that explains why: 'Because Christ brought light and immortality to light by the gospel.'"

"Oh, yes, Annie, that is beautiful."

"I am glad you like it. But, oh, I wish Mrs. Silby had said, whether she thought we might get to be *assured* of our salvation. Oh! I would shout for joy, if I were *sure* of being converted; wouldn't you, Clara?"

"Well, Annie, it would be worth shouting for."

"There is a verse somewhere, that says: 'give diligence to make your calling and election *sure*.'"

"Why, Annie, it must be attainable, for it reads like a command."

"One thing, I am sure of, that God is willing to save us, and Christ has grace enough for everybody."

"Look here, you two little Fields, this chap is going away to-night across the lake. He'll be calling us to account. So we had better get out our tin."

"Tut!" said Joint, "the fellow said he would only charge a few conditions."

"Why," said Arthur, "he hasn't learning enough to know conditions from any other big word in the dictionary."

"Silence a moment," said Joint. "Can you all keep a secret?"

"Yes; out with it," cried Jerry.

Then, Glen, looking round to see if they were all attentive, said, in a low voice :

"I leave here to-night. Mr. Joint has just found that there is an officer of the law on my track. So I must fly, with my valise, I can't tell where, and if——"

"I beg pardon," said Fred, "but you haven't settled with Egerby yet."

"Never mind, I'll make him all right. You give him this note after I'm gone, Mr. Joint. It's on the Bank of——. The company has lots of money, but they don't owe me a red cent."

"Hallo! Carpenter Jackson, so your going, eh?"

"Yes, I'm just waiting for the stage."

"Well, tell us what's to pay."

"I told you a few conditions. One is, when you return from the theatre, at one or two in the morning, have some consideration for the others in the house, and make as little noise as possible. Take your boots off at the foot of the stairs, and go quietly to bed. Another is: if you cannot rise before ten o'clock on the Sabbath mornings, lie still and sleep till dinner time. Always remember that there are others as well as yourselves to think of. And in the third and last place, when you meet me again, have the manners to call me John Brown."

CHAPTER XIV.

Now, reader, we will return to Cosey Cott and take note of what the women are doing there. Mrs. Barton and 'Becca Lunt sat thinking awhile, when, all at once, 'Becca started up, saying :

"I have it now. Isn't preacher James over at William's now?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Barton, "that is his buggy at the gate. He is going back in the country, and is getting some oats to take with him for his horse."

"Then," said 'Becca, "I must see him. You wait until I run over." And she hastened away, pulling down the broad rim of her straw hat, to shade her eyes from the sun.

"Well, well; you might surely tell his own mother what you wish to say to him," muttered Mrs. Barton as she leaned back in her big arm chair.

James Barton was just settling himself in the buggy, when 'Becca laid her hands on the reins saying: "Hold on a minute till I ask you a question."

"Ask away, 'Becca," said he.

"What money did you give Maggie? Would you know it again, Mr. James?"

"Let me think a moment, 'Becca Lunt. Yes; it was a bill that had been torn and patched with a piece of tissue paper."

"That will do, Mr. Barton; you can drive on now," and she turned to go.

"But, 'Becca; there was more than that, if she has lost it.

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The finder would see a Yorker with it, for fear the basket would be more than a dollar."

"Glad you told me that," said 'Becca, as she hastened back.

"What a burry you are in, you mysterious body," Mr. Barton called, but 'Becca heard him not.

When she returned to Cosey Cott she found the old lady helping herself and little Lottie at the cupboard. "Oh! hah! stealing are ye? I'll have you both put in jail," she said, pretending to be angry.

"Doe away, doe away, coss tuzen!" cried the child, in alarm; "I tell oo its ganma's lubbid and ganma's sugie."

"Yes, sweetie," laughed Mrs. Barton, "and it's grandma's house and grandma's dear pet." Then, turning to 'Becca, "You see, I can't help feeling at home here."

"And I hope you will always feel so," replied 'Becca, "but, now listen to me. I'm laying a plan to detect Maggie Langford: it's too far to walk back there this afternoon, but I'll go to-morrow and get the money from her to buy the basket for the bibles, as I am going to the village anyway. Mr. James says it is a patched bill, and I don't think she has any other money, for I didn't pay her. But, upon my word, if she has spent the money for drink I'll do no more for her, but let her suffer a little more of the consequences."

"Well," replied Mrs. Barton. "But, oh! 'Becca, don't be too hard on her. Maggie is a woman of few words, and I hope you will find there is nothing low or mean about her. Indeed, at one time she put me to shame."

"Put you to shame! How was that?"

"By her candour in putting in a word for Christ and for truth, when I was too backward."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Barton; I perfectly understand that. Maggie is not the first that has put in a word for Christianity, when they think it will be two for themselves."

"Well, well, 'Becca, that's enough about her; don't hang up your hat yet; but put it on and come with me, do. William wants me to sort over his poor Ellen's clothes, and pick out some old things for Maggie."

"All right; but just let me settle things up a bit first, while you call Lottie, and put a clean pinafore on her, please. I always forget to ask you about Norah. Have you heard anything of her?"

"No; I have not, 'Becca; but I dare say it was just one of those run away matches, and I wonder she kept it so quiet for she was always so outspoken."

"What I mentioned Norah's name for was, Ben, my husband, has a relation employed about the station. He sees to the loading and unloading of baggage cars."

"Well, what about that, 'Becca?"

"Not much; but he was telling Ben that one day a man drove up in a great hurry, and put a trunk on the platform, and told the porters to wait till he could get the address from the girl who owned the trunk. He ran to the cars, and either failed in seeing

the girl or getting the card in time. Anyway the car went off whistling, leaving the man and the trunk on the platform: He then desired the porters to put it in the storehouse till next day, when he would be at the next station and see it taken to her. He put his mark on it to distinguish it, and told some of them that the girl was his sister."

"Pshaw! what an idea! Why, 'Becca, if the girl was the carter's sister, wouldn't he know her address? But he was green."

"Run on, Tottie, before us. See Willie coming to meet you."

"No! no!" said Tottie, "Willie will take tuzin's hand."

"Well," continued Becca, "the trunk has not been called for since."

"Is that so, Becca? Did your Ben see it or hear what like it was?"

"Yes; it was a large trunk, covered with deer skin, and nailed with tacks having brass heads."

"Oh!" exclaimed the old lady, "it's poor Norah's. Whatever has happened to the poor girl. That comes of being in a hurry. She had no card put on, and she may lose her trunk, foolish girl."

"Yes, grandma, she had a card," said Willie, "I know she had. It was my picture card, too. I put it in one day to hide it from Lottie."

"Hush, Willie," said his grandma; "Norah forgot to put her name on that trunk. That's what we mean by a card; not to put it in the trunk, but on it with tacks."

"It will do, grandma," persisted the child. "That's just the way I done it. Because there was a rip on the deer's back, and I put my new picture card away under the skin, and I coaxed Norah to let me nail it down. So she gave me two brass heads to nail the rip, and said she would take it out some day, but she didn't."

"Never mind, Willie, you'll get another. Go on to the kitchen with your little sister, and keep her there till your cousin 'Becca is ready to go home. 'Becca, you cannot think how bad I feel about that girl disappearing so. We will just go up stairs to work. Robina, will you fetch me the keys out of your father's desk?" she called out.

"Yes, grandma, here they are; and this is the one for the closet door."

"Are all your mamma's clothes there, Robina?"

"Yes, grandma, Norah took them all out one day to air them. The day pa took us out for a sail. She said: 'Just give me the key, and say nothing to papa about it, because it would only make him feel sad.' Wasn't it kind of her, grandma? And she said she would put all mamma's very best clothes in the big box in the bottom of the closet. Here is the key for it grandma."

"Very well, dear; just open Norah's room door, and let us have all the light we can get. Now, see, Becca; we had better lift out the box into the middle of the floor, first. There; it's not so heavy as I thought. I'll open it. But, my! the key won't fit. Why, how is this? It's filled with putty. Dear me, Robina, bring

me a fork to pick it out. There, it's out now, and the fork prong broken. You are very quiet, 'Becca; what is the matter?"

Poor 'Becca threw herself into a chair in a dreamy way—"I'm thinking—thinking."

"Thinking? You needn't tell us you are thinking, for you've done nothing else. It's the first word you've spoken since you came up stairs. I am thinking, too, and—Well, Robina, my dear, you had better go down and get the tea ready. Your cousin has walked a good deal this afternoon, and a cup of tea will be very acceptable. Just let her see what a nice table you can set."

"Will I bake apples, too, grandma?"

"Yes, my dear; and, Robina, give Willie and Tottie something to play with, so that they won't go out; it's getting rather chilly."

"Now, 'Becca, Robina has gone. For pity's sake tell me what you suspect, for fear all is not right. There, the putty is all out, and another prong of the fork broken."

"Mrs. Barton, open the box," said Becca, in a low voice, "and you'll know what I was thinking about. There; it's open."

"Oh! 'Becca, they are gone," exclaimed the old lady—"they are all gone. Oh! wicked Norah, what will poor William say? It's too bad; and we all thought her so honest. Why, if she only found a penny, she would seek out the owner."

"Yes, yes," said Becca, "and with seeming honesty she had the run of the house, whereas if she had kept every little thing she found, she would never have been trusted. A wise girl was Norah. There, take everything out. See, Mrs. Barton, there is actually the cutting of poor Ellen's dresses. Of course, they were not fashionable enough for lady Norah, but had to be altered, and she did it all so quietly too."

"Oh! 'Becca, it was time she went; just see the vile books she has been reading. I hope she has not showed these illustrations to the children. And only look at all her own filthy cast-off clothing. Rags put in to fill up the box. What ever shall we do with these?"

"Just take them to the field, Mrs. Barton, and make a bonfire of them. What else are they good for?"

"Well, hold on a bit, Becca, perhaps some of them could be fixed over for Maggie?"

'Becca, thought a while. Norah's rags for Maggie? "No! Mrs. Barton, you wouldn't have the face to offer them. Maggie is at least honest, and I don't think she would wear them. Let us just burn them."

"Well, wait till William comes in." Then going to the stair's head, she called: "Children, tell your papa to come up to me as soon as he comes in."

"How hard it is," said 'Becca, "to get good trustworthy servants. A great many think only of the work they are to do, and the wages they are to get, but, dear me, that ain't everything. Why a great share of domestic happiness, or real comfort, is either lost or obtained through them. Here he comes."

Slowly Mr. Barton ascended the stairs. "Mother!" said he,

"I wish you would settle these things without me, you know best what would do to give Maggie. I leave it to you and cousin 'Becca."

"My dear son, there is little either to keep or give away. That wicked Norah has been making very free with poor Ellen's clothes. She has taken them, and left her own rags to fill up this box."

"Oh! the heartless girl. She—— But, tell me, mother, has she taken everything off? Canton crape shawl, brown silk dress, velvet jacket, silk stockings, these were Ellen's mother's, and given to my Ellen, with her portrait, on the evening of our marriage."

"I have them safe, William, I took them in charge, when your poor wife took sick, knowing that she would have strangers about her. But with the exception of them, that wretch has taken everything of any value."

"But, mother, you have not proof that she took them."

"Yes, William, we have proof, but no witnesses."

"So, mother, that accounts for her not letting the girls sleep in their own room. Its plain she wanted this for a sewing room. I am grieved to think that my beloved wife's clothes should go to adorn her body. Still, I am glad she is gone. I know," continued William, "that women are apt to set a high value upon good dress, but, for my part, I set a higher value on my children's morals, and I am glad and thankful she is gone from amongst them."

"But, what about those rags and cuttings? Shall we burn them; and this obscene book?"

"Burn the book, mother, but the clothes I would put into a bag, and send them after her, if you only knew where."

"Oh! Mr. Barton," said 'Becca, "I want to tell you, Norah's trunk is lying in a storehouse at some wharf or station, uncalled for yet; my Ben told me so, and its likely the stolen articles are in it yet."

CHAPTER XV.

"Where are you going, papa?" said little Willie.

"Going for Norah's trunk, my boy."

"Bring me my picture card out of it, pa. Oh! here comes cousin Becca Lunt."

"Mr. Barton," said 'Becca, "take the boy with you, you will find him handy, and it's only a little bit to S—— Station. He has seen the trunk oftener than you, and would help you to single it out."

And now, reader, that Mr. Barton and his little boy are on their way to the suspected trunk, you and I will even be their silent companions.

"This way, sir," said the official, as with straps and keys he preceded them into the store-room, where were several trunks, boxes, valises, and such like, in safe keeping, until properly claimed and taken away.

"Are you sure you'll know the trunk?" said the baggage-man.

"I am not certain that I will, though it was a long time in my house. I did not see much of it, it being in the girl Norah's room."

"You're a fine fellow, to come looking for, you don't know what. Recollect, I am accountable for what is under my key, and unless you can swear to it, sir, I cannot let it go," said the big official.

"I think," said Mr. Barton, "this one covered with deer-skin is the one. I have already told you how it was taken from my house, and what we suspect it contains. However, if you have any doubts about me, I will wait till afternoon, when I will have a man here who will help me in this matter."

Mr. Barton then turned to go, but the boy, Willie, was not so easily put off, but kept whispering:

"Papa, give me your jack-knife."

"What do you want with it? Come on out."

"I want to get my picture card before the man locks the door."

"Where is your card, youngster?"

"It's in here," said the child, "away in on the deer's back, and he picked at the nail to get it out."

"Hold on, boy, I can't allow you to cut up so. Tell me how your card came to be there," and he told him. "Now tell me, young hopeful, what is on your card? Is it a heart, a diamond, or a king?"

Willie eyed him for a moment, then burst forth, "Its just yourself that's on it, with your bunch of keys. Yes, and a lot of other pictures prettier than you. There, now, the nails are out of the rip. I've got my card. Aha!" It was only the picture alphabet, and for the T stood a portly turnkey. Willie stuck in the tacks again and gave a whistle, pleased to have recovered his lost treasure.

"See here, Mr. what's the name?" said the man, "you may take the trunk; your boy has sworn to it."

"Oh! I didn't; did I?" said Willie.

"No, my son, you did not swear."

"No matter," said the big man, "you did as good."

"Oh! you are a bad man to call swearing good. Guess you never heard anybody swear, and that's the way you don't know what it is. If you only heard Abby Langford's grandpa; that's the man that swears."

"I'm sorry to hear it; and I hope you'll never learn such a bad, mean habit," said the man, as he handed out the trunk.

Twenty-four hours later, and the lost trunk has undergone a change; everything has been taken out that had no right there, and in their place all Norah's things which she had left, with the exception of some books of a light character, which our worthy friends cast into the fire, were put carefully in, the trunk fastened, Norah's name affixed; and once more it is left at the station, with many surmisings whether she will ever find it, and if so, what will she think of the transfer of its contents. So good-bye to Norah for a

while, and we will once more take our stand at Widow Langford's.

"Little girl, can I see your mother or your aunty?" said Mrs. Lunt, as she stepped down from her light cart.

"My mother has gone to granny's, but aunty is in the kitchen," and the little girl ran there, but soon returned, saying her aunty had finished what she was doing, and gone up to her own room.

"Then I will just go up," said Mrs. Lunt, "if you will have an eye to my pony."

She found Maggie dusting and settling her room, though it did not seem much in need of it.

"And how do you feel yourself to-day?" inquired Becca, as she shook hands.

"Much better," said Maggie. "Thanks to the good minister for his pills and tonic. I had intended going to work for you to-day, but my sister-in-law was obliged to go to her father's, and I keep house till she returns."

And Maggie, once in a while, would clasp her hands and give a smothered sigh. Becca noticed it, and said:

"You seem to be in low spirits, Miss Langford; what's the matter?"

Maggie gave an evasive reply, and tried to be cheerful; but it was quite perceptible that she was feigning.

"I am going to town with my light cart," said Becca, "and if you give me the dollar, I will get you the basket for the bibles, and save you that much of a walk."

Maggie seemed pleased with the offer, and rose at once to get it; but, alas, nowhere could she find the dollar. She said she knew it was in some careful place, if she could only mind where.

"I am afraid my memory is failing," she remarked, as she stood on a high chair to search the high shelf of her cupboard.

"Perhaps," remarked Mrs. Lunt, "it has got into some of these bottles."

"No," replied Maggie, innocently; "it was a paper bill, and wouldn't drop into a bottle if it did fall. Strange that I should forget so," she muttered in a dreamy sort of way.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Lunt, "your memory does well to fail. Perhaps if you were to smell of these bottles in the bottom of your cupboard, they would refresh your memory, for I am thinking, if they could speak, they could tell a pretty story."

"Oh! Mrs. Lunt," exclaimed Maggie, "I ken now what you're driving at. Yer thinkin' that I spent that dollar for whiskey. Na! na! I did not. I look upon the money as belonging to the Lord. Ah! yes; them bottles have a history that makes a blot in mine. But, oh! believe me, lady, I do *not* drink," and saying so, she burst into tears; and looking for something to wipe her eyes, she crossed the room to where her shawl, sun-hood, and satchel hung. Taking the latter down off a peg, she took her clean apron out, and was tying it on, when she gave a scream of delight, as she picked up a little pill box which had dropped as she she shook out the apron.

"That's it; I mind now o' puttin' it in there when I took out the pills," and rushin' over to Becca, she pushed the little box in the palm of her hand, saying:

"Hech! but I'm thankfu' it wasna' lost."

Mrs. Lunt opened the box, and there indeed was the identical patched bill, and the yorker.

"Oh! it's just as he gie'd it to me—the gude Mr. Barton."

"But the yorker is your's, Maggie."

"Na! na! it's na mine. It's just as he gave it to me, and must all go for the basket."

"Maggie Langford, can you forgive me," said Becca, "for my cruel and unjust judgment?"

"Oh! Mrs. Lunt, never mind; its all richt. I must mind and grieve too, for what I have said."

"Do you forgive me? Say yes or no, Maggie."

"Then heartily and fully I forgive you; but don't think of the incident again, please. I would have acted the same, perhaps, had I been in your place, for indeed there seemed to be ground for sus-peeshun."

"Now, Maggie, I have tested your character, and you have come out all right. You have exhibited a Christian spirit," said Becca; "and I have a favour to ask of you. Will you do it?"

"I cannot say yes," she replied, "till I know what it is, and it would ill become me to disoblige you."

"Maggie Langford, I want you to confide in me as a sister, and I promise to treat you as one. I know you have a cross to bear (we all have). You have trouble that the world knows not of. I may not be able to do much, but I can sympathize with you. Your trust will be sacred, sister Maggie. Will you let me share it with you?"

"Dear, dear, Mrs. Lunt, you have been more than a sister to me. I feel like calling you mother, only I'm too old for that; and, oh, my troubles are light compared wi' some."

"But, Maggie, while I think of it, I wonder why you keep all those bottles there. They don't look nice, and your room is other-wise neat."

"I leave them there," she replied, "to remind me of my share in the ruin of others."

"Maggie, what do you mean by the ruin of others?"

CHAPTER XVI.

While these women are thus engaged, a very different conversation is being carried on below stairs, between the little girl already mentioned, and brother Abbie.

"Hallo! whose horse and cart, Bessie?"

"Why, Abbie, don't you know it's Mrs. Lunt's, and she is talking to aunty in her room. I think aunty is going out with her, for her sunhood and shawl are on the bed."

"Golly, I wished she was killed," muttered the boy.

"Abbie, you are a wicked boy, what do you want her killed for?"

"None of your business. Was you up stairs, Bess?"

"Yes; I went up to ask aunty if I could put the barley in the pot."

"I do wish she was killed, for George hates her and Maud hates her."

"Why, Abbie, what did she do? I'll tell mother, so I will, if you talk like that. Is it aunty you want killed?"

"No; its Mrs. Lunt; aunty ain't so much of a sneak, but that Mrs. Lunt or 'Becca, some call her, she is a regular sneak; she always manages to be out in the road, or common, just when George and Maud are out walking in the evenings."

"Well, Abbie, what about that? The common is wide."

"You're a mope, Bessie, and don't know anything, so you don't. I tell you that Mrs. Lunt is a sneak."

"Well, what about it, if she is? You say that I'm a mope, and that's just as bad."

"No, Bessie, a sneak is the worst thing anybody can be. It's a pity Mrs. Lunt ever came to live in Cosey Cott."

"Well now, Abbie, I passed down that road twice, since she moved there, and she didn't watch me, but she gave me a big handful of currants once, and nice ones they were, too."

"Do you know why, Bessie? Because you are not worth watching. If you were big, like George and Maud, and going out at night to meet your beaux, the old sneak would watch you, never fear."

"Dear me, what does she watch them for?"

"Because she hates young Cliff, that's why, Bessie. She always manages to cross the road near them, when they are meeting. One night, when Maud was sauntering about near the style, waiting for somebody, the old sneak walked right up to her and says: 'Take heed, this road might lead to hell!'"

"Oh, Abbie, did she say that? Then Maud must not go there again after dark. If Cliff wants to see her, why can't he come here in the day time."

"Why, Bessie, you're nothing but an old fashioned mope; you're almost an old maid. I'm sure you'll never get married."

"Well, what about that, if I don't; that's no great thing."

"Oh, Bessie, Bessie, its aunty and Mrs. Lunt, that's spoiling you, I do believe. I wish they were both killed. Say, I'll fix her horse so he'll run away, and throw them all out on the road."

"Oh, Abbie, you're a wicked boy, so you are. Do you know what? They are going to have a children's party at Mrs. Barton's, and they asked me and you to come. There now, and you want to kill her. There, she is going away," and Bessie ran to the kitchen.

After a few minutes delay, Maggie and Mrs. Lunt came down stairs.

"Good morning, Maggie. Come over as soon as you can. I must hurry now, for my horse is tired waiting."

"Just let me help you up, Mrs. Lunt."

"Oh! never mind, Maggie; I can jump up like a youngster. There now; I'm all right. Good-bye."

The unsuspecting 'Becca, with the reins in one hand and the

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whip in the other, and her heart full of charity, feeling better pleased than ever with poor Maggie, gave the pony a slight touch of the lash, when off he walked, leaving her sitting in the cart with the reins in her hand, not knowing whether to feel angry or amused at her ludicrous position. No further harm was done, however.

'Becca soon caught the quiet animal and put him in going order once more. It was easy to be seen that the young avenger had made some grand mistake in his arrangement, and so the intended accident was a failure and the hated old sneak still lived. This made a deep impression on her mind that there was room for improvement and reform in that family; and as she spied him peeping round the back of the stable, she thought to herself, there goes a country Arab, a home heathen.

"Good morning, Mrs. Lunt; I couldn't rest last night for thinking about you. How do you feel after yesterday's fright?"

"Oh, I am all right, Maggie, except a slight soreness in my back; that, of course, was caused by the sudden falling of the shafts. I am thinking your little niece had been and unbuckled some of the harness, intending to put the horse in the stable."

"No, ma'am; but she told me all about it. It was her brother did the deed, and she was very sorry, and tried to turn him from his purpose, but he had taken the chances when she was not watching."

"I am sorry to hear this of Abbie; I do hope he will get better as he grows older. Bessie seems to be a proper behaved child."

"Yes she is ma'am; a dear lassie, and does many a turn for me, when I am ailing. An, a' the reward she asks is, 'aunty tell me some bible stories,' or 'read one out of Foxe's Book of Martyrs.'"

"I'm truly glad to hear that good account of your little niece. Who comes now? Why! it is Mrs. Barton."

"Yes, 'Becca, I came to see how you rested after your upset."

"Very well, indeed, and the soreness in my back is not so bad to-day. I have every reason to be thankful, and I begin to think I am of some consequence since you and Miss Langford have come to see me before ten o'clock. Who knows but I might have a few more calls before night," and 'Becca laughed pleasantly.

"If you please," said Maggie, "I would like to do a wee bit o' washin' or scrubbin' for you. I know that neither of you have much help. You have both been kind to me, an' I wad like unco' weel to do something for you both before I enter on my bible mission."

"There, Maggie, is a parcel for you. See how that jacket and dress will fit you. And here," said 'Becca, "is a cheap bonnet I bought for you to wear with the dress and jacket Mrs. Barton has given you."

"And to whom am I indebted for a' this kindness? And won't you let me pay for them."

"Yes, Maggie, you can pay for them when you have more money than you know what to do with."

"Tut! tut!" said 'Becca, "don't talk of paying, it's a present from us two women, and no one is to know about it."

"Between you," said Maggie, "you have made a decent body

of a poor washerwoman," and her heart filled as she turned away her face.

"Nonsense, Maggie," said Mrs. Barton, "you must not call yourself a washerwoman, though you have been under the necessity of doing it. You were born for something else, and we hope you are now going to do something that will suit you better than washing, so you will not have to work so hard after this. However, we will gladly accept your offer next week."

"By the by, Miss Langford," said 'Becca, "you did not finish what you began to tell me yesterday. What did you mean by saying you had a share in the ruin of some one else? It is proper that we should know it before you proceed on this sacred mission."

"And when I have told you all," she said, in a resigned tone, "dear friends, you may see proper to bar my going. If so, God's will be done. Well, it was about six months after my dear brother's death; I was ironing in the kitchen; my sister-in-law was at her brother's house, and George, who had been ailin' wi' a bad cold asked me to do him a favour. 'Auntie' he said, 'are you going to sweep and dust the office to-day for me.' I said 'Yes, George, if you are not able, unless that Abbie.—' 'No,' said he, 'mother will not let any of them go, for fear they fall into a whiskey vat. So aunt, when you are there, look under the old desk, and you'll see a small cask of grog, fill this little pocket bottle and bring it to me. I want to get a hot drink to-night going to bed, to make me sweat. Don't you think it would do me good?' 'Yes, George, I think it would cure,' said I. 'All right'; says he, 'and, aunt, don't forget the keys.' Well, I did as he desired. The boy had the hot punch, but complained that I did not make it strong enough. Again and again, when anything was the matter with him, an' he was often ailin', he got me to fill his bottle; till I saw it was going to be a regular habit. 'George,' I said one day, 'you must not drink so much.' 'Oh! phaw!' said he, 'I've drank whiskey ever since I was——' 'But, George,' I said, 'it will kill you. I'll bring no more for you, nor conceal it for you either.' A sullen look was all his answer. I'm feared I weary you with my speaking, Mrs. Lunt."

"Not at all; go on Maggie, we're listening."

"Well, it was in the next summer. One day when we were all in the orchard picking apples, Abbie called out, 'Come here, every one of you, and see where the ghosts of the Indians have been round here. Look at their work on this tree.' 'What do you see,' said Maud, 'to make such a noise about?' And they all gathered round, but could not make out clearly the marks on the tree. 'George,' said I, as soon as I could be heard, 'my sister Bessy's name and mine are carved out on two trees in this orchard. I stood by with your grandfather and Aunt Bessie while it was being done. George say that they are mine. I planted them when I was younger than you, Maud. The names were cut the year your grandfather died, and that was the first they bore fruit. I have often intended speaking to you about those apple-trees; so may I have them for the future?' 'Yes, you may if you pay for them,' says Maud, 'not otherwise. No doubt it was our father cut or carved them, and

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with very little change I can make this stand for my name, Maud Langford, and the other long side is just Bessie.' 'No, no! Maud,' I replied, 'it was not your father, nor your grandfather neither, that carved them. It was a man that lived and worked with them though, and he cut a sort of prophecy on a large beech away down by the river.' 'Oh!' says Maud, 'you mean the man that had our farm on shares, do you?' 'No, Maud, I don't mean him; it was before that. He was a carpenter by the name of Brown.' 'Was he Scotch?' enquired Abbie. 'Bah!' returned Maud, 'you may be sure he was that, and that's why aunt thinks so much of his work.' 'You're wrong there,' said I. 'His parents were both Irish, I think, tho' they lived in Scotland. John Brown, himself, was born and brought up in Montreal, and lived there a long time before he came to Upper Canada. He was a quiet, inoffensive man, and God-fearing, and so devoted to his mother. And now, George and Maud, tell me what price you set on those trees, and I'll try—' but here I was interrupted by their mother coming. 'What's all the catter batter about now?' she cried. 'Nothing, mother, only Aunt Magg is laying claim to some of our trees. She wants us to sell or give her two of them; the very best.' 'The trees,' said Mrs. Langford, 'are mine, and you can neither sell nor give them. So let me hear no more about it, and mind your work.' Little Bessie (a wee bit bairn she was then) came to my side. 'Never mind,' she says, in a coaxin' way, 'wait tiil I get growed big, an' I'll buy you apples an' tree, too.' Then to help change the subject, Abbie asked me about the beech tree down by the river. 'What was on it?' I told him it was just two lines. 'Train carefully up the youthful mind. The tree bends, as the twigs incline.' 'And do you call that a prophecy, aunt?' said Maud. 'I know it's not what people call a prophecy,' I said; 'but, anyway, its a true sayin.' No more was said about trees till long after."

"But, Maggie," remarked Mrs. Lunt, "I cannot see what all that has to do with what you were to tell us?"

"You shall hear directly. You mind I refused to smuggle any more drink for my nephew, but that didn't cure him of drinkin'; he took it at the distillery. The whiskey was missed frequently. George tried to put the blame on one of the men employed there. The man denied it. Then they quarrelled and fought, and in the strife George broke the man's watch. He threatened to inform on George to the head managers, and that was George's uncle, and grandfather on his mother's side. That frightened George; he would rather that the whole world knew than those two. So, after they cooled down a bit, George offered to get the watch fixed, or give the man twenty-five shillings to get clear. George knew at this time that I was saving up money to buy the two trees, so he came up to my room.' 'Aunt,' says he, 'I want to make a bargain with you about them trees.' 'How much can you pay now?' 'George,' I answered, 'how much does your mother want?' 'Oh!' he said, 'she should be satisfied with six dollars a piece.' 'I have only twenty-five shillings,' I said. 'Just,' said he, 'give me that, and

I'll give you a receipt.' 'But let me go to S—— first, for fear he goes to my uncle.' He then told me of the scrape he had got into. In the evening he came again, and a bottle with him. 'Magg,' said he, 'I want to make another bargain with you. I want you to give me the bottom part of that cupboard; and mind, now, you're not to be telling on me.' 'No,' I said, 'but you didn't give me that receipt yet.' 'Oh,' he said, 'his hand shook too much that night; he had walked twice to and from the distillery, which had put him all in a flurry. Never mind, I'll write it in the office to-morrow and bring it up to you. And, see here, there is a small stove down there you might as well have. It would keep this place nice and warm in winter.'

CHAPTER XVII.

"Well, I got the stove, though it was of little use, it was so broken, but the receipt I never got, nor never will. I keep the key of my door; and many a time, when I have been out late, and come up to my room, I would no sooner be in than poor George would come, in nervous haste, take a drink out of his bottle, then hurry away to his bed before it would affect his head. Oh! I am sorry, sorry, that I helped him to get it unknown to his mother. I believe he would have had it any way. Still, I did wrong."

"But, Maggie, does he still have drink? I mean, does he still keep it in your cupboard?"

"No, ma'am, not now. If he has any way of concealing his bottle, it's with Parley, that boards in the house. His mother was often away at granny's."

"Does his mother not know that he drinks?"

"Oh, yes; she knows, and worries about it too, and does all she can to hide it from the rest. Poor boy, he has gone twice out of his mind."

"Dear me," said 'Becca, "it's really awful. Why, he is not eighteen years of age, yet, and his face is as blue as my apron. I cannot help thinking that his associates have had much to do with his ruin. Really, there ought to be some society formed here, just for evenings, where our lads would have something to amuse and instruct them, instead of idling around—something that everyone would have an active part in. You see, poor George could not very well help being brought together with a bad class, and he, of course, would be with the rest—doff his glass, smoke his pipe, or chew a great, black cud."

"Maggie," said Mrs. Barton, "we have no need to tell you that you did wrong. You appear to feel that keenly enough already. But I do think you might have entertained them with books. History, or even innocent games would have been better than spending their evenings—no one knows where."

"Ah! Mrs. Barton; do you not know that an old woman——"

"Tut! tut!" said 'Becca, "you're not so old."

"An empty pocket, a coarse hand and homely visage, have less influence than youth and wit. And, of course, taverns and saloons have always something to entertain."

"Aye! there is some truth in what you say," said Becca. "We are all less or more inclined to respect and be taken up with a person of wit and rich attire. I remember being greatly amused when in Quebec. I was at a concert one evening, at which there were some hundreds, young and old. There was an old lady there, well known to most of them. There was always something a little odd about her, and old-fashioned, but nothing really bad. She was sitting at one side, looking rather sleepy, when a dashing young gentleman—mistaking her for somebody else—took a seat beside, and commenced a chat with her. She was so deaf that she never heard him, but kept dipping into her snuff box. Suddenly, he looked up into her face to get her answer, when—lo! he saw his mistake—darted off as though he had been shot, upsetting the chair in his hurry. He was laughed at, I tell you, for being so blind. 'Thunder!' said he, 'I would as soon be seen along side my father's cow.' And he was a church-going member."

"Ah! well," said Mrs. Barten, "his being a professor may have hindered him from using worse language, or taunting her about her old age. So it's well to look on the bright side of things."

"I can't think how anyone living in the fear of God could act so inconsistent—be they old or young."

"Surely that young man wasn't a Christian, no matter what he professed?" said Maggie.

"Maggie! Maggie! look within before you pass judgment upon others."

Maggie coloured. "I thank you for the reproof. Oh! how ready I am to see the faults of others, but slow to see my own."

"Yes," replied Becca, "much need to cry 'Hold Thou me up.' Oh! what mistakes we would make if God left us to ourselves—to our own guidance."

"Mistakes," said Mrs. Barton—"Yes. That reminds me of something I read long ago. You know it is a dreadful sin to take one's own life, or that of others. Well, this was about a very godly man, who seemed troubled in his mind. No one knew for what—but he was found lying dead with his throat cut. I think the story said they heard him fall. His family were horrified—he so pious, so godly—to yield so far to the devil as to take his own life. Where now was his soul? Searching around him they found a bit of paper, evidently written after the fatal deed was done, but before he dropped on the floor. Though written in haste."

"And what were the words?" asked Becca.

"The words were: 'My God left me to myself but for a moment, and see what I have done.' It was a mercy that the man left so much of an explanation. What a comfort to his friends! See, now, just as some thoughtless, wilful child, whom his nurse has been watching all day long, if she leaves him but a few minutes, how he falls and blunders."

"Ah!" said Maggie, "how much need of faith to hold on to the Lord Jesus."

"But, Maggie, it's not our holding on to Him that saves us from falling, but His hold on us by His Spirit."

"Oh! yes, ma'am; it's our only safety. Judas Iscariot took his own life."

"Yes, Maggie; his was a fearful example; a warning to all to beware of the love of money."

"When I was a young lassie," continued Maggie, "I used to think with pity of Judas Iscariot, because that which he did was of necessity-like laid upon him. It was decreed or fore-ordained by God, though by the act his soul was lost."

"Well," replied Mrs. Barton, "I know it is generally believed that the soul of Judas is with the damned; but, really, we have no scripture authority for it, and for aught we know his soul may be in glory. It may be that the Divine restraint was withheld in that hour of darkness, like that godly man I read of. God left him for a while, and just during that time the devil tells Judas: 'Judas, here is a chance for you to make thirty pieces of silver; don't be the least afraid to betray Christ; Christ can easily get away out of their hands,' and so the act was committed, and——"

"But," interrupted Maggie, "did not Christ speak of him as being lost?"

"Yes, Maggie; in one sense he was certainly lost. Lost out of that honored little band, soon to go forth as heralds of a glorious redemption. Greed was his besetting sin, and it caused him to commit a worse one. Oh! how bitterly he repented when he found Jesus was condemned to die. He brought the fatal money again to the chief priests, thinking, perhaps, to undo the mischief, and makes his sad confession: 'I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.' But when he saw they were not disposed to be favorable, he throws down the money in disgust or anger at his folly. He had failed to deliver Jesus out of their hands, and now his remorse was so great, so insufferable, that he departed and hanged himself."

"And do you really suppose, Mrs. Barton, that Judas, the traitor, has a share in that great salvation?"

"Becca, I don't know; no one can tell. But this we do know, that there was merit and efficacy enough in that innocent blood to atone for his guilt. There was room enough in that suffering Saviour's heart to include even Judas in that intercessory prayer: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' You see, if Jesus had been a mere man, Judas would have stood a bad chance. But 'God's ways are not our ways,' and his thoughts far above our thoughts. Man's thoughts in such a case are thoughts of revenge, but God's thoughts are of love, of forgiveness, and of pity."

After a few minutes of Quaker-like silence, a light step was heard in the doorway, and a voice said: "And they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard."

So said Mrs. James Barton, of Willowvale Manse.

"Why, Jessie," said the old lady; "is it you?"

"Yes; it's me," was the answer. "I stood in the doorway a

ew moments, not liking to disturb your conversation. Jack drove me down in the buggy. Some one was telling him this morning that Mrs. Lunt was thrown out of her cart yesterday, so I came down to see if she was hurt; but, really, 'Becca, you seem all right."

"Why, yes, I can't complain, and, indeed, a little toss is not the worst thing in the world. You are my third visitor this morning. However, I don't want to get another toss, for the next time I might not be so fortunate."

"I am glad you escaped so well," said Mrs. James. Then pressing her fingers on her forehead she continued, "What's this I was thinking about as I stood in the doorway? Oh! I mind now; couldn't we have a mothers' meeting once a month or so? There is a number of us women around here all of one mind. What do you think of it, grandma?"

"I think it would be very profitable, if we can only get them to come out. We could meet over at William's or here, or 'at the manse."

"Suppose, 'Becca, we met here on the first of next month. We must not expect a large attendance."

"If you wish it, I could tell folk when I'm round wi' the bibles," said Maggie.

"I think not," replied the old lady. "It would come better from the minister's wife."

After Maggie had gone Mrs. Lunt gave a sigh, saying, "I can't forget about poor George. And I am thinking if we had a better class of taverns things would not be so bad. Though Renard's is not the worst, and it is likely Abbie will follow George's ways."

"Put on your thinking cap again, 'Becca," said the old lady. "Renard's is good enough; as for that, a better class of taverns would only trap the better class of people, I think."

And Maggie Langford went on her mission. It was a new life to her. She felt as if elevated in position. She had often thought to herself, "Oh! if only I could do some good in the world." And now her desire was granted. A few weeks later and she presented herself before Mr. Barton.

"If ye please, sir, I've sold them all, and here is the money and the account."

"All right," said Mr. Barton, when he had looked over it. "But, Maggie, what names are these?"

"Oh! sir, ye see I whiles met wi' paup' folk that wau'd like a testament but cudna' pay for it, so I bad them just pit down their names."

"That was a good idea, Maggie. I'm glad you done so, and now I will write their names on the books they want and you give them free."

"A great many, sir, asked me for prayer-books and rosaries, and for every one that wanted a bible, ten wanted dream books, cheap novels and songs. Some took me for a peddler."

"Not a bad trade, Maggie. By the bye, my sister Lucy and her husband left five dollars for your benefit."

"For me!" said Maggie, astonished like, "surely it's a mistake. It wadna' be for me."

"Yes, for you, Maggie, with this condition, that I was to decide how to lay it out. I think it would be best to lay it out in some small ware. They will lie in one end of your basket. Of course what you make on these will be your own. Here is your receipt for the bible money, and here is your five dollars. Be sure and keep separate accounts. 'Black on white, mind.' I will have more bibles in a few days. With the proceeds of your small wares you can replenish your own stock."

"Kind sir, I would like to thank you, but I can't get words."

"Its all right, my good woman," said the pastor.

And Maggie, with a modest curtsey, left the manse light and happy, only for one thing. Oh! if she could only stop George in his downward course. If she could only see him become a temperate youth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Perhaps, kind reader, it would not be amiss to follow our bible woman on one of her tours. The day is cold, drizzly, half rain and half snow, but Maggie's heart is warm for the work. She had gone a few miles from home, and arriving at a stage depot, where a number of people were waiting for the conveyance to take them to the city of ———. She offered her wares for sale, and some bought from her. As she was about to return home, a gentleman told her she had better go into the waiting-room and warm herself at the stove before starting. It was while she sat there that two Irishmen commenced the following conversation, by which Maggie was greatly amused:—

"And so yer'—yer' going to thry it agin, are ye? Eh, Pat?"

"Why, yis; I feel more secure this time, tho' it ain't my first love."

"Well, Pat, luck to you, I say; only don't be after making a fool of yerself this time, or I'll never spake another word to ye. Why, man, dear, the way you trated that poor girl, it was a caution. Ye ought to be ashamed ever to stand afore the praste with another. That's so, Pat."

"Hould yer' peace, Tom. You would have done the same if ye'd been in my place, so you would."

"Is it me that would have done the like, eh? An' it's there yer' mistaken, Pat."

"Why, yes, Tom, I always thought ye had an honest core in yer' heart, I did for shure."

"It's honest I thried to be; that's so. An' do ye mean to tell me that it——"

"Easy, Tom; spake easy. Don't bawl so everyone will hear."

"Do yo mean to tell me that it was an honest thing of ye to go a courtin' a girl till ye got her consint, and then turn yer' broad back on her, Pat. It was mighty like a theatrical play. And then to have it in the church, and afore the altar. I wasn't prepared for it, nohow."

"Neither was I, Tom, no mor'n you."

"What do you mane, eh, Pat? Are ye mad crazy, to say you wasn't prepared, no more than me. Shure, then, what did ye come there for? Ye looked as if ye had all cut and dried, as they say for an ugly action. An' in me heart, Pat, I hope the praste made you do pinnance for that same."

"Easy, Tom; don't be after firing up, an' I'll tell ye jist how the thing happened; an' thin I'll be able to take my Nancy to the altar to-morrow, with a clear conscience. An' thin, maybe, ye'll be honest enough to say I did right. Another thing: if you come, don't sit so far back; an' ye'll hear better, Tom; an' mind I say——"

"Go on, Pat, with your first say; for I'm tired, I am."

"I beg your pardon, Tom. You see there was some blunder about the affair, all through; but to make a long story short, we were walking away to the church, I in my 'Sunday best, an' she dressed so, so. 'Darlint!' I says; 'haven't you a better dress?' 'Oh, yes,' says she; 'I have beautiful dresses in my trunk, if it would come along. Whatever keeps it so, I wonder.' 'But, darlint,' says I, 'why didn't ye put on one of 'em, when ye knowed we were to be married to-day? You said you had a beautiful sky-blue merino. A drop of rain wouldn't have spoilt it.' 'Because,' said she, 'people would see it. I have a lot of good dresses that belonged to my mistress. I took and fixed them over so nice. I'll wear them when we get away from here,' says she. 'You see, Pat, they gave me no present for nursing that sick woman.' 'So,' says she, 'I took the clothes.' Wasn't she bould? It turned me heart, Tom; it did. I'd have married the girl, and no dress at all, rather than stolen ones. 'Never mind,' says I to myself; 'I'll be up sides with you for that.' So we walked up to the altar, and the ceremony went on till the question came: 'Will you have this woman to be your wife?' I thundered out: 'No, never! She ain't honest enough for me. So, good-bye, Norah. I could never marry you, after stealing that dead woman's clothes. I'd have no luck.'"

Our bible woman then rose up, thinking to herself, it's Farmer Barton's servant lassie they are speaking about. So, going across to where they sat, she asked Pat if he knew where the woman Norah, was now.

"Not a bit of me, ma'm," said Pat; "and don't want to, either."

Reader, may I have your company down to the great City of the Mountain; you will recognize the place for you and I were there before. The widow Brown has been ailing for some-time, and her son is her almost constant attendant. Some people think that men are not gentle enough to be nurses, especially to women, but that's not so. When the heart is in the right place, they make splendid nurses. I myself have known husbands, brothers and sons to wait on the sick, I was going to say as no female could do. At any rate, John was a good one.

"Mother," said he, one day, "if you get over this sickness, I would like to take you to a better house. I would hire a girl to do the work. I am well able to do it. Would you like it, mother? We would be so happy."

" Ah, John, it's a higher country I am going to, and a grander house than you could buy."

" Oh! mother, how can I ever live without you?"

" My death may be a loss to you, but, John, it will be a gain to me."

" Mother, will you forgive me for every time I may have grieved you."

After a minute's silence, she asked: " John, do you remember the mixture you made?"

" Yes, mother, I haven't forgotten that yet."

" And how's the conscience now, my son; and the tobacco box?"

" All right, mother. Conscience is clear of drink, and the little box clean and clear."

" God bless you, my son. You're none the worse for having provided for your old mother. Aye! aye! the promise that came with the fifth commandment, will surely rest on my son's head. Do you mind the time you subscribed for the *Witness*, John? how vexed I was."

" Yes, mother, but you liked it better after a while."

" Oh! yes, my son, I liked it very much. They are all here, every one," and the old lady laid her hand on the bed clothes.

" Mother," said Brown, as he passed his hand over her gray hairs. " Mother dear, your memory is failing you. There are no papers here. See, didn't you use them to light your fire."

" No; not one of them, my son. They are all here, every one. Smooth and clean, under my bed tick, on the mattress, all carefully folded, after Mrs. Crane and I had read them. How long is it since?"

" Nearly two years, mother. This is November, and I think it was about the new year. How would you like to have them bound? They would make a nice book."

" Yes, John, but I'll never see it. My death will be in it before you get it bound."

" Oh! mother, I wish that would never be."

" Don't say that, John, nature you know must have a change. I will soon put off old age. John, let me rest a bit, for I am tired, and sleepy." And the dear old lady slept as calm as an infant.

When awakening up she seemed as if trying to recollect something. " Yes, many a time I've said: ' Blessings on the man that put that in the paper.'"

" Put what in, mother?" said John.

" That good bit of reading for the Lord's flock. Oh! how often it has refreshed me. Keep the *Witness*, John, and my bible. There is nothing can take the place of the bible."

" Yes, mother, I will."

" My poor son, I am sorry for you, and would die happy if you were married, and had some one to love and care for you, or if you could only get into some good family, and like, live and die with them. I wonder you ever left the Langfords, after being so long there."

"For different reasons, mother. They didn't require my services."

"I suppose not, John, after turning to the other——"

"They were a good, kind family, mother, but were getting very saving and anxious to make money, too much so I fear. Well, the effects of poor nourishment, and sometimes little of it also, hard work, soon threw them into fever, from which poor Mr. Langford never rose."

"All this came of being too saving and greedy to make money. Not taking the good food providence sent them. Still, I must say, Miss Maggie was good to me, and when I lay sick with the pleurisy, during two weeks or more, I could not leave my room, Maggie nursed me as tenderly as if she had been my sister."

A few days after this conversation, as Mr. Brown sat reading a chapter for his mother.

"John," said she, "get me something to eat, and a cup of tea, I feel so weak. It's all habit, nothing else, John."

"What's all habit, mother."

"The habit I have always practiced of taking a cup of tea about four o'clock in the afternoon, and if I pass that time I get so weak. It's all habit John."

John got her a cup of tea, a nice bit of white bread and fresh butter: While she was sipping her tea, she said:

"When did you hear from the Langfords, and how are they?"

"I saw a man from there, a short time since, who told me a rather sad tale about them, but I found out that part of his story was not true, so it may be the rest is not true either."

"What did he tell you?"

"Why, mother, he said widow Langford was like to loose her property. Things had gone against them so, and young George Langford was drinking hard. And the man said he saw Maggie going about from door to door, with a basket on her arm, as if looking for charity."

"What! can it be possible that they have turned her adrift on the world to beg for her bread. John, they never will prosper. No; no; you must do something for her, my son."

"Pshaw! mother, would you have me marry a beggar."

"My son, I didn't say to marry her, but you can give her a few shillings now and then. I can't think why she should beg. The Scotch, as a nation, are above that. All the time I lived in Scotland I never saw a beggar. It's only a few days ago that you said if you ever saw her in want, and it in your power to do her a good turn, you would do it. Don't swallow your words, John."

"Maggie is not in want, mother, for I wrote up to Mr. Barton, and soon got his answer. He said there was some truth in the man's story to me. But, as for Maggie Langford going about from house to house, it was under his directions, and nothing to be ashamed of. Maggie was a bible woman now, and doing a nice business, and was paid well for it."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mrs. Brown; "I never saw them but once. It's a long time since. They stopped here a fortnight on

their way up. She and Bessie always reminded me of the two girls mentioned in the gospels, Martha and Mary."

"Is that so, mother, and which do you think was like Mary?"

"Bessie was the Mary one, so quiet and spiritual like. She was the better looking, too. Maggie, again was like Martha. A care-taking, and hard working body."

"Mother, your hands don't look very work like," said Brown, as they fondly stroked each other's hands.

"John," she said, "I want you to take, or send, this ring on my finger to her, and give her my blessing for her kindness to the widow's son. You won't forget, after I am gone."

"No, mother, all shall be done as you desire, but I wish you would talk about something more cheerful. Let me comb and brush your hair before you go to sleep."

Carefully he untied her old-fashioned, full frilled cap. Then, dipping the corner of a towel in tepid water he wiped her face and hands. Oh, so gently; then combed and brushed her white hair, so softly, while she leaned on his manly breast. During ten minutes not a word was spoken. Then he replaced her cap, and kissed her wrinkled forehead, smoothed her pillow, and laid her gently back, saying, as he did:

"You will sleep better for that."

She clasped her hands together and muttered something to herself.

"Are you in pain, mother, dear?"

"No pain, John, no pain, only so weak. Father in heaven, bless my son. Grant that his latter end may be peace. What would I have done without you, John, best of sons."

"Dear, dear, mother, don't praise me. The credit is all your own. I am just what you trained me to be. You never allowed me to disobey or speak disrespectfully to you when I was a youngster, and habit, you know, is second nature. That's so, mother. You didn't spare the rod, though I was your only child. If you had given me my way and let me run wild, I would be no stay or comfort to you now."

"A child left to himself, bringeth his mother to shame," said she, in a low voice.

Not many more such conversations had John Brown with his aged mother. A few more nights of watching, a few more days of nursing, and all is over—dust returns to dust, and the spirit to God who gave it.

After Brown had buried his mother, he gathered up her effects and left them in safe keeping. He could not for a moment think of selling them. The paper she had so carefully hoarded up, he sent to get bound as soon as the volume would be complete. The ring, with a lock of her hair, he wrapped carefully up in a piece of tissue paper to send to Maggie.

The Cranes missed her very much. They were all sympathy for Brown, but he did not mourn as those without hope. He knew all was well. It was the Lord's time to take her, and it was the best time. He had heard of some who had lived longer than she—but

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what sort of a life. Their minds gone; their health gone; bed-ridden—a burden to themselves and friends. The more he thought of it, he felt the more thankful that she had died as she did. And now, that his only earthly relative was gone, the great city had little attraction for him, and again he left.

People change, places change, all things change, but the Lord changeth not.

CHAPTER XIX.

Friendly reader, while the carpenter is pursuing his avocation—no matter where—you and I will stop at Willow Vale manse. Maggie, the new bible woman has just departed with a fresh supply—light at heart, only for her one great trouble—George's dissipation. We will peep in and see Aunt Hatt, in her accustomed seat—still in gray lustre—never anything lighter, a plain, white collar and black apron, her work-basket beside her, her almost constant employment being knitting and darning. Her crutch stood in the corner beside her chair, though she didn't use it much. Still, she liked to have it near, and no one ever thought of displacing it. Just now she is opening out a paper, while Jack threw himself on a seat by the window.

"There, now," said Jack, "that, what-do-you-call-her, is away, and didn't get her *Witness*. Possie, call her back to get it."

"Never mind, Jack, said Aunt Hatt, "she'll get it next time she comes, and I'll read some to the children. Don't throw the orange peels on the floor, Jack, they might cause somebody to fall."

"Let the somebody keep their eyes open," was Jack's reply.

"Aha!" said Possie, "I know where you got the orange; you got it from the woman that got bibles to sell."

"Well, I know I did, Possie—have a piece. Tell you what, that woman will make money," continued Jack, looking towards his aunt. "Why, she has capital enough to start business for herself. You ought to be a mission woman, Aunt Hatt—I mean you ought to go around with a basket, like Maggie. You would be doing good, and at the same time making money to keep yourself."

"But," said Neddie, "she hasn't got a basket like that other woman. It has a handle on it."

"Pshaw!" replied Jack, "that's a small excuse; it would be easy to get a basket."

"But, Jack; she's lame and couldn't walk," pleaded the child.

Poor Aunt Hatt gave a sigh, but said nothing; the children often talked that way, she was getting used to it.

"If she goes, I can go with her and help to carry the basket," said the fair haired Possie, "Can't I, Aunt Hatt? I know the road by Uncle William's, because I went there with you when Aunt Ellen was sick."

"Yes; but it made aunt worser," said Neddie (wise Neddie).

"Were you lame when you was little like me?"

"No, Possie; I was not."

"Why," said Jack, "I thought you were born so?"

"No; it was an accident, Jack. I was quite well when you were little."

"Then, how did it happen?" enquired Jack, with some impatience in his manner.

"Didn't you just get hurted?" said Neddie, in a sympathizing tone.

"Yes, darling; I just got hurted; and, if you sit still, I'll tell you how it happened. I was coming home from town one day (the roads were rough then, not as they are now), and a man was driving along with a young colt, which he was breaking in. He insisted on me getting into the buggy and riding with him. I refused to comply, the horse looked so furious and wild. He would not listen to me. I begged him to take care of himself, and let me walk. He got angry, and, with an oath, said if I didn't get in he would drive to h—l. I consented, and no sooner had I done so than he forgot his promise; forgot, too, that it was only a two-year old colt he had, and tugged and jerked the lines, also using the whip too freely. The frightened and spirited animal sprang from one side of the road to the other. At last, striking a stump, one wheel came off, and we were both pitched out. The young man was not hurt, but I was made a cripple for life. Some people near the road saw me fall and very kindly brought me here. Your father was from home at the time, so the young man went for a doctor. He brought a young practitioner, with little skill in his head and too much brandy in his stomach. He failed in setting my knee properly."

"Say, Aunt Hatt; was that that the man you were going to marry?"

"Who told you that, Jack?"

"I heard somebody say that you would have married him, only he used to curse and swear so."

"Now run away to your play, children," said Aunt Hatt.

"Well, well!" said Jack, "that man ought to have given you enough to support you all your life. Wait till I am a lawyer. See if I don't make him hand out the chink. Yes; and pay up for back scores too, that I will. Where is he now?"

"I don't know, Jack; he went to the Southern States."

"Oh! only that you're father's sister, you might have whistled for a home," said Jack, "especially since grannie's given up her cottage." And Jack, with one leg over the stair railing, his usual way of descent, soon found himself in the dining-room.

"Ned," said he, "ran back for my cap. It's lying on Aunt Hatt's bed."

The child ran up.

"Here 'tis. Oh! are you crying, Aunt Hatt? I didn't know big womans could cry. Are you sorry you got your knee hurted? Is it sore now?"

"Oh! Neddie; I am sorry I got my knee hurted; but it's not sore just now."

"Then what are you crying for, Aunt Hatt? What's sore? Tell me, won't you, and I'll be your little boy."

"It's my heart, darling; my heart!"

"Oh! your heart. Did you get your heart hurted too, Aunt Hatt? Pity you couldn't bind it up, like you got your knee binded; but Aunt Hatt nobody could get at it."

"Yes, Neddie, Jesus Christ could."

"But, Aunt Hatt, does Jesus know its hurted?"

"Yes, darling, He knows all about it."

"Well, Aunt Hatt, don't cry. Just get pleased. We'll get Him to mend it; see if we don't."

"Neddie, don't say anything about me when you go down stairs," and she kissed the chubby boy, as he darted off with the cap.

Soon a man walked softly in, and a strong arm was passed lovingly around her waist, and a voice, in kindly tones, said:

"Harriet, my sister, why do you take on so? Come, cheer up, this will do you no good. You should not mind what the children say."

"Ah! James, I can't help it. I know I am too sensitive for my own comfort, and other people's too. James, the thorns on young growing trees hurt as much as old dry ones. Please excuse me, this evening, from the tea table. Just shut my door after you."

Mr. Barton said something to his wife as he passed into the dining-room.

"Poor Harriet," was her answer.

"James, you must reprove Jack; indeed you must. * * * No, I'll not send Mary, I'll take the tea up myself."

And Jessie took a small tea tray, and set it near her. As she turned to go she stooped and kissed Harriet, saying, "perhaps, if I were in your situation, I would feel just the same as you do. But, Harriet, we are indebted to you, and we have no other way of repaying you but by giving you a home with ourselves."

Mrs. Barton then hurried down stairs.

"Come to tea," said Possie.

"Mary, ain't it ready?"

"No, child, it ain't ready. Don't you see, I turned out all the water to bathe Miss Harriet's feet?" and poor Mary bustled about taking it upstairs.

"Pahaw," said Jack, "you and Miss Harriet are two hambugs. Then we must wait for more water to boil, before we can get our tea; really, its too bad. It would be a good riddance to the house if you were both on the other side Jord——"

"Jack," said his father, "silence at once."

"Why, Mary, aunt is not sick," said Mrs. Barton. "She is taking her tea in her room."

"Please, ma'am, I did think somebody said she was ill. Shure and I am sorry I did, I am."

"Never mind, my good girl," said Mrs. Barton. "Your intentions were kind; we can wait for more water to boil."

"Pa, pa, tell me a story," said Neddie, as he climbed up on his father's knee.

NOTHING LIKE BLACK ON WHITE.

"Have you had no story to-day, my pet?"

"Yes, pa, but we want one from you."

"Very well, deary, what shall it be about? Little cats, or little birds?"

"Come, Possie, what is the story to be about?"

"About a little boy, papa."

"Neddie, what do you say the story is to be about?"

"About somebody gettin' hurted," said Neddie, "not kilt, though, mind."

"Very well," said their papa, "here goes a story about somebody getting hurt, but not killed."

"And they must have a pa and a ma, mind that," suggested Possie.

"As a matter of course," replied Mr. Barton; "but, first, you're not to interrupt me."

"That's just the way you begin your sermons," said Jack.

"Guess you're thinking about studying first. Now, all be quiet. Go on, pa."

"Well, there was once a little boy who was very fond of playing out of doors."

"Had he a dog, pa?"

"I can't say, Neddie. His papa and mamma were not at home, so the little boy was having a nice play, but the little boy fell off a fence and broke his arm. His nurse heard him cry, ran out to him, and carried him into the house. She found one of the bones near the wrist was broken. No one was in but a little girl, and nobody near to go for a doctor. A neighbour came in and advised the nurse to bathe it in warm water, and rub it well with vinegar. The nurse only listened to her; and as soon as she went out, the nurse barred the door, so that she would not be disturbed. Then she tore strips of cotton, and told the little girl to bring her some laths, and with the little girl's assistance, she set the little boy's arm nicely, with small splints and cotton. And when his parents came home, he was sleeping nicely on the nurse's bed, and she sitting beside him."

"Did the little boy die, papa?"

"No, Neddy, he was only hurt; not kilt."

"Is it a true story, pa? And did you see him?"

"Yes, Possie; I saw the boy and his nurse, too."

"I would like to see that little boy," said Neddie. "Wouldn't you, Possie?"

"Yes," said Possie; "but I would rather see the nurse."

"Very well, children; if you like, I will take you to see them after tea. It is early yet."

So, after tea, Mr. Barton went to his study, telling the children to come up for him bye-and-bye, which they did, all dressed.

"Ah! so here you are, Neddie, and you, Possie. And there you have the little boy with you."

Mr. Barton took hold of Jack's arm, and said:

"Here, Neddie, is the place that was broken. You can feel where it united."

"Why, pa, was my arm broken once?"

"Yes, my son; feel this place. Now, my Possie, would you like to see the nurse. Just follow me; we will not have far to go." So, leading the children, Jack following close behind, they went into the next room.

"There," said Mr. Barton, "is the nurse who saved my boy's life. A more faithful nurse never lived. She has helped your mother doing and caring for you all. A faithful, loving creature. She has waited upon every one of you in sickness and in health, as no stranger could have done."

"Oh! James, don't talk so," said Aunt Hatt.

"But I must, my sister. While I sat in my study this afternoon, I heard my boy talking to you in such a manner that went to my heart sharply. It is time he was made to understand that you are under no compliment to us. It is we who are indebted to you. I remember well the day I went to mother and coaxed you to come and stay with my wife, to be company for her. She was low-spirited and ailing, and I had to be away much of the time from home. Jack, you remember Cecilia's sickness and death, not two years since. Aunt Hatt lame and weak, took the charge of the house, so as to allow mamma to be with Cecilia. We could not repay such services with money, nor does she want it. All we can do is to be kind and respectful to her. Come now, Jack, I must punish you while there is hope."

They were turning to leave the room, when Jack stopped short, and in a husky voice, said:

"Aunt Hatt, I am sorry I treated you so; you will find me a different boy after this."

"James, James, forgive Jack; do not punish this time."

"He is too big to be strapped," said Possie.

"No," said Mr. Barton; "if he is small enough to be naughty, he is not too big to be punished. But, Jack, for your aunt's sake, you are forgiven."

Jack then threw his arms around her neck, saying:

"I didn't deserve this from you, my dear Aunt Hatt."

"How very uncertain is our life. How little we know one day what the next may be."

Thus spoke Mr. James Barton as he lay down on the lounge after dinner.

"Jessie," he continued, "did you hear of that shocking murder and suicide?"

"No, James; I heard nothing about it. Who was it? and how did you hear tell of it? Tell me."

"It happened near the town of—I knew the parties well; Smyth was their name. Mr. Smyth first murders his wife, and then commits suicide."

"Dear me, James, that was awful. It must have been a case of drink or insanity."

"The Montreal *Witness* gives it as the doing of that monster alcohol. But, good wife, if I had been near the reporter, when he took notes of that, I could have told him that drink had little to do with it."

"What about their family, James? Did they leave any children."

"Yes; they have several children. The oldest a fine sensible lad, but illegitimate. He, I doubt not, would be the bread winner of the family. The next is a daughter, just the mother over again. Then there are other two younger. What they will do, I don't know, as Smyth left no written will."

"What sort of a family are they, James; or have they friends to look after them?"

Ah! Jessie, you are like all good mothers, thinking of the children. They were a respectable and well-to-do family, and might have been useful members of society. Yes; poor Smyth was a hard working, good-hearted man. He used to be a sober man, and, no doubt, would have continued so only for——"

CHAPTER XX.

"Oh! pa, pa," said little Possie, as she peeped in, "here's Mr. Owen wants to see you."

Mr. Barton rose, saying, "I must go, good wife, I will tell you all about the Smyths another time."

After exchanging salutations with his friend, he inquired if he had dined.

"No," replied Mr. Owen, "I have just come off the stage."

While he sat eating, a messenger came for Mr. Barton.

"I am sorry I have to leave for a while, but duty calls."

"Never mind, my good sir," said Mr. Owen, "I dare say the time will pass pleasantly with the little folks; so keep your mind easy."

Soon the children gathered round, and their ma left them to entertain him for a little. This they were no wise backward in doing.

"Why didn't you bring your little boy this time, Mr.?"

"Oh! I couldn't do that, Possie, they are going to school."

"Have you a school and church, too, Mr.?"

"Yes, Possie, and Sunday school, too."

"Have you a nice house and garden, too?"

"Yes; I have a nice house, but no garden. I live in the city."

"Have you a play ground, or play house, for your two boys to play in, Mr.?"

"No, I haven't; they play in the wood-shed, or the verandah. You ought to come and stay with them a few days. Won't you come, Neddie?"

"No, Mr.; I can't leave my rabbits?"

"Oh, yes, Neddie; Jack will feed them."

"No, no, Mr.; I like my own papa and my own mama bestest."

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"Are you going to preach for our pa?" said Possie.

"I don't know Sissy; perhaps so."

"Cause if you do, you'll have to go to the study," said little Neddie, "and write your sermon, like you done last time, Mr. But our pa has something in his study desk?"

"Yes, indeed," said Possie, "and you won't guess what it is, 'cause you haven't the place and our pa has it, in the pulpit, too. Now, you won't guess Mr."

"But, won't you tell me what it is Possie, or show it to me? Is it a map?"

"No, it ain't. Oh! your a man and can't find what it is. Why, Mr., it's just a little corner for us."

"Children, you don't mean to say that your papa has you in the pulpit when he is preaching. Why, a corner for his children in the study, and in the pulpit too. That's what I call an——"

"No, Mr., that's not it; papa calls it children's porrith." At this little blunder, Mr. Owen could not repress a laugh.

"Ah! Neddie," said Possie, "that's not it either. I'll go and ask Aunt Hatt. There now, Neddie, Aunt Hatt says its children's portion."

"Ah! here is your papa at the door. Well, Mr. Owen, so you are enjoying the company of the children. We will now go up to the study for a change."

"Indeed, Mr. Barton, I have been greatly benefitted by their childish talk. Why, my good sir, they bring some items to my notice which might, with propriety, find a place on the table at our Presbytery meetings. You will please have the kindness to explain to me, this something you get up for children in this study; although I have a guess, still I may be wrong."

"I will do so with pleasure, Mr. Owen, for I believe something is gained by exchange of sentiment and system. You see I did not spend as much time preparing for the ministry as I ought. Much time was wasted over medical studies, though I find that useful too."

"Go on, Mr. Barton," said the other, setting himself to receive instructions.

"I have made a practice of preparing a small part of each sermon for the children of the congregation. And here, let me remark, that children, unlike grown up people, take that part to themselves each. Grown up people are far too generous, and give most of the sermon away, children are not so. What I prepare for them is just the sermon, made short and simple. Sometimes it is in the middle, and sometimes at the end of the sermon. I always call their attention by a short pause; and then beginning with, 'now little ones,' I generally make some illustration, or repeat some bible story, just to fix the subject on their minds. It does not take long, only a few minutes. Why, sir, the children look and watch for their part to come; of course when there are few or no children their part is omitted."

"Very good, Mr. Barton, but tell me how do your parishioners like it."

"Oh, very well, those who have children especially. There were a few who objected to this mode. They thought that I underrated my calling, and that I might employ my time better than by talking to children. However, they were soon silenced, when I told them my Divine Master thought it no waste of time to speak to children, and my orders from Him were to feed His lambs. Children were a part of the congregation, and if children were to have no benefit from the service, why are they brought there. Indeed, Mr. Owen, I think it hard and unkind to take little children to meeting, and cause them to sit still and keep awake while the preacher delivers a long discourse to their parents and others, in which they, poor little things, have neither part nor lot."

"Just so, Mr. Barton, that brings to my mind the first time I was brought to church. I dare say I was four years old. I got a good many charges to be quiet, to keep awake, and not to speak. During the service my father gave me a copper, soon a man held a plate before me with a lot of coppers on it, and, of course, I thought they were for me. My bashfulness was the only thing that kept me from helping myself. As I opened my hand and looked at my copper my brother whispered in my ear, 'Why didn't you put in your copper,' 'Cause,' said I, right out, 'he has got plenty, and pa gave me this for sitting still.' I recollect another time when about ten years old, our folks used to charge us to sit still and listen to the sermon, so as to be able to repeat some when we got home. That you know, Mr. Barton, is pretty hard when it is not adapted to a child's comprehension. No doubt if the preacher had been like you, I might have remembered some, at least, I would have had a better chance. However, at dinner my father asked me to repeat all I knew of the sermon. But, alas! memory had failed to retain it. I tried to bring home a lot, but at that my father raised his hand and gave me a sharp remembrancer on the side of my head, saying, 'If you had been looking at the minister, instead of the people, you would not forget so easily,' 'I do mind some' said I, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget—' 'Forget what?' said my brother, who was inclined to mirth. 'I don't know,' was my reply 'but it was not the sermon any way.' 'No,' said my father, 'that was only the text.'"

"Ah, do you know, Mr. Owen, it was just some such experience as this, that inclined me to think, and plan something for the young," said Mr. Barton. "You see, let a boy or girl take a dislike to church going, and it is hard to reconcile them or overcome that dislike. Of course, parents must use their authority and also show by their own example that it is a duty and privilege for all parties to be regular in their pews on the Sabbath."

"Mr. Barton, what do you say of those who allow their children to stay at home for any trifling little thing? One does not feel quite well enough, another finds the service too long; one pleads that her dress is soiled and not fit, another does not feel like going in such weather, but promises to read the bible all the time the rest are away at church, only let him stay at home. One, her side

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pains, when she tries to sit still, another has the headache, and that makes them feel heavy in church."

"I can't say, Mr. Owen, there are exceptions. Delicate children have to be treated as such. Their parents ought to be the best judges. However, there is a great deal of pretension amongst the young. I recollect, when I was about twelve years of age, I began to take a dislike to church, and would frequently form an excuse. Father, I said, one day, 'I don't think I can walk to church this morning.' 'All right,' said he, 'you can ride in the cart.' 'But, father, the cart shakes so, that it is worse than walking.' 'Very well,' he said, 'say no more about it.' About an hour after this, father, looking towards the lake, remarked: 'The wind is blowing towards the land. Now, who will volunteer to run to the point and see if there is any sign of the missing boat,' for sometimes they get washed ashore and the fishermen get them again. 'I'll go, father,' I said. 'How can you,' replied my father, 'it's too far.' 'No it ain't, father, I'll run most of the way.' 'Jimmie,' said he, 'you will go to church to-day. That is not quite so far, and to-morrow you will run to the point.' Well, sir, I never shirked going to church after that. I do think we would be justified if we did deviate from the old beaten track, I mean what is called the old school rule, and put a little more life into our service."

"I don't see how that can be done," replied Mr. Owen, "without conflicting with the orthodoxy of the present system of worship. I like your sermon system. The prayers, perhaps, might be shortened, although, before all the wants and cases of the people are mentioned, though not too long for experienced Christians. Still I know a great many will complain of long prayers. Some come to hear and be heard, while others only come to see and be seen. Still it is better to come even for a vain end, than not to come at all. Now, as I said, I liked your plan of a corner for the children in the study, or pulpit. What about a corner at the family altar."

CHAPTER XXI.

"You are right, Mr. Owen, I confess I have been more taken up getting something to say to them; still, owing to a little incident, I find my thoughts turning more to the subject of prayer, lately. We teach children to pray."

"Yes, Sir, there is something wonderful in the efficacy of grace in this new life. We teach children, and before we have done they turn round and teach us. I had been sitting here, one day, deploring in my own mind the low state of religion among my people, when my little boy came running in and crept close to me, and looking up in my face, said: 'Papa, I want to speak. Pa, didn't Jesus heal lots of people that was sick, and lots of lame people too, when He was down here long ago, if they asked Him? And, pa, can't Jesus do any more?' 'Yes,' I said, 'Jesus can, Neddie, but long ago was the age of miracles. Now is the age of means,

but you are too young to understand that.' 'Am I too young, pa?' was his answer. 'Why, papa, you said to the children, one day, when you was preaching, that Jesus liked the little boys and girls to pray to Him as well as big mans and womans. Say, pa, do ask Jesus to cure Aunt Hatt. Couldn't you ask to-night at worship? Do ask, pa; speak it out quite plain, 'cause I promised Aunt Hatt once that we would.' Oh! Sir, there is something touching in the simplicity of a child's faith. I suppose your congregation is more of the upper class? Mine are mostly farmers, but, I may say, that half of my hearers are women and children. Perhaps, I am a little fanciful, but I sometimes like to classify my people, because each one has duties to perform. Is that not so, Brother Owen?"

"Yes, my dear Sir," replied Mr. Owen. "A sermon that is not practical, and does not admonish to duty, is of little use. A personal application, an earnest appeal to the hearts and consciences of our hearers, regarding their every day life, is far superior to a long sermon, no matter how eloquent, in which the speaker is more likely to please than to benefit. My mind has been exercised of late with the subject of prayer. I would like to hear your opinion. Oh! sir, none of us realize as we ought the solemn position we occupy, when on our bended knees before the great and dreadful God. We believe in the inspiration of the Spirit, of course. I don't mean as the prophets of old, to foretell events, nor yet to add to the Scriptures, because that is complete. But, does not the Spirit sometimes, aye oft times, bear upon two individuals alike, inspiring them with thoughts of God. Thoughts of immortality or it may be our responsibility? What say you?"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Owen, I anticipate you, the Spirit which so inspires, has inspired us both to think of prayer. And the Providence of God has brought us together to consider this precious privilege. Let us first look to our Master's rule, called the Lord's Prayer. It is short, yet what does it not contain or include. So was that other example, He left us. 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' and the man went away justified more than the proud pharisee."

"There are some facts about the Lord's Prayer, brother Barton, perhaps you have noticed them as well as I. We first address 'Our Father, who art in Heaven,' and who puts those words in our mouth? Our Brother, our elder Brother. Let us not be irreverent nor use language unworthy of Him in our approaches. Since the very first petition is 'Hallowed be thy name.' Oh! Sir, we should bear in mind, that through all that prayer, not once does the dreadful name of God occur. Surely we might take the hint, and repeat that name as seldom as possible in our prayers and conversations. What think you of the next?"

"I think as you do," replied Mr. Barton. "The two next petitions may be taken as one. How seldom it is that anyone prefers the will of God to his own. Mr. Owen, you recollect a few years ago, a great drought prevailed, and it was feared that there would be a failure of the crops. A poor, hard working farmer came to me lamenting the state of things. 'Well,' I said, 'we need rain,

and if it's God's will, shall have it.' 'Oh!' he said, 'I have prayed for rain, prayed night and day.' Not an hour passed that he did not pray. He was incessantly praying, and the burden of his prayer was: 'Send us rain.' 'My dear Sir, I don't think you are justified,' I said, 'in being so urgent for rain. God is not a man, nor you His equal, that He should yield to your every caprice. Would it not be better, if you in a humble, and submissive spirit, should say, 'even if famine should follow, I will bear the indignation of the Lord, for I have sinned.' He can give the increase without rain, or give the rain, and withhold the increase. Too often we say: 'Thy will be done,' when we would fain have it parallel with our will. Only one petition referring to the things of this life, which confirms to us, that precept, 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.' Of other blessings Christ says: 'Your Father knoweth that you have need of them.'"

"Now, Mr. Owen, it is your time; what do you say of the next one?"

"I believe," replied Mr. Owen, "there is a great deal to be learned from the short petition: 'And forgive us our sins.' How short and plain. How will that compare with the prayers of many a one, earnest and anxious they may be, as they lengthen out that petition. 'Forgive us all our sins and iniquities, pardon all our crimes and rebellion against Thee. Wash away all our transgressions, and remember not our shortcomings.' As if they feared God might not understand that short prayer, 'forgive us our sins.' Or do they think to be heard for their much speaking. And, again, 'forgive us as we forgive.' So much is said about forgiving others, that it is stated here as the condition on which we would be forgiven. Oh! how much need we have of cultivating a forgiving spirit."

"Very true," replied Mr. Barton, "but what you said about lengthening out that petition. No doubt that is the case oftener than it need be. Still, my good brother, let you and I closely examine ourselves, and we will find that the offal of our service is more than what is fit for His altar. Again, God is a spirit; His thoughts are far above ours. He may not look with such scrutiny upon the services his creatures offer to him so long as they really desire to worship him. Still, I agree with you that our words should be few and well ordered."

"But, what say you about our posture in prayer—I mean in public. Is every one to choose for themselves—sit, stand or kneel, as they like?"

"Really, I don't know, brother; I never thought of that before. I think our people all stand. But, of course, my eyes are closed when I am leading in worship. You are older than I; what posture do you believe to be the most scriptural?"

"You're smiling, Mr. Barton. Have I said anything out of the way?"

"Why, no," replied Mr. Barton, "I was just thinking of a little circumstance that occurred when I was in charge of ——— Church, in the city. I was leaving my vestry, one day, when I met Walter

Noel, a hearer of mine. He was rather weak minded or simple. After the usual salutations, I asked him how he enjoyed the services the day before. 'Oh,' he said, 'I didn't like it at all. That was not a good man that preached for you—he kept his eyes open.' 'Walter,' said I, 'that was all right; I keep mine open, too, when I am preaching.' 'But,' said Walter, 'he keeps his eyes open when praying.' 'That's strange, Walter,' said I. 'Was he looking for anyone, or did he not shut them sometimes?' 'No, sir; he had his eyes open all through every prayer, and he was not looking for any one, but just straight before him. It was very wicked for him, Mr. Barton, was it not? And when he pronounced the benediction, he opened his eyes wider than ever.' 'But, Walter,' said I, 'Who told you.' 'Oh, nobody,' said Walter, 'I saw him myself.' 'Saw him,' I said, 'then your eyes must have been open, too. Oh, Walter, Walter, that was very wicked of you—doing the very thing which you condemned others for. Walter,' said I, 'it don't matter much about the eyes, if the heart and mind are lifted up.'"

"Well, Mr. Barton, we were speaking about posture at worship. It seems to me that kneeling with the face down is the most becoming for the creature man before the Creator of all, except where they are crowded, then they can only stand. I would like if a congregation could all adopt one way; for my own part I am in favour of kneeling and short earnest prayer."

"We are like-minded, Mr. Owen. I can't forget the rebuke poor Walter gave his master, whose prayers were apt to be lengthy. At one of our prayer meetings I had called upon Mr. Dean to engage in prayer; his prayer was long. Walter thought to remind him by saying amen, but it only made Dean more zealous. Once more Walter repeated 'amen, amen, and amen,' but Dean kept on. Walter gave up, quietly sat down, opened his bible, and read to himself. So, after the meeting, Walter was walking away from the church, Dean and his wife being alongside, Walter tapped his master on the arm, saying, 'that was a wonderful prayer of yours.' 'Do you think so,' was his answer, 'I am glad you enjoyed it.' At this a new idea seemed to strike Walter. He stood out in the middle of the sidewalk, looked his master full in the face: 'Why, was it to please me you kept on? Then you would have done me a kindness to have stopped the first time I said amen, and you would have had the rest for your own fireside.' 'Oh! Walter,' said Mr. Dean, 'I was just thinking I must have family worship at home, but now you have put a damper on my ardor. You are the only one who ever faulted my devotions for being too long.' 'Why, master, didn't you read about the Pharisees' long prayers? Man, dear, do you think God has nothing else to do but listen to your long yarns?' said Walter. 'If you made a petition to the President or the Queen, you would have it shorter and more systematic. Such a long, rambling prayer; you might have said it in half the words.' Poor Walter had a character of his own. He would speak so blunt sometimes. His very presence was a check, often, on exuberant talk. 'Come, come,' he would say, 'keep off the enemies' ground.' His own greatest failing was drink. He would get on the spree for a

few days, and then he would come, so repentant and grieved for what he had done, begging me to pray for him, and when he became a member, he feared to drink of the cup of communion, lest it should create a thirst for drink or rather liquor. Yes, though weak-minded, Walter is growing in grace, for God hath chosen——”

“I have often thought,” remarked Mr. Owen, “that none of us avail ourselves of the great privilege of prayer as we might. Among the common people the trouble seems to be the want of words to express their meaning, when addressing God in an audible voice, and that embarrassment takes away the sweet sense of nearness to God. Don't you think, if each one for themselves would draw up a form of prayer suitable to their wants, and commit it to memory, then they could make any change they wished after, as they got more experience?”

“Do you know,” said Mr. Barton, “that a great many of our strict Presbyterians would no more use a form of prayer than they would a rosary. There is something very beautiful in family prayer. A father takes his children and kneels down with them while he invokes a blessing on each child. He thanks God for all they enjoy now, and prays God to forgive the sins of each child, and to give them grace to subdue their little passions, make them dutiful and affectionate children. I often think if family worship partook more of a miscellaneous nature, children would both learn and benefit by it. What do you say?”

“I say you are always trying to make religion gladsome to children, Barton.”

“Yes, Sir,” was his answer.

“The Master did so.”

“We change one of our characters.”

“Mr. Barton, I want to rent that farm-house of yours. What do you ask?”

“Six dollars a month is what I have had for it; but, Mr. White, what do you want that house for?”

“I want it for a tavern. You are aware that a man came all the way from ——, and has opened a bar near us. He will not even buy his stuff from us, though he could have it cheaper than where he gets it.”

“One too many, Mr. White.”

“Never mind; a bar here, in Willow Vale, will help to make him shut up shop.”

“But, Mr. White, you have one already down town.”

“I know I have; but I must have one on this stage road, too—— 'twould pay, you see. I pay a high figure for duty, license, and such like. Yes, I must make a push this winter. Hard times, you know.”

“Mr. White, you can't have my house for a bar. You may have it for a dwelling or grocery; but not for a tavern.”

“I don't see what right you have to dictate to me, so long as I pay you.”

“Listen to me, Mr. White, I use my voice against the traffic. And do you suppose I could let my house for such a purpose, and expect a blessing. No!”

"Say no more; say no more about it," then replied Mr. White, in an angry tone. "I hope every stick you own will be burned down before spring, and your family all go to the bad, and yourself, too, Mr. Barton. That's all the blessing I have for you."

And in anger Mr. White departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

For our better acquaintance with the Smyth family, fancy, reader, that you and I are quietly looking on.

"Now, you just stay here, Jessie, until I call for you. I will be going back home in an hour or so." And James Barton let his wife out of the cutter.

As she stood a minute to shake the snow off her feet, a young man crossed the road, and in a respectful manner expressed his gratitude for her kindness in calling to see his sister. He then led her into the house, gave her a chair, and went to call his sister.

"Here is the good lady come to see you, Betty."

He then went back to his work while they sat talking. Reader, perhaps we had better let Mrs. Barton help tell the story.

"While we sat talking a little girl came into the room. I called the child to me to speak to her, but Betty, in a loud and angry tone ordered her out, calling her an impudent, dirty thing to come before a lady unwashed and uncombed.

"Oh!" I said, "poor child; I don't mind that."

"But," said Betty, "I'll make her mind. Indeed, ma'am they havn't a bit of manners."

In a few moments the door next me was pushed open, and in walked the child again—the front of her hair combed, and the back standing on end; her face washed, leaving a dark margin; her feet stockingless and dirty, set into a pair of new slippers—while, at the door opposite, another child peeped in to see what welcome her sister got. The sight was so ludicrous, I could hardly contain myself. But there was no smile on Betty's face.

"Mrs. Barton," said she, "just look at the brutes; what dirty little dogs they are. They're the worst behaved children I ever saw,—and so disobedient. They won't do a thing for me. Choke them, they are worse than hogs, and my brother is soft enough to spoil them."

Pity for them was choking me.

"Miss Smyth," said I, "I see your supper is on the table. Just go on with it."

"Won't you take some with us?" she asked.

I said "I would, if it gave no trouble."

"No, no," said she, "I only wish there was something better for so good a lady."

So, in a few minutes, I was seated at the table with Betty and Zach.

"Have the little girls had their supper?" I ventured to ask.

"No," said Betty, "they'll get their's after."

"I would be sorry if they stayed away on my account, Miss Smyth. I would like to see them at the table, if you have no objections."

Zach took the hint, cleared his throat, and called out: "Come in to tea, girls."

"Zach, stop that!" said Betty, "you are always interfering; you know the girls are so rude: they've got to wait."

"Oh," I said, "won't you forgive them for my sake, and let them sit at the table? They will learn better if they come, but not if they are kept back."

"Call them in, Zach," said she. "Call them a little louder, you old fool, why don't you?"

"Please," said Zach, "don't talk so cross," as he rose to call them.

Soon they were seated at the table.

"Now," said Betty, "the first one that misbehaves, I'll twist your neck!"

Poor Zach, fearful of a scene, whispered a word of kindly warning, and was giving them jam and cake.

"Ah, Zach, you're quite a gentleman to-day. I never knew you to help anyone but yourself, before," said his sister, in a sarcastic tone. Then raising her voice. "There, you blockhead, you've served them, and left the lady to the last. It's just like you, Zach."

"Oh, Betty, never mind," I said; "I am glad to see him so kind to his little sisters—and you've plenty on the table, too."

"Yes," was her answer, "and not a thing fit to eat." Then to the girls: "Did I not tell you to stop whispering. If you want more, take it."

"Zach, I wish you would deal in some other store where you'd get good groceries. They've nothing good in that old store. Bother to you, Zach, don't shake the table so. Such stuff, that tea is mixed with old leaves; I know it is, and there is sand in the sugar, I'm sure. Old cheats they are with their light weights."

"Well," said Zach, "we'll not buy any more there."

"Goodness, I don't care where you buy, Zach, but don't tell me that they could cut such a dash in their great hoops and crinoline, silks and gew-gaws if they didn't cheat. Have a little more apple-pie, Mrs. Barton. Gracious me, it isn't half cooked."

"Oh! yes," I replied, "it's all right. This piece is beautifully cooked, and I must disagree with you, for I do like your tea. These little girls must be company for you, now that your mother is gone, Miss Smyth."

"Company," said she, "charming company! I wish'd they were nowhere." Then, turning to the girls, "Why, is it possible! You dirty little toads, you came to tea with such begrimed hands? Zach, where were your eyes? Don't know how it is, Mrs. Barton, but Zach and I are so very different. I like to have every one clean, and be clean myself. But him, my gracious, he could live in a pig sty, and them girls, they are like him, soft soots, they are."

Mrs. Barton started up saying, "I beg your pardon. There is my husband, I must not keep him waiting."

"Betty," said Zach, "I think I will go up with them, and see that small house near Willow Vale."

"Yes," said Mrs. Barton, "you would do well to secure it, and perhaps the owner would put up a workshop for you."

"And, of course," said Betty, "the house will be like a stable to clean. Never mind, it will be a change out of the cauldron into the fire."

Poor Betty, it seemed a part of her being to find fault. The habit had grown with her growth, and matured with her maturity.

"I am glad you came up with us, Zach, and now tell me can I do anything for you?"

"No—yes—I don't know," said Zach. Then after a few minutes silence, "You are aware, Mr. Barton, that my father left no will and that I can claim nothing. My poor sister often reminds me of that."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," replied Mr. Barton. "There is one thing the law can't take from you, and that is your character. It is no fault of yours, though it may be a misfortune that you are illegitimate. Good morality, good principles, are far superior to a birthright. Zach, my poor boy, I am interested in you, and you may put all confidence in us, for, be assured, you have our sympathy and prayers."

"Have I?" said Zach. "Then I would like your advice. Shall I stay on with my sisters, or shall I leave them. Mrs. Barton; you have seen what I have to contend with."

"I have, I have," replied the lady, "and wish I could correct the evil. How to influence your sister I don't know, but I must try."

"I don't know," said Zach. "She has a very unhappy disposition, and the little girls have got so accustomed to be scolded that they don't mind it. They are hardened to it. You would not think so, ma'am; but they are warm-hearted creatures, and with a little kindness would be led better."

"Well, Zach," said Mr. Barton, "if you wish to leave I can get the two little girls into the Orphans' Home."

Zach thought a minute; "Oh! no sir, I can't think of them going. Oh, if Betty would change, I could work late and early for them. They should never want a home while I live. My little orphan sisters."

Ten days later, at Smyth's once more.

"Good morning, Miss Smyth, I hope I see you well."

"Yes, ma'am," said she. "I was just going to try if I could go up and see the house Zach is taking. I would have gone yesterday only for the snow storm. I don't know how it is, but just as sure as I ready myself to go out, it is sure to blow and storm. No matter how the sun shines, when I don't care to go out; but when I want to go out, then it is sure to rain or snow. Such confounded weather; its enough to provoke a saint, so it is."

"I beg your pardon, Betty, but I came to speak to you on a

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very serious matter; but I can't, unless I get your consent. I would like to talk to you in real friendship, just as if you were my own daughter. May I do so?"

"Why, I suppose so," said Betty.

"Then tell me, did you ever read the New Testament?"

"I should think I did," she replied, "and the Old, too, for that matter."

"And you read of the dear Saviour, healing the sick, and curing some who were afflicted with evil spirits?"

"Yes," replied Betty, "but, of course, very strange things happened long ago, and ministers don't agree about it either." Then to one of the girls: "Goodness, didn't I tell you to stay out. I'll——"

"But Betty, it won't."

"Then let it run, and don't you stand prating there; go fetch in some wood for the stove. Mercy, such wood; just look, its soaked with water. Zach, give her some dry splints. What a shame for people to sell such stuff."

"You forget," said Zach, "that we got that wood for nothing."

"My goodness, Zach, but your sharp, and I should not wonder if— Ah, you clumsy thing; just look at the floor after me sweeping it."

Here, again, the little voice came in at the door. "Oh! it won't stop, and I think she is going to die."

At that, Betty gave a scream, and rushed into the kitchen, followed by Zach and Mrs. Barton. There, indeed, was the poor child, half leaning over a wash tub. She was very pale and weak from the loss of blood. The tub was half filled with water deeply stained with blood.

"Save, oh! save my sister," wailed the distressed Betty. "You must save her," Mrs. Barton.

"I must first know," replied Mrs. Barton, "if the child is subject to the nosebleed, or is it a hurt? If it is an artery, I can do little for it."

"No, no, Mrs. Barton. She is not subject to the nosebleed at all, and I didn't mean to hurt her; and now, you'll think I killed her. Oh! can't you do something to stop the bleeding? Oh! gracious sake, what will I do? What will I do?"

"Tell me, first, what you did to her, Miss Smyth?"

"I was just combing her hair, and every time I pulled she would turn up her face and say that hurts. I was bothered, and I just gave her a punk with my fist between her eyes, and before I was done combing, her nose began to bleed. Sure as death, I didn't mean to strike her. Oh! what will I do, Mrs. Barton?"

"The first thing for you to do, Miss Smyth, is to calm yourself. Sit down and watch me."

Mrs. Barton then took the child and set her on a chair, as she was too weak to stand. Betty, in her ignorance, had told her to lean over the tub till it would stop. Mrs. Barton told her not to be frightened, and raised her hand above her head, and wiped the little stained face with a cold wet cloth. Then she felt her feet; they

were very cold. So, with her own hands, she bathed them with warm water, and then drew on her little stockings and boots.

Mrs. Barton requested Betty to get a pillow and coverlet. While she was gone for them, Zach told Mrs. Barton that Betty scarcely ever slapped the girls; this was quite accidental.

"There," said the kind lady; "she is all right now, and I see you have baked some apples; just give her a little taste on a saucer, and then let her rest. She may be weak for a few days, because she has lost so much blood."

"My goodness, Zach," said Betty, "why couldn't you have carried out that tub, and not have dear Mrs. Barton sitting beside it? Such carelessness; I am ashamed of you, you great booby."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The path of duty was plain to the pastor's wife, as she sent up a silent prayer to God.

"Miss Smyth, the bleeding has stopped now," she said; "but I warn you it may bleed again with little to cause it, and may not be stopped so easily next time. Now, I am going to ask you a few plain questions. First: whom did you intend the blow for that started the nose bleeding?"

"Intend it for? Oh, my gracious sake, I didn't intend it for anybody, that punk. It was just because I was bothered. I didn't think. I seldom do that; I only jaw them," she said, laughing, "and jawing don't hurt."

"I believe you," replied the lady.

"Now tell me what I should do if I saw a terrible reptile winding around your body, slowly, but surely, tightening as it neared your throat, and charming the children with its deadly influence?"

Miss Smyth opened her mouth and fairly stared.

"Mercy! I don't know. There is nothing so bad about here, that I see. But can't they ever be pulled off?"

"But, Betty, wouldn't you think me very rude and impolite, if I tried to pull the horrid thing off you? Wouldn't you be angry at me trying to save——"

"No, ma'am; I wouldn't. My gracious, I didn't get angry when you saved my sister, did I? (Then to the other little girl): Why don't you go and find something to do, you good-for-nothing, and don't stand watching me. Go and shut the door."

Zach who suspected what was up, called the child to come and turn the grindstone for him.

"Mrs. Barton," said Betty, "you think that I drink, and will take *delirium tremens*, just because you saw a bottle on the table. Why; bless me, that's vinegar. I was using it to stop the nose-bleed. We never have liquor in the house. My poor father never brought it in either, though he did sometimes go out to drink; but if——"

Here the poor girl burst out sobbing.

"My dear," said Mrs. Barton, "I know very well you don't drink. But that is not the only evil we have to shun."

"Then tell me what it is, for I mind you beginning to say something about evil spirits, when we were sitting in the room."

"Yes, my friend, it is an evil spirit, and it often makes you unhappy. But Christ can cast it out if you lay your case before Him. It is a bad habit you have of constant scolding and finding fault. You, a little while ago, called it jaw; but you were astray, when you said it did not hurt. I know it did not seem to you that you broke two of God's commands. The one commandment requires everyone to perform the duties devolving upon them to each other. Your duty is to be gentle and kind to those younger than yourself; affectionate and respectful to your brother, as he is the oldest."

"But, my goodness," she exclaimed, "don't you know he is a bastard?"

"Ah! Miss Smyth, that's a coarse term. I hope you are not so ungentle as to remind him of that. He is working for you all—a good lad. See that you respect him as the head of the house. The other command is the third. It requires us to use, with reverence, all God's names or titles; but these you have taken to scold or jaw with. Merciful; Goodness; Gracious, are titles of the Supreme."

"My Gra—— said the poor creature, every body talks that way. We working people could not talk plain soft words, we must——"

"Stop, my dear," said Mrs. Barton. "He who gave us the use of speech, said, 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay, for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.'"

"But I never curse or swear, or use God's name."

"Dear girl, will you read Ex. 35 and 6 verse? Believe me, it is all a habit some get into, and you can throw it off, if you like. Neither does scolding mend matters."

"Well," said she, "when things come against me I must let off, I can't hold quiet, when I am vexed. Am I to choke?"

"Will you try my plan, Miss Smyth?"

"I don't know, what is it?"

"If you must scold, and will scold, and can't hold in, when you're vexed, my advice is, to go away out of hearing, and let off, as you call it, where no one will be the worse. It must affect the girls, and this constant fretting must make Zach unhappy. What if he should leave you?"

"I can't help it," she said, "mother jawed more than I do, and she was a good woman. She was for ever jawing somebody. One gets used to it, and if Zach leaves, I'd take a situation."

"Then, my girl, you must break off that habit, for no stranger would take it from you. Your employer would never put up with it, no matter what position you held. A fault-finding habit is sure to bring discord into a house besides; it is a low vulgar way for any woman, more so for a young person like you. I want to see you happy, I want to save you from misery in this life, and the next. You cannot be ignorant, that it was this bad habit, in your mother that drove your father to commit the crime he did, and deprived you of both your parents in one day."

"Ah, Mrs. Barton, you're mistaken. My poor, dear father, happened to go out and take a glass too much, which made him crazy for a while. He didn't know what he was doing at the time."

"Miss Smyth, why did he drink? You know he cared nothing for liquor. Your mother was a good-hearted, clever woman, only for this one failing. Incessant fretting has a bad effect on the nervous system. You have seen one terrible result in the death of your parents."

Mrs. Barton then moved her chair close to Betty, and passing her arm round her waist, took her hand.

"Poor girl, I feel for you. You have a great charge. But promise that you will break off scolding, and also of criticising others. Say nothing about others that you would not like said about yourself. I know you can, if you only make an effort, for I see signs of reformation already. You would not believe it, I dare say. I have noticed, with pleasure, that you have not used these titles of the most high God, since I told you it was wrong."

"If I do change, they will talk about me, and perhaps make game of me and that will anger me," said Betty.

"If they do talk about you, (which I don't believe they will) which of the two evils would be the worst. Talked about for doing what is right, or talked about for doing wrong? Besides, you must learn to bear from others, as they have borne from you. There is much about a house that can be managed to further, instead of hindering a reformation. Ah, don't halt, decide at once, Betty. Will you try to be gentle?"

"I will try," was the answer, "but if I forget or fail?"

"Try again, just."

"Then, God help me," was all she could say.

Mrs. Barton pressed a kiss on her forehead, saying: "My dear friend, God always helps those who call upon Him, and make an effort to help themselves. Now, call in Zach; this reform must be mutual, must be in earnest."

The girl stepped to a side door, and in a tremulous voice called, "Zach, come here; we want you a minute."

When he entered, Mrs. Barton addressed him: "Zach, your sister sees her error, and is now minded to turn over a new leaf. Will you encourage her by assisting her all you can, or will you laugh and make light of her efforts?"

Zach could not answer in words until he clasped his sister to his bosom; and in a voice choking with glad emotion, said: "My own, my own good-hearted sister, I will help you all I can; and you will help me to overcome my faults, for you have had much to bear from me too." And the little agreement was sealed with a kiss.

The sleeping child opened her eyes to behold her brother and sister embracing each other, and promising to make each other happy.

"Oh!" said the child, "was I dead? Was I dreaming? Oh, is it heaven? I wish it was. Oh, dear, I wish my hair would never tug so; I 'most wish it was off."

As her hair was none of the best, Mrs. Barton suggested that it would be well to shingle it.

Quickly, Betty produced a pair of scissors. When it was done, she kissed her.

"Live, darling; live, darling," she said; "I'll be cross no more."

"Yes," whispered the little one, "and I'll be good too. Won't I, because I was dreaming about heaven? Zach and you and everybody was talking so gentle. Oh, Betty, it sounded so nice."

Miss Smyth did overcome her besetting sin, and with that, what a changed household? Everything prospered better. The poor creature must have had many a struggle, and no doubt often failed. She became a conqueror, and so will everyone who, seeing their own faults, will endeavor to obtain the victory over them.

We will now turn to Uncle William's big kitchen—so called because of its old-fashioned fire-place. Uncle William, who is ailing with a bad cold, keeps his place on the bunk near the fire. Grannie and Robina are clearing up the dinner dishes. Nellie is little errand girl between them, doing this and doing that.

"Mother," said William, "I don't see any use trying to give Robert a trade. He does not seem to care for anything past farming. I thought if he would learn the saddler trade, that Jim and he might commence business together some day. I sent him to try it for a week, but I don't believe he will finish it."

"Well, William, I would not stick to one trade. I would let him choose for himself."

"Just so, mother; I must talk to him about it. I don't want to force the boys to learn a trade they do not like. I believe that is the reason there are so many half-taught mechanics."

"Yes, William; I often think there is nothing degrading about labor. Christ ennobled it, since he, too, learned the carpenter business."

"Ah! mother if Langfords and Whites had only thought as you do, poor George would not now be so shiftless and degraded. But he was taught from his infancy to despise work. The Whites were such a go-ahead set, they thought nothing would do for Susie's son but a profession. He quit school the year his father died, the very year he should have been at a trade, which would have enabled him to earn something now."

"Oh! do you know what a lady told me last week pa;" said Robina.

"Something wonderful, of course," replied her father.

"Well, it was true any way, pa. She was just starting for church one day when her husband, who was stopping at home, on account of some ailment, called out 'mind the collection,' and gave her his purse, which she put in her pocket. When the collection plate was passing round she opened the purse, and finding that it contained a number of silver pieces of different value, she searched for a small piece, found one and put it on the plate, and put the purse safe back in her pocket."

"Well, Robina, that was all right. It may be that she had a great deal to do with her money. We are not required to give all to the church."

"Oh! no, pa; but wait till I tell you. Her purse was stolen, or lost out of her pocket, on her way home, and that happened twice,

So she told me she never would search her purse for small money for the church again."

"Robina, I hear the gate open."

"Yes, pa," said she, "its cousin Jack and Aunt Jessie."

"See, grandma," said Jack, "I have brought you a needle woman."

"Say, Uncle Bill, where's Jim?"

"He is in the woods getting out posts to fence his field."

"Is Jim going on his own hook already?"

"No; not yet."

"Are you about hooking with the law; eh, Jack?"

"I don't know, uncle. I fear the law and I won't agree very well on some points. I am going back to College next week."

"That's right Jack, keep black on white on the side of justice."

"Yes, uncle, I would like to plead——"

"Come," said his mother, "don't wait, hurry Jack and mind to call at the cooper's as you come——"

"Let me say a word or two, to uncle and grandma Barton. Put on your best bib and tucker, for I am going to bring a hero, a real conqueror to see you."

"A conqueror, Jack; what do you mean? or what is he coming here for?"

"It's not a man, it's a woman, roared Jack. My mother will tell you," and Jack turned to go.

"Yes, I have a bit of good news with me," said Jessie. "You remember Zach Smyth, the cooper, and his three sisters. Their father and mother are both dead. James advised, and gave all the help he could, to have them move up to a house near Willow Vale, where the little girls can go to school, and they will be near a Protestant church, too——"

"And, no doubt," said William, "Zach will get plenty to do, making casks for the distillery."

"You are mistaken, William, he will do nothing of the kind. Only flour barrels, with wooden hoops, churns, and such like. They have it down, *black on white*, what he is to make, and what he is not to make. The bit of good news I have to tell is: that his sister is, I humbly trust, convinced of the error of her way, and is fighting bravely against her besetting sin. She is the conqueror."

"Ah," replied William, "I am very glad to hear that Miss Smyth has changed for the better. For my part, Jessie, I don't know anything that would drive me to destruction quicker than a scolding wife or sister. Sickness and poverty are trials that can be borne. They are trials sent from heaven, I think. But, oh, this incessant fretting, sarcastic way of snapping at, and criticising everyone. It is devil sent. A bar to domestic peace. Really, the jaws of a scold put me in mind of rusty door hinges. Jessie, what did you say she was coming here for?"

"She wanted to see you, William, about getting some straw for bedding. So I told her to come here to-day. I thought it would be a good chance to get her acquainted with some of our good neigh-

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bers. I am not sure that she will come, though. Why, if there is not Mrs. Parly all the way from Langfords, I wish Mrs. Langford would make her appearance, too."

CHAPTER XXIV.

After the usual salutations were over, Mrs. Parly began.

"I must know what I have to do 'fore I consent to remain. I have heard so many different reports about this 'ere meeting of yours. Some say it's a woman's right meeting, others say it's a mother's prayer meeting. So then, as I bein't a mether, I can't stay. But Mr. White said he would bet it was a sewing club, got up for a gossip. Oh, I do see you have got something over there in a frame, so I don't mind staying."

"Yes, Mrs. Parly, we are sewing to-day. We meet once a month for working, and once a month bible reading, prayer, and religious conversation."

"May I ask whom you are sewing for, Mrs. Barton?"

"We sew for any one of our neighbors who is really in need of it. To-day we quilt for ———. Last month we made a suit a piece for each of the Walsh boys, and my daughter knit a pair of stockings for Mrs. Walsh. Now, tell me, Mrs. Parly, how are the Langfords? I was wishing you had brought her with you."

"Bring her with me, you bet I'd have something to do. Why, she has more in her own hands than she can manage. Though I ventured to tell her this morning, if she would go out more, she would find her work easier to get through. I don't profess to be much of a Christian, Mrs. Barton, but for a woman to stick to pots and pans, cooking and cleaning all day, then mend all evening. Laws alive, its slow murder. Husbands get out, children get out; but the mothers, oh, how can they get out. She is a fixture. Why, I have only been away a few months, and, really, everything seems to be going down hill, and what is worse, I fear she has quarrelled with her own daughter, and that old Scotch aunt of theirs."

"Ah, I think, Mrs. Parly, Maud sews at her grandmother's, and Maggie is bible woman now. Still she is home most of the time."

"Augh, there is something wrong," replied Mrs. Parly, "as the saying is. 'There is a leak somewhere,' 'a rip in the dress,' or 'a hole in the pocket.' Before I left things were bad, but they are a sight worse now. Every one is again another. 'Peers to me they hain't got enough to eat, and are agoing to eat one another. Bessie is a sensible sort of a child; but, laws' sakes alive, how them ere boys 'buse their mother. 'Seems to me they'll have her heart broke afore long. I mean to speak to her about letting that son of hers go idle. Such an idea; women out doors, sawing and splitting wood, and carrying it in; and George, the great lubber, a doing nothing. Only to-day I asked him to split a bit of wood, and Abbie to bring it up for me. 'Mrs. Parly,' said they, 'you have to get your own man to wait on you. I won't cut wood for our own fire,

and mother don't ask me to; so you may be sure I won't for you, neither me nor Abbie.' Now, what sort of husbands will them two boys make, eh? I ain't religious, Mrs. Barton, but I've got sense enough to know that its bad for boys, both body and mind, to go idle all along. Its true, a man that does nothing but loaf about, drink, eat, sleep and play, is most like the hogs. There now, how do you like that for quilting, Mrs. Barton?"

"Very nice, indeed; and you sew fast, too, Mrs. Parly."

"Come, come, Jessie, you've had quite a chat with William, and we want you here," and soon Jessie's needle was flying as fast as any.

"Where's your servant girl? Didn't she come back last fall, Mrs. Barton?"

"No; Norah did not come back."

"And how do you ever get along, and no help?"

"Very well, indeed, considering, Mrs. Parley. You see, Jim and Robert are not at home. Mrs. Lunt has the youngest. Little William is an obedient child, and he is at Lunt's, too, most of the day. Then Robina and Nelly do a great deal of the work."

"How will you ever do when they go to school?"

"I don't know yet?" replied Mrs. Barton. "They learn very slow, too, which is a pity, but can't be helped."

"Perhaps," said the other, "if you would keep them at their books in the house, they would learn."

"No, Mrs. Parly," said the old lady, firmly, "you could not do a worse thing. Force a child to pursue their books, either Sunday or day school lessons too constantly, and you set the little heart against them. They may learn when they get a little older. At any rate, I don't care to make their lives miserable now, by incessantly dinging at them."

"Well, well, Mrs. Barton, I don't see how you can keep the house so nice as you do, and no domestic to help you."

"I'll tell you, Mrs. Parley," said the old lady, as she leaned over; there is a secret in it. "Ellen, their mother, helps me."

"Ellen!" exclaimed Mrs. Parly, in amazement. "Ellen helps you? What do you mean? Laws, isn't she dead?"

"Speak low, speak low, Mrs. Parly. Yes, Ellen is dead, but the training she gave the children lightens the work now. When Robina was not nine years old, she would stand her on a stool by the table to wash dishes; and little Nellie, before she was six, would sweep the floor and then dust, and settle everything around as particular as a little woman. Then, every one has pegs to hang their hats on, and each has a box or drawer to put their things in. Yes, Ellen helps me. Many a time, when she would be going around teaching the girls, I would say, 'Ellen, you would do that work in far shorter time yourself, and better, too.' But poor Ellen thought otherwise, so she taught them all to wait on themselves, and —"

"Ah! there comes 'Becca. Willie, open the door for your cousin. Why, there is Miss Smyth too. She has not waited for the buggy."

CHAPTER XXV.

After the usual round of salutations and introductions, Betty was placed, needle in hand, to quilt.

"Mrs. Parly," said Becca, "I am truly glad to meet you here, and I hope you will favor me with your company next week, down in Cosie Cott. I will not ask you to sew there."

"All right," was the reply. "Perhaps I will come if I'm not on tother side the lines, but mind you, I ain't to do moren listen to you."

"Just as you wish," Mrs. Parly, "only try and get Mrs. Langford to come too."

"Oh! sakes, Mrs. Lunt, I couldn't, but I'll try, I'll try. Let me tell you that that lady won't trouble the world another winter. So you may make the most of her when you can."

"She has a servant girl, has she not, Mrs. Parly?"

"Well, there's a girl kind o' lives there. She is not much good only to dig potatoes. You see, Mrs. Lunt, girls that go on the spree ain't much good. I guess the only thing that keeps her there is because she gets drops. I says to her this morning, 'Bridget, your mistress looks wretched, I fear she is agoing to leave.' 'Is she?' said Bridget, so sharp like. 'Then I hope she will take Bessie and Abbie with her, for nobody else can manage them.' Sakes, the hateful thing! I could have hit her a slap on the mouth."

"Ah! here is another arrival," said Mrs. Barton. "Yes, it's widow Walsh. Why! we shall have a goodly number soon. Glad to see you, Mrs. Walsh."

After a little talk on different matters, Mrs. Parly enquired if they held meetings to advocate women's rights.

"I don't see the need," replied Mrs. James Barton. "We all get our rights, as far as I know."

"I know some that don't," said Mrs. Parly, "I know Mrs. Langford don't get her rights; of course she was wrong to act as she did."

"Didn't her husband make his will all in her favor?" enquired Mrs. Lunt.

"Why, yes," replied Mrs. Parly, "but that nasty old scheming father of hers was so very determined to buy up all the shares in the brewery. He borrowed money, and I can't tell you all he done. The house she is in is mortgaged. He got her, his own daughter, to sign some papers, by which she has as good as lost all. I guess neither father, mother, brother, sister, no, nor husband either, would get me to sign my name to any paper of their dirty transactions that I didn't thoroughly understand, you bet. I don't care what any person says to the contrary, every woman, married or single, should know enough of business so as not to be tools of others. There, I've been a pulling too hard and broke my needle. Wouldn't I be a good advocate of women's rights."

"Dear me, it looks like a retribution for putting Maggie out of her rights," remarked Mrs. Lunt, as she passed the needles round. Then William spoke from the chimney corner. "I say, ladies, be carefull how you speak of the absent. If Mrs. Langford should need a helping hand, which of you would be willingly prepared to assist? Hands up."

"All of us are. See, Mr. Barton, every hand is up."

"I am sorry to say," continued William, "that a black cloud is gathering over their heads, or will be soon. Her brother, Albert White, has gone and committed a forgery, for which he will be sent to the penitentiary for life, if——"

"Why, William, William, is that possible? How did you hear of it?"

"I got it through a private correspondent, who requested me to use my influence to get him cleared. But I can't do it. His guilt is proven. Oh, it was a sad mistake for Mr. White to take such an interest with Langford in that distillery. It would have been better if White had thrown their money into the lake. How true that proverb: 'He that hasteneth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.' That was a bad speculation."

"Better," replied Mrs. Parly, "if Langford had minded his trade, and let speculation alone. Laws, if a woman had done that."

"Look," remarked William, "look under the frames—some of you ladies have dropped a pocket handkerchief there."

"Ah! that's one I found," said Mrs. Walsh, "on the road, about a mile below the village, when I was out walking on Sunday evening. See, there's a name on the corner, very nicely worked, too. Just you look at it, Mrs. Barton."

"That's only initials," replied Mrs. James.

"G. C. B. So it is," said Mrs. Walsh. "I met a young couple a little before; very likely it was hers."

"Sparking, I shouldn't wonder," half whispered William, pleasantly.

"No; you are wrong for once in your life, William," said Jessie—"for we too met them when we were coming from church, about the same time and place, and they both resemble one another. High shoulders and large eyes; of course they are brother and sister."

"I'll bet," remarked Mrs. Walsh, "they are just brother and sister. Though I must say that his eyes are black, while hers are blue."

"Will you let me say a word, Mrs. Walsh?"

"Certainly; have your say, Mrs. Lunt."

"Well, my say is, that the description you have given corresponds with the——it is just Gussie C. Burney, a poor sewing girl. She has neither kith nor kin that ever I heard of. Some say Nurse Burney has adopted her. Perhaps she is some distant relative. However, she is the only person that takes any interest in the orphan girl."

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CHAPTER XXVI

"Oh, I know now who you are speaking of," said the old lady. If all stories are true, she may not always be a poor girl. Nurse Burney holds a secret about her parentage, which may yet bring her something. But she is not to marry without Burney's knowledge and consent—and I don't think she will. Yes, and another thing. She is never on any account to drop that 'C' out of her name. In case of the old woman's death, there is a paper, sealed and addressed to Gussie C. Burney."

"I am thinking," said Mrs. Lunt, sighing.

"And what are you thinking about?"

"I am thinking the young man may be he whose *path I have crossed; and, I may cross it once more, I may.*"

"You are a mysterious body, 'Becca," said William.

And, for a few minutes, all was quiet.

"Well, ladies, we are getting on nicely with the quilt. I would like very much to see you all at my place next week, and I trust you will remember Mrs. Langford in your prayers in the meantime."

"That's enough, Mrs. Lunt; you'd better call a meeting to advocate woman's rights," said Mrs. Parly—"that is, if you hold any rights at all. I know a good deal of these matters, and could help you some. You see, I've women's rights on the brain."

"Why, certainly, Mrs. Parly; we don't deny that at all. We know that every woman has a right to rule in her own family, managing her own household affairs as she chooses. That is her Dominion—and happy is the family that is guided by a judicious mother," said Mrs. Barton.

"It sometimes happens that a mother is at a loss to know what plan to try, particularly with way-ward children; or it may be a drunken husband, who spends all on drink. The poor mother has neither courage nor judgment sufficient for her task. She gets disheartened. Tell me who has need of wisdom more than women? Whose patience is tried more than a mother's? We hold that she has a right to ask advice from those who have had more experience. She has a right to meet for prayer, and reading God's book. We have all an influence over one another, can all sympathize with one another, and converse on religious matters."

"You talk nice," was Mrs. Parly's answer. "But it's other rights I would advocate. In one thing I caught you saying: 'Women had a right to meet for prayer, reading, and conversation.' Whereas, Paul says: 'Let the women keep silence, or learn of their husbands at home.'"

"Why, Mrs. Parly, that is quite the reverse of what I thought your principles were."

"No; in religious matters," replied Mrs. Parly, "I hold that women should be a pattern of quietness and modesty; never aspiring to or taking part in what I call church work. What I maintain is that a woman has a right to hold property; increase or dispose of it

as she likes; should have a voice in choosing teachers, and the girls' education should be as good as the boys. But as for presiding at a prayer meeting or bible class, that should be left to the men. They have the most brass. They are gifted, and their voice sounds better. Paul was an old bach,—of course, a little hard on the fair sex. Still, I am glad he laid down that rule. Laws! I hate to hear a feminine voice even saying grace at meals. No; the men are the speakers, and the chapel the place to meet. You seem in a brown study, Mrs. Lunt."

"I am thinking," she replied, "of something I read in an old book, bearing upon this."

"Then by all means let's have it," said Mrs. Walsh.

'Becca then slowly repeated:

"Jesus said, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you.' Again, 'Wheresoever two or three are met together in My name, there am I.' He didn't say where they were to meet, or where they were not to meet, whether men or women, whether they were to ask in an audible voice, or just in a thinking way. Should Christ have made this better understood? He made no difference; but heard and answered all."

"Come, Miss Smyth," said Widow Walsh; "have you no opinion?"

"I don't know," she answered; "but I think it's wrong for women to do anything like that. Looks just like as if they wanted to show off."

"Good for you," exclaimed Mrs. Parly; "you're on my side of the debate."

"Listen to me," said William. "Why should women want to show off more than men? You ought to have a better opinion of your own sex. No one would think to say that of men. If you are very anxious for anything, you'll not always be content whispering or thinking of it. The duty of family worship or grace belongs to the man as the head of the house; it is not often required of women. But when he will not, or cares not to do so, the wife, for the sake of her children, should perform, if she is a Christian."

"I have often thought," remarked Mrs. James, "that the very hearing of our own voice quickens our desires and draws our thoughts heavenward."

"So, Mrs. Parly," said 'Becca, "You would allow us rights in money matters, but no further? Well, it is a duty and a pleasure to meet as we do now. It is a pleasure to visit the sick. To see that wants are supplied. To see that they are kept clean. Yes; we have a right to meet together to encourage one another on our way to the better land, and give a word of advice to those who need Christian council. At least ministers' wives have. What say you, Mrs. James?"

"No more than the rest," said she, as she leaned towards Betty, who blushed, and whispered "Yes, you have a right."

"You all know," said William, "that a great responsibility rests upon the women. Heaven has entrusted a greater charge to them in one sense than to men."

"And what may that be, pray, Mr. Barton?"

"It is to instil truths into the child's mind, that will give a right basis to their innocent thoughts, cultivating right principles into what will be the great men and women of the future day. A noble work which few but mothers can accomplish."

"My sakes! that's fine talk, sir. I never was a mother, but I know religion is a good thing in its place. But, laws! to make such a common use of it. It's as bad as making a school-book of the bible. What would Paul think if he were here now, eh?"

"I dare say, Mrs. Parly, he would think as other Christian men do of the present age. The women were a very unlearned class in Paul's time. Though we have no reason to believe that they were forbidden to pray with one another or speak of the religion of Jesus. A great deal of caution had to be observed for fear of bringing discord or error into the then infant church. And had you lived then, Mrs. Parly, I don't know as you could have held property the same, ner yet have a vote in choosing a teacher."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Parly, "I know women were greatly kept down in the early ages of the world's history. It is high time they had their rights, as well as the little lords of creation. Sakes alive! just to be their own husband's slaves; stand behind his back while he eats his dinner, and eat what he leaves. Well, well; catch me!"

"Very true, my good woman, and what else but the gospel has made the change? Therefore, you are indebted to the bible for your position. It has broken the fetters, and put woman in her proper sphere."

* * * * *

"Oh, grandma!" cried Nellie, "There is Maggie, the bible woman, at the gate."

"So it is, Nellie, lass; open the door for her, she looks tired and wet footed."

Nellie quickly obeyed, and admitted her into what was called the stoop or porch.

"Gude day, Nelly, hoo's a' the foulk the day?" was her salutation.

"They are all very well, I think," said Nellie, as she chuckled and laughed.

"Gang in by, and speer at them if they want ony needles and thread the day, an' I'll bide here, for my feet are awfu' wet and muddy."

"Tut, never mind; come away," called the old lady. "Come in, Maggie; bring in your basket, we'll patronize you to-day. Come, we're all kitchen furniture at present."

But Maggie had still some Scotch bashfulness, and hesitated about going in.

"Come on in," called William Barton. "Come. I like to hear that broad tongue of yours."

Thus kindly urged, Maggie went in. She was rather surprised to see so many there. Mrs. Parly smiled to see her in such a good rig.

"I am glad to see you back to Canada, Mrs. Parly."

"I thank you," said Mrs. Parly. "But, Miss Langford, how is this? They told me you were a bible woman; but laws, it's needles and pins instead."

"Oh! ay, but I ha' bibles ta in this corner. See Mrs. Parly what nice printed bibles, and sa cheap. Da take ane."

Before Maggie left that house she had sold two dollars' worth, and all in small ware. Mrs. Parly also promised to buy a testament when she would go home,

"Maggie Langford," said that lady, "you must be getting rich, driving two trades at once. How much do you make at small ware?"

"Whiles twa whiles three dollars a week. It's far mair than I could make at the bibles.

"But," replied Mrs. Parly, "I always thought you too modest and bashful to do anything so public. Sakes! I guess you are getting greedy for gain. Let me tell you Miss, you may be sorry for it yet. You would be doing a greater duty to stay with your sister-in-law. Everything seems to be going wrong with them. She is so miserable, it is cruel of you to leave. To my mind, her house has been a home to you for many a day, and you could go out or in as you liked, and if George or Maud did make game of you sometimes, what about it? Any young person would have done the same."

Thus spoke Mrs. Parly, and in silence Maggie sat thinking thus. "After all it has been a gude home to me, an' puir Susie never interfered wi' any thing about me or the garret, an' I could aye gang out an in as I likit."

"I guess I vexed you," said Mrs. Parly.

"Na, na," replied Maggie, "I'm no vext ava, but tell me are ye gaun back to Rochester this spring?"

"Yes; I expect to go back in a few days; but my going or staying can make little difference. If I stay I will pay for my board, of course. I have the room yet, but that is settled for."

"It's a' richt then, but I maun still sell on. It's na mair than ye wad da yer sel. The minister's wife kens a' about it, an' it wad ill set me to soun, my ain trumpet, an' it's a sma' ane——"

"Laws! what does she mean;" exclaimed Mrs. Parly, as she looked around for an explanation.

"Yes, yes; I know all about it," said Mrs. James Barton, "and you must not be hard upon Maggie. What she makes peddling goes to help support her brother's family. She has done so ever since you left Mrs. Parly.

"But, my! she ought to be well paid for selling the bibles," remarked Mrs. Walsh.

"O, aye," said Maggie, "I'm payed for that. Mr. Barton gies me what the Society allows, but it disna' amount to much, an' I'm pitin' that in the bank for a sair fit or a rainy day."

"Maggie," said Mrs. Barton, "have you got the *Witness* this week?"

"No, ma'am, not yet, but I'll ca' at the manse for it the nicht, but maybe yer no din wi' it yet."

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"Oh! yes, Maggie, we take the *Witness* ourselves now."

"O, aye! that's true ma'am, twa families ha' been spiering about that paper. Ye see I whiles happen ta have a few in my basket; it's a great treat for fowk back in the country to get a weekly paper. Some likit the stories an' others the receipts. Ay! auld man blin' as a mole likit the bit o' gospel reading. His granson reads to him."

"Speak to the minister, Maggie; speak to the minister and he'll write down to John Dougal's office, and they'll send a parcel. You might get a number to subscribe for it, or you could sell them. Mr. Barton was about sending for a few on trial. So speak to him, Maggie; its a good standard paper, and deserves a good and wide circulation."

"Aye, an' its sa doun again drinking," said Maggie.

And, with another little glimmering ray, and hope of future usefulness, Maggie lifted up her basket and went her way.

Soon the rest, Mrs. Parley and Mrs. Lunt, went down together, and as they went they talked thus:

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I am sorry, very sorry indeed, for Mrs. Langford. Trouble must come hard to one in her situation. No father to care for the children. No husband to bear the trouble with her!"

"Ugh!" replied Mrs. Parley, "as for that, people differ in their opinion. Husbands and wives do not always share with one another in joy and sorrow."

"Oh, but they do, Mrs. Parly. I dare say some try to keep all trouble to themselves, to save their partners."

"Well, my good woman, it's to be hoped the majority of people are of that stamp; but, mind you, there are exceptions, and more than the world knows of, that's so. Laws! why, I have a cousin who has not spoken to her husband for the last ten years, nor he to her. Do you believe that? I guess, if he has trouble, he may take it to the Witch of Endor for all his wife would care, and they have as fine a family of children as ever you saw. They live well, too, at least comfortably, and seem quite happy. They ride out with the children together, eat at the same table, entertain company together, but never a word to each other."

"Oh, dear, is it possible, Mrs. Parly? It can't be that they— Ah! I understand you now, they are mutes and can't talk," and the little woman fairly laughed at her supposed blunder.

"Indeed," replied the other, "not much mute about them, Mrs. Lunt. They are as talkative as you or I, only they don't talk to one another."

"They don't? Why don't they? How do they get along? Do they not know each other's language? Or what ails them?"

"Of course; they both talk as plain as you and I do; and are very jolly, Mrs. Lunt, old and grey-headed though they be."

"Oh, my ! how in the world can they live so, Mrs. Parly. It would put me crazy. They may appear to be happy, but, oh ! they must lead a miserable life. How can they live so, at all ?"

"Laws ! Mrs. Lunt, it's the easiest thing in the world to do. So simple. I'll tell you how. When there's a little tiff between you and your husband, just you say something sharp and short ; go away ; don't wait to hear his defence. Next time you meet, just give a heavy sigh, but be very reserved. He will soon learn to be sullen, too. If it so happens that you must tell the house is on fire, why, just tell the dog, or the canary, in his hearing, that will do. Simple, why the youngest in the house understands. Sakes alive, they practice it, too." And Mrs. Parly laughed to see how amazed her listener was. She concluded that they always manage to have a staff of tellers as well as don't speaks.

"Oh, Mrs. Parly, if there were only two things in the world that would drive a man to drink that would be one of them, and if there were only two things in the world that would tempt a man or woman to commit murder or suicide, that would be one, at least I think so. I don't mind a man and wife quarrelling sometimes. But, why, oh, why do they keep it up, eh ?"

"Sakes, Mrs. Lunt, you really don't know how the most of people live. As for the keeping it up, that's the beauty of the thing. You see, so long as they don't speak they won't get into another scrape, and the longer they don't speak they like it the better. Pshaw ! sakes, my cousins didn't have much of a quarrel. Their relatives did it for them, by making a great story out of nothing, and so managed to get him jealous of her, and she of him. For my part, Mrs. Lunt, I never believed in any of their stories. If the spark had been let alone, it would have died out itself. Tell you what, if I have not got religion, I *have* got sense enough to know that it's a dastardly mean thing for brother or sister, or any one else, to interfere with folks after they are married. They have much to answer for, by putting one against another."

"That's true, Mrs. Parley, but, oh ! it seems so little, so childish, so unchristian like, besides the sin. I wonder they are not ashamed to act so before others."

"Sakes ! I tell you, Mrs. Lunt, Christianity has nothing to do with it, one way or t'other. I have seen so much of it in my day I think nothing of it. Pshaw ! there was a family lived near us on t'other side, nice people, too, but they were forever falling out with somebody. He held office in the church for many years."

"Mrs. Parly, how could he hold office in the church, and be in bitterness with any ?"

"Just because it was not known much out of the family. Young and old had policy enough to keep that to themselves."

"What did he do ?"

"I can't say what all, Mrs. Lunt. Anyway he was doorkeeper for the living and grave-digger for the dead. He got sick once and was confined to his bed for some time. His wife was afraid he would lose his situation, and she did all that had been required in the church, and on several occasions dug the graves too."

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"Were they Americans?"

"No; you don't find Americans work so. They came from Germany; but they are both dead now, and their family scattered. Tell you, if I had children, I'd bet they would not cool off with one another whenever they pleased. I'd have them speak, if they should snap. Of course people can do as they like."

"Oh, dear me," said Mrs. Lunt, "I wonder there's not afraid of a judgment."

"Why, bless your kind heart, Mrs. Lunt, people don't think so seriously about such trifles. It would never do at all. My cousin has a daughter mute; but, sakes, it wasn't a judgment. She had measles when about three years old. It left her deaf, and, of course, she soon lost her speech, forgot how. Well, well, every nation has its own way of driving a quarrel. Let an Irish couple fall out, and she'll settle him with a flat-iron, and he'll settle her with a boot-jack. When they have blackened one another to their mutual satisfaction, they'll kiss the place to make it well. But if a Scotch or English couple has the misfortune to fall out, hang up the bag-pipes, for it may be years before they fall in again. The French are worse still. I, of course, like the American way best. A mutual divorce, and the wife can then demand a——"

Slowly Mrs. Lunt repeated: "'Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.' Oh! I would rather, far rather, the coldness of death, than such coldness of heart between my Ben and me. I dare say there are none so happy and loving but may have little differences at times, but why can't they give in, one to the other; why be so stubborn, and keep up the spite, like naughty children, as you say? Mrs. Parly, a heavy charge lies against any that put a stumbling-block in the way of others. If 'blessed are the peacemakers,' what shall be said of the peace-breakers? Oh, Mrs. Parly, it must be dreadful to live in a family where any of them do not speak to one another. Oh, dear, what a separation of hearts; to me it seems worse than the silence of the grave."

"Tut! tut! Mrs. Lunt, you're far too sensitive. Everybody don't think as you do, or nobody would do it. Sakes, it's surely better than swearing and tearing at one another. After all it's the mildest form of punishment they can inflict on each other. They don't mean any harm, and it's nobody's business either."

"What do you say, Mrs. Parly? They don't mean any harm? Then worse still, the devil means it for them, and urges them to do his pleasure."

"I am thinking," continued Mrs. Lunt, after a minute's silence,

"What about pray?"

"I am thinking of one of whom it was said Jesus cast out the dumb spirit."

And poor 'Becca sighed heavily as she said, "What an example before children and servants. Really such cases ought to be made a subject of prayer."

"Laws! and who is to do it, Mrs. Lunt? You take far too serious a view of the matter. Why, my cousin's husband is a good moral man, and a good provider for the family. They are both

good, and I put no faith in the stories that were afloat. No! it was the work of a meddling old maid, making extravagant stories out of trifles. It's a long ten years since. But I am sure the coldness would have died out if my cousin had more prudence and less devotion."

"What do you mean by that, Mrs. Parly?"

"I mean my cousin was too devoted to the children. She could think of nothing else but their comfort. While she would not turn a straw to please him, she would turn the house upside down to satisfy them. If they wanted the carriage the father must walk a distance of four miles to his office; everything must be arranged to please them. No matter about the father, he always came off second-best, an easy good-natured soul he is. You are sighing now, I am sorry I made you so sad. I'll just finish by telling you something real funny. I was there on a visit one spring. One evening I got a summons to go home next day, first day of April. Said I to myself, 'I'll teach these foolish things a lesson of common sense before I leave them.' You see I had been trying in a round-about way several times to get them reconciled. But it was no use, for each said they had nothing against the other, and each said they waited for the other to speak. Well, just as I was about to leave I went to bid my cousin good-bye. She was sitting in her bed chamber. 'Polly,' said I, 'your husband is coming in here to speak to you. Ain't you glad?' But, oh! my sakes, she gave a start and trembled like an aspen leaf in the wind. 'Laws, Polly, he ain't agoing to shoot you. What are you afraid of? It will be a delightful change. I would like to see him, but I must go. Make up your mind to speak pleasantly to him and ask his forgiveness, because you know you are to blame. Be sure and speak, if it is only these four words 'Did you want me?' Polly, go meet him in the dark entry, or hall, where you'll neither see nor be seen. Good bye.' I had been in the library opposite to her door a few minutes previous, and spoke to her husband to the same effect, concluding by saying, 'Now go you and meet her whenever I leave, and don't let her ask all the pardons. Mind now, or you may plant thorns in your dying bed.' Well, just as I reached the hall door at the foot of the stairs, I listened a moment and heard them talk, really talk, first one word and then another. Then a sob and a smack. It was time for me to clear. 'April fools,' I muttered to myself. No matter, I gave a sob too as I shut the door quietly. But laws! Mrs. Lunt, you are so pious I dare say you have condemned me already for deviation from the truth."

"Tell me, Mrs. Parly, my good woman; tell me—do they speak now?"

"For a while, I know they did; but habit, you know, is strong. Good bye; this very long talk has made a very long walk."

Reader, you and I will step back to William's a minute.

"Grandma, I heard something about Norah."

"Oh! did you Jessie; and where is she?"

"I don't know that. I only heard of where she had been serving before Ellen got her. She was nurse in a very respectable family, and was at times sent out with the baby. Very often the other

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children would go with her for a walk. It soon became a regular habit. The child appeared better, and the other children were out of their mother's way, who was in poor health. She never asked Norah where she walked, and where should Norah bend her steps but to a house of ill-fame."

"Well, Jessie, how was it found out?" asked grandma.

"Her fellow servant, the cook, informed on her. She wanted a dress made. Norah said she would get it made cheap and good, if she (the cook) wouldn't ask any questions. Norah was going out every day or two with the children, and it would be no trouble. All right. The dress was made. Norah brought it home, but the cook would not put it on till she knew where it was made. She asked one of the children, who readily gave the number of the house. Well, the cook, who is a faithful sort of a creature, thought it her duty to tell her mistress. Soon Norah was discharged. The little girls were getting so very intimate, they would recognize and speak to the inmates of that house when they would meet them on the street."

"Well, Jessie, they were not to blame; poor things."

"Of course not, grandma. They even invited the little girls to go to a dancing party. It's a lesson for parents to be on their guard. Norah was, to all appearance, a well-conducted person. And Mrs. Wade had no scruple in letting her take the children out on week days."

"But, Jessie, how is the evil to be evaded?"

"I don't know, grandma. The least people can do is to insist upon knowing where their children are taken to. I fear there is more mischief done by the nurses and governesses among the upper class than is known. Of course, it may sometimes be the other way. One thing certain, people should never scruple to raise a girl's wages, when they find them good in principle and practice."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

* * * * *

"George, my son, I wish you would not go out so at night. You might stay in this one. I don't see what pleasure you can have every evening out. Go out now, if you wish, but be home at night."

"We have jolly fun, mother—jolly fun; perhaps not what you would care to see."

"Indeed, George, it's not me that gets any recreation, whatever others do," she said, with a heavy sigh.

"There, now, mother, don't you begin to sigh and whine, and cry and pine. Oh, I hate that. Come, cheer up. I'll take you with me to Renard's, and you will want to go again. Did you ever go to a circus or theatre, mother?"

"Yes, I have; but not for the last ten years."

"Well, mother, the stable man and the bar lad had both been

clowns once. So the landlord lets them brush up so as to entertain his customers, while he gets in behind the counter to wait on folks. Do come, mother, it will do you good. Then you will have a chance to see Maud's beau. Cliff takes Maud often. You think it is a dirty place, but it is not. Maud is as much a lady as either you or aunt Magg. She likes it, and sings songs with Mrs. Renard. So you won't go, mother? All right; I'll make a bargain with you. You go some place this afternoon for me, and I'll stay home to-night for you. Listen. There is going to be a meeting of women (all mothers) at Cossey Cott, and when they all get in, they bar the door and pull down the blind, so nobody can see them. I don't want you to go in, mother; but I want you to get under the side window and listen to them. Then you can tell me so that I can report."

"What's the meeting for, George?"

"Oh, to pray for each other and preach to one another. They think they don't get enough from Dr. Barton."

"Well, indeed, George, Mr. Barton's no great things. However, no fear but he will give women and children enough."

"Mother, are you going or are you not?"

"Yes; oh, yes, George, I'll go to gratify you. And you stay in to-night for it."

"All right," said George. "Mind, you need not be afraid. Nobody can see you. Just wait till they sing the doxology, and then clear. Now, get ready and go, for it's a long walk, and they'll be all in before you get there."

She went, and returned about four.

Reader, fancy that we are alongside. Sakes, it was nice, somehow, listening to them. Why that old lady fairly talked to the Lord Jesus, just as if He was in the room listening to her, and knew all about it. I wish I could do that; but I never was any hand at praying. Dear knows, I've always had enough to think about. Sisters, they called one another. I wish I had a sister. Oh! my; what am I dreaming about? I must think what I am to tell George. Oh! George, George, my son; I know it was you—I am almost sure it was you and Maudy they were praying for. What is this they said? 'Do, oh, do, arrest them in their wild career—who love pleasure more than they love God. Save them from sin and sorrow.' Yes; that's what they said. 'Make them partakers of grace now, and glory hereafter.' But, my! I can't tell that to George; he'd blurt it all over the country every day. Mrs. Lunt, too, prayed out loud: 'Lord, open their eyes that they may see their danger, ere it is too late.' Oh! dear me, one would think those women knew somebody was coming to kill Maud. What am I to tell George? But what business have they with me or my family, I'd like to know."

As she approached the stile, she turned to look back, and could just see them coming out of the little gate; but it was too distant to make out who they were, and it was not the doxology they were at when she left, after all.

"Why Maud, it's you, is it? What brought you here?"

"My feet, mother."

"But why are you sitting here in the cold?"

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"I am waiting for George."

"No, Maud, you are not waiting for George."

"I tell you I am waiting for George. Is it any harm?"

"No, Maud, you are not waiting for George. He is in the house, and you know that."

"Mother, you had better tell me I am a liar. Why, I come here every evening, and then walk home with George."

"Maud, don't try to blind me; it is not George, but Cliff, you wait to meet."

"Mother, you are always finding fault with me. Poor thing, if I can't talk to a friend a few minutes, but you blow me about it."

"Listen to me, Maud, once for all; I forbid you waiting for any one."

"I know where you have been. You have been in Cosey Cott, mother."

"No, Maud, I have not; but, no matter where I have been, I forbid you crossing this common or waiting for any one till I know more about them. Cliff may be a villain for all either you or I know."

"Mother, who told you it was Cliff I waited to see? You have been talking to Mrs. Lunt. I wish you would stop her crossing the common as well as me. Old fool that she is, to watch young people the way she does. It would serve her better to mind her work."

"Maud, I never heard Mrs. Lunt say a word about either you or Cliff. All I hear is just in the house among yourselves now and then. Why do you suspect Mrs. Lunt? And why did you put on that silk dress to come out here? See what a sight it is?"

"It is really too bad, mother, if I can't walk out evenings after work and sewing all day. You allow aunty to go where and when she likes"

"Maud, I care nothing about aunty, but I love you too much to allow you to run wild. Ah, Maud, nobody can love like a mother. Why despise me?"

"I don't want you to love me, mother. I know somebody that loves me more than you do. Scolding a person ain't loving them."

"Hold your tongue, Maud; you know if your poor father was alive, you would not be allowed to steal out and stay so late at night. Maud, you are my eldest daughter, and should be a comfort instead of a grief to me. Come, like a good girl, tuck up your dress, and hurry on."

As Maud turned to go she dropped some bits of paper.

Quick as thought her mother picked them up, but said nothing.

Amongst them a letter—— * * * * *

"Well, mine mother, how did you get along?" said George.

"Oh, I don't know; I did not hear much, my son. I think I must have been late. I was afraid I would be seen, for Barton's baby was up at the window, and I left when they began the doxology, though they did not come out till I was up at the stile steps. But never mind, George, perhaps I'll have better luck next time?"

"So, mother, you mean to go again, just to get me to stay home another time; but I ain't so soft, not I."

"Very well, George, please yourself. I don't care to go again; but if you want to find out what they do or say, then you had better go yourself."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Dear reader, let us go back a few hours, and fancy that you and I are silent observers of this mothers' meeting. It is the same room in which some business matters were being discussed when Maggie Langford was first introduced to our notice. The same round table, on which are placed a number of Bibles and hymn books. The floor is covered with home-made carpet now. On the mantel shelf are the same two brass candlesticks. Between them now stands a handsome oil lamp. Mrs. Lunt has just finished her dusting, and settling round the chairs. She is very anxious that there may be a chair for every woman and a woman for every chair. After stirring up the fire, she opens the door so they will not have to stand and knock, while she goes to her own room to tidy up her person a little. First came a poor heartbroken mother, but a wife no longer. Her heart was yearning for sympathy. Each in turn as they entered, passed over to where she sat in the further corner, and, with a warm grasp of the hand, gave her a welcome of sympathy and affection. They commenced their little service by that very appropriate hymn: "Come thou fount of every blessing." Then all knelt down in silent prayer for a few minutes, not a breath was heard. After singing again, a chapter was read. Then Mrs. James Barton, in an audible voice, repeated the Lord's prayer, in which they all joined, repeating it word for word. After singing again, a chapter was read. Then, kneeling down, two prayed in succession. Their prayers were audible, short, and, some might think, simple. Each, then, in their turn, made a few remarks on the chapter they had read, a few minutes being allowed for any question to be asked or any plan to suggest by which a mother might be helped in the training of her children.

While they were thus engaged, little Tottie got up on a chair near the window to look out. She was feeling lonesome; so, lifting the curtain a little she muttered to herself, "woman on a gound." Then, raising her voice: "Tome in, womans—Tottie dive 'ou a seat." After which they stood to sing the doxology. The child turned to her grandma, saying: "Oh, gamma, woman gone 'way."

The old lady looked out, and there, sure enough, was Mrs. Langford just leaving the gate. She said nothing, because she thought Mrs. Langford had come too late, and was ashamed to come in.

"Now, my friends," said Mrs. James Barton, "we must all be here again at the time appointed. There are other mothers in the settlement whom I would like to see here. Perhaps they will be along the next time. And you, Mrs. Walsh, I trust, will continue to come. Tell me how you are getting along with your little children? You must feel sad and lonely. But you have a greater claim upon

the Lord, now, than when your husband lived; and you have a greater claim upon our sympathy, too."

"Oh!" said the poor creature, "we found it hard to make all ends meet. Before he died, I was ailing most of the time, till he was taken ill. I got stronger then, and indeed it took it to attend to him. But what I am to do this winter to get bread for myself and my children, I really don't know. I wish I was in the grave, too, for what, with my heavy grief, and starvation staring me in the face, I can do little else than fret."

"Tut! tut! my good woman," said Mrs. Lunt, "that's not the way to do. Have faith in God; look on the bright side, woman, dear. The Lord's granaries are as full as ever."

"It is all very fine to talk so, but I never had a bright side to look to. People talk about Providence providing, but I have always had to work for my bit and sup. Providence has never done much for me."

"Calm yourself, my friend; do not give expression to such feelings," said Mrs. James Barton. "Do you not recognize the Lord's hand; and has he not put some drops of sweet into your cup of sorrow?"

"None! none!" was the poor creature's answer, as she tried to cover her face with her handkerchief.

"Come, come," said the old lady, "I, too, have tasted of sorrow; but the good God always slips a few drops of sweet in every bitter cup. Come, Mrs. Walsh, you will certainly craze yourself if you give way so. Now is an opportunity for faith to triumph. Trust in the Lord; He can make all things work for your good."

"Not much signs of that," replied she. "All things are against me. All I held dear are in the grave. Oh! if my baby had only been spared. I would rather the other two had been taken, if only my husband and baby had been left me. But they are gone; they are gone!"

"My poor friend," said Mrs. Lunt; "and who took them? Surely you are not daring enough to enter a protest against the God of Heaven. Do not, oh, do not quarrel with your Maker. Do not find fault with Him for doing what He sees best with His own. He took your babe for He was about to remove your husband. Was there no mercy in that? What would you have done with an infant in your arms this winter? God took your husband, but you had the satisfaction of waiting on him all through his sickness. Was there no mercy in that? Your own health and strength were good, all through, was there no mercy in that?"

At this Mrs. Walsh fairly trembled.

"Oh!" she cried, "I know I am doing wrong to give way so."

"Yes, indeed you are," said the old lady; "and the Lord has much to bear from you. Now, I warn you to submit at once, and stop murmuring at His dealings, or He may soon remove the other two also, and lay you on a bed of suffering the rest of your days. Come, now, keep up your heart, for we all mean to help you; so good-bye."

Dear reader, if it is not too much trouble, turn again to Lang-

ford's. George, vexed at not getting out, opening his old pocket-knife, commenced cutting and scratching everything he could get hold of. The furniture (already a sorry sight) was getting notches to remember that night by. Supper over, it passed as all other nights. When all went to bed, Mrs. Langford took the note she had picked up, opened and read it. What could it mean? It was evident that Maud loved Cliff, but he was getting tired of her, and seemed anxious to shake her off. That whatever else she had planned or anticipated, he fancied a bachelor's life would suit him better. While she was reading, Abbie came in and stood stamping the snow off his feet.

"Why, Abbie," said his mother, "where have you been? I thought you were in bed."

"No," said he; "I was looking for something Maud dropped on the common."

"Well, did you find it?"

"No; it was only a bit of letter, anyway."

"Abbie, do you carry notes for Maud?"

"I won't tell if I do or not," said he.

"Come, now, Abbie, tell mother all about it, and I'll give you something real nice. Ah! there's a good boy. Tell me, do you take letters to or from the post office for Maud?"

"No; I tell you, and you're mean to pry. You know well enough I never was in the post office."

"Hush, Abbie, sonnie; speak low. Didn't I see you get a letter from Maud one day when she was ill with a cold, and could not go out? Come, sonny, tell mother, did you give it to Cliff?"

"I won't tell you; so you need not coax me. There's now, old mother, you may shut up; think I am a fool?"

And the misguided child of an indulgent mother dashed off to bed.

Poor Mrs. Langford was suffering for want of judicious treatment of her children, and with a sore heart she picked up his wet boots and socks, and put them to dry—then hung up his coat and cap he had thrown about. This done, she went to bed, but not to sleep. The first thing she thought of in the morning was the troublesome note. Again she opened and read it, then slowly she folded it up and pushed it deep down in her pocket, and then stood with her hands drawn tightly over her head, as if to keep her brain from bursting. She neither sighed nor wept. Either she did not believe what she had read, or tears and sighs were a weak demonstration of grief so great as hers. So the days came and the days went. Oh! what a mercy. Sore, sad days pass as swift as glad, joyous ones.

"What's the matter, Maud," said Mrs. Langford, when she entered her room one day and found Maud sitting staring at vacancy, her hair hanging around her shoulders, and her hands clasped tightly over her knees.

"There's nothing the matter," was the cool reply,

"Maud, your manner belies you. Either you are sick or you have got a fright. You look like a ghost."

"Then, don't look at me," was the pert reply.

"Stop your scolding, mother," said Abbie, as he poked his head in at the door, "no wonder Maud's angry. Mrs. Parly went away that time, and didn't leave Maud the key of the room as she promised, and now our party is all knocked on the head."

"Maud, I would like you to come with me to hear the lecture that is to be given in the old school-house. It is a long time since I was at one; it will be a change for us both."

"Delightful change, mother; you can have it all. For me, I am going to grannie's."

"Ah, do come, Maud, that's a good girl, do; and George, you will come too? There, don't look so surprised; it is time we were all beginning to think what we are going to do."

"I am thinking," said George, as with both hands he scratched his head, "I am thinking, what are you going to do, mother? Are you going to join the Millrites or the Methodists? I do believe you have been at Mother Lunt's prayer-meeting."

This was one of Mrs. Langford's good spells, which came by fits and starts, few and far between.

"Do you know what, mother? I saw Jim Barton, the saddler, to-day, and had a nice long talk with him."

"Why, George, I thought you did not speak now?"

"Neither we did for a long time, mother; but to-day he mistook me for some one else, and was talking away till I told him his mistake. Then he begged my pardon, and said he believed his eyesight was failing. He is a lucky lad, mother."

"How do you know?"

"I will tell you, mother, how I know. Jimmy put his arm around my shoulder, boy-fashion you know, and in a kind way asked me to come and see the present he got from his father last Christmas, four acres of land. He wants me to advise him what to crop it with. Now, mother, ain't he a lucky chap. His boss put some money in the savings bank for him, all because he had stuck to nothing else."

"What does 'stuck to' mean, George?"

"Mean, mother? Why it means that he learned his trade, served his apprenticeship straight through. Don't you wish it was me, mother? But he is a suppy; a profession is better than a trade, it sounds better, one don't have to work so hard nor dress so shabby."

"What is a 'suppy,' George?"

"Bah! don't you know what a suppy is, mother? Why, it's a chap that's afraid to drink cider or beer, for fear it might give him delirium tremens. I suppose you thought it was a trade—well, well, I would like to be a—let me see, now; I can read and I can write some."

"Mother, where is Maud so long? I thought she was only to stay two days at grandma's."

"She is there yet, George, spinning or sewing; my poor mother is so helpless, and Maud just has her own way there. What would your grandmother do without her?"

"Well, mother, and what is that to us? Indeed, Maud won't

be their servant, I'll be bound. I will send for her to-morrow. You are a pack of fools, that is what you are. Tell me at once, mother, why don't she come home to see the new play at Renard's?"

"George, don't ask me. I sometimes wish she had never been born, nor you either, for that matter."

"Golly, you were proud of us once, mother. S'pose you're going to set your 'fections on things above after this, eh?"

"Oh, George, I beg you to hold your tongue. My pride has got a terrible fall," and indeed, she looked like it, trying to make a new dress for Bessie out of her own old one.

Poor George, impulsive at times, hung down his head; then with a start, "Mother, something tells me I have not long to live. Sometimes I feel as if there were fire in my veins, rushing up to my head. Ain't I just as old as Jim Barton?"

"Yes, George, you are both near of an age. You two, and Jack, the minister's son, were all born within one year."

"Ah, mother, I wish I was in his shoes. I am no use to any one. I wish I was in California. Nobody loves me, mother. How does it feel to be a Christian? Ah! suppose you don't know. Oh, dear, what is the use of living?"

"George, where have you been, your tongue is so loose to-night? Have some sense, and don't talk silly, cant stuff."

"Well, mine mother, I was in a blacksmith shop, if you want to know, listening to a Millerite preaching. He stood by the forge, and laid the Bible on the anvil. There were a great many people, sitting on harrows, ploughs, rough boards, and whatever they could get. Some window panes were broken. It is well the night was mild. However, the wind blew out a lot of their tallow candles; so, as there was a little fire in the forge, the preacher (who was a blacksmith formerly) stepped back and caught the bellows handle, blew up the fire, then called out, 'Bring your candles and light them at the forge, and bring your hard hearts to the anvil and hammer of God's word.' Then he looked over to where two old farmers sat on a plough, and said, 'Plough deep, old men, break up the fallow ground of your hearts, for it is time to seek the Lord.' He told them the world was coming to an end right away, and they had no time to waste. 'Tell you what, mother, Aunt Magg should have been there. It would have suited her to a 'T.' Then he named a lot of persons who would be claimed by the master they served; the Sabbath breaker, the drunkard, the swearer, and I don't know who all. Of course, he had to come down on our distillery, as if nobody had one but us. Stupid man, had he only enquired, he would have found that it was shut up. He called it and the taverns nurseries for hell. He made me feel so squeamish, I most wished they were nowhere."

"George, what made you stay to hear the Millerite? You would not come with me, neither you nor Maud, to hear a lecture in the old school. I suppose Jim or Robert Barton asked you, and of course you would go any place to please them. Yes, that is the way you got to hear the crazy heads."

"Now, mother, nobody asked me, and the Bartons were not there. So you may shut up."

"George, do not get angry. Mother did not mean to annoy. Neither I did; and I am very sorry for it. Now, tell me, how did you find out about the preaching?"

"You're getting to be civil now, mother, and you had better keep so. Well, I was passing down to meet some chaps. When I got opposite the blacksmith's they struck up a tune I knew well. It was 'Auld Lang Syne' the stupid heads were singing. Aunt Magg sings it sometimes. Of course I thought some sport must be going on here, so in I walked. 'Anything to pay,' says I to the door man. 'Yes,' he bawled, 'you have got to pay attention.' 'All right,' says I, 'that don't cost much.' 'But, young man, the want of attention may cost you your soul,' was his reply, 'Time is short, eternity at hand. Here is a seat, friend.' That was doing business, mother."

"But, George, why did they sing that song?"

"Oh, they did not sing the song, it was only the tune. It was some sort of a hymn they put to it. Anyway, Mr. Millerite said a Wesleyan preacher had stolen a number of tunes out of song books for his hymns. He said the tunes were too good for the devil. Aha! aha! the Methodists and the devil are always at loggerheads. One poor chap, deaf Paul, was just leaning on the handle of a plough, doing a little, when Millerite, who was going over a number of dates and figures, all at once stopped speaking, and raising a great sledge hammer gave the anvil such a blow, and in a solemn voice, said: 'Wake up, there; how dare you sleep out of Christ, and time so near at an end?' Then he went on with the figures, telling them even month, day and hour. It was awful to hear him, mother."

"George, was that all he was preaching about. Had he no text?"

"I don't know, mother; I came away while they were singing a hymn. It sounded awful like 'Home, Sweet Home.' I felt ashamed of my old coat. No—father's. It's a mile too big for me. No wonder Jim Barton mistook me for a—— Oh! I remember. The words of his text were: 'Set your affections on things above.' He was a queer looking man, mother, for he seldom looked at the people. He kept one hand raised up by the side of his ear all the time he was preaching. He wore a threadbare coat—out at the elbows. Oh! he was in a great way to get the people to believe what he said; and the tears ran down and dropped on the bible. Of course, it was all 'bog latin' to me, ahem! I wonder how it feels to be converted. Do you know, mother? Is it just——"

"Come, George; go to bed. Do you know what time it is? Sakes, it's near twelve. Do get to bed."

"You didn't answer my question yet, mother. That man said all the unconverted would be lost. Now, if the world is at an end, we had better get converted, for he said that the most wicked one that was there could be converted into a good Christian—no matter if their hearts were as hard as iron. That is good; eh, mother?"

"George, you are neither a heathen nor a papist, a murderer nor a thief, and I don't see what you are in such a stew about. I don't

believe the world is coming to an end. My poor mother used to know a good deal about such things before she got so useless. She said it would not be until the Jews were gathered in, and that might not be for a thousand years. However, if you want to know any more, you had better ask your Aunt Maggie. I never was any hand to preach or lecture to folk."

"Then, mother, I won't ask aunt. I would not give her that much joy. I know she would like well to get on the soft side of me. It would be, 'Noo, Geordie, ye'll ha' to get a bible. Ye canna da without,' that's what she would say, ahem! Mother, why don't we have some sort of worship? Lots of people have. Mrs. Barton does it all herself when the minister is away."

"Come, come, George, go to bed. What on earth are you waiting for?"

"Why, mother, I am waiting up for Abbie. I sent him for some hot stuff to make me sleep. I won't be able to sleep a wink if I don't get some, after all I heard. Oh! dear sakes, he is long enough to have tried every rum shop in the village. I wish I had gone myself, but Abbie can always make the best bargain. Do you know, mother, these Millerites, made some go out of their mind in the States, they did. Oh! there is Abbie's whistle." And poor George ran to the door, snatched the bottle from the child, and swallowing the contents ran off to bed.

I believe there are opportunities, or turning points in every one's life, and it may be this night the opportunity in George's case was lost forever.

We follow Mrs. Langford next day to her father's.

"Oh! father, what can I do? I would have told you my fears about George sooner, but you always get into such a sputtle of a passion when anything goes against you. No use telling poor mother either. Where is my brother Albert?"

"Albert is out of town just now on some business. What do you want with him, Susie?"

"Why, father, you know he promised to get an easy situation for George. I am so sorry that George did not get a trade, but both you and Albert were against it."

"Then, Susie, don't trouble your brain about George. If you had only pushed him on with his schooling during the last three years he would have been fit for some profession. Mechanics are so common, and they associate with the lowest."

"Father, father, who else does George associate with but the worst. What am I to do?"

"Susie, his uncle Albert is getting a situation for himself and George. He has been away for some time trying to get the where-with."

"Oh! father, that is good. What is it to do?"

"It is to be a little landlord. Keep shop up in Willow Vale. Albert will have the one below here. Now, what say you to that, Susie? I hope I will get the house reasonable. I am going to offer a tempting rent to Black Coat. No doubt I will get it this time."

"Oh! father, don't put my George to attend bar. He will drink himself to death. You won't believe me that he takes to it so."

"Curses on you then, Susie. Get him something else to do."

Ah! poor woman, poor woman! To whom will she go for sympathy, or to whom unbosom her griefs and fears.

CHAPTER XXX.

I must now beg the reader's pardon while I stop to take up a stray thread of my story.

"What, without her knowledge or permission? No, Edward, I could not act so, after all she has done for me."

"Then you think more of her than you do of me, that is plain," said the young man.

"Edward! Edward! how can you talk so, you are all the world to me. But surely I can love you and still have a loving respect for the guardian of my youth. Why should the one love destroy the other?"

"Gussie, you ought to have judgment enough to exercise your own will, and not be hampered with an old woman's caprice."

"Oh, Edward, how can you think so after all she has done for me? If she had been my mother, she could not have done more for me. I might have been sent to some orphan's asylum only for Nurse Burney."

"Very well, Gussie, it just amounts to this, that you will not marry me, if, in doing so, you have to leave her?"

"Dear Edward, do her justice. Poor Burney has no desire to thwart me or control me, but she surely has a right to look after me. Besides she has papers in her possession that tell of parentage, that might prove something I am entitled to."

"Fudge!" retorted Edward.

"Don't you believe it?"

"What do you want with property or money, when I have plenty? Come, just say the word, dearest, and then we will arrange matters about starting right off."

"Oh! Edward, give me till this day three weeks, Burney will be home then most of the time."

The two walked on in silence a few minutes, when an unbidden tear found a place in Gussie's eye, searching in her pocket for her white handkerchief, she stopped short, saying:

"Oh, I have lost my pocket handkerchief. There, I see it away back on the road."

"Never mind it, Gussie, you will soon have plenty. What about it?" said Edward.

"Our acquaintance has been so short that I have not even mentioned it to Burney."

"What about that," retorted Edward. "Do you like long courtships? I don't, so long as we like one another."

About four or five miles from the Willowvale village, in a

thickly settled and woody part of the country, stood the humble though comfortable dwelling of Mrs. Burney. Her abode is neither stone nor brick, it is only a log shanty. Reader, have you ever been inside one? perhaps not. No matter, the inmates have little trouble with their gas-pipes, or water taps, because they have none of these modern improvements; not even a stair to weaken the spine. But what does it matter? Many a clever man and woman have been raised in a shanty; aye, and rocked in a sap trough too. Well, I must hurry. Nurse Burney is out just now. Her calling takes her out often among the neighbours, but she never stays longer than she can help. In the door yard a young woman is busying herself trying to improve the outward appearance of her home. A large Newfoundland dog is lying very contentedly watching his young mistress with the corner of his eye, lest she should invade his property, which was only a barrel laid on its side.

"There now, Rover, what do you think of that? Have I not put the shine on the old hut? Burney will be home soon, only three hours since she left, and see what a change. She won't hardly know the place. Speak, why don't you, Rover? Bark, or something. What stupid things dogs are. Well, I will have a rest anyway, on this tub. I don't believe Burney will care a bit about my work. She would rather see the dirt than see me tired. Oh, how I wish I had sisters, brothers, cousins, or something. It's real lonely here all day, not a soul to talk to, but a stupid dog. There is one comfort, he never contradicts me, nor quarrels with me. I know some families, where I have been sewing, the brothers and sisters are incessantly bickering and finding fault with each other. So, if this is a dull place, it's happy enough. Come, Rover, speak, why don't you? You stupid dog. I have a good mind to write some verses about you, and the last line of each verse will be Rover, Rover, Rover. That will nettle you, sleepy head. You are tired of my talking so. Poor fellow. But I must talk, whether you answer or not, I would forget how. Ah, you're dreaming. So you may sleep awhile, I am going to have a sing."

So suiting the action to the word, Gussie, in a low sweet voice, sang "Home Sweet Home." As she finished, Rover growled, Gussie started and looked around. There stood an old man. She had seen the same old man talking to Burney the winter before, aye, and the winter before that, too. He held his hat in his hand and leaned heavily on the gate.

"Hey, day, young woman, if you have a poor house you have a rich voice. It may be a fortune to you yet."

"Who are you old man? and what do you want?"

"I was just listening to you a minute, and I want to see Nurse Burney."

"She is not in, but if you have a message for her you can leave it with me."

"Then I wish to leave some money for her; can you give me a receipt? First give me a drink of water and let me rest a bit. I am a lumberer, and have been over my timber limits some distance from here, and I am very tired."

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Saying so, he went to go in, but a quiet signal from Gussie, and Rover planted his huge form right in the doorway.

"Call away your dog, girl; is he wicked? Will he bite?"

"No, no," said Gussie, "he is not wicked. He will only take you by the throat and pull you out."

"But, woman, can't you scold him, and keep him still?"

"No, sir, I never scold him, Rover and I never quarrel. He knows his business."

"Then, perhaps, I had better not go in, though I would like to smoke by your fire a bit.

"You had better not, sir, it might be your last smoke."

"You seem very self-possessed; you are a pair, you and your dog. Tell me what is your name?"

"Gussie is my name."

"That is not all. Are you Burney's grandchild; or are you her adopted child?"

"Sir, I don't care to be communicative with strangers. If you have any desire to live any longer, you had better be going as Rover's patience is very short."

"Then here is a cheque on the bank for twenty dollars, I won't mind the receipt," and he turned to go.

"Oh! see here, old man, you neither gave me your name, nor said what the money is for."

"It is for Burney," was his answer, "and I don't know what to say. I know who you are, but you don't know me." And trembling with emotion the old man hurried away.

Poor Gussie was quite overcome, as, with her arm around Rover's neck, she sat down on the door step.

"Rover, you dog, I made that man afraid of you, so he would go off. Dear, oh, dear; but he looked sorrowful at me, but he can't know me. I wonder if Burney knows him. There be still, Rover, till I put away this money. I wonder what it's for. I have a good mind to look through her papers. I will pick her lock so I will. It is too bad, she ought to tell me all about myself. I hate secrets. I hope she wont come in. Oh! pshaw! I don't like to open her desk, she trusts to me so. She just says, 'Gussie, don't stir my paper desk,' and I know she never touches my old box of papers. She is real good that way, so she is. She knows I write both poetry and prose, but she never interferes. I wonder what she would say if she saw that piece I wrote: 'Who am I; what am I, or wherefore am I here?' My nurse sings that lullaby to keep her conscience clear. Indeed she never had but one hum. Dear, oh! dear; perhaps I was some great lady's child, laid at Burney's door. No matter; I will know soon. She promised to tell me before I would marry, and she does not know I have got a sweetheart. There, she is coming in sight. Go, Rover, meet her. I know what she will say when she sees the old ice cleared away, and the yard clean. 'I am so sorry you work so hard, Gussie, child; you will be sick.' She thinks I am a child yet. She always calls me that. What are you listening to me for, you stupid dog? Go, Rover, meet Burney."

"Are you not well this morning, Burney, that you are so long getting up?"

"I am, child; but I am very tired."

"Just lie still then, Burney, and here is your breakfast. I do wish you could do without going out to nurse the sick folks, indeed I do."

"Child, I can't help it; we must live, and it ain't much I make either."

"Say, Burney, what are you going to do with the money that man left here?"

"Do with it, child? Why, I have some of your schooling to pay out of that; and I want to get you a parasol and dress with the rest."

"I don't want a parasol and dress. I wish you would rather put a gable roof to this old shanty."

"No use, no use, child, your wishing for that; wishing won't alter circumstances. Gussie, child, I like the shanty well enough and you may not be in it long."

A moment's silence, then Gussie, in a faltering voice, said:

"You won't object to my altering circumstances, will you?"

"I know not what you mean, child."

"I mean," replied Gussie, "I would like to take you to a nice house to live with me, and go no more out to nurse."

Burney said nothing, but sipped her coffee.

"I want to ask you something, Burney."

"Ask away, child."

"You promised me years ago to tell me about my parents, before I would get married, so now you have just two weeks to do it in—"

"Child, child! how is this? I did not know you were keeping company with anyone. Tell me, does anyone come here to see you?"

"No, Burney; but in where I sew. I got acquainted with a nice young man, who calls there sometimes; I don't know what for; anyway, the girls like to have me sing, and Edward, why he is crazy to hear me."

"Gussie, child, what do you know about 'him? He may be a drunkard, or an idle good-for-nothing, or he may be a married man. Child beware!"

"If you knew him as well as I do, Burney, you would like him. The very last time I was there, he came with me the most of the way; and he is neither a drunkard nor an idle good-for-nothing. He is not married either. And only think, he has a nice farm away up West. So we are going to have a nice comfortable home. You will come, too, won't you, Burney?"

"Gussie, dear child, I must see him. I must know that he is deserving of you, and if he is, I have no objection to your union. What is his trade, and what did you say was his name?"

"I don't know what he follows. Perhaps he lives on his money. His father is very wealthy. Edward has a gold watch and chain, and dresses well, and one of the prettiest canes you ever saw. He does not smoke, only cigars."

"Gussie, is that his christian or surname?"

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"Why, Burney, that is his first name. Cliff is his surname. Now, Burney, I do wish you would tell me about my parents. Of course they are dead, but tell me who they were. Did you know them?"

"Ah, Gussie, child, it grieves me to tell you, but it must be done. Your mother died soon after you were born, and about a fortnight after she was brought here. - Your father still lives."

"Oh, Burney, where is he? Did I ever see him, and did he ever see me?"

"Yes, child, you have seen him and he has seen you, but, though you did not know him, he knew you."

"Tell me, Burney, were they married?"

"No, Gussie, that was the black part of the story. Your father had a wife and family in the old country. He came out sometimes on business. Your mother was serving as housemaid in the hotel where your father boarded. Gussie, child, I wish you would not ask me any more. Well, what he pretended to be, and how he was trusted. But, instead of a guardian, he proved to be a deceiver."

"Burney, what was his name?"

"Child, I cannot tell you; I cannot tell you. Bring me my writing-desk."

Then, unlocking it, she took out a package of papers, saying: "Here, child, open it. Your mother sealed it and left it with me for you if you should grow up."

Poor Gussie felt stunned; however, taking the package in her trembling hands, she opened it, but could hardly make out the writing; at last, with Burney's help, she did so.

"And so it was you, Burney, that baptized me, and my name is Gussie Cliff?"

"Yes, child, your mother desired it. She was just able to write a few words at a time."

"Did her people not come to see her or to get me?"

"No; they came for her clothes after she was buried, but they would have nothing to do with you. Your poor mother extracted a promise from me that I would keep you myself. Your father bound me to secrecy, paying me well for it. So you see, child, I was bound by both the living and the dead to keep the secret."

"Tell me, Burney, was that old man who left the money, was he my—"

"Yes, child; your father."

"Oh, nurse Burney, what is his name?"

The old woman only touched the name Cliff on the paper Gussie held in her hand.

"Burney, dear Burney, tell me, is Edward Cliff my brother?"

"Child, he is your father's son."

"Oh, dear," said the poor girl, "what a fate I have escaped! But why did the old man ask if I were your grand-child?"

"Because, Gussie, I had a grand-child for the first three years of your life, but she was taken home. It may be your father wanted to find out what you knew about yourself."

"But why do I go by the name, Burney?"

"Child, I only gave you that as a sort of protection from pryers. I had you entered on the school register. Some think you are my grand-child; some think I have adopted you."

"Did my mother wish you to call me that?"

"No, child, she did not. She requested me to keep you. Her wishes are all written down there, 'Black on White,' nor has it been opened since she closed it. There now, calm yourself, Gussie, child, and thank heaven for crossing your purposes," for the poor thing sobbed and cried as though her heart would break.

"Oh! Burney," she cried, "I have indeed escaped a terrible fate. But I think Edward has found out the secret of my birth, because he was to have been here ten days ago. Indeed, he wanted me to elope with him then, for fear you would not consent to our union. But I could not do it; Burney, I could not do it. Then I felt so sure you would consent. Oh, but you must see him, and tell him how it is."

Gussie then threw her arms around the old woman's neck, and kissed her repeatedly. "Oh!" she said, "I never cared to think much about Providence before. I do now."

"Poor child," said Burney, "I will make enquiry shortly, and find out if this is the same young man; so think no more about it."

CHAPTER XXXI

Reader, the house which I now introduce to you, appears to have been once a substantial building, but now showed signs of decay. Negligence and poverty have stamped the place with a foreboding aspect. True, the long winter has passed away, or nearly so. We will not say much about the beauty of the spring time. Fancy, reader, that we are listening to their conversation, and then we will know who the inmates are. "What a confounded fool Albert was. He might have known that would not do." These words were uttered by an old gray headed man, who staggered into the kitchen, threw himself into a big chair, which proved too frail to bear his weight. He had sat on that chair for many a day. But it refused to bear his weight any longer, and the old man fell back, sprawling on the floor. A young woman stood by, laughing at the ludicrous sight, as the old man slowly rose out of the wreck. She muttered, "yourself is the oldest and biggest fool." This so enraged him, that he picked up the broken chair, throwing the pieces about, breaking whatever they came in contact with. When the storm had somewhat blown over, the old man sat down on a bench, and, taking out his pipe, commenced to smoke.

"Maud, it was all your fault that your uncle was apprehended. I hate the sight of you, and wish you were in your grave. Give me some dinner, and be quick."

"Yes, sir; what shall you have? Cold meat and chips, or cold meat and straw, grandpa?"

"Maud, answer me first. Do you know that young man, Cliff?"

"Yes, grandpa, I have seen him before. Why do you ask?"

"Maud, the stage driver told me you were privately married to Cliff. Is that true?"

"The stage driver has no business telling you anything about me. He is a meddling old fool."

"Maud, that is not answering my question. Tell me at once, hussy, is it true?"

"Find out for yourself," was her pert reply, and Maud gave her head a dignified toss, and was about leaving the room.

"Curses on you, is that the way you answer me?" said her grandfather, and, seizing her by the arm, shook her violently.

"Grandpa, if you had spoken civilly, I meant to have told you. I am engaged to be married."

"You are, eh! engaged to be married! When, hussy?"

"As soon as the spring opens up nicely, so we can take a trip up or down the lakes, like other people."

The old man started and shook his fist at her.

"Go!" he said. "Go from this house, you bold, bad girl. Never darken this door again. Take your things and be gone."

Maud ran around the house, getting her things and tying them in a bundle, and when she re-entered, the old man lay snoring on the floor, with a broken tumbler beside him. Tying on her bonnet and jacket, Maud, ere she left, turned into a little room back of the kitchen, where an old and almost helpless woman sat in an old-fashioned arm chair. On the one side was fastened a huge work basket, and on the other side a pouch bag. The poor creature was paralyzed on one side, and had been for a long time. The bag and basket were well filled with thread, needles, strings, rags, socks, buttons, bits of paper and such, for in her well days she would work, but most of the time she played like a child.

We will not say how this calamity came upon her. All her other faculties were more or less affected. Just now she looks very much agitated, and tried hard to ask an explanation of the noise. Maud picked up the drinking cup and turned back to her grandfather's jar hurried it to the old woman.

"Here," she said, "drink that. And I am sorry to leave you, because you are the only one that leaves me alone. Never once have you scolded—never! never!! And I love love you—love you! See, here is a lot of little pictures, and pretty things for you to look at. And here is some snuff I hooked for you. Hide it now, mind, deep down in the bag. Hush! don't try to speak. Good-bye, grandmother, good-bye."

Yes, reader, there was a tender spot in poor Maud's heart, and when she saw tears come into her grandmother's eyes she fairly broke down, and pressing a kiss on the old, wrinkled forehead, she tore herself away.

Alas! poor Maud. The way of the transgressor is hard. Yes, family pride has turned many a one to the door, for whom the gates of heaven will stand ajar.

Again, hardened with abuse, she stood at her mother's door. Sullenly she stood by, while her mother gave vent to many bitter words, which I do not care to repeat. May none of my readers ever bear the things that were laid to her charge.

"Base girl, why did you not tell me sooner—you profligate hussy? I don't believe that Cliff ever intended to marry you. Oh, that you had died in infancy, when you had the whooping cough. You were low enough to have died; I was foolish not to let you go."

"Then, mother, it is all your own fault, keeping me here to sin and suffer. I might have been in heaven."

"Maud, your death would have made me crazy."

"No fear of that now, is there mother?"

"No, Maud; but your life may."

"Well, is there no one in but you, mother; and is tea ready. I am starving with hunger."

"Don't take off your things. Fly! Maud, fly from this house. You have brought black disgrace upon us, and ruin upon yourself. Why, oh, why did I cherish you to break my heart. Go at once; I disown you; you are no daughter now."

"Where will I go, mother? I never travelled."

"Then you may go travel, now. Don't call me mother. Go search for him whose company and whose love you preferred to mine."

"Oh, Maud, is that you. It is sa dark I cud hardly see you, sitting there."

"Yes, Aunt Maggie, it is me."

"Are ye waiting for somebody? But may be I shudna speer, only it looks sa like a storm the nicht ye'd better come hame."

"Home," repeated Maud. "I have no home, no home. Oh, Aunt Magg, I am turned to the door, by both grandfather and mother."

"Heh, and I ken what for. Maud, waes me that it should come to this. That my brother's bairn should be turned to the door be her ain mother. Eh! what, wie, could they no bear wi' ye for a while. The Lord Jesus has borne wi' you an' them for mony a day. Dear me, to think of a mother turning out her ain dachter in a nicht like this. Ah, lassy, lassy, see the evil of sin, an then hoo great the Lord's love. He turns na body away for sin, if they only come to him in a humble spirit. Tell me, Maud, what do ye mean to do?"

"Aunt, don't bother me. If you must know, I mean to make for the city of ——— though it takes me a week. Bridget gave me directions to get into the nunnery. She is going to granny's to stay. Yes; I will give myself up to the blessed nuns. Bridget said they will be good, and they never turn girls away. I will live and die there. They will not abuse me like my mother did."

"Oh, Maud, your mother has other trouble forbye your's. Her brother, your uncle Albert, has committed an awful crime. Come away hame, I'll carry yer bundle."

"I tell you, Aunt Maggie, I have no home. Why don't you believe me?"

"Maud, you used to have a guid hame, an ye were well off ta."

"Used to, Aunt Maggie; used to, not now," she repeated in a sort of dreamy way. "Used to have a home, a father, and mother, brothers, sisters, good clothes to wear, plenty to eat and drink. I never had to chore and slush like you. Just to sew, and walk out. A good home,—used to; not now. Now I have no home, but I am going to one."

"Maud, is there anything I can do for ye, my woman."

"Yes, Aunt Magg, you can go away, and mind your own business. Let me alone, I don't want you to talk to me, and if— Oh, yes, I want you to give me some money. You will never get it back again. But you can take my beautiful silk dress. Sell it, or wear it. Quick, now, give me the money, and let me go."

"How much, Maud?"

"Nine or ten, Aunt Magg, or five dollars, if you have no more. Hurry now, before any one comes."

"I haven't that much, Maud, but come hame wi' me and sleep on my bed in the garret this ea' nicht, and in the morn I'll do a' I can for ye. I've been a' roun' the country, and ken far mair about it then ye do, sa come awa', my woman."

"Do you want me to be turned out again? You old thing, you! No, I am tired enough without having to walk the same ground over," retorted Maud.

"Oh, Maud! Maud!" pleaded her aunt, "if ye have any respect for yer deed father, come wi' me, sleep this ea' nicht, an' in the morn I'll do whatever is in my power. Yer mother 'ill be down at gran- nie's noo, sa come awa', my woman."

"Oh, aunty, aunty, must I go back again? Mother will be seeing me, and, oh, she will kill me. Oh, save us, what will I do?"

"Dinna be feered, my woman. Ye ken yer mother never looks near the garret, ye might be there for weeks an she wadna' ken; I've little money about me, but I ha' some nice cheese and crackers."

"Then give me some, aunt, for I am faint with hunger. Oh! that is nice, give me some more. Oh! Aunt Magg, if you had always spoken in that kind way I might not have been the fallen creature I am."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Two hours later and Maud lay sleeping quietly in her aunt's bed. At the far end of the room sat Maggie. There was little sleep in her head. Sometimes talking to the unseen, sometimes to herself, as we before noticed it was a habit of hers. "An' what for am I here the nicht? An' what kept me in the paths of virtue? What for am I no an outcast wanderin' crater? Lord, it was Thy hand that sheltered and guided me, an' I cannie help but love Thee. Thou art my strength, my Lord and Redeemer. Help, oh! help me in my present duty." The next day Maud woke up with a bursting

headache, and her aunt coaxed her to lie still, and gave her a cup of tea.

"There noo, let me wipe yer face an' hands wi' a wet tool, and ye'll feel better. Pit doon the bit o' paper out o' yer hand, or it'll get a wet."

"Oh! no, aunty, I must take care of that."

"Then lay it under yer pillow, an' it'll be safe."

"Oh! no, Aunty, Maggie. First tell me are you my fast friend?"

"Eh! yes, lass, I'm yer only triend be yer father's side, an' I'd da as much for ye as if ye was my ain sister."

"Then, Aunt Magg, I want you to bring me something that will make me die right off; rat poison, or I don't care what, and bury this bit of paper with me. Now promise, promise."

"Na, na, Maud, I couldna da that my woman, but will ye no tell me what the bit o' paper is about?"

"No! I want George. You'll not do anything for me at all."

"Speak low, speak low, my woman. Ye canna see George till ye tell me what ye want wi' him."

"Oh, dear! must I tell you? When I was coming from granny's yesterday I met Abb, and he gave me this note. Young Cliff has given me up, taken up with another girl." And the poor thing sobbed and cried as if her heart would break. "Now go down and send George to me."

"Maud, what for de ye want him?"

"I want to tell him about Cliff, and get him to make me his wife and take me away from here, I don't like this place. "Oh! aunty, do, do. I can't bear this suspense. Oh! I'll go down myself, there now," she said, springing over the bed.

"Eh! na, na, my woman, ye canna' see George. Eh, Maud, lassie, it winna da to tell George about Cliff. George wad murder Cliff. Eh! my bonnie lassie. Da ye think he wad let the man live that deceived his sister? Na, na, George maunie ken. Take another cup of tea and a cracker. There noo, rest a bit, and ye'll feel better."

Ah! Maggie knew the secret of calming the nerves by attending to the wants of the stomach.

In the evening:—

"Oh! golly, mother, I have got a situation! Have I better clothes to put on to go with?"

"Abbie, are you mad? What do you want with a situation? What are you going to do?"

"Here is the paper. See, 'Black on White,' what I am to do and what I am to get."

She took the greasy paper and glanced over it. "Abbie! what in this world have you gone and hired yourself without my consent or knowledge to that gipsy circus for? What do you mean? You can't go."

"Golly, don't you go to stop me now, mother. You'll find I can't be beat. Write your name just there, quick."

"What will I do that for? No, I have done that too often already, Abbie."

"I think, mother, it means that you will answer for my good conduct. Sometimes they hire boys, and when they have paid their passage to places, they leave them. Hurry, quick."

"Say, Bessy, I am hired. Won't I have the fun? And I will get you a free ticket every time my circus passes here. Say good-by for me to George and Maud. Tell them the company was just waiting for me. and——"

"There is the man for me, mother. Mother, where is the paper?"

"In the fire."

"Oh! mother you, you wicked wretch to do——"

"My good woman, I am the bearer of sad news."

"Oh! I thought, I thought," said Abbie, "you were the circus man."

"Sit down my good woman, sit down" said the man, "taking no notice of the child. Sit down and hear all."

"Go," cried Mrs. Langford, "with your bad news I have had enough," and turned away, leaving the man standing there.

"Sad news, 'Becca, sad news; poor George Langford is dead."

"Impossible, Ben, I saw him in the afternoon. I am sure it was him."

"Ah! 'Becca, he is gone; he is drowned."

"How is that, Ben. Tell me all about it," and the dear little woman sat down to hear the tale of woe.

"George found, through some means, that Cliff had deceived his sister. That he had married another girl, and was on the point of leaving for California, but requested an interview with Maud at the old trysting place, the style steps. Poor George, enraged at the villian, and without letting anyone know, hurried on to the pine grove, near the distillery, where Cliff would pass. I believe he went round by the distillery first. Soon he espied Cliff under a pine tree gathering spring flowers. A bouquet, no doubt, for Maud. George had exhausted his strength hastening there, and as he leaped wildly at Cliff, the villian started and stared at George. George charged him with the crime, when with the wild cry of a maniac, they rushed upon each other. 'You're mad, George,' cried Cliff, 'you are mad.' 'Yes, villian I am mad, you have driven me to destruction. Lie down till I kill you.' 'George you flash of wild fire, boy you are in the *delirium tremens*. But you will kill yourself before you kill me.' 'Villian!' roared George, 'for your treatment of my sister I will trample you under my feet, and your bride will feel better of her widow's weeds, when she hears all. It was the last was heard of poor George. Cliff and he fought away, but as the ground slanted they could not keep their footing, both stumbled into the mill-pond.

"Ben, how did you hear all this; and is Cliff drowned too?"

"No, Becca, that is the strangest part of the proceeding. Cliff was no swimmer. George was a good swimmer. Cliff struggled out

by some means. George, poor fellow, sank like a stone to the bottom."

"Tell me quick, Ben, have they found the body; and tried to restore him to life?"

"Yes, yes; I helped to pull him out. We tried for a long time, but life was gone. As for Cliff he fled; no one could see where. But I don't know as he could be taken up for murder. Though I hope he will be brought to justice yet."

"Ben, did no one interfere to save poor George?"

"Why, no, 'Becca; there was no time or opportunity to do anything. I was on the other side of the creek, and called out to them to desist from fighting, but they heeded me not."

"But, Ben, there is a log hut there, and an old man and an old woman living there. What did they?"

"The old man was out. The old woman stood at her door, 'Becca, and heard and saw all; but what could a woman do? Besides it was getting dusk. The old woman stated that George came to her for some keys, and then went to the distillery office. She does not know whether he got liquor or not, but he appeared to be terribly agitated. 'George,' said she, 'what is up?' He turned round, and gave her a look that she says she will never forget."

"Has word gone up to his mother?"

"Yes; but she did not receive it."

"Why so, Ben? Was she not there?"

"A man went up right off to tell her. He had a spite against the whole family, and had said in her hearing once, that he would be glad to be the bearer of ill tidings to her."

"Oh! well, then, I am glad she heard him not."

"Yes, 'Becca, it is as well; so you had better go up, and commence the subject to her as easy as possible."

About eight o'clock next morning, Mrs. Lunt's horse and buggy might be seen to leave Mrs. Langford's gate, while beside the gate stood Bessie and Abbie.

"I think," said Bessie, "mother is going to bring George's body home."

"No; I don't think so; they are holding an inquest on him now."

"What is an inquest, Abbie?"

"I can't tell you what it is, Bessie; I think it is something they do with drowned people."

"Abbie, I am sorry George is dead. Is Cliff dead too?"

"No; Cliff ran off lest he might be blamed."

"Oh, dear! I wish there was no pond there."

"Why, Bess?"

"Cause, don't you see, Abbie, if there had been no water there poor George would not have been drowned."

"Ugh! Bessie, he might have been killed, Murdered, though, and that is as bad. I am real sorry I gave him that letter though; it was it that made them fight."

"Abbie, what makes boys fight? Girls don't do that."

"Do you call George and Cliff boys? Why, Bessie, they are men, real men."

"Abbie, you never see girls scuffle and haul one another over, hardly ever. Men go to war, too, and kill one another, but women don't."

"'Cause, Bessie, they are not strong, like we are; women are cowards, too, and not brave like we are."

"Oh, Abbie, I don't see the use of being so strong and brave. I would be glad if all the men were weak, like girls and women are."

"Well, Bessie, but you are soft. What would you do if a great bear was coming to fight you?"

"I don't know. What would you do, Abbie? Could you kill it?"

"Well, wait," replied Abbie, "till you see."

"Say, Abbie! if Cliff had been drowned, that would have been four men that have been drowned there since pa died. Don't you mind, one was sailing in the canoe, and just shaken the boat a little to frighten his wife, so he fell out and was drowned?"

"Now, you are wrong; Bessie, it was the woman that was drowned, just because she was a coward. Her husband was only in fun. And the fall before that, a Frenchman, driving in a team, mistook the pond for a field, and went to drive over it; but the ice was not strong enough, and he broke through; but, Bessie, he was tight."

"I don't care, Abbie, grandfather should let the water all go down to the lake. I wish I was strong and brave like men are, I would make a big hole in the dam."

"Bah! how mighty wise you would be, Bess."

"Oh, Abbie, I am sorry George is dead. What shall we do at all? Uncle away, too, and grandfather so cross."

"Golly, I am the only man in the house, I am."

"You are not a man, Abbie, so don't go to call yourself one."

"Well, Bessie, I will soon be one, and then you will see how I will work for you and mother. I will soon get back the horse and cow the bailiff took, you bet I would. I am sorry that that circus got away last night, because they promised me lots of money, if I would go with them, just to play, mind you. Not to work any. I will go yet, I will."

* * * * *

Down by the pond. The living meeting with the dead.

"Oh my son, my first born, my George."

And the poor creature folded the lifeless form in her arms, smoothed his hair over his forehead and kissed his cold lips.

"Come away with me," said Mrs. Lunt. "While they wash and lay out his body."

Mrs. Lunt, and the others, wished to keep away all noise from Langford's, on account of the refuged Maud.

"For a little while let me be near him. He is my son, my George—my own Georgie. His father used to call him wee curly-headed Georgie. Oh, my son! my son!"

And where was Maggie all this time? She had been down before Mrs. Langford, and saw the cold remains, but had to hurry back to watch Maud. Maggie had told Maud her fears that poor

George was drowned, but said not a word of his body being found until long after it was buried.

"I can't believe it, Aunt Maggie. George is off on some errand for uncle, or to see Cliff," said Maud, "he'll be back again."

It was the evening after the funeral that Mrs. Langford was walking about the house. Bessie was doing some house work under the direction of her aunt. Abbie was slyly practising some tricks which he thought would better qualify him for the circus.

"Children, get in your kindling wood," said Mrs. Langford. "And go to your beds."

But still they trifled about.

"Go at once," she bawled, "for I can't stand your noise," and lifted the poker and shook it at them.

When they had gone, Maggie came and stood around, wishing to comfort her if she could. Poor Maggie had work to do up stairs and down, trying to keep each as calm as possible from exciting the other. And Susie had work to do. In her deep trouble she thought and planned it all.

"Maggie," said she, "are you done with your basket for to-night; I mean, can you empty it for to-night?"

"Yes," replied Maggie, "I can."

"And your hood and shawl, too."

"Certainly, Susie. I will leave them all here. Just where you can see them."

And Maggie did so. Then went up stairs to her room, but first suggested that she had better take her boy with her, to which Susie made no reply. All being quiet she soon slipped out in the bible woman's rig. The basket on her arm, full of kindlings and some matches, too. Did Mrs. Langford wish to go in disguise, or did she fancy that there was virtue in the bible woman's rig. Susie had never asked for these things before, and Maggie never doubted but she had gone to her father's. It was a good chance to get some victuals taken up to Maud.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

How startling the cry of fire; and how awful the glare of light it throws on hill and dale, particularly in the country place where there is no fire engine to bring into action. It was about eleven o'clock at night that the whole neighbourhood was alarmed, and as they gathered to the scene of the disaster, the eager enquiry was: "How did it originate?" The distillery had been shut up for some time, on account of not having sufficient means to prosecute the trade. What could have done it? There was no one living there. The old man and woman had moved away on the night that George had been drowned. The spectators were just coming to the conclusion that it was the work of an incendiary, when some hinted that perhaps Cliff had taken refuge there, and at once the rest came to the same conclusion. Still, it was evident the fire did not originate

in the inside, but from the outside. It was now unapproachable. Now, the man who longed to impart bad tidings, demanded a hearing. He said:

"I had occasion to cross the common about ten, last night, when who should I see but a wolf in sheep's clothing, near the style steps."

"Which way did he go," asked one?

"It was not a he," said our informant; "it was a she wolf."

"Arrah, man, can't ye spake plainer than that, and have done, shure?"

"Then, with your leave I will speak plainer," said the bad news-man. "It was the bible woman, Miss Langford; I know it was her. She had a basket on her arm, and was talking to herself. I heard her say: '*He made me feel so squeamish, I most wished—Oh! Ah! I'll burn you. I will burn you, I will!*'"

"Shure," said our Irish friend, "it is yourself that's the bad man to be, after suspecting a dacent woman, and a bringing her into throuble."

A messenger was sent to White's, and another to Langford's, to find if any were out that night. Neither Maud nor her mother could be seen. Soon Maggie appeared and answered for Maud's safety; but where was her mother. Towards day she was found in the church-yard, lying on George's grave, almost insensible; the basket alongside with a few kindlings and matches in it. She was carried home by kind neighbours. It was plain that she had fired the distillery. Poor creature, she took sick, which soon terminated in a brain fever. For many days she lay at the point of death. Sad, weary days of watching were in that house.

It was while Susie lay sick, out of her mind with fever, that another immortal was added to that family. It was well for the young mother that Mrs. Langford was unconscious. When she first awoke to consciousness, it was to see Maud standing by her bed. She looked hard at her, and, as Maud casually drew back, she watched her every motion, until she left the room. When Maggie afterwards entered to give her medicine,

"Maggie," she said, "are there many strangers about the house?"

"No, Susie; very few have been in."

"Maggie, don't tell them about Maud."

"Trust to me, Susie, and keep your mind easy. I am glad yer' a wee better the day. Just be as quiet as possible, till ye get strengthened." The next day, and the next again it was the same.

Maggie said she: "That woman was in again, and looked strange at me and slipped out; she never speaks."

"Who can it be? What is she like, Susie? Did ye ever see her before?"

"She is very, very pale and thin. Her hair is short, and she wears a big black shawl over her shoulders. She 'minds me of somebody I have seen before. But why did you let her come in here?"

"Susie, I have to be out hawking. What else would we live on? I couldna leave ye alane, and when that pair thing offered

to mind ye, I cudna say no. Sa, rest contented the day, an' the morn I'll see about it."

"Oh! say, Maggie, that woman did not come to-day. Did you send her off?"

"Na, na, Susie, she'll not come the day. She's lying ill on my bed, and I fear it's the fever she's ta'en. She's sa hot."

"What is her name, eh, Maggie?"

"I didna' speer at her. But I ken she's some puir heartbroken body. Though I doubt na' she has herself to blame. What am I ta do wi' her, Susie?"

"I don't know, Maggie. Oh! I had such a strange dream about her last night. Maggie, do you believe in dreams?"

"Whiles, Susie, whiles the Lord sends messages to folk when they are sleeping."

"Why, Maggie! I always thought dreams turned out contrary like."

"Na, na, Susie, I dinna think sa when the message is frae the Lord."

"Tell me, Maggie, what's come over you? You did not appear so free and pious heretofore."

"I dinna ken, Susie, unless it was the fear of losing you and the joy now at having you restored. Let me sort yer bed a bit."

"Sit down, Maggie, till I tell you my dream. I dreamed I was listening to George whistling about the house, when all at once I became aware that some one was coming into the room. I was sure it must be that strange woman. So I thought I got up and shut the door in her face and turned the key. But when I attempted to cross to my bed thorns pricked my feet, and when I tried to scramble on to the bed there were thorns all over it, the pillows and all. Then I felt sorry that I had locked the door, for the woman could have picked them off. I felt so weak and faint that I must lie down, thorns and all. I wakened up all trembling. Maggie, can you read my dream?"

"I dinna ken, unless it be this: If ye hadna turned Mand away, she would have helped ye to bear your trials and troubles."

"Oh, Maggie, she was, I fear, the cause of all my troubles. A sore, sore child she has been to me always."

"Ay, but the Lord may change her heart, and make her a comfort to you yet, Susie."

Poor Mrs. Langford gave an uneasy twist, as though she cared not to speak on that subject.

"Why does my father not come to see me?" she at last asked.

"He canna come, Susie; he is lying ill wi' the rheumatism."

"Then, Maggie, where is Bessie; can't she mind me?"

"Bessie is down minding your puir mother; she hears everything, but understands nothing, and it makes her so nervous."

"Where is Abbie, then?"

"Just about, sometimes here and sometimes there."

Maggie feared to tell the truth, Abbie had run away to join the circus.

They were both silent for a few minutes, during which each

seemed to divine the other's thoughts. Then Maggie, lowering her voice, said, "What for do ye no say where is Maud?"

Mrs. Langford turned pale, but whether it was to brave it out, or, or did she really want to know what had become of her. In a husky voice she repeated: "Where is Maud? Do you know?"

"Ay, Susie, I ken; she is in the garret, lying on my bed, an' a wee bonnie innocent aside her."

Poor Mrs. Langford; this was almost too much, but it had to be told some time.

"Oh, Maggie," she said, "is that possible? How did you dare to bring her here, and when did you do it?"

"Forgive me, Susie, if I ha din wrong. It was the night before George was drowned: the very night ye sent her away. I was coming home frae the country, I came on her about twa miles frae here, sitting on a log by the roadside. It was threatenin' to be an unco storm of wind and rain. I cudna come away and leave her exposed to the weather, an' it wud sune be dark as mirk; I cudna take shelter under her mother's roof, an' leave her lyin' by the roadside. Na, na! if she hadna come back wi' me, I'd ha' biden wi' her."

"I understand all now, Maggie; and so that was Maud that used to come and wait on me when you were out? I used to feel so uneasy while she was in. Oh, dear, what are we coming to?"

"Ay, Susie, the plump, rosy cheeks are gone; an' her lips are thin an' white; her bonnie lang hair had to be ta'en off, it got so taut it culdna be kempt. The shawl she had on she got frae Mrs. Barton. No wonder ye didna ken her. Susie, wud ye no like to see the wee innocent?"

"No," she replied, "I don't care to."

"Noo, lassie, I ha' telt your mother a' about ye. Maud, let me show her the wee thing. She is no sa mad wi' ye noo."

"No, no, Aunt Maggie, don't, oh, don't; she will kill it, I know she will."

"Very weel; keep it, lassie, but ye should ne be so feared o' yer ain mother."

Next day Mrs. Langford inquired how Maud was, for Maggie looked troubled.

"She's a wee bit better the day; its no' the fever ava,—but the wee innocent is deeing."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Langford, "I am so glad. What a relief it will be to the whole house."

"Aye, Susie, but it's na relief to my conscience, nor Maud's either. Na, na."

"I don't know what you mean, Maggie, by letting the death of that creature trouble you. You are a strange woman, to take such a fancy to Cliff's child."

"I don't."

"But why do you think it is sick? It is not crying."

"I fear it is past crying, Susie; it is in convulsions."

"Well, Maggie, why do you take blame to yourself?"

"I'll tell you how. Ye see it was the first time I went to the city for my goods. I fell in wi' a woman I kent, an' she took me to see the nunnery. We went frae ea' place till anither. One place was for old, helpless men an' women, an' anither for orphans. We asked to see the foundlin's, an' they showed us twa lying in cribs. They looked like twins, but our guide said ain was three days old, and the other twa. At least that was their age when brought there. The coverlets were tucked all round so smooth. Not a crease nor a spot; an' a wax doll could not have lain stiller. I passed them again an' again, an' still they slept. I asked the lassie how it was that they slept so good. She said the nuns gave them syrup to make them sleep. They only took them up at the regular time, washed, dressed and fed them—then put them back to sleep again. The woman that took me there told me afterwards that she believed they drugged them. For she had been there ever so often, and never saw an infant awake. Sa! I telt this to Maud ea' day to pit her against gaing there. But she begged me to get her a little bottle o' laudanum or paregoric, so she could keep the wee thing quiet when I would be out. Sa; yesterday, when she was sa ill, she could na mind it, she gie'd it an extra drap, sa it wadna' disturb you, and it's never wakened up richt."

Reader, it may be Maud is not the only one that has drugged their illegitimate offspring to keep them from disturbing others.

The little one died, and a few weeks after Maud returned to her grandmother's to whom she was greatly attached.

Little Bessie came to her mother.

Abbie chose a wandering life, from one circus company to another.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT COSIE COTT.

"Good day, Mrs. Barton. I called to see how the sick child is."

"Thank you, Mrs. Walsh; Tottie is much the same. I fear we will not have her long. She is asleep just now; Mrs. Lunt is attending her. Is that one of your boys out there?"

"Yes, ma'am; he is waiting for me."

"He had better come in, Mrs. Walsh; it is just commencing to rain heavily."

"Oh, never mind; I will soon be going. He is so shy, I don't think of taking him into any place."

"But are your boys not going to school?"

"One is, ma'am, and learning well, but this one is not smart, nor good looking either."

Just then Mrs. Barton called him to come in.

"Why!" she said, "you are getting to be a great boy; you must go to school and learn."

"I don't think I will send him, ma'am; there is something wrong with him. Besides being so clownish and homely, he is weak-minded."

"Mrs. Barton saw the poor boy's lips quiver, so, with great presence of mind, she took a hamper and gave it to the boy, saying, as she did so, "I will see about that. Will you fill this with chips for me before they get too wet?" Quickly he ran for them. Then turning round, she laid her hand on Mrs. Walsh's shoulder, saying, "I am surprised at you. Oh, how could you make that heartless remark before your child? Why, if he were not weak-minded, it is enough to make him so. Depend upon it, those words will eat like a canker in his memory while he lives; and, as for coarse visage, can he help that? You ought to have care and sympathy for him. Depend upon it, my good woman, education, with a careful training, helps to improve even the countenance. By your keeping him in the background, as you are doing, you just foster shyness, until, by-and-bye, it will grow to insanity. Never show partiality to your boys. Give them an equal chance, for, how do you know but your good-looking, clever boy may turn out a scape-grace, and this weak-minded one may be chosen of God."

"Oh! Mrs. Barton, I never thought that I was doing wrong."

"Then," replied the other, "it is time you thought and acted too."

Just then the door was opened gently, and the boy entered with a basket of chips, and shyly set them down.

Mrs. Barton patted him on the head, saying, "What a fine lot you gathered. You are a clever lad, and I see no weakness about you. Would you like to go to school?"

"Yes'm," he said, in a whisper. "Then, Mrs. Walsh, you must send him. He will soon show you what a boy can do."

"And so, Mrs. Lunt, you think it is the same young man, this Cliff, and that he and his father have taken ship for Europe?"

"Why, yes, Mrs. Burney; you see my husband, Ben, works about the station some, and he saw and heard the old gentleman telling that a troublesome law suit required their presence at home. He had wound up this business, or left it to others to do, I don't mind. I hope they will stay there, for they are a bad set."

"What is the matter with the little girl? She seems very ill."

"Yes, ma'am, it is Mr. Barton's motherless child. She has been sick some time. First it was worm fever, but now it is inflammation of the membrane of the lungs."

"Mrs. Lunt, I have some herbs at home might give her some relief. If not, it would do no harm to try."

"Oh, I would feel so much obliged to you."

Soon, nurse Burney, went and returned, bringing Gussie with her. The herbs were tried without effect. The poor sufferer was sinking fast. It's constant cry was, "Walk with Tottie. Sing ful Tottie." Out of one arm into another, it was all the same; "Walk ful Tottie. Sing ful Tottie." It was no easy matter, when the heart was full, to walk and sing too.

"Gussie, child," said Burney, "you just sing a few minutes before we leave."

Gussie did sing; but when she stopped, the weak voice said:

"Sing more, petty; sing full, Tottie."

"Ah! Miss Gussie," said Grandma Barton, "if you could only stay with us to-night, and sing now and then, your voice seems to calm her so. It would be such a relief to us."

"Gussie has never been used to sitting up at night," said Burney, "and I fear it would make her sick. What do you think, Gussie?"

"I would like to stay; and I will come home early in the morning. It will not hurt me."

"You will not have to walk in the morning, Miss Gussie," said William. "Some one will drive you home."

Burney went away, after telling Gussie:

"If I leave in the morning before you get home, just lie down and rest, child, till I come in."

Dear little Tottie. It was affecting to hear her weak voice repeat the one thing, over and over: "Walk ful Tottie; sing ful Tottie." Near night she changed a little. "Drink of watty ful, Tottie." She took a taste, then pushed it away. "No more drink a watty ful, Tottie; sing ful Tottie." At one time she dozed a little, and all tried to have her sleep. No sound was heard but that of Gussie singing the child's evening hymn: "Jesus, gentle Shepherd, hear me." All at once she looked up, and in a pleased tone, said: "Ea, ma, ma!"

"Poor child," William said; "I thought she forgot ever she had a ma. How pleased she looks. Does my darling see her ma?"

"How do we know," said Mr. James Barton, "but these sinless ones are permitted to see such glad sights as they cross the Jordan."

"Walk fas'; walk fas', ful Tottie; hully, hully; fas'; sing no more; walk ful, Tottie. Sing, petty, sing."

They all sat down with her. Soon the little face began to assume the hue of death. After lying still a few minutes, she looked up bright and amazed-like, and in a clear, though weak voice, called: "Papa, papa." She even tried to raise herself up, as a child would lean towards the approaching father. "Papa, oh! papa." Soon all was over.

"Over Jordan at last. Of such are the kingdom of heaven," said the minister.

"Yes," replied William; "I will have one babe in heaven, waiting there with her mamma for me."

The little children had all stood round and saw their sister die. Now, it was washed and dressed in its white gowney, and laid in its crib bed. After worship they all came and kissed Tottie good-night and went to bed.

"I thank God for the gift of this child, and I thank Him for taking it back to Himself," said Mr. Barton, as he patted the cold cheek of Tottie.

It was now near midnight. The family sat conversing a long time, giving each other the benefit of their thoughts, which Gussie's memory kept for her poetic brain. It was the first death she had

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seen, and it impressed her very much. Early in the morning she wished to go home, so Ben Lunt took her home in the light cart. Burney had a sick call, which took her out very early. About ten she returned. Rover was keeping guard at the door. So, going in quietly, lest she should awaken Gussie, there was the poor girl sitting by the table. On it lay some odd sheets of paper, over which Gussie's arms were crossed, the pen still in her hand and she fast asleep. The old saying was true: "Look long at a sleeping child and it will wake." Burney, with clasped hands, looked and wondered, till Gussie gave a sudden start and opened her eyes. Burney was not much of a scholar herself, and understood little of the art of composition. But just now she appeared vexed at the waste of paper, which Gussie was vainly trying to get out of sight. All at once she stopped, saying: "No! no! I will not; I cannot do it."

"Gussie, child; what are you trying to do, eh? What's wrong," said Burney.

"Nothing," replied Gussie, "but I will never try to keep anything secret from you again. My more than mother, you may read my very heart." And with a trembling hand she pushed the sheets of foolscap towards her.

"Gussie, child, you will have to read it for me, for I have forgotten my spectacles."

And Gussie did read thus:

LITTLE TOTTIE.

From a stupor, see her waken,
Oh, our patient, suffering child;
Speak, dear Tottie, don't you know us?
All the answer is a smile.

Each in turn, we passed before her,
Each, in turn, pronounced our name;
Looking round, and looking o'er us,
We, from her, no notice claim.

"Dink a watty now, ful Tottie,
Ea, mama, oh petty sing;
Walk ful Tottie, sing ful Tottie,
Hully, hully, more petty sing."

Did you wish to tell us, Tottie,
Of the wondrous things you've seen;
Was the glory so abundant,
That we could not pass between?

Did you see the Saviour, Tottie,
Waiting for your spirit, near;
When you cried, "papa, papa,"
Was it him you meant to hear?

When your earthly father answered,
 "Tottie, darling, I am here;"
 Did you see Christ Jesus standing,
 Waiting, smiling, beckoning there?

Was the music so entrancing,
 That you heard no other sound;
 Papa! papa! then raised your head,
 And you calmly looked around.

Sounded not like fear of dying,
 Sounded not like one in pain;
 Sounded more like spirit crying,
 Spirit Father, take me in.

Does our Tottie see the angels,
 Gathering round her in the room;
 Hears she, through soft rolling music,
 Jesus calling: "Tottie, come."

From a world of grief and care,
 Ere your soul is stained by sin;
 Come, my lamb, come to me,
 I will take away your pain.

Did you see Him, like your father,
 Stretch His arms of love to you;
 Was it that, that made you call Him,
 Did you hear Him calling too.

Blends the mortal with celestial,
 In that strange, mysterious way;
 This transferring the affections,
 Up to Heaven by the way.

While the child is crossing Jordan,
 While the shadows pass between;
 First on one and then the other,
 Does the child's affections gleam.

Oh! that mysterious thing called death,
 None can tell, though all must know;
 And a little child has faith,
 In a Father's helping through.

Softly there my suffering one,
 Lean thee back on Jesu's breast;
 Israel's Shepherd, bending o'er thee,
 Soon will give His promised rest.

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Nearly over Jordan, Tottie,
 Sounds as from the other side ;
 Like a far off distant echo,
 Thy last faint whisper died.

Looking round yet, Tottie tell us,
 What glad sight is it you see ;
 Could we now obtain your knowledge,—
 But on earth this cannot be.

Now 'tis over, thanks we give Thee,
 For this dear release from pain ;
 For the child which Thou didst lend us,
 That child Thou hast re-called again.

Thou didst say of little children,
 Suffer them to come to Me ;
 They who would Thy Kingdom enter,
 In some things must children be.

"That is very nice. Where did you get it, child?"

"Get it? Why, Burney, it is just the things they were talking about last night. I just thought it over this way, and then transmitted it on paper this morning."

"Who is it for, Gussie, child?"

"For no one, Burney, just for myself."

"Oh, Gussie, was the child very ill before it died?"

"Yes; only about an hour it did not feel or know any one, apparently."

"Oh, they gave me a note for you," and Gussie handed it to Burney."

"Why, child, it is for yourself."

Gussie took and read it. "Oh, Burney, I never thought but it was for you. I put it into my pocket without looking at it."

"Please accept this small sum, with my gratitude, for your service of song, which helped my pet as she crossed the cold river of death."

"Ten shillings, Burney; may I do what I like with it?"

"Certainly child, but what would you do with it? That is not enough to raise a gable roof on this shanty."

"No, Burney, I like the shanty well enough now, but I want to keep myself in paper, pens and ink."

"But it is a great waste, and what is the good, Gussie?"

"I know it, Burney, but it is a great pleasure to me, and I have something to do when you are out."

"Very well, Gussie, child; but, see, here is a bit you did not read."

"Oh," said Gussie, "that is a poem about a fly."

"A fly, why that is a small thing to waste paper on, but read it till I hear what could be said about a fly."

Gussie reads :

THE SNARE.

Once I heard a buzzing nigh,
Sounded like a silly fly ;
Searching round me I did spy
It in a spider's net.

When the fly the centre shook,
Spider saw it from its nook ;
Then he gave a knowing look,
And to action set.

Now with him a rope he brought,
T'was to mend the net it broke ;
His presence gave the fly a shock,
For well he knew his fate.

Spider then walked round and round,
Proved the fly was on his ground ;
None to help fly could be found,
Alas, it was too late.

Poor little fly, one foot was free,
But, alas, the spider he,
Soon fastened it as fast could be,
With his cruel rope.

That spider's heart was surely stone,
To think that he could look upon
The fly's distress, and hear it moan,
'Twas to the spider sport.

A short way off he stood at ease,
The fly's wings fluttering made a breeze ;
And that the spider seemed to please,
Though not a word he said.

He stood a while to whet his sting,
Then at the fly he made a spring,
And soon made fast that little wing,
Then stung him dead.

Now, gentle folk, we all may take,
And out of this a moral make ;
Nor need we good manners break :
Beware of gin.

"That is all very nice Gussie ; but really I would not care for a barn full of it. You will never make a penny by it, child. No, no, you must contrive something to make money by, for we will get no more from the old man, now, he is away ; at least, not likely."

"I will try to get more sewing, Burney."

"Yes, but, Gussie, child, since machines have got so common, there is little got for hand-sewing."

"Then, Burney, what will I do at all?"

"Some people have been speaking to me about your singing. They say you would be a great help in a church choir, or you might teach in a singing school, but you must take some lessons first from a singing master."

"But, Burney, where would I get money to pay for lessons? Would ten shillings do? Last night they were talking about a great many things. I wish I could hear it all again. One thing was: at what age does a child become accountable to God? Ben Lunt said he thought it was at seven years. But the minister said all owing to the light of conscience. Some much older. As a proof, we often hear of children of that age dying happy. But never hear of any in despair so young.

"Was that all they were talking about Gussie?"

"No the minister talked about death, too. He said death was for every one, and the grave was the house appointed for all. But hell, he said, was not prepared for man. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. But he said people that would not come to Heaven would be gathered up with the devil and his angels. There was no help for it. There was no middle state. Then he said he knew something that was really and truly prepared for man."

"What was it, Gussie, child, did he say?"

"It was the Kingdom of Heaven, Burney, and it is not prepared for angels, but for man. Is it not wonderful how these good ministers know so much?"

"Yes, child, they learn it the way you do your verse making."

"Oh! Burney don't talk so, please."

While Burney dozed on her chair, Gussie rose and went to the door.

"Oh! dear," she said, to herself, "how can I ever sing in public?"

Rover, thinking he was the party addressed, came towards her, wagging his tail.

"Lie down you dog, don't bother me, I am in the blues to-day, and so is Burney. Oh! dear, but it is hard to get money," she said, sadly. "Silver is a very useful thing, a precious thing, indeed. But to obtain that precious thing is just some Brass I need."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Mrs. Barton had not been keeping house for William more than a year, when her health began to fail. William could not shut his eyes to the fact that his house and large family were a charge too heavy for her. He would not trust his precious ones to hired house-keepers. So he found a helper for himself, and a step-mother for

his children in the person of Mrs. Langford. Some said "surely, surely she was a very unfit person for such a family." But, indeed, she proved a better step-mother than she had been a mother, and neither of them had cause to regret the step. Bessie, of course, came into the family with her mother. Previous to William's marriage, his brother James received a call to a distance, and as his wife's relatives were there, he accepted the call, and the time was near for his departure.

"Harriet," he said one day, "I wish you could come with us to our new home. Say, will you come?"

"Oh! James, I could never stand the travelling, and I do not like to go so far from mother, now when she is so poorly. I will just go home to her. Then we are so near William. They will be company for us," and so Aunt Hatt moved down to the house of her childhood. Previous to this, the Lunts had moved into their new house, leaving old Mrs. Barton in possession of Cosie Cott. No sooner were they settled than the old lady bethought her of Maggie. And as they sat at the breakfast table, the following conversation took place.

"Harriet, I am going this very day to see if I can't get Scotch Maggie to come and live with us. What do you think?"

"All right, mother, the room is empty; but, perhaps, she has got a place already, for I heard the boys say there were great changes going on in the old house, and, of course, she could not stay after Mrs. Langford left. Then, I don't suppose there was even bed or chair left that was not sold."

"Yes, Harriet, Maggie carried out her own feather bed and some other things, not much of course. I dare say the law would have allowed them that much at any rate. Poor Susie, what else can we call her now. She would not take a thing from the house, but the clothes on her back. She said it was all too little to pay the debt."

"That spoke well for her, mother. But, oh! dear, how they looked down upon us once, when they could drive a beautiful buggy and we ride in a hay cart, or walk."

"Harriet, we must not remember this against them. It is God who putteth down one and raiseth up another. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof belongeth to Him. And what have we that we have not received from Him. We should despair of none changing for the better, and we must acknowledge the improvement in Mrs. Langford, (Susie) has been sure, though slow. And we must not expect perfection all at once."

"Mother, there seems to be quite a change in White's family too."

"Yes, Harriet. Since Mand went down there the old man is not so passionate as he was. His poor wife is decidedly better than they ever dared to hope. And, just think, he has turned his bar-room into a grocery. We must all patronize him after this, so he may feel encouraged to go on from better to better."

"Good day, Maggie, I am glad to meet you. I was just on my way to see you. Have you got a room yet, or where are you stopping?"

"I canna say that I am stopping any place, but just where I happen to be at nicht. I am going up to seek for a room in the village up by."

"Maggie, sit here on this log, I have something to tell you and something to show you. Can't you guess?"

"Na, I'm na' hand at guessing."

"It is a sort of relic, Maggie, I found when turning over some things I had left in my house when Lunts came." Then putting her hand into her pocket she pulled out something and held it up before Maggie, saying, "Did you ever see this before?"

"Eh! na," said Maggie, "that was never finished, just go it ta me. I'll rip it past the brunt place and knit it over again."

"Maggie, that is just what I was going to ask, and in this Harriet joins me. Come live with us, and finish the stocking where you commenced it. There is a room waiting for you."

Poor Maggie looked bewildered. "Eh! na, I cudna' da that."

"Yes, Maggie, do come. You can go on with your business the same as ever. Come, you can just furnish the room for yourself."

"Very well," said Maggie, "I'll accept of your offer, but ye mun tak pay for it, ye canna live on the wind na mair than masel."

"Maggie Langford, only for your timely warning I would have no claim on Cosie Cott. Because I certainly meant to give it all up to my sons, and live and die with them. It is not likely I would suffer want. But, still here is Harriet. What would she have done? James away and William married again. Thanks to you, Maggie, we have a fireside of our own."

"Tut! tut!" said Maggie, "dinna say that. What have ye no a' din for me? What for am I no scrubbing here and washing there?"

"Well, Maggie, to settle it you pay me a dollar a month, and failing to pay will make no difference."

So Maggie walked home with her good friend, where they found Ben Lunt talking in a very cheery mode to Aunt Hatt.

"What about the petition," enquired Mrs. Barton, sitting down.

"The petition," he replied. "Oh! you signed it, did you not?"

"Yes, Ben Lunt, I signed it, and proud I was to see Mr. White's name at the very head of the list. I hope it won't all go for nothing."

"Did you present it to the new purchaser yet?"

"Yes I did, and informed him that I came as the representative of the village and settlers around, holding in my hand a petition, signed by nearly every man, woman and child, requesting that he would not rebuild the distillery. I also told him of accidents by drowning in the pond. He just gave a laugh, saying he would put a fence all around the pond. 'That,' said I, 'is all right; but, sir, you can't fence in the spirit of whiskey.' He gave another cunning laugh, and asked to see my petition; so I spread it out on the table before him. 'I suppose,' said he, 'you set great value on this; but I can show you a sheet that I value just as much as you do that, for you must allow that I have a right to build what I like on my own land.' Saying this, he opened out a stiff sheet of paper beside mine.

'There,' said he, 'the people have had something to drink, now they shall have something to eat. If you had called to see me first, Mr. Lunt, you would have saved yourself all the trouble.'

"Why, Ben," said the old lady, "what was it all?"

"A plan for an oatmeal and grist mill. I said it was reported all over that the distillery would be rebuilt. 'Ah,' he replied, laughing, 'old Madam Report is a great humbug.'"

And so all is well that ends well.



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