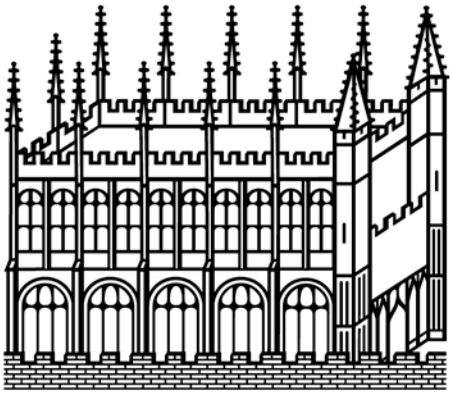


Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:

http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

AUNT HESTER

AND WHY WE LOVED HER

6000677980

"Lucy hid herself behind Jonas' old brown coat and he felt his manhood leap to the touch of the little fingers on his coat. '

p. 76.

AUNT HESTER,

AND

WHY WE LOVED HER.

A Story of Rosebrook.

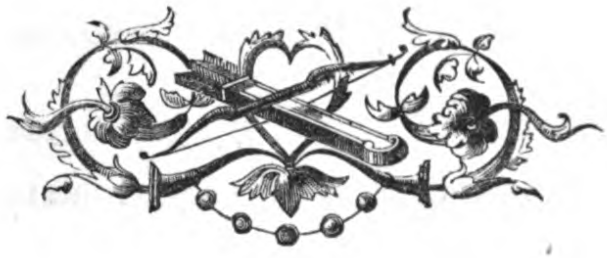
LONDON:
JOHN F. SHAW AND CO.
48 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1880.

251. g. 311.

CONTENTS.

I. Rosebrook and its Mistress 7
II. Unexpected News 19
III. The Arrival 34
IV. Doubts and Difficulties 47
V. Trouble at Rosebrook 57
VI. Aunt Hester's Confession 69
VII. Going to the Mill 85
VIII. Mr. Grisbey Calls 98
IX. A New Acquaintance 113
X. Going Down Hill 126
XI. The Boys' Revenge 136
XII. Frank's Sunday 149
XIII. The Discovery 161
XIV. A Sunday Walk 175
XV. Puzzled 190
XVI. Consulting Dr. Clark 200
XVII. The Prescription 215
XVIII. Jonas Triumphant 229

XIX. Going to School 241
XX. Public Opinion 251
XXI. The Thunder Shower 265
XXII. The Mill-dam 277
XXIII. Hester's Triumph 291
XXIV. Sick unto Death 303
XXV. Home at Rosebrook 317
XXVI. Conclusion 326



AUNT HESTER,

AND WHY WE LOVED HER.

I.

ROSEBROOK AND ITS MISTRESS.

ROSEBROOK was a farm in the small town of Allston. Hester Trueworthy owned and tilled it. There was only one small brook and a few young rose-bushes on the grounds, so its cognomen was not applicable, and therefore not agreeable to its owner.

When complimented on the choice of a name so full of pleasant associations, she used invariably to return a tart answer,—

"It's none of mine. My great-grandmother baptized it, and a silly, romantic chit she must have been. I'll none of it. When I buy and when I sell, I am honest I hope, and that's reputation enough, without having a sentiment tacked on to me. It's a nice old place, and I'm fond of it; I've lived here all my life, and I hope to die here. I mean to make it more and more valuable as the years go on. I'll plant no rose-bushes, or open any brooks, but the one in the ten-acre lot where my cows go to drink; that I'll keep clear and sweet, with a trough in it hewn out of a solid, hickory log. A marble basin, or perhaps a fountain, would be in keeping with Rosebrook; but hickory is good enough for me."

Rosebrook, however, it was, in spite of her, to all the neighborhood, and it had come, at the time when our story commences, to be a place of which Allston was

proud, and to which they used to drive visitors when they wanted to boast of the capacities of their town.

Hester Trueworthy's was not an uncommon story in the life of a New England woman. Parents who were hard-working, forehanded farmers, on an inherited farm. A mother, folding tired hands in middle life, leaving her husband and two half-grown children to miss and mourn her; a brother who would not walk in the footsteps of his ancestors, but sought the busy world, learning it at his cost, and, leaving in his turn a wife and two children, laid down to an untimely rest; a father whose disappointments and hard work had embittered his days, and who poured out the vials of his wrath unsparingly on the head of his daughter. Hard work for her too; loneliness, anxieties, the loss of all that made young life worth the living, and then years of close

attendance upon decreptitude and age,—repulsive age, that demanded all and gave in return not even the poor guerdon of a thank. When this was over, Hester Trueworthy found herself alone with Rosebrook. Her brother had been pensioned off years ago, so every thing belonged to her,—the old house, with its hundred years of wear and tear and neglect; the barns that were dropping over the heads of the well-cared-for cattle; fences that tottered and fell, as had their late master; old carts and wheels and logs and lumber and sleds and beetles and ploughs; farm machinery which the times had long since discarded, but which had been hoarded with touchy care; old horses, and dogs gray with age and stiff and cross with rheumatism; old furniture, legless, armless, paintless, useless—not one spot of modern brightness and cheer about all the old domain. Hester had gone to

work carefully in the changes she began at once to make. There was a little money in the bank; every cent was drawn out and put to immediate use. All Allston stared over the improvements which soon became visible, and said if that was the way Hester Trueworthy was going on, she would soon be through with the old farm, and it would come under the auctioneer's hammer.

Years, however, had come and gone, and Rosebrook was a changed place, but still hers. New fences around the grounds, new barns, new paint on the house, new and the latest improvements in farm tools, old animals pensioned off to die in comfort, new ones of the best stock taking their places; and no one asked for advice or help. Allston of the shrugged and cold shoulder, became Allston the approving, the courting even. Hester Trueworthy evidently understood what she was after. If she

kept on as she was doing now, not a place around would be more valuable. Certain widowers grew keenly alive to the capabilities of this sharp-witted, long-headed woman, and would gladly have availed themselves of her assistance in the management of their own families; but she thought otherwise. Several eligible bachelors inclined to change their condition and position, with her help, but she laughingly refused them. It became soon evident, that the maiden lady understood her own lot, and preferred to keep it. Thus fifteen years had passed by, and she was nearing sixty. So far she had been too busy to feel often lonely; beside, since her mother's death and her brother's leaving home, she had always been lonely; it had become second nature to her. There was the man, often man and boy, to be directed about their work; there was the stock, every one of which, in a way,

became her dear, almost personal, friend; there was Max, the Newfoundland dog, in whose strong, manly instincts she found companionship; and, almost above all occupations, was keeping her premises free from her neighbors' hens.

It is said there has been a greater amount of neighborly hatred generated by these innocent domestic animals, than by any other cause; be that as it may, it is certain nothing ever stirred Hester Trueworthy's ire to such a degree as to see a chanticleer come crowing up her neatly gravelled paths leading his favorite wives. No matter how absorbing her occupation, she would drop it, and insure their immediate flight. It was often so ludicrous that, after having summarily greeted them, it was not unusual for Hester, whose sense of the ludicrous was keen, to sit down and indulge in a hearty laugh at her own expense; but this foible,

like any other, grew with its indulgence, and, at the time our story commences, it being that of early gardening, had more to do with Miss Trueworthy's state of mind and routine of life than almost any other; indeed, without her being conscious of the power it was exerting, it turned her life's current into an unexpected channel.

One pleasant May night, as she was sitting on the wooden seat that ran at the side of the large portico before her front door, watching for any intruders upon her perfecting grounds, she saw Isaac Oberton —the man who, when he was coming her way, brought her mail—strolling along, looking carefully to the right and the left, anywhere but at the spot where she was sitting.

"Ike has a letter for me," she said to herself with a grim smile. "That's the way he always plays bopeep when he has."

Now a letter was a most unusual occur-

rence at Rosebrook. Miss Trueworthy was not given to correspondence, in truth had no one with whom to correspond. Her relatives were distant. Most of them hardly knowing of her existence with the exception of her brother's widow, and from or of her she had heard but twice since her brother's death. There had been but one interview ever between them, that was when the young bride was brought home soon after her marriage for a short visit to the farm; then Hester had pronounced her "a pale-faced chit," and had so withdrawn herself from any further intercourse with her that, on her brother's death, the grave seemed to have buried both husband and wife. It was with no small surprise then, that she made out from the post-mark, after a critical examination, Ike watching her carefully all the time, that the letter she held was from the town where Mrs. Trueworthy lived.

"What's up now?" she said testily, glancing over her spectacles at Ike. "This is from my brother's wife!"

"Like as not," was Ike's rejoinder; "but she holds a fist terribly like a man's, if it is."

"There's more pluck in it," went on Hester without breaking the seal, "than I thought the woman had; there's character here, and she has no more than a painted doll."

"Folks change," said Ike sententiously, "and she's most likely had to rouse up, since her husband died."

"Or else starve," answered Miss Trueworthy.

By this time the seal was open, the spectacles adjusted anew, a sweeping look given over the grounds, and then a momentary silence broken by a sharp—

"You don't say so! Isaac Oberton, the widow is dead!"

"Dead!" echoed Isaac, sitting down quickly upon the steps, as if the suddenness of the blow had felled him—"*dead!*"

"Yes, dead and buried; and there are no particulars here. It's from a strange man. Listen to what he says,—

"'MISS HESTER TRUEWORTHY:

"'*Madam*,—It is my painful duty to inform you of the death of your sister, Mrs. Rose Trueworthy, known to us by her new, legal name (formerly her maiden name) of Herbert. Mrs. Herbert has left two children, a girl and a boy, wholly without support. I therefore write to you, as nearest of kin, to ask what shall be done with your nephew and niece. I should perhaps add that Mrs. Herbert's death in the end was sudden, and that she had no time to form a plan for their independence. Perhaps it would be proper for me to state that I am not con-

nected with the late Mrs. Herbert, only as a neighbor who had learned to respect and value her, and as one who can not now see her children suffer.

"'The girl Lucy is about twelve; the boy Frank, about ten; both fine children, who will well repay any trouble or expense in their education.

"'Hoping to hear from you at once, as the circumstances are pressing,

"'Respectfully yours,

"'M. L. SANDERSON.'"

"M. L. Sanderson is a fool!" said Hester Trueworthy, slowly folding up the letter and thrusting it to the bottom of her capacious pocket. Then, without another word, she got up, slammed and fastened the door behind her, leaving Isaac Oberton sitting astonished, and not a little crestfallen, on the steps.

II.

UNEXPECTED NEWS.

NEVER was a royalty in greater turmoil than was that of Hester Trueworthy's, when she found herself in her sitting-room, rocking violently before an open window. If she could have locked and barred out the letter and its contents as summarily as she had Isaac Oberton, it would all have been over; but no one knew better than she that could never be.

To Miss Trueworthy's mind, there were circumstances which made this event peculiarly aggravating. That her sister-in-law should have been sick, and absolutely died

without giving her a sign, was a personal affront she could not readily forgive. That she should have left two children added to the crime; and that those children should have been wholly unprovided for, was heaping injury upon insult. "Frank and Lucy *Herbert!*" she kept repeating to herself, with an ominous emphasis upon the name Herbert. "So, her husband's name, and mine, was not good enough for her high and mighty ladyship. Let the Herberts take care of her children—I'll have none of them."

Then Miss Trueworthy felt consoled; put the open window down with a bang, lighted her lamp with an angry snap at its wick, as if that was to blame for the moral darkness that surrounded her, and sat down again in the same chair and same position. One thing was certain,—Miss Trueworthy had hitherto been queen in her own royalty, and if at

times some of her servants became unruly or unduly pressing in their claims, it was not a more difficult matter than it is with any of us to reduce them to obedience; but to-night the whole kingdom was in arms,—pride and prejudice, obstinacy and selfishness, an imperiousness that yielded with difficulty even to the sternest necessity, and a warm, kindly, genial, noble heart, with the first dim foreshadowings of a coming desolate old age creeping slowly over it. There would come, too, memories of the boy brother, whose children were now holding up their hands to her for their daily bread. Through the still rooms of that old farmhouse—that desolated old farmhouse—she heard the sound of a boy's happy voice, echoes of his nimble feet running through the silent hall; whistling and singing, small teasings in which his heart delighted, little cakes and pies which made him so glad, nuts and corn

they had cracked and popped together, songs they had sung, sleds they had ridden on, skates they had shared, fragrant hay over whose rounded cocks they had rolled side by side, the great blue sky almost seeming to touch and cover them as they played; memories, too, of faults committed, and hidden from their stern father: of the first great untruth, the consequences of which seemed to dog their steps for an immeasurable time, hers as well as his who had uttered it, of their final parting, and of the day when she knew that he had passed out from all her love and care forever. The cold hands of the poor dead brother clutched tight upon her heart, and would not let go their hold at her bidding. She saw the late May light fade away, and still she sat—her head leaning upon the palms of her hands, her elbows on her knees—without moving. She knew Jonas Holt had come in from his milking,

and was waiting for her in her spotless kitchen; but Jonas was of no consequence to-night.

At last she roused herself with something very like a shudder, and said, as if she were talking to that brother,—

"I'm like a two-year-old baby, Frankie; I'll just take it to my Father in heaven, and it shall be as He decides."

Jonas saw his mistress coming at last, but she walked more like a person in her sleep than like the firm-stepped Miss Trueworthy; he moved out of her way, and watched her with a kind of awe as she went silently about her usual task. Generally she had a pleasant or a sharp word for him as his work had or had not prospered; but now she passed him by as she did the old kitchen table.

"She's seen a ghost," said Jonas to himself, and he was not wrong.

When Hester Trueworthy entered her closet, she literally shut her door, and her prayers were in secret. This had been the habit of hers, as it is of so many other introspective lives, and if the Lord did not always reward her openly, it shook no jot or tittle of her perfect faith in His promises.

"It's not for me to suppose," she often thought, "that I know what is better for me than my Lord does. I know what I want; what I *need*, He; and on the whole, I'm glad."

This simple declaration was Hester's confession of faith. And who can claim to have one embodying more of true, vital religion? "Not my will, but Thine," it reads in the sublime simplicity of Bible words.

Hester walked about as in a dream until all the little night tasks were done, then going to her room prayed—prayed as she had never done before, for she did not hide

from herself one shade of all the consequences her decision involved.

Early the next morning, almost in the pale gray of its dawn, she is sitting by her window writing a letter. Her hand, all unused to the work of a scribe, moves stiffly at its task; but there is no faltering until the letter is done. Then she opens a quaint old writing-desk, and takes out a bill, smooths it gently with her firm fingers, encloses it, folds and directs the envelope to MR. M. L. SANDERSON, and the deed is done. Jonas is hurried to the office with the letter, and soon the gentleman addressed reads the following,—

"MR. SANDERSON:

"*Sir*,—Yours was duly received. Forward the children. Find enclosed a bank-bill of twenty dollars to meet the expense.

"Respectfully yours,

"HESTER TRUEWORTHY."

It may be imagined by those who do not know Miss Trueworthy, that after this laconic epistle had gone, she indulged in some qualms and many forebodings; but such was far from the case. Her hand once on the plough, she would as soon have thought of sending Jonas away from the culture of the four-acre lot, after he had run half a dozen furrows, as of going back herself—no matter what the undertaking. The children were to come to her.

There was an almost ludicrous pathos in the way she began at once her preparations. Living for so many long years alone—alone it might almost be said while her father was with her—she had spread herself over the whole house. She seldom had a guest, even to a meal, and calling was unknown in Allston, unless in cases of sickness, death, or irrepressible gossip. Jonas passed his life in the kitchen, in the little bedroom over

the loft, on the farm, and in the village grocery. He seldom spoke to Miss Trueworthy except on business, and she still more seldom had any words to waste on him.

What was to come out of the immediate future, who could tell? Was she to take a step back into that far-off past, when her brother and herself were children together? She threw open the blinds of the first Frank's chamber, and let the sun stream in once more over the room. There was no dust on the well-worn furniture, nor on the boy's rough toys, which she had garnered here; the old yellow sled leaned against the wall, with a pair of small skates and some well-worn blue-and-white mittens hanging over it; a broken bow and arrow was balanced nicely over the three-cornered looking-glass; a few battered books were ranged on a little shelf which was hung by an old whip-cord from the side of the wall; and

just inside the closet door stood a pair of boots, patched and worn, but with the lasting impress of the boy's feet they had covered. At first she began to gather these things one by one; they must be packed away in order to be preserved; but a sudden thought stopped her—"No, let them be for his son, he will love them for the dead father's sake;" so she only aired and sunned the room, made the bed with linen as white as snow, and put a Bible on the one-leafed table.

There was more hesitation as to what to do with Lucy. In the great, square, four rooms to a story of the farmhouse, there were many apartments to spare; but a certain feeling of the fitness of things made unusual disturbance in Hetty Trueworthy's mind. She could not put the young girl in the room where, it seemed to her, her old father had just died; she could not give up

her own, though that had belonged to the ghost of a maiden vanished long ago; and about the guest-chamber there lingered that wonderful sanctity which is a part of the domestic economy of every New England family. But with a commendable disregard of custom, the choicest room was handed over, for the unknown guest.

It was a pleasant view that the eastern window opened upon, when Hester threw it up this morning,—on the distant horizon lay the Monadnock, still and blue, between it and the farm Allston sent up its two church spires, and with its tree-bordered streets and its neat rows of white and tinted houses, gave life and sociality to the scene; but it was the near view upon which Miss Trueworthy's eye rested with the greatest pleasure: for there, spread out right before the window, lay the rich lands of her own farm. She took in rapidly every pecu-

liar feature of the scene,—the trim fences; the pastures greening in the warm May sun; the rich, brown earth Jonas was turning in such straight furrows from under his plough; the cattle already out to browse; the sleek horses making a pleasure of their toil; the fruit trees with their pink buds bursting from the brown covering;—and all was hers! Hester Trueworthy would not have been the true woman she was, if there did not come to her to-day a new sense with this of ownership. She was not given to any melancholy forebodings of death, there was hardly a failing to remind her that "the old must die"; but she knew it, and she knew, too, that on her death this home would pass into the hands of strangers. She had never intended to disinherit her brother's children should they be living when the farm was to be disposed of; but in all the wide world there could hardly be found two per-

sons upon whom she had bestowed less thought or affection. To-day, as has been said, there was a new feeling in her heart as she looked out over the farm. There sprang up a sudden hope that the boy might return to the ways of his forefathers, and the old place once more be glad in the reign of a rightful lord. The girl, too,—might she not fill her place, when the sceptre dropt from her hand? Who could tell!"

Such adornments as she had valued in her young days, Hester stripped ruthlessly from her own room, and brought into this prim chamber. There was the sampler, with its tombstone and the shrouded mourners leaning upon it, the only fancy work her busy hands had ever wrought. There was the little picture of the shepherd and the shepherdess standing side by side near the most meandering of brooks, running toward a village embowered in trees in the background,

and a flock of very innocent-looking sheep standing obligingly just within reach of the two crooks; this was the only work of art in this venerable farmhouse, and if not entirely pre-Raphaelite, certainly it was on the border land. The place where these two frames had hung, looked desolate to the eyes of Hester Trueworthy until every thing faded away.

Only one other ornament could by any means be spared from the rest of the house; that was a china dog with a hole in the back of his head, where, in summer, when her little "bed of posies" was full to overflowing, Hester used to put a few flowers.

These arrangements made, Miss Trueworthy settled herself down to her usual work. She was sorry she had not asked Mr. Sanderson to let her know what day and hour her nephew and niece would come to Allston, that she might send Jonas over with the

wagon to the stage-office for their luggage; but as she had not, she was too sensible to trouble about it. So it came to pass, that a week went by, without her either seeing or hearing any thing further from her expected guests.

III.

THE ARRIVAL.

SITTING in the portico at about the same hour in which she had received her letter,—for Miss Trueworthy was very methodical in all her little habits,—thinking of the children and their possible coming, she was startled by seeing a boy and girl walking over the hill that led across the fields to her house.

"How in the world did they come there," she said to herself a little petulantly; "there isn't a child in Allston but would know better than to be treading over one of my planted fields. It's a good beginning!"

Seen at a distance, the children seemed to be about the same height. They were hand in hand, and at length caught sight of her; the boy took off his cap and swung it jauntily over his head.

At the gate which entered the lane leading to her back yard, the children stopped; evidently they neither of them understood how to open it.

"Climb over it, you little geese," said Hester, speaking aloud to herself. "Why I could do it, and I am turned of fifty! Great boy that, don't know how to climb a gate;" but by this time the boy had climbed it, and seemed to be urging his sister to do the same. Once or twice she attempted it, but fell back, evidently hurting herself, for she sat down upon the ground and made no further exertion.

"Geese!" said Hester Trueworthy emphatically as she seized her cape bonnet of

brown gingham from behind the door, and strode down the lane to meet them.

Now Hester in this old cape bonnet was not a very enchanting looking woman! She was tall, and large, with long arms that swung as she walked, almost like the pendulum of a clock; her dress was a dark calico, with nothing to relieve it but the briefest of linen collars and a small breast-pin; it was short too, showing large, but shapely feet, and stout, firm-stepping ankles. Any one would have naturally moved out of her way, allowing her by far the larger half of the road.

Within the great cape bonnet, there appeared a face that, if it had lived a life into which a few smiles had come, might have been pleasant; but as it was, two rather unnaturally large eyes seemed larger, for the setting of a bronzed and yet ruddy complexion, two high cheek bones, a large Roman

nose, and lips with a perfect arch and a half smile. The want of pluck which the action of the children seemed to show, had not clothed her face in its pleasantest aspect, as she hurried towards them; so, when they looked up and saw her, it was no wonder the boy climbed over the gate faster than he had before, and placed himself close by his sister as if to protect her.

"So, so!" said the woman, as she reached them, with an eager questioning look, that belied her words, "you don't know how to open a gate it seems, or to climb it either. Why in the name of common sense didn't you come round the road, and not go trampling down my oat field?"

The girl had risen, and come close up to the gate, while she was speaking, and now, without answering, she looked her straight in the face and asked,—

"Are you our Aunt Hester?"

"I am. And you are Lucy and Frank Trueworthy?" said the newly-made aunt, in a pleasanter tone.

"Lucy and Frank Herbert," answered the girl, while the boy began to climb the gate again.

"You're welcome. But see here, young man," catching Frank by the collar, and unceremoniously tumbling him back again, "that way will do for a boy. But don't you see this girl don't know any thing about it? Did you never see a gate opened before?" and with a pull, and a jerk, two fastenings were taken out, and the girl timidly came through.

She lifted up her face to the forbidding one within the cape bonnet; evidently expecting to be kissed; but Aunt Hester had not kissed any one since she put her lips, the last seal of her warm love, upon her mother's cold forehead, and it simply did not

occur to her now. She would have kissed the child a hundred times, rather than have chilled her little heart as she did; but she only gazed at her with a sharp, penetrating look, beneath which Lucy's eyes fell, and a bright color spread over her cheeks.

"You look like your mother," she said, not unkindly, "and he"—nodding toward Frank, who was tugging away at the gate, to shut it—"he looks like his father. You're both welcome to Rosebrook!"

This she said with a distant, curtly kindness, very chilling to the children. It was a part of the twilight through which they were walking to their new home, and childhood loves sunshine and brightness.

"Now tell me," she said more genially, as the gate was shut, "when you came; and how you came across lots, instead of around the road; where your luggage is, and all about it."

Lucy was the one to speak,—

"We left Denton this morning at six. We came here an hour ago, and they told us the nearest way to Rosebrook was across the fields, so we—we didn't know it was oats!—I am very sorry!"

It would have taken a harder heart than Aunt Hester's, as God, and not events, had made it, to withstand the sweet face that was upturned with its innocent pleading toward her. Lucy had full gray eyes, that were melting now into a half conscious wish for forgiveness. Aunt Hester saw nothing else, and she answered almost pleasantly,—

"It was a half mile shorter; and for once the oats don't matter."

"No, ma'am; and we're sorry, if you please."

"Say no more about it," she said with a good deal of asperity. "This is the old homestead," looking down on the children

as she led the way directly into the back door, "and this is the door you may as well use; it saves litter."

Frank stopped upon the back steps to pat the head of the dog Max. Max got up from the bit of old mat upon which he was lying, smelt cautiously and carefully all over this new friend, looked at him curiously out of his big brown eyes, and ended by putting his forepaws upon Frank's shoulders and licking his face.

"I never saw him do the like of that before," said Aunt Hester, stopping in her work of setting the table to look out at these two. "He seems to know, little boy, that you belong to the family. No tricks on him, now; if you hurt him, you'll get a return you will not soon forget; better never try it."

Frank, busy and delighted with this new, large playmate, hardly seemed to hear what was said to him, and before supper was

ready, the two were rolling over on the grass plot before the door, in most amiable companionship; Frank forgetful of the hunger with which he had nearly cried an hour before.

Such a bountiful tea as it was! The children had never seen its like; and they did it ample justice, Aunt Hester standing by in a kind of mute wonder, having very much the feeling with which she would have watched the first meal made by a new animal she had bought, wishing to discover by its heartiness its general health.

Her conclusions to-night with regard to the children must have been most satisfactory. "They eat as if they were as hungry as bears," she said to herself. "I don't believe they have ever had enough before, since they were born."

It was quite dark when the meal was ended. Frank betook himself in the little re-

maining light, to a play with Max, who, too well trained to venture to put even a paw upon the spotless kitchen floor, had stood with his nose inside the door, waiting for his new friend.

When every thing was neatly put away, Aunt Hester turned to Lucy, with,—

"Jonas Holt's gone to market. He won't be home until late, so I can't send for your things until to-morrow. Can you make a shift to get along."

"Make a shift," repeated Lucy, helplessly.

"Yes. Can you manage to sleep in one of my night-dresses? They won't be so small as to pinch you," with a smile on the sweet mouth that drew the child at once to her.

"If you please, ma'am."

"Then you shall go to bed. Call Frank; we will make one job of it. You are both tired enough."

Frank came unwillingly. He was having

a nice time with the dog, and he was getting so old he thought he should choose his own hours; besides he had a dim idea of asserting his rights from the beginning, and so being the man of the house. Aunt Hester would have smiled grimly, if she could have looked down into the depths of his young mind, and not very approvingly.

However, to bed the children were sent to-night, Frank not even being allowed a glimpse of the many rich treasures with which it seemed to him his room was full.

"Say your prayers, now, Frank Trueworthy," said Aunt Hester, as she marched straight into his room, as soon as she thought he had time sufficient for undressing, "and say them right; don't skip. You'll want the Lord to bless you in this new life you're beginning with me, if you ever do. See to it now; no shirking. Good-night to you."

Poor Frank! his mother had always kissed

him, and had sat with her hand put softly on his head, while he prayed; then tucked him up so tenderly, and looked back at him with a smile as she closed the door. Aunt Hester would not willingly have done an unkindness any more than this mother; but she took up the candle with a little jerk, and without turning her head walked away like a brave soldier heavily encased in a steel armor.

Frank shook his fist at her mentally as he curled down in his fresh sweet bed. "If she had been a brick, she would have brought up Max and let him sleep with his new master," he thought. Evidently, she was not.

Lucy, attired in a plain, long nightgown of her aunt's, which trailed around her over the floor, made such a droll but such a pretty little picture, Aunt Hester had a half feeling of admiration as she looked at her.

"What a little dolly you are," she said

pleasantly, almost patting the round, fresh cheek near her.

"Please let me kiss you good-night. I shall sleep so much better if I do," said this dolly, with a maturity a little startling; "I always kissed my mother!"

Aunt Hester bent to give her the kiss, and as she did so, the depths—the long silent depths—of her heart seemed quickened into life. What could it mean?

"Say your prayers little one," she said gently; "and good-night to you."

IV.

DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

ALL the sleep there was that night at Rosebrook was in the children's rooms; even the profound slumber of Jonas Holt was broken by dreams, and wakings, most unusual to him. He had been ordered to go for the children's luggage with the first peep of day, and a charge regardless of the early meal given to the precious stock, presaged a dire change, over the possibilities of which Jonas's dull brain pondered, troubled. As for Hester Trueworthy, never in her whole life had she been so perplexed. She

had considered herself as having settled the most important question when she consented to receive the children; but they had hardly been with her two hours before she found that was only the first in a long and intricate series. Touching matters of duty, she was, if such a thing is possible, unduly sensitive. So far in her life she had tried to do what she thought was right;—that is what many people do;—but she had tried to do so at the cost of great self-sacrifices, and in a noble, uncomplaining way that neither asked nor attracted attention. She made little Christian profession, but she carried with her, even into the minor details of her life, an abiding sense of her responsibility: as one whom God had made and Christ had died for. She had a nature that needed battling with often; sometimes only a little light skirmishing, oftener a regular pitched battle, in which it was no uncom-

mon thing for her to come off worsted, perhaps vanquished; but one thing—let the result be what it might—she made a special object of her care, that was, to keep her will a power. Just what I mean by this, my story must show.

It is not to be supposed that, with such a character, the advent of two orphan children into her family to be for the future her sole care, could be otherwise than a great event.

"It's as I begin with them," she said over and over to herself; "and I know no more what to do, than a babe unborn." It was no wonder that for almost the first time in her life she counted every hour of the night and saw the early morning dawn.

Jonas Holt did not wake at the appointed time,—considering his unusual night, how could it have been expected of him?—and the first consciousness he had of his delin-

quency, came from hearing his name called by a sharp voice at the foot of the back stairs,—

"Jonas Holt! You, Jonas Holt! Are you going to sleep till noon? Time you had been to Allston, and back, an hour ago!"

"Marm!" said Jonas, in so frightened a voice Hester Trueworthy could not forbear a grim smile.

"Yes; and there you are! Who's to do the chores this morning, I should like to know? I suppose I am!" but there came no answer, only the sound of scurrying feet; so Miss Trueworthy retreated to the kitchen, to wait Jonas's appearance.

It was a very sheepish-looking man that crept down the back stairs and out the door, without turning his head to the right or the left.

"Is the whole world to be turned topsy-turvy on account of these children!" said

Aunt Hetty peevishly. "I never knew Jonas Holt oversleep himself before."

Immediately there followed another sound upon the stairs, and in came Frank. It was almost like the coming in of that other Frank so many long years ago. The same big brown eye, with the half-defiant, half-merry expression, the weakness of the mouth, the slight retreat of the chin, the broad, bold forehead as if the upper part of the head defied the lower and was ashamed of it, the same winning smile, and the same straightforwardness to bring about a desired end.

"Aunt Hester," the boy said, holding his cap in his hand, "your man is going to ride; I saw him harnessing from my window. I am going with him; but I shall be back in time for breakfast."

Aunt Hester looked at him for a moment in mute surprise. *Which* Frank was it? For a moment the wish to let him go, and then

hide his absence from their father, came over her, as it used to in old times; but the boy's rapid strides toward the door gave her little chance for thought, and it was a very peremptory,

"No; Jonas has no time for fooling," that arrested the boy's steps.

"Can't I go?" he asked half-hesitating. "There he is—see, and Max too;" then, without waiting for another word, he threw open the door violently, flung up his cap as a signal for Jonas to stop, clambered into the wagon, and Hester Trueworthy could hardly believe her eyes, as she saw the two go smilingly past the window, before which she stood, on their way to Allston.

"Well!" she said to herself, "well!" and nothing more. This was a sudden calling into play of her authority, and she saw quickly that much depended upon the way in which she met it. Should she punish him

for such an act of utter disobedience? If so, how? Should she pass it by, explaining to him that for the future she should expect and must have her word law. Her father had done both with the lost brother, and how miserably he had failed. Aunt Hester forgot to make any preparations for her breakfast, in her perplexity; surely never was maiden aunt in such a predicament before.

"Good-morning, Aunt Hester." It was a sweet voice that said this, and before Miss Trueworthy could look around to answer, two little arms were thrown about her neck, and some velvet lips were kissing hers.

"Good-morning, little one," said Aunt Hester, trying her best to drive the perplexity out of her face by a smile. "I hope you have slept well."

"Like a top," answered the child, still with her arms tightening round the brave

old neck. "Frankie has been up and off, no one knows how long; he is the greatest boy for waking ever was known."

"Did he go to ride when your mother told him not to?" asked Aunt Hester, almost involuntarily.

"He didn't always mind her," said Lucy hanging her head. "Has he gone now?"

"Yes," said Aunt Hester, with a brevity that made Lucy start.

"Where has he gone to?"

Miss Trueworthy explained, but was not relieved when she saw Lucy run to her room, return quickly with her hat, and, without another word, open the front door and go out.

"I shall bring this to an end," she said, shaking her head with much determination. "It shall be a plain talk from beginning to end, and it is behave, or budge, as you please. Don't talk to me about responsibili-

ties; no sane persons will undertake to do what they can't! If they do, the bigger fools—that's all I have to say."

In spite of her philosophical conclusions, Aunt Hester never had cooked a breakfast in so much trepidation before. The necessity of immediate action was not to be overlooked; the only hope was, circumstances, or more, the quiet prayers for help she was constantly breathing, would bring her direction.

It was but a short time before she heard merry laughing and loud talking coming toward the house.

"There is no consciousness of wrong; it's their way!" she said hastily. "What an old fool I am making of myself!" and then the wagon stopped before the door, and out jumped the children, rosy and happy; Frank having in his hand a large bunch of pussy willows, which she heard him say he had brought for her.

Jonas cast rather a frightened look up to the window, from which his mistress generally watched his arrival; but the children marched straight in, up to the troubled Aunt Hester, bearing before them their olive branch of pretty early catkins.

V.

TROUBLE AT ROSEBROOK.

"FOR you, Aunt Hester. Ain't they beautiful? We don't have pussy willows. I think Allston is the nicest place in the world; and Jim—why Jim is the biggest horse there is out! Jonas says he would trot 'two-forty' any time, if you would only have him trained."

While he had been talking thus, Frank had been trying to thrust his bunch of pussy willows into Hester Trueworthy's unwilling hand. She could not push them rudely away,—there was not a rudeness in her

whole being,—she could not, offended and disobeyed as she had been, take them, so she only half opened her tight-shut hand and they dropped upon the floor.

"Pick them up, and put them in the blue pitcher," she said to Lucy. Scant thanks, but the words were not ungraciously spoken. Then, this done, and the pitcher placed in the middle of their bounteous table, they sat down to their waiting breakfast. The morning was one of those lovely foretastes of coming June, when the sky is its bluest, the air its sweetest with opening bud and blossom and bird-song, and through open door and window you are catching your first glimpses of the short New England summer.

Now the large door that opened from the dining-room directly upon the square back porch stood wide open, and through it, in his usual waiting position, was to be seen Max's black muzzle, the top of his shaggy

head, and his two bright eyes. As soon as Frank caught sight of him, he whistled, and held out a tempting bit of well-buttered johnny-cake. The dog licked his chops, and put his two front feet on the threshold of the door.

"Go back, Max!" said Aunt Hester, sternly.

The dog blinked furiously, but took his paws down at once. Then, unseen by Aunt Hester, Frank continued, with johnny-cake, nod, and smile, to tempt him in. The temptation was too strong for Max, whose heart was already given to his new master; so, after a little passage at arms between them, he came softly up the steps, and, cunningly choosing the side of the wall furthest from his mistress, he crept, with a ludicrous attempt at stealthiness for so bulky a dog, toward the cake in the small, brown hand. He had nearly reached it, when Hester caught sight of him, and, without a word

or a moment's hesitation, she rose from her chair, crossed the room, and took down from a nail on the wall a long, stout, leathern thong. Then she came swiftly to the spot where the dog, his eye fixed steadily upon her, had crouched and began to whine; the whip was uplifted, but before it had time to descend, Frank had slipped from his chair, thrown his arms around the dog's neck, and down came the blow upon his hand. Without uttering a cry, or moving, he looked with a dumb rage, as did the animal, up into her face, waiting for the second; but it did not fall. Aunt Hester had sunk into a chair near by, and only uttered a groan. She saw the flesh on the small hand, still firmly holding to the dog's neck, rise into a long, reddish-black welt, the size of the thong; she saw tears come into the boy's eyes, wrung out of him by the pain he was suffering, and saw him wink them resolutely and manfully

away; she saw his lips set firmly, and his knees tremble as he knelt, but no sign of renouncing his championship. What was to be done? The whip was a relic of olden times, left of stern men's rule long years ago; excepting to dust it, it had not for years before been taken down from its nail; but never before since she was mistress had Hester Trueworthy been so openly and rudely disobeyed. It must be remembered in her excuse, how exasperated and confused she was; it was clear to her moral sense that a wrong had been done, which, for the future good of all concerned, it would not do to be bought off from by the smiling faces of two children and a bunch of pussy willows. She had not given herself time to reason on Max's small share in the worries; but upon him, as upon one peculiarly her own, her instinct was to visit the retribution.

In the ominous stillness which followed

the blow, Max's loud vindictive breathing was the only sound heard. Had Miss Trueworthy been the least of a coward, she would have been terrified by the wrath which every feature of the huge dog showed; perhaps the danger did come to her dimly, for she said at last, in a voice so subdued she hardly knew it for her own,—

"Take the dog out, Frank!"

Frank rose slowly from his knees, still keeping the bruised hand tight upon Max's collar, and making with the other a defensive motion toward her, which cut Aunt Hester to the soul, he led Max, growling like distant thunder, and eyes literally blazing, out of the open door. Then Frank closed the door behind him, and Aunt Hetty seated herself once more at the breakfast table. She did not even make a pretence of eating for some moments, and when she reached over to help herself to food, for the first time she looked

at Lucy. The child had put her head down upon the table, and was crying silently.

"Eat your breakfast, little one," said Aunt Hester kindly; but Lucy did not move, or answer.

"Lucy," said Aunt Hester, with an appeal that was touching and reached the sensitive child, "what *is* to be done? You children *must* mind me if you are to live with me."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Lucy, choking.

"I didn't mean to hurt Frank,"—here Lucy began in a most unrestrained way to cry aloud,—"but he must mind me, and not make even my dog disobedient."

"Yes, ma'am," said Lucy again.

"Go and see where Frank is, and bring him back to his breakfast."

Lucy quickly obeyed, but after waiting some time for the children's return, finding they did not come, Miss Trueworthy went to see where they were. They were not

in the yards, they were not in the barns; she called, and there was no answer. Jonas Holt stood with back toward her, and made no sign.

"Jonas," she said at length, with a shamefacedness she could not control, "do you know where the children are?"

Jonas pretended not to hear her, but her next question was in a tone which made the startled man turn quickly toward her.

"Has the whole world gone mad this morning, Jonas Holt?"

"Sure, and how do I know?" muttered Jonas.

"I asked you if you knew where the children were. Can you answer or not?"

"In course I can." But not another word spoke Jonas.

After waiting a moment in her utter astonishment, his mistress said, "Well, then, will you please to do so?"

"They went off yonder," pointing toward the road leading to Allston; "the boy first, and the gal after him, and Max a-following. It's my opinion he's gone to find a doctor, to have his hand dressed," with which parting thrust Jonas turned his back on Hester Trueworthy once more, and went on with his work.

Poor Aunt Hester! Every moment seemed to deepen and broaden her perplexity. What was to be done, with Jonas taking sides against her, with the boy gone, bearing the marks of her severity upon his hand—absolutely gone—to Allston to have the wound dressed. Oh, what a dreadful, dreadful disgrace!

"Hurry after those foolish children, and bring them back," she said peremptorily to Jonas. If she had left out the word "foolish," Jonas would have gone much more readily; but he had never struck even a

contrary animal without receiving a severe reproof, and that now she, Miss Hester Trueworthy—kind, good Miss Trueworthy—should have struck that "pretty little fellow" who had already laid siege to Jonas's kindly heart, was strange beyond explanation. Jonas as yet knew none of the circumstances; he had only seen the boy's flushed face and bruised hand, and had heard him say through his shut teeth,—

"I'll go back to where I came from. She's a fiend! Come, Max!"

Now, however, his mistress stood looking at him with such a firm purpose in her face, he had nothing to do but to obey. He put up the work he was doing in a most leisurely way, and, still muttering, went swinging off the road the children had taken—Frank and Max first, and Lucy in great haste following.

"How like a snail he does go!" said Miss

Trueworthy, watching him impatiently. "I could go to Allston and back before he will get to Reuben Towles's barn. I'd better start." So, in a short time, the whole family at Rosebrook were out of the house, following one after the other, on the pleasant country road.

It mattered very little that the morning grew brighter, sunnier, fresher, and sweeter, as the hours passed rapidly; not one of the four heard a bird sing, saw one of the myriads of pretty flowers which grew all along the wayside, or paused even to answer back the lowing of the numerous cattle that knew and called to them as they passed.

Frank, still hot with anger and excitement, was only anxious to reach the depot, and take the cars, before his purpose could be known and arrested. He had a little money in his pocket; he would ride as far as that would carry him, and walk the rest.

Lucy, crying bitterly, but coming after him with all the speed she could, without any purpose but to join and comfort him.

Jonas Holt, taking long strides, forward, but very infirm of purpose—should he help the children off, or bring them back, he could not tell.

Miss Trueworthy, her heart and mind tossed about with shame and sorrow and anxiety, conscious that she was hardly to blame, yet foreseeing that upon her, and her wholly, must descend all the consequences of this sorrowful mischance.

What a troubled procession they made!

VI.

AUNT HESTER'S CONFESSION.

FRANK'S steps were arrested by an unexpected obstacle. He was just coming in sight of the depot, when Max, who had shared so deeply in the general disturbance, becoming thereby heated and thirsty, spied through an opening in the trees the glimmer of water, and without a moment's hesitation made direct for it. Frank, astonished and perplexed by this unexpected desertion, plunged into the woods after him, trying his best to keep closely on the dog's trail, and thus he lost the direct road, very

little clew being left by which to return to it.

Max's path led through close underbrush, over broken logs, up and down uneven rocks and broken earth, until Frank, who could not see the water, threw himself on the ground, and began first by whistling, then by entreaty, and finally by command, to try to call Max back to him. Once the dog did stop, put his long ears down, and wagged his tail in a most pleading manner, running out his long, fiery-red tongue, as if to explain as well as he could what he must have; but dog language was one of which the boy understood little, so he found himself abandoned in the midst of a deep woods, not knowing either how to return or to go on.

Lucy, coming to the spot on the road where the small footsteps she had been following so closely ceased, did not miss them

for a short distance, and when she did, her own footprints, treading as they had over Frank's, left her no chance of finding them. She walked forward nearly a quarter of a mile, and then came back to meet Jonas Holt.

Jonas had a decided advantage over the children,—he knew every inch of the road: where to look ahead for a glimpse of them if they were on the way to the station; where to hurry down a slope, and where to walk slowly up one; besides, one of his long strides could cover a half dozen of their short steps; so he made no hurry, sure of overtaking them quite as soon as he knew what it was best to do.

"I hope now that little fellar hain't been and done it," he said to himself, with a troubled wag of his head. "'Cause she," jerking his elbow back, "will walk into me, if he has."

By *it*, Jonas may have been supposed to mean, taken the cars; for the next moment he accosted Lucy with,—

"I say naouw, where's he up and gone to?"

"I don't know," said Lucy, beginning to cry.

"Don't you cry, for pity's sake," said Jonas. "It's tomfoolery enough for one on you to be sarving Giffy in this 'ere way. What do you suppose, naouw, that aunt of your'n thinks, having you a-running away in this style, when you might e'eny 'most be said not to have come yet."

"I—I—don't know," sobbed Lucy, wholly broken down by the half scolding Jonas felt called upon to deliver. "I've lost him."

"Lost him, have you? That's cur'ous. I didn't know as you had found him yet."

"I've lost his boot-marks," explained Lucy, trying her best to stop her sobs.

"Boot-marks, eh! Wull now, he don't wear cowhides, does he?"

"Cowhides!" repeated Lucy, with a dim thought of the whip made of leather in her aunt's hand.

"Yes, cowhides; like these of mine," putting out a huge boot, red from neglect and brown in streaks from mud.

"No—no—o," said Lucy; "like mine," placing a dainty little buttoned boot beside his. Jonas laughed a loud, hearty laugh as he saw the contrast, which somehow made Lucy happier; she almost smiled too, so he said,—

"That's right, chirk up about it naouw. If he had on cowhides, there would be some sense in following them; but, la! sich little bits of critturs as them, you might as well go after an humming-bird's tail, it would make as deep a print. So you've lost um, have you? And where'bouts did that happen?"

"I don't know."

"That's wus yet; but we'll go back a bit. If he hasn't been along the road, it don't strike me as very likely we shall kitch up to him, does it?"

"No," said Lucy, answering the broad grin on his face with a real smile.

"Then, the next thing is to call him," went on Jonas, shouting Frank's name in a voice almost loud enough to be heard at Rosebrook. Miss Trueworthy, hurrying along after them, heard it, stopped, and drew her own conclusions.

"They have lost his track," she said to herself. "Where can the boy have gone?" The idea of a child's being lost in any New England town was simply an absurdity; but thoughts of the big, old woods that made so large a part of Neighbor Foster's farm with the pond in its centre, the bottom of which no line had ever yet been long enough

to fathom came to her. "Boys always took to the water as naturally as ducks!" Foster's pond had been the terror of her life, when her own brother had been of this Frank's age. Why not suppose it had the same attraction for him, and the morning was so tempting for a bath!

Lucy and Jonas were standing in the centre of the road, talking over what to do next, when they saw her tall form come sweeping over the top of Blend's Hill.

"High and mighty!" said Jonas. "There she comes, a-tearing along like all possessed! Now we must start our stumps, and the quicker the better," so he hurried down the road, half dragging Lucy after him.

A great sense of protection came to the young girl when she found her hand held tightly in the rough hand of this strong man. Any body, any thing, but that dread-

ful aunt who was coming down like a whirlwind straight upon them.

They had gone but a few steps before they heard, "Jonas Holt! Jonas Holt!" called in a voice there was no mistaking. Jonas stopped as suddenly as he had started, and wheeled around with instant military precision. Let come what might, it was better to face the advancing foe.

Lucy hid herself behind Jonas's old brown coat. Never had he been made a protector to any thing but an injured animal before. Jonas felt his manhood leap to the touch of the little fingers on his coat, as Aunt Hester had her motherhood, only one short (but oh, how long!) night before. He would see no harm come to this one—no, not even if he and Miss Trueworthy parted company from that hour and forever. Quite a hero this Jonas Holt; consciously so for the first time in his life.

Aunt Hester was soon within talking distance,—

"Have you found him?" she asked eagerly. "If not, what are you fooling round here for? Why don't you go until you do?" She took no notice of Lucy, who, however, clung tighter to Jonas at every sound of her sharp voice.

"No, nor I ain't likely to," said Jonas sulkily. Something in his mistress's face puzzled him. He did not feel safe with her.

"Have you been to the station?" she asked briefly.

"No, nor there ain't no use in going, She," with a little jerk behind him at Lucy. "says she has lost his footsteps, and he's gone to Ballyhack," with a venomous look at Miss Trueworthy, "for all that I know."

In answer, Miss Trueworthy began to whistle in her peculiar way for calling

Max; a low sound—half bark, half growl—answered her. She bent her head for a moment in the direction from whence it came, then whistled again, and again came the muffled answer.

"He has found Foster's pond so soon," she said with an odd mingling of annoyance and fright; "Max took him there. Jonas Holt, go by Silas Bent's mill, and if you don't see him on the rocks—" almost catching her breath as a dreadful possibility suggested itself to her—"hire his boat, and sail over the pond till you find him. I'll meet you at the pond, the nearest way. Come, Lucy!"

She held her hand out to Lucy, but the child shrank from her, clinging close to the rough working man. It was like a stab to poor Miss Trueworthy's heart. What *had* she done to deserve it?

"There—there!" said Jonas, speaking to

Lucy, as he would have to a sick lamb. "You can't go with Jonas, 'cause he's a-going as if a streak of lightning was arter him. You go along with your aunt; she won't hurt you, not a bit."

"Hurt her!" exclaimed Aunt Hester, looking bewildered from one to the other, "hurt her!"

"Yes. You see," explained Jonas, "she kind of remembers Frank's hand, and she's afeard of you. There naouw—there!" and Jonas loosened the hold of the tight fingers from his coat with the utmost gentleness.

"It beats all!" murmured Aunt Hester, turning away with a grieved look. Lucy saw, and could not withstand, it; letting alone of Jonas, she came to her aunt, as if she had never a thought of avoiding her.

Miss Trueworthy looked down at the child,

resisted a passionate impulse to put both arms around her neck, and ask her to forget it all, did not take the hand Lucy held toward her, but strode on into the nearest field, hardly looking behind.

They soon reached the woods, and plunged into them, Aunt Hester only planning for a bee line that would lead her soonest to the pond. When well among the trees, a short, quick bark stopped them; then immediately Max, head and ears down and tail between his legs, came out from behind an old log to meet them.

"You've been into the pond, sir," said Aunt Hester, now truly alarmed. "Where's the boy?"

Max turned, looking back to be sure she was following, then led the way over the log. There, sound asleep with his head resting upon it, was Frank.

"So, so!" said Aunt Hester, losing all anx-

iety for the boy's safety. "You've taken good care of him, Max," patting the dog's head, who seemed to understand every word she said. "Poor little fellow, how tired and hungry he must be!"

The wounded hand lay uppermost, but the discoloration and swelling were already abated, so Aunt Hester took courage. "Poor little fellow!" she repeated, and as she said so, she felt Lucy's hand stealing gently into hers.

"We'll have him all right, soon," looking down with a smile at Lucy. "Shall we wake him up?"

"Frankie! Frankie!" shouted Lucy, kneeling beside, and shaking him.

"Let me alone," growled the boy.

"Let him sleep it out," said Aunt Hester wisely. "I will go for Jonas."

So Jonas was not a little surprised to see his mistress beckoning to him violently from

the opposite shore. He made all speed to her, and when he saw the boy—safe, sound, and asleep, with Aunt Hester bending over him, her face beaming with her most benevolent expression—he broke into a loud laugh, so queer and so discordant that it waked Frank in a moment.

He sat up instantly, rubbed his eyes with the back of both his hands, then, as where he was, and what it all meant, came slowly back to him, he looked almost terrified into Aunt Hester's face.

"Yes," she said in answer to his look, "we have all been wrong, Frank; but it's very easy to start new again. We have none of us gone so far that we can't go back. I am sorry I hit your hand. Will you forgive me? And—and—" hesitating, the blood rushing to her face as it had not done for twenty years before—"will you kiss your old Aunt Hester?"

To the last hour of his life Frank will never forget this scene. He rose slowly, stiffened by his sleep on the hard ground, went directly up to his aunt, pulled her face down, and kissed it on both cheeks.

All that there was noble in his erratic nature, her simple confession and apology had reached and stirred. He was too young to more than half understand it, but enough came to him to remain deeply impressed on his memory forever.

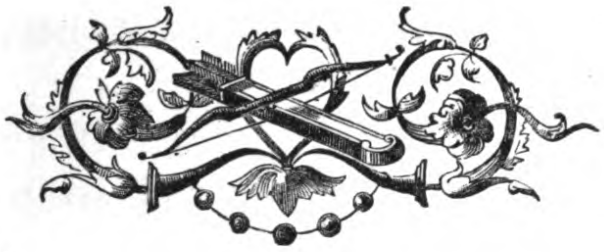
"I, too," said Lucy as he turned away. "Dear Aunt Hester, let me kiss you, too."

"Both on them! Now I'm beat," said Jonas Holt, staring at them in a dazed, helpless sort of a way, "you don't!"

But Hester Trueworthy was queen of her own royalty again, and what minded she who heard or saw.

"Come," she said, "our breakfast is waiting."

So they all went home, Max walking between Frank and his aunt, looking demurely first at one, and then at the other, as if to assure himself that at last every thing was right.



VII.

GOING TO THE MILL.

IT would be difficult to describe or define Hester Trueworthy's decisions; they appeared to leap to her often out of a dull darkness, clear, definite, determined. In the case of these children no mind or heart could have wandered more aimless or comfortless until, like an inspiration, it came to her, to treat them as she would grown people whom she had unintentionally injured. "Why not?" This question was sharply asked, and honestly answered, and it is doubtful whether the largest caucus

of the wisest mothers could have answered it with a more delicate and assured wisdom. Without any ability to reason upon her action, with only the crudest recognition of its moral worth, both children succumbed happily and at once to its influence, and went back to Rosebrook with the feeling that they were going home. It was a battle waged unexpectedly, but won,—won, as so many of our life's battles are, by the humblest subjection of self to a higher authority.

It remained now for Aunt Hester in some way to insure obedience to her wishes. If she had a half hope that her example would recommend itself to them so as to allure them to follow it in action, if not in words, surely she was again showing her tact, if we give it no higher name.

"Frank," she said this morning, "would you like something to do?"

"Yes, Aunt Hester," said Frank meekly.

"Can you ride John Gilpin?"

"I can ride any horse at Rosebrook."

"So, so!" with a cheery smile. "Tell Jonas Holt to saddle John, see that the girths are tight, put you on his back, and strap the bag of meal behind you. You can take it to Silas Bent's mill. Silas Bent's remember! Noah Lowe cheated me once, and no man ever cheats Hester Trueworthy twice. Every body you ask will send you there; he is the best miller at Allston; but don't you go one foot. Go to Silas Bent's as I tell you!" Frank was rushing out, eyes dancing, face all aglow, when she stopped him, with,—

"Do you know where Silas Bent's mill is?"

"It's—it's—I can ask," said Frank hesitating.

"Precisely; you can ask,—that's what I wanted you to see. Always use your tongue

in asking useful questions, but never use your tongue when your eyes will answer."

"No, Aunt Hester," said Frank looking anxiously toward the door.

"Then be off. Don't play by the way, don't *trot* a step; John Gilpin is as hard as an elephant when he trots; don't speak to a strange boy, and don't fall into the mill pond. Come back as soon as your grist is ready, and fill your pockets with doughnuts, if you want them; here they are."

Frank stretched out his hurt hand timidly, to take one;—how much better it looked!—Aunt Hester filled it with the twisted, brown cakes until the little fingers could not close upon another, without half the pang it had given her to see it before; then he darted off, and from the window she watched him parleying with Jonas Holt. Evidently Jonas was very much at a loss what to do. He was by no means sure that Frank had been

sent to him with such a novel request. Grist there was to go to the mill that day; but this bit of a boy, that probably never held a rein before in his life, and on John Gilpin, too, the hardest horse on the farm; so Aunt Hester was not surprised to see Jonas making his way with much speed to the house.

"It's all right, Jonas," she said, before he had time to speak. "The grist strapped behind the saddle, on John Gilpin, girths tight, and Frank is to go to Silas Bent's mill—remember (emphatically), Silas Bent's."

Jonas knocked his hat violently from one side of his head to the other, his way of uttering a silent protest when he did not dare to speak, then went back to the barn, and pretty soon, Frank—mounted on a great, gaunt bay, with the corn in a bag almost as high as his head behind him, and a very frightened face—went by the window.

"Oh dear!" said Lucy, gazing after him with a face only a little less frightened.

"Pooh, child," answered Aunt Hester, "I'd as soon put a baby a week old on his back, and send him off; he wouldn't hurt a hair of its head; he's as safe as any nurse in Allston. Frank can't come to harm if he tries to; it will keep him out of mischief for a time at least. Now, little one," a strange tenderness falling suddenly into her voice, "what can I do with you?"

Literally there seemed to her nothing on the farm for these children to do. She did not for a moment think of putting them to menial services. Frank she destined to be the owner of the property when she should leave it; but during that interval, which her strong health and good habits assured her would not probably be a short one, what was to be done with them? Sent to school, of course; but sending to school Hester

Trueworthy had the sense to see was only a small part of education, and educated in the highest sense of the term she meant them to be.

"There's home education, there's practical, every-day life, there's common sense, there's other people, there's economy, there's generosity, and, above all, there's their relations to God," said this sensible woman to herself; "and here is no one but old inefficient Hester Trueworthy to guide them. What is to be done?"

Years ago, Hester Trueworthy had read Jane Taylor's "Discontented Pendulum," and it had made upon her, as it has upon so many others, a life-long impression. "It's only one tick at a time," she said to herself comfortingly; "and I'll try to drop a good seed every time I see there is an opening in the fallow ground; God is the great husbandman, and will care for the rest. I may plant, and

Apollos water, but it's God, and God only, that can give the increase."

While matters were thus arranging themselves at home, Frank, becoming more at ease upon his horse's back with every step it took, began to look around, with a boy's pride in his position. Once before in his life had he mounted a horse, and that was when he was a very small boy, his father holding him. He had often led horses to water, and had driven Deacon Dustan's old gray mare,—the Deacon sitting by his side and chirruping to the mare, to induce her to put one lame foot before the other,—but with these exploits his horsemanship ended. To be mounted on John Gilpin was the summit of human felicity; a very different boy he was from the one who only a few hours before had gone over that same road with such dire thoughts of vengeance and escape in his heart. In every particular

he scrupulously obeyed his aunt's direction there being nothing to tempt him to do otherwise, as he met neither boy or animal on his way to the mill.

Silas Bent was an old man, surly in his manner, and not over genial in his heart, ready to do his work as well as his poor mill would allow, and honest to a kernel of corn. He stared at the new boy on Hester Trueworthy's old bay, asked him his name, and grunted, when he heard the unknown one of Herbert,—

"I kind o' thought you favored the Trueworthys," he said slowly. "You look something like that poor stick of a fellar they had up there once; but he's been dead this five year they tell me."

Frank did not know he was speaking of his father, and it was well. When the corn was ground and he was on his way home, Silas Bent, the miller's son, saw him, and

called, "I say, you fellar, hold on! What you been stealing dad's meal for? I'll be after you and wallop you into fiddle-strings!"

"It's my meal," said Frank, sitting up straight on the saddle, and jerking the reins.

"Go to grass! Who be you? That horse comes from Rosebrook; you've stolen it. Stop thief! Stop thief!"

Silas Bent, Jun., was a much larger boy than Frank, and as he came toward him making threatening gestures, Frank wished John Gilpin would trot quickly away; but John was not in the least disturbed; he only shook his head, and wagged his ears in the most decided manner, while Frank tugged away at his mouth.

"Give it up!" said Silas derisively. "You can't lick that horse into any gait but his'en. I'll pitch you off, if you don't get down, and then I'll take the horse home myself, and get ten cents out of the old maid for ketch-

ing you. Ten cents will buy some marbles over to Kendricks—you bet! Will you get off?"

"No," said Frank as bravely as he could speak, for his fright.

"Then I'll pitch you off, and thrash you for your impudence." Silas was coming very near now, and John Gilpin seemed to Frank to move more slowly than ever. He gave himself up for lost, when a friend unexpectedly appeared. Max had been content to jog along, watching the boys quietly, as if quite used to boy chaffing, until Silas came near enough to lay one hand on John Gilpin's rein, then he uttered a low, ominous growl, which made Silas loose his hold and step back.

"Max, good fellow!" he said, trying cautiously to approach Max and pat him; but the dog was not to be won. He began to show his teeth and growl deeper than be-

fore, so Silas retreated across the road, and sat down as if only an unconcerned spectator.

"Give my love to the old woman," he called out coarsely, "and ask her if she don't want her dog fed with some fresh meat; I've some at home ready salted for him," then he walked slowly away, turning round now and then to fling a stone at Frank, hitting and hurting him several times.

Frank was very glad to see Rosebrook again. The ride had not been one of unbroken happiness, but he had a great deal to talk and boast of when he found himself alone with Lucy.

"This Rosebrook is a great place," he confided to her. "I had rather be here than anywhere else in the world. John Gilpin—why, John Gilpin, he's just a two-forty, and what would you want better than that."

After all, when the children were once more in bed and asleep, Aunt Hester had no cause to be dissatisfied with her first day's work.

VIII.

MR. GRISBEY CALLS.

ALLSTON was like every other New England village, and in one of these quiet towns it is not to be supposed so great an event as two children coming to Rosebrook, could pass unnoticed. The day Peter Towne put the children down at the Golden Eagle, hardly a family in Allston but was immediately made aware of the event, and was filled with curiosity to know how "it would turn out." Every thing about the little new-comers was discussed, from their resemblance to some dead and gone mem-

ber of the Trueworthy family, to the quaint box which held all their worldly goods; and, no doubt, had the town felt at liberty to do just as it fancied, there would have been a long procession to watch their arrival and reception, but no one ventured there until the Rev. Mr. Grisbey, Miss Trueworthy's pastor, made his appearance at the door, to inquire in his double capacity of spiritual guide and personal friend how matters were progressing.

Rumor had it that once upon a time Mr. Grisbey had been a suitor for the hand and farm of Miss Trueworthy, but that she had no fancy for the position of an unappreciated prophetess; also, that the present Mrs. Grisbey, with whose affection the minister wisely and immediately comforted himself, had never looked with a thoroughly approving smile upon even the appearance of a friendship between them; so that it came

to pass in due time that a pastoral call was an event, both at the parsonage and at Rosebrook, and, when Frank came rushing into the kitchen with the rather unceremonious announcement—

"I say, Aunt Hester, that man who preaches in your church on Sunday is at the door, and he's got a horse that's all ribs and legs," Aunt Hester was somewhat astonished and not a little flurried.

"What on earth has *he* come for!" she ejaculated almost unconsciously; then she rushed out of the room in an unwonted hurry, that left Lucy staring after her.

The knock upon the side door was rather a deprecatory one. Lucy had been told it was a part of her business to open it at any summons, so she hastened now to admit the tall, grave man she saw every Sabbath in the pulpit, and in answer to his inquiry for her aunt, to show him into the

darkened parlor, admitting a ray of light by unclosing the upper half of a wooden shutter; she was then about leaving the room, when he stopped her with,—

"My dear, how old are you?"

"Twelve, sir," said Lucy modestly.

"Twelve," he repeated. "You are old enough then to become a Christian. I hope you are one."

"Sir," said poor Lucy.

"I hope," went on the reverend Mr. Grisbey, "that you have made it the first object of your life to prepare yourself for another that shall never end. I trust your dear father and mother were Christians before their summons came."

The awfulness of the man's manner, his deep sepulchral tones, and the fixed way he looked at her through his round eye-glasses, brought tears of fright at once into Lucy's eyes, and she stood irresolute, without an-

swering a word; as he went on in a gentler tone,—

"I ought, perhaps, to have told you, my dear, that I am your minister, and that I speak to you in this way because I feel, your own father being dead, I have the care of your soul. I want to speak the word in season, when I have the opportunity. Life is short; we are here to-day and gone to-morrow, and—" At this moment the door opened, and Miss Trueworthy entered. She seemed to divine at a glance what had taken place, and to be annoyed by it.

"Lucy, go out," she said briefly and rather curtly. Lucy's cheeks were dyed crimson as she obeyed. What had she done to need such a reproof? Before the minister too!

Hester Trueworthy as she seated herself in a chair, did so with a decidedly antagonistic feeling. "Now we shall have it," she

said to herself, and she was right. This stepping into maternal duties in such an unorthodox fashion was not to pass without comment, and Mr. Grisbey had already been through too many encounters to waste any advantage which the earliest coming into the field might give him.

"I have called this morning," he began, "to see if I could be of any assistance to you in the arduous and responsible task you have undertaken. You may not know it, Miss Trueworthy, but there is in all this wide world no relation that trenches more closely upon eternal interests than the maternal; in your case, I should feel inclined to coin a word and to say the ant-ternal—"

"That's a very good word," said Aunt Hester with a grim smile; "suppose we speak now, not as pastor and flock, but as old friends. You have come to see if I am fit to take charge of other people's children,

and what is coming of it. Very well! I am *not* fit, and I know no more what is coming of it, than you do; indeed," her voice softening and faltering a little, "I don't think any one does, but God."

Mr. Grisbey was by no means the man his unfortunate first way of dealing with people or subjects would lead you to suppose; he was a thoroughly good and, in an uncommon way, sensible man; but he was shy to a most uncomfortable extent, and had to feel his way into any thing he tried to do, as if he were purblind; he was, moreover, a delicate man, and morbidly conscientious, so he drove himself often into what he considered his duty, particularly as far as personal influence was concerned. He had done so this morning. He never came to Rosebrook but with redoubled shyness, both on account of the woman he left at home and the one he came to meet; and he did

feel a ministerial anxiety on account of the children that did him great credit, but for this unfortunate way of expression. Miss Trueworthy well understood this weakness; well knew the good things in the worthy man, and wanted, as she said, to have him help her.

Something in the simplicity and directness of the appeal put him as much at his ease as he ever—poor man!—could be, and even the expression of his face underwent a sudden change.

"There is no denying it, Mr. Grisbey," she said, "my world is completely upset; I am like the pelican of the desert, though I can't just tell you how. At first it seemed as if I couldn't and wouldn't have it; but considering God hadn't asked me, but had done just what He saw fit, I couldn't make up my mind I had any great opportunity for setting up my Ebenezer. It was either to say

no,—and turn my own brother's children on the tender mercies of strangers,—or yes, and take what it might bring. I thought the latter the safer course, and if you have any advice, with your experience, to give me, I should be very glad of it."

"Miss Trueworthy," said her minister, in a quiet tone intended to soothe her, "you have the right of it, and, I have no doubt, every thing will work for good. I have yet, in all of what you are pleased to call my experience, to see the first time when a soul in need called upon its Father in heaven for help and was refused."

"That depends," said Aunt Hester, a little pugnaciously, "upon the request made, and the condition of the soul that asks. I, for one, have importuned my Maker, time and again, for things which I have lived to see would have been my destruction had they been granted. What I want is practical

advice from you. What is to be done to make that boy into a good, noble, true man —what is to teach him to educate his will, so it shall be a servant and not a master as life goes on—that's what I want to know."

"The subject of the education of the will, as you very properly call it, is a most difficult and important one. Our moral philosophers—"

"Oh fiddlesticks!" interrupted Miss Trueworthy, not politely it must be acknowledged. "I don't care a copper for philosophers! What I want to know is, how is Frank to be taught to be his own master instead of slave; how is he to be made to say *no* when he ought, and to stick to it, and to say *yes* when he ought, and to stick to it; to have a will and a way of his own, and to have that the right. Why, according to my thinking, half the sin and misery in

this world come from one's not having any kingdom of their own and being a sovereign there. At every body's beck and call is about next to being a fool and a knave, particularly for a boy. I want Frank to have backbone,—able to say *no* to the devil when he tempts him."

While she had been talking, the minister had been thinking of his boy at home, and of the different kind of nurture a weak, indulgent mother was giving him; so there was pathos in the answer, which he made after a few moments of silence,—

"I don't see but what I must go back to where I began,—God—God's help! I see only prayer, and surely there can be nothing in such a request that need make us doubt its being granted."

"Of that I am not so sure," said Miss Trueworthy, shaking her head. "It may be now, perhaps it is," lingering reflectively on

the words, "a part of the economy of God, that this boy's misdeeds should be the cross by which I am to gain my crown. I don't believe, generally, in the generosity of the theory that one soul is to be perilled to save another; but it's all a mystery; and now, for practical questions—these others seem so useless to be asked, and we are never sure they can be answered—shall these children go to the public school here?"

"By all means," interpolated the minister; but Aunt Hester went on, as if she had not heard him,—

"Shall they go to the Sabbath school?"

"Certainly—certainly," from Mr. Grisbey.

"Shall they be made to mind, and be punished if they fail to do so? and how are they to be punished, and who is to do it? What shall they read? what shall they play? what time shall they go to bed? what time shall they get up? I tell you, Mr. Grisbey," a

most perplexed look coming over her face, "when I begin to think of these things, they drive me frantic!"

"Then, don't think of them; for if you were to go frantic, I should think the world was coming to an end," said the minister, with a grave smile. "You can't settle all these questions with regard to a child's life any more than you can those relating to your own, and I need not tell you that we, none of us, know what a day or an hour may bring forth. Trust these minor matters; don't try to map out their whole future, and then expect to have them follow it up to a line; let to-day take care of the things of itself, and trust to-morrow. In this simple rule, I think you have the whole epitome of a Christian life, which is only another term for Christian work."

Aunt Hester was guilty of rather an irreverent sniffle as he said this. She had needed

real help so very, very much, but had only received a little commonplace ministerial advice. She felt discouraged, and kept back the questions she was so eager to ask. Mr. Grisbey tried in vain after this to draw from her any more; so he rose to take his leave, saying, in what he meant should be a most kind and helpful manner,—

"You don't want to bring up these children too much alone, so I will say to my wife, that our little folks had better find their way to Rosebrook. Bella will be an excellent companion for Lucy, and Ned for Frank; Ned is a better boy now than he has been, I am glad to say, and I hope will prove only a help in what is proper and right."

"I thank you," said Miss Trueworthy, with a stately bend of her white head, "but these children are such strangers yet, they don't take kindly to others. We will wait awhile."

"By no means, my dear friend; Ned shall

come to-night, and Frank can go with him to the Boys' Temperance League. Ned, I am glad to say, is its president."

Poor Miss Trueworthy! she saw him depart with a hearty premonitory groan.

IX.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

NED GRISBEY was a character in Allston. He was emphatically "its bad boy," and as such was known and recognized by all but his parents. He was the only son, seven sisters sharing with him what he left of the parental heart. This was but a small portion, for he was his mother's idol, and, in a certain way when he indulged in his paternal blindness, his father's hope. As nature made Ned, he was only a commonplace kind of a child; as education had made him, he was what is so expressively designated

in country parlance "*given over.*" He was now fourteen years of age; too old to be called a child, too young to be, though he liked to be thought, a man. He was prematurely wicked on the sly, which is the worst kind of wickedness. He had learned to smoke by practicing on grape vines out in the woodshed or behind the barn at home; he had tried hard to learn to drink, but the violent headache which followed the attempt had so far prevented his success; he could swear, though he did not seem so partial to this as to other vices;—in truth, Ned Grisbey was as far on the road to ruin as any boy of his age, who has not openly vicious parents, is often found. In many respects, being a minister's son hurried him downward; every thing he did was noticed and commented upon, and notoriety was a thing he dearly loved. A certain kind of respect, and pity too, kept the parish from making

his misdeeds known to his father, and of his mother, nearly every man, woman, and child stood in trembling awe. Sometimes she was very unjust in her finding fault with Ned, sometimes very severe; but generally she was weakly indulgent, hoping to save the boy, in as far as she was willing to acknowledge he needed saving, by her love and attention. Poor Ned was only half to blame, if we should sift the matter to the bottom; a mother's boundless indulgence and a father's enforced neglect would ruin better stuff than this boy was made of. His sisters had little influence over him; he was the torment of their lives, so, in as far as it was possible in a Christian family, they hated him. It almost seemed as if there were very few agencies at work to save the boy, and yet he was the minister's son. Such a boy, it may be seen, Aunt Hester would not be very desirous to secure as a companion for Frank.

It was Frank's delight to take Max and go with him in the twilight after the cows. The present pasture was on a warm southern slope, where the grass was already green, and pretty bunches of spring beauties smiled up at the boy as he sauntered along. He always gathered large bouquets which he carefully carried home to Lucy or his aunt, with a nice gentlemanly tact giving them by turns to each. To-night—the night after the minister's call at Rosebrook—it was Lucy's turn, and he was unconsciously taking special pains to cull only the choicest. Sitting down, or rather lying down, Max at his side, he was startled by a deep growl from the dog, and then by a red apple which fell near him. He looked around, but there was no one to be seen; so, being a brave little fellow, he laid down again, continued picking his flowers, and did not touch the apple.

Then came a series of whistling calls, a language every boy readily interprets. Frank tried to answer them, but made only an awkward sound.

"Hullo–o–o!" called an unseen boy.

"Hullo–o–o!" answered Frank.

"What you up to?"

"What you up to yourself?"

All the time this conversation had been going on, Max kept up an uninterrupted series of growls, growing louder and louder in proportion with the tone of the boys' voices.

"Hold on to your dog and I'll come out; I'm Ned Grisbey."

"Where are you?"

"Hold on, I tell you, and I'll show you in a jiffy."

So Frank took tight hold of Max's collar, and stared about him. Then Ned came skulking from behind the trunk of a large

tree, where he had hidden in order to watch for Frank. His father had sent him to Rosebrook, but there was something in Hester Trueworthy's face he did not like to meet. I don't think he could have walked right up to Frank in an open, manly manner; he had become so accustomed to skulking it was second nature, and Frank looked at his sideways manner in surprise.

"What you after down here?" was his first not very polite salutation, Max making hostile attempts to break loose, as he spoke.

"Come to see you. Who are your flowers for? Got a sweetheart so soon?"

"They're for my sister," said Frank, holding them up for admiration.

"You don't say so," said Ned, with a leer he meant should be smart, but which was in reality very ugly. Frank stared at him, and took his hand off Max's collar.

"Hold on to him. can't you," said Ned

crossly, "he looks as if he'd eat a fellow up before he could say Jack Robinson. Why don't you kill him?"

"Kill him!" echoed Frank.

"Yes, poison him; the old lady wouldn't know, and he's the worst brute in Allston. Joe Tombs had a dog who wouldn't let any one go near a fruit tree, and Joe, he administered a dose that kept him still: there wasn't any thing after that to prevent a fellar's having an apple now and then. I shouldn't be surprised if that was one of them," pointing to the apple which still lay untouched on the ground. "Joe gave it to me for a slate pencil."

Frank looked with much disgust at the apple, but Ned went on,—

"Those slate pencils were a dodge anyhow. You see, I wanted the rhino, so I told the old lady I had to cipher so hard I needed a dozen slate pencils; I broke a half

dozen every lesson. She won't give me the money, because, she says"—imitating an old woman's voice in a falsetto that made Frank laugh—"'she don't know where the money goes to,' so it's slate pencils instead of cents. They do just as well, for we fellars know how to trade, I can tell you; I'll teach you a thing or two, in good time."

"Who's the old woman?" asked Frank innocently.

Ned laughed scornfully as he said, "Well you are green! Where have you been to pasture?"

"Who is she, though?" persisted Frank, not in the least daunted.

"Why she's my devoted, revered, and highly-respected ma!" then Ned laughed again, but Frank did not smile.

"That isn't the way I used to speak of my mother," he said.

Ned did not feel like chaffing him any

longer when he heard this. "Well," he said, "it's all one; she don't mind; only it's cute about the pencils, ain't it? Do you want to trade? See here, I've got four left;" he pulled out from his pockets four mutilated pencils, and spread them on the palm of his big hand.

Was there ever a boy who was without the instinct of trade? Frank immediately laid an old, one-bladed knife down beside them; it was worth two dozen slate pencils, but that was little matter. Very soon the pencils were in his pocket, the knife in Ned's. Then followed other trades—some fishhooks, some old sleeve-buttons, a watch-key, and a broken padlock, on Ned's part; the new knife, his aunt had only given him yesterday, and a lead pencil on Frank's. Of course, Ned had the best of every bargain.

In the meantime Jonas Holt was hanging over the fence wondering "why in natur'

them cows didn't come"; Aunt Hester was looking anxiously up and down the street for the loiterer, and fretting over the delay; and Lucy, swinging her sun-bonnet by the strings, was hurrying bare-headed over the road leading to the pasture, to hasten his return. Both boys, sauntering along slowly, Ned was recounting some of the wonderful bargains he had made, and Frank was deeply interested in and laughing at him, his hand however still tightly clutching Max's collar, when he saw Lucy coming toward them.

"There's my sister," said Frank, for the first time remembering the flowers he had left upon the ground where he had gathered them; then, too, he thought of the length of time he had been gone, and, without one word of good-night to Ned, he started into a run, trotting the cows, who had thoroughly enjoyed the leisurely way they had hitherto been driven, into a run. Aunt Hester caught

sight of them, and uttered an earnest—to say the least—protestation.

"Is the boy a born idiot?" she said to Jonas Holt, "that he don't know better than to run a cow before she has been milked. Boys are torments!"

"That's so," said Jonas with as much *sang-froid* as if he had never been one himself. "I don't see what's got him."

"The evil one," answered Aunt Hester, as the cows, excited by their quiet trot, broke into a furious run and came tearing toward the house, legs and tails in the air, heads erect, and significant snorting which stirred their owner's ire to dire extremity. "You just let me get my hand on him, and I'll find out what it means," she said threateningly, "see if I don't."

"'Tain't likely he means no harm," said Jonas Holt apologetically; "he ain't used to cows now, and he don't know no better."

"I'll teach him, then," returned Aunt Hester wrathfully, and one glance back into her face made Jonas conclude he had better hurry away to meet the cows and quiet them.

Brave Hester Trueworthy! No sooner was she conscious of the turmoil of her spirit, than she turned abruptly, went into the house, and shut the door tight behind her. "If I get hold of him now," she said to herself, "I shall do something I'm sorry for; I'll get firm hold of Hester Trueworthy first," and she did. When Frank, all unconscious of the greatness of his offence, came, trying his best to imitate Ned's manly whistle, into the house, to show his aunt the bargains he had made, he found her putting the milk-pans softly down upon the shelves, with a dainty care he had never observed in her before.

"See here, Aunt Hester," he said arranging his treasures on the shelf beside her,

"see what bargains I have made out of Ned Grisbey."

Not a word spake Aunt Hester as she eyed the worthless trinkets, but just glared at him until, surprised at her silence, he looked up and met her eyes.

"Are you a goose?" she said then. "And what right have you to be with Ned Grisbey? See here," holding her hands together frantically to keep them from clutching at the boy, "don't you ever let me hear of any such nonsense again. Never! Do you understand me?—Never!"

"Yes, ma'am," said Frank meekly.

"Where's your new knife?" she asked next, pushing Frank's treasures contemptuously away.

"I—I—swopped it for this padlock," said the innocent boy.

"Goose!" remarked his incensed aunt and went away.

GOING DOWN HILL.

THAT night was not the last one in which the cows were brought tardily home. This occurred so many times, in spite of Aunt Hester's requests, that her patience was spent; she peremptorily ordered Frank to remain at home, and Lucy to take his place. To this command, both of the children came as near refusing obedience as they had to any order since the first morning of their coming to Rosebrook. Lucy, because she was afraid of cows, half afraid of Max who was to go with her, and half

ashamed to be seen driving cattle,—a big girl almost as tall as Aunt Hester herself; yet she went quietly out, when Frank, who had been sullen and silent on the doorstep, pushed himself before her, and said,—

"You go back. It ain't a girl's business, anyhow."

"It's my business to do what Aunt Hester requests," answered Lucy, half crying. "Don't, Frank."

"Don't don't Frank me. Ned Grisbey is to be there, to show me a fighting-cock we're going to buy on shares, and, see here," pulling out some small silver bits from his pocket, "here's my money ready to pay my part; pretty you'd look with boys and fighting-cocks, wouldn't you, now?"

"Aunt Hester won't like it," said Lucy.

"Aunt Hester be hanged!" replied Frank, with what he meant should be a manly swagger, but what was in reality a fright-

ened way of looking over his shoulder to assure himself his aunt was not watching him. "You go back into the house, and I'll manage her—Ned Grisbey has taught me how."

"Frank Trueworthy!" called a sharp voice that made him start.

"Ma'am," he answered meekly.

"Come back here this minute."

Frank struck his heel into the sand, made a pivot of it, swung round four times, then, head down and body stretched forward, he darted down the road leading to the pasture.

Hester Trueworthy came to the door, turned pale as she watched him, then beckoning to Lucy, went into the house. Lucy slowly following her.

"It's that Ned Grisbey," she said, as the child stood staring at her with great frightened eyes. "You needn't go, Lucy; it's no place for a lamb among such ravening wolves.

I'll send Jonas or, rather, I'll go myself." Without another word, she caught down the dreadful cowhide from its nail on the kitchen wall, and away she went, Lucy watching her with dismal forebodings. Max had gone with Frank.

Frank continued the trot with which he had started, until he could no longer see the house, then he whistled to Max, called him close to him as if to insure his protection, walked more slowly, and, alone with his disobedience, found it a most unpleasant companion. A big robin flitted along just before him, calling to his mate in the pleasantest and most chirrupy way; a red squirrel ran along on the stone walls close to the road, stopping every now and then to sit down and nibble a bit of the fresh green moss it found, twinkling its black eyes, and whisking its long tail in a way that would have amused the boy at any other time;

there were beautiful bunches of flowers in the clusters where he counted the buds only yesterday, and planned how big a bouquet it would make for Lucy; the alders and the willows had hung out large additions to their green banners, and even the birch was beginning to look purple and waving in the bright sunshine.

At any other time since he had come to Rosebrook, Frank would have been a pleased observer of all these things; but to-day, they irritated him. When he reached the pasture, however, Ned was there, and another boy with him. Frank saw at a glance it was Silas Bent, the one who had teased him the day his aunt sent him to the mill. Max began to growl, that made the boys who had their backs to him turn around, and Silas called,—

"How are you, old fellar? How's that grist? Look out for your dog, or I'll settle

him! I've got a dog here in my pocket," lifting the end of an old pistol into view, "which don't bark for nothing, and his bite is worse than his bark any time."

"Max won't touch you," said Frank timidly. He was afraid of Silas and wished Ned had not brought him.

"Got your money?" asked Ned hurriedly; "because this is the biggest fighter in Massachusetts. He will beat any other ten cocks that ever were bet on; but Silas won't put them at it till he's got the chink down."

"No, I won't," growled Silas. "Ned's done me too often for that. It's a cash business I do, there ain't any other that pays; so, let's see the rhino, and here's for as bloody a fight as ever came off."

Frank forgot the cows, pulled the money impatiently out of his pocket, hurried it into Ned's hand, and was ready.

"Make that fellar," nodding toward Max,

"lie down first. If he gets a scent of the blood, he'll tear them both to tatters, then you'll just have to pay for them," said Silas.

Frank obeyed, made Max lie down in the sunshine behind a tree where he could not see them, and was soon back again looking anxiously for what was to come next.

"This is ours," said Ned standing a poor little, half-starved looking rooster on his feet, and holding him tight.

Frank stretched up to his utmost height as he heard the word *ours*. Ned then dropped his cock, and all three boys kneeling down in a ring were doing their best to incite the birds to a fight, when suddenly two of them, Ned and Silas, found themselves seized by the back of their coats, and, being in a most disadvantageous position, hurled over on their backs; looking up, they saw Hester Trueworthy's angry face bending over them, and their cocks with a delighted

flap of their wings flying away over their heads.

"Pretty fellows you are!" almost screamed Aunt Hester in her excitement, "cock-fighting! You, Ned Grisbey," tightening her hold on him, as he struggled to get up, "a minister's son, cock-fighting! A wicked, blood-thirsty scamp you are! A pretty story will be told at the parsonage, before I am an hour older! 'Get up?' Yes, up with you; but don't you dare to stir, till I give you leave. Max! Max!" whistling to the dog who came to her call, then, touching Ned and patting Max—"See to him, Max! see to him!"

Max sidled along close to Ned, his black nose in dangerous proximity to Ned's trembling legs; evidently it would be the part of caution to keep very still, and Ned, so far as his own safety was concerned, was a cautious boy.

He being thus disposed of, Aunt Hester turned full upon her other prisoner, who now, wholly recovered from the sudden onset, she needed all her strength to hold.

"So you are Silas Bent? You are the very boy I should have expected to see here! But you made a mistake when you brought your sin into Hester Trueworthy's pasture. There's not an inch of all the ground I own for such a cruel purpose as this," kicking at the ring drawn on the ground; "no, not for half a minute." Then looking down sorrowfully into his red, angry face, "How I do pity your father! There, go! there's no use to waste words on *you;* nothing can save you but a miracle — the mighty grace of a mighty God. Poor fellow?" There was real pity in Aunt Hester's last two words. Silas, as he struggled up, looked at her wonderingly.

"Pick up your feet and go home, and the

next time I catch you—either of you—in my pasture, or with this boy," stretching out a long, thin arm and pointing at Frank, "I'll have something more to do with you than I have had to-day. Go, the birds are out of your way. Now be off, my pasture is no place for you. Here, Max!"

Max reluctantly came to her; evidently he preferred to finish his work. She stood very erect, watching the boys as they skulked away; then she said, "Frank, you can go for the cows. I'll wait here while you call them; and when you want to be wicked and cruel again, don't let it be on Aunt Hester's farm."

XI.

THE BOYS' REVENGE.

HESTER TRUEWORTHY had unwittingly brought down on herself more than she had bargained for in her treatment of these boys. They had never liked her abrupt words and ways, particularly when they had been found trespassing, nor the persistency of her dog in discovering them when they were interviewing the ripening fruit or melons; but all these unpleasant things were easily to be forgiven, in comparison with the act of freeing the game-cocks. On the purchase of these they had lavished all the

money they had been able to accumulate for a long time "by hook or by crook," and the ways were very crooked indeed. They had seen the birds fly over the river, and knew they were beyond their reach, safe in some farmer's poultry-yard. It was so much money out of pocket, so much rare fun out of their lives, and Hester Trueworthy was not to be easily forgiven. From the moment they turned their backs upon her, and walked slowly away toward the village, they began to plan, not only the way of escape from the consequences of the proposed cock-fight, but also how they could be revenged. Ned, for whom the direst punishment he knew was in store when his parents should learn what had happened, was rapid in his resolves. He would tell the whole story, disclaim all partnership in the affair, lay the blame upon Silas Bent and Frank, as soon as he reached home;

thus, by turning state's evidence before Miss Trueworthy could reach the parsonage, diverting all blame from himself. And this he did exactly as he had planned; so when Hester Trueworthy on the following day, still hot and indignant over what had happened, made her appearance at her minister's house,—partly to receive advice and consolation, and partly to give it,—she was met by a story of her nephew's delinquencies that turned the tables entirely upon herself. Frank's own mother would scarcely have recognized her simple though wayward child in the accomplished bad boy into which Ned and his mother had transformed him.

Aunt Hester listened at first in open-eyed astonishment; it did not even occur to her to recriminate. She was conscious of now and then an inclination to interrupt, or ask a question; but she contented herself with dumbly making her peculiar emphatic gest-

ure with her two extended front fingers, as if she were cutting away silently and surely every one of their arguments, at the same time pursing up her mouth until it was no larger than a button-hole, thus buttoning in close whatever she did not wish to have it utter, and nodding so significantly that she conveyed a whole lecture, a very curt one too, in a few bends of her head.

Her call was a short one. Ned had been listening through a broad crack in the door to all that was said, and coming out behind her as she walked slowly, stiffly, and doggedly away, he snapped his fingers after her with an air of unmistakable triumph.

"Hardly worth while to try that game again, eh?" he said with a low chuckle. "Better let the cocks alone next time; it's bad meddling with Ned Grisbey."

Aunt Hester's reflections were something of the same nature,—"I ought to have had

more backbone, and told Mr. Grisbey I would have no intercourse between those boys. It's too much my fault for me to blame any one," said this noble woman to herself. "When Hester Trueworthy can say 'boo, to a goose,' then it's time for her to bring others up to the mark, and not before!"

On the whole, she felt disposed to pet and excuse, rather than blame, Frank. Such wholesale fault-finding failed utterly of its object; so the boy was allowed to slip easily over his part in the coarse, cruel sport, with hardly a reproof. At the end of a week the whole thing seemed to have been entirely forgotten by all but Silas Bent, to him it was of more importance than to any one else. He had anticipated a large return for the money invested in the game-cocks; for the fights witnessed by Ned and Frank, were to be only a small part of those fought. He knew almost every wicked haunt around and

in Allston, and, young as he was, had a reputation for skill and cunning in low vices that made him welcome among older and even worse profligates than himself. Partly in hopes of getting a return, and partly longing for revenge, he began to haunt Hester Trueworthy's house. Not a day passed, but he was there, skulking behind fences, hiding in the barn or woodshed, where he could watch what was going on, and sometimes even venturing in the twilight under the windows and close to the cracks of the open doors. For weeks the gains he made were small. A few eggs purloined from nests hidden in the hay-mow, a tool which brought him, when sold, only the price of old iron, the farm whip so seldom used on the indulged cattle that it was never missed, and pocketfuls of grain of whose loss the teeming granary took no count,—these, with sundry other little items too insignificant to no-

tice, were not reward enough for the trouble taken, and he was about resorting to some overt acts of revenge that might at least have proved troublesome, when an opportunity for accomplishing even more than he had dared to hope was thrown in his way.

Rosebrook had always been noted for its fine cattle. To know that a pair of oxen, a cow, pigs, or a horse, was to be sold there, was to insure plenty of purchasers. All through the winter and spring, Jonas Holt and Hester Trueworthy had been fitting a handsome yoke of oxen for market, and on the day appointed for their sale Rosebrook wore an unusually lively air. Farmers' teams came from miles around, and were fastened in long lines to the fence all about the barn, while the oxen themselves, bearing the new handsome yoke, stood under the big walnut-tree, in mild dignity, rumi-

nating proudly upon their chances and their ambitious future.

Boys of course were there in plenty, and among them Silas Bent; so also was Frank Trueworthy; but Frank was afraid of, and consequently shunned, Silas. After an hour or two of gossip and trading with Jonas Holt, who was master of ceremonies, his mistress however keeping a sharp lookout on what was doing from between the dining-room blinds, the oxen were well sold, the money somewhat vauntingly promised to be paid on a certain day, and the crowd dispersed; but Silas's chance had come, that money should be his! The lost poultry was well paid for, and the revenge completed.

So far in their lives, Ned Grisbey's complicity in Silas's sins had been only with those of the lighter kind,—if any kind of sin can be called light,—but now Silas felt the need of accomplices, and set to work at

once to plan how he could best induce both Ned and Frank to help him. He saw how dependent he must necessarily be upon Frank for admittance to the house, and for a knowledge of where the money was kept, and, bad boy as he was, he was not so utterly lost as to want to break away from all friends without taking with him some one who would link him to his past. He must of course immediately leave Allston and betake himself to that great wonderful world that was so unknown, yet so earnestly longed for; but, poor child, deep and strong in his heart, living through sin and shame, and want and sorrow, was a clinging to the miserable place he called home, to dim memories of his dead mother, to gentle tones and loving words that had once been all his own, to a little curly-headed sister that kissed and hugged him, and died; with all that was rough, and bad and lost about him, it was this longing for old sym-

pathies more than any thing else that made him determine to draw Ned with him into the crime he proposed to commit. He knew Ned thoroughly, and how to influence him; indeed there was a kind of magnetism about this miller's son that gave him a power over the boys around him, which the parents in Allston recognized and feared.

In a week the money was to be paid, Farmer Woodman, the purchaser of the oxen, coming to Rosebrook for the purpose, and Silas knew no time must be lost after it was in Miss Trueworthy's possession, before he transferred it to his own. He began without delay to work upon Ned, and found him much easier to win over to his purpose than he had supposed possible; indeed Ned himself would have stoutly and truthfully denied any body's power to lure him into the commission of an actual crime, for there was something in his position of the minister's

son that did have a hold upon his pride and upon what principle he had; the mistake he made was, in going to the verge of the precipice and trusting himself to look longingly over, all the time calling to some one to observe how brave and firm-footed he was. It was but to loosen his hold for a moment, and he was gone!

He never meant to take the money, not he. Hadn't he learned the Ten Commandments before he could walk alone? and was he the boy to forget how "Thou shalt not steal" looked, printed in gilt letters on the card hanging over his bed? Not he. He hoped he loved his father and mother too well for that. Yet he listened to Silas's glowing stories of what, once away from Allston, they would do in the big world, and consented to just what he would not like to have been asked to do. It is so easy for boy or man, to act with only a

half consciousness of the true character of their actions, a wilful blindness which is the most difficult of all for the clear light to penetrate.

It was with Frank Trueworthy that Silas expected and found the most trouble. It was easy enough to blind the little fellow. Silas could, and did, make him believe that the money was his own father's, the oxen having been his father's property when he was a boy at home, and that his aunt had no right to one cent of it; but he could not, as he had hoped, induce Frank to take it. He told him of his plans of leaving Allston with Ned Grisbey "for the greatest lark that ever boys had since the world was made," and invited him to join them.

Frank listened delighted, his quick imagination caught the glowing pictures, and he revelled in the almost fairy stories the big boy told him of what they would see,

where they would go, and what they would do, until the steady, quiet life at Rosebrook became too tame to be any longer borne.

XII.

FRANK'S SUNDAY.

FARMER WOODMAN, "punctual as the clock," as he said of himself, made his appearance at Rosebrook on the day named for the payment of the money due for the oxen, and Silas Bent, who had been waiting and watching for him a full hour before the time, saw him come, and go, with feelings not easily described. Wicked boy as he had been, this was the first time he had planned to commit a crime actually large enough to send him to prison, and, though firmly resolved to have the money if possible, he

dreaded the consequences of detection, with a nervous shrinking wholly beyond his control. It was not the guilt and shame of stealing, but the confinement and hard fare consequent upon the act that drove him back, while his desire for freedom pushed him on. It was the old battle that has been waged ever since the world was made, between sin and its results, and in which, alas! sin has so often come off the conquerer.

After Farmer Woodman went from the house, Silas saw Miss Trueworthy leave the dining-room, and go up-stairs.

"She keeps the money about her bed somewhere, as all women do," said this boy to himself. "Now what remains is to screw that little chap's courage up, and we have it." Silas snapt his fingers softly but triumphantly, then crept noiselessly away.

The next time the boys met, which they did now daily in a little cave made by the

overlapping of two large rocks in one of Miss Trueworthy's fields, Silas told the boys he had just received a letter from a friend in Boston, who wrote him, a "bran new ship was to sail from there on Tuesday of the next week, and there was just room enough left in it, for three boys; that he might have a berth for nothing, with two of his dearest friends, if he would be there on Tuesday, the day she sailed; but time and tide waited for no man, or boy, and if they were not there, they would lose their chance."

Ned knew the whole was a silly hoax, but Frank listened to every word with a firm belief in its truth. This was Saturday noon, the bundles were to be packed that day, the boys to make sickness an excuse for staying at home on Sunday, and the journey to be begun just after the afternoon church had commenced. Silas and Ned were to come to

Rosebrook for Frank, as Silas knew a short cut over the farm lands where they would be less liable to meet any one; than by the main road.

There was no time to be lost, nor did Frank need any more than was given him. Almost as soon as the boys had begun to tell him of their plans, he had commenced to pack his bundle, up in the dove cot in the roof of one of the barns. This cot was a small room only to be reached by a steep climb along the rafters, or up a very perpendicular ladder, therefore, as neither Aunt Hester or Jonas Holt were any longer young, there was little danger of his bundle being discovered. He took a large, red bandanna handkerchief that had been his grandfather's, and spreading it out on the floor put into it, six handkerchiefs, two shirts, an old pair of pants, and three vests, eight collars, and the tasteful bows for his neck his mother had made him,

four odd socks, his worked slippers, a hammer with a box of crooked nails, a monkey-wrench, a box of bent fish-hooks, a red painted hatchet, a tin cup, and three old forks, with one rusty bladed case-knife. He probably would have doubled the contents, had his time been longer; but even now he found it quite impossible to make the ends of his handkerchief meet, and had most reluctantly to throw out a few things; but these were articles of clothing, he could not have spared the others.

The announcement that the time for starting had actually come, was not therefore received by him with half the surprise that the other boys had anticipated. He went home very much elated over the prospect, and was ready on Sunday morning to feign a sickness, the uncommonness of which gave Aunt Hester no occasion to doubt its genuineness. With Lucy who was always happy to go to

church with her aunt, and Jonas Holt, Miss Trueworthy left Rosebrook, on the ringing of the first church bell, in happy unconsciousness of what was to take place during her absence. She had been gone but a short time, when Silas and Ned came skulking out from behind the barn, and tapped softly at the kitchen door.

Frank was not expecting them so early, and was busy hunting over the pantry for provisions to take with them, when he heard the knock. Like all children who know they are doing wrong, he was very timid, and instead of going to the door, he hid himself behind the flour barrel, and there he would have remained, perhaps, until his aunt's return, if he had not heard the boys whistle, and thus learned who were at the door.

It was a pale little face that opened the door, but no paler than the two it found there; for now the time for the actual com-

mission of the crime had come, both Ned and Silas's courage failed them. Ned was ready to abandon the whole thing; but Silas pushed him rudely forward, called him "a girl-baby," and pretended to be hunting "for his mother's apron-strings." One would suppose this taunt must be worn out, but it never seems to lose its hold on a weak boy; and it told on Ned now, so he followed Silas sulkily into the house, and sat down beside him.

"This is a cur'ous old house," said Silas, after sitting in scared silence a few minutes. "I say, Frankie, I never seed any thing like it afore. Can't you show us round? Where's your room, you sleep in? Let's have a look at it."

Frank was not a little proud of his room, with his own and his father's boyish traps strewn so thickly over it; so he willingly took them up to it. Both boys were loud

in their admiration, and Silas pushed into one room after another, until he came to the one which was unmistakably Miss Trueworthy's. Here he stopped, and looked carefully around.

"I say, Frankie," he said at length, "you don't happen to know now what your aunt keeps in them drawers of hers. Suppose you open one, and let a fellar have a squint inside?"

Frank had looked them over often, when his aunt had been in the room, and had been much interested in the treasures they contained; so he drew them out one after the other, exhibited their contents, then, without much care in replacing the articles, pushed them noisily back.

"She don't keep her money there, now, does she?" asked Silas, innocently.

"No," said Frank, "she keeps it in a little hair trunk under the head of her bed, and

here is the key," swinging a small key which he took from the corner of the open drawer, upon his brown finger.

To snatch the key from his finger, rush to the head of the bed, find the small trunk, unlock it, and make himself the possessor of a roll of fresh-looking bills, was, for Silas, but the work of a moment; he then locked it again, put the trunk carefully back, and tossing the key to Frank, said carelessly,—

"There now, put that up where you found it; this will pay your expenses on the trip, and as it is your father's money, it's better to take it away than to leave it here."

Bewildered by the suddenness of the whole thing, Frank took the key, dropped it into its place, closed the drawer, and stood looking at Silas with such an expression of stupid surprise that Silas grew angry, or pretended he did, to hide other and harder feelings to bear, gave him a violent push

toward the door, and told him to "go along and get his bundle, and not make a fool of himself."

Frank went to the door, but turned then and looked at the drawer, at the bed, and at Silas's pocket, into which he had seen the bills crushed, as if there was something connected with them which he did not understand; but Silas gave him another and a more violent push.

"Git along," he said, "or we'll go without you. Come on, Ned, you and I will be off on the ship Tuesday morning, and he may stay at home and dig taters and weed garden to the end of his days; he's just fit for it."

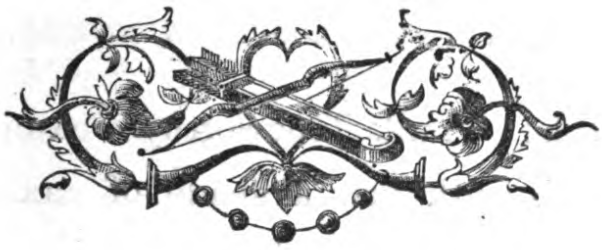
"Come, Frankie," said Ned putting his arm affectionately around the child's neck, "I wouldn't give a copper to go without you. I love you better than I do Silas Bent. Where's your bundle? I'll help you carry it. Come on, that's a good fellar."

Thus coaxed, Frank still in a dazed way allowed himself to be drawn out of the room and down the stairs, through the kitchen where he only stopped long enough to push the luncheon he had been collecting into a paper bag, then out to the shed where his bundle was ready, and then, Ned carrying it, as he had offered to do, the three boys went hurriedly off across the field.

They had gone but a short distance before the knots with which the handkerchief was tied began to give way, and first one thing dropped, and then another, the boys in their impatience to be gone, not daring to stop to pick up a single article, only giving it a kick out of the path with their boots, and leaving it.

They made their way at once to the cave, and pushed over each other rudely in their desire to get in first safe out of sight of any pursuers, for already, and it was not a half

hour since Silas had stolen the money, he began to feel the fear of discovery, which is the first symptom of acknowledged guilt. Ned was no less timid, with a full consciousness of the truth of the adage, that "the partaker is as bad as the thief." When this should come to the knowledge of his home, what would be said? Would his mother, who knew him better than any one else in the world, suppose he could have had any hand in such a transaction? and if she did, would it kill her, as he had read of the guilt of only sons killing other mothers? Short as the time had been, it had been long enough for Ned to think over all this, and to make him in a great hurry to put some hiding-place between himself and his abused parent. As for Frank, he had not recovered from his surprise; he felt himself only hurried away into a strange new life, with a very strange beginning.



XIII.

THE DISCOVERY.

WHEN the church-going party returned to Rosebrook, they were a little surprised not to find Frank hanging on the gate, looking for them. He was so unused to being alone that Aunt Hester almost expected to see him walking into church repentant and well, before the services were through. He was not on the door-steps either, and Max who had run on before them, the most impatient of the party, was seen scenting around the back door, out to the barn, back, and out to the gate, before they were well in the house.

"Frank! Frank Trueworthy!" Aunt Hester called, with just a shade of anxiety in her voice; but no Frank answered.

"Run and find him, Lucy," she said. "I dare say the boy is sound asleep on his bed. Perhaps he is sicker than I thought; he didn't eat much breakfast."

Lucy instantly obeyed. She had none of Aunt Hester's anxiety, and thought more likely he was out in the fields bird-nesting than asleep; so she took it as a matter of course when she found his room empty, and only called down the stairs to say, he "wasn't there."

"Not there!" came back in Hester Trueworthy's sharpest tones. "Then where in the world is he?"

Lucy heard the search going on; she saw Aunt Hester hurrying with a troubled face toward the barn, and Jonas Holt leading in a half-unharnessed horse.

"Where is he?" asked Jonas as the two met.

"Where *is* the boy?" Aunt Hester asked, by way of answer.

"Ain't he in the house?" said Jonas.

"Ain't he in the shed?" said Miss Trueworthy, and neither made direct answer to the other's inquiry; but both hurried together to the shed where Frank was oftenest found when missing.

It was in this shed, which was in truth a second barn, that the dove-cot was, where, as we know, Frank had secreted his bundle.

"He's been a master hand of late to climb up to that 'ere dove-cot," said Jonas, hitching his horse to a post and going at once to the corner of the barn where the cot was, "and as sure as you're alive there's a ladder put up agin the barn this very minute. He didn't use to get the ladder since I told him the heft was too much for a little boy; but he'd

climb along there," pointing to the beams on the side of the barn, "like a squirrel; it was cur'ous to see him! He's up there, and asleep in that hole, I'll bet you! Frank! Frank!"

No answer.

Then in a coaxing tone, "Frankie! You, Frankie, be you up there?"

Still no answer.

"Go up and see what's to pay," said Aunt Hester.

Jonas looked troubled. Several years ago he had a bad fall and a stiff knee in consequence. This knee made it difficult for him to climb anywhere, much more up the steep rounds of a ladder which, to reach the cot, had to be placed in a nearly upright position; he was timid about it, too, which of course made the attempt all the more hazardous; so he stared at Aunt Hester, at the ladder, and at the dove-cot, without saying a word. She understood him and, with a queer smile,

took some long strides toward the ladder herself.

"Seeing you are afraid, Jonas Holt," she said, "I don't see but what I must mount up there. No," as he stepped forward to hold the ladder, "you need not hold it. I," with a decided emphasis on the pronoun, "at least, am not afraid."

"Marm!" said Jonas.

"Stand out of the way! Go and put up your horse, while I look into the dove-cot."

Jonas obeyed, shamefaced enough, but even the shame was easier to bear than the peril of the ascent; as soon as he was out of the barn Aunt Hester, still in her best, Sunday clothes, began to mount.

She had not been on a ladder before for years, and, it must be confessed these years neither added to her limberness nor her courage; still up she went.

"Frank! Frank Trueworthy!" she stopped

to call repeatedly, not doubting in the least that he was in the cot, but sound asleep. It was only when she stood so high that she could push open the door and found it empty that she was convinced he was not there.

She however staid long enough to see that he had been within a short time, for near an overturned box lay a stocking which she had washed and mended for him only the week before. Carefully descending the ladder, she was none the less anxious than when she ascended, nor was there any thing very assuring in the crisp way in which she answered Jonas's inquiry, he peeping cautiously in at the barn door as he asked it.

"Found him? No! You don't think I should have been such a precious fool as to have left him there, if I had, do you? If you are not afraid to touch it, take down that ladder, and put it in its place."

That was the unkindest cut of all, but

Jonas had nothing to do but obey, and Aunt Hester, filled with forebodings which were only the harder to bear because of their dimness, went back into the house.

Lucy was not in the least alarmed. Nothing seemed more likely to her than that Frank had gone off into the woods, had forgotten it was Sunday, and the time of their return, and would be back only when he was hungry, or it was growing dark; she was startled, therefore, when Aunt Hester, pushing her door quickly open, said,—

"Have you found him, Lucy?"

"No, Aunt Hester. Did you want me to look after him?"

"Want you to?" said Aunt Hester. "How on earth can you help it? It's Frank Trueworthy that's gone! Didn't you know it?"

Now Lucy was in trouble. To tell her aunt just what she thought would be to subject Frank to severe blame, perhaps to pun-

ishment. Miss Trueworthy was very strict in all her religious observances, and demanded the same from others, and to do any thing but what was straightforward and simply honest was not in Lucy's nature; so she only colored, and sat still. This was sufficient to fill her aunt's cup of indignation to the brim.

"So, so!" she said. "You can't bestir yourself, even to find your brother, can you? You are all Herbert; I don't believe you have a drop of the Trueworthy blood about you!"

"Please, Aunt Hester," said Lucy, the tears starting into her eyes, "I am afraid he has gone out bird-nesting. May I go to the woods after him?"

"Bird-nesting! Bird-nesting on the Sabbath!" ejaculated Aunt Hester. "Well, that beats all I ever heard! No, it's enough for one to break this holy day; you can learn a hymn."

"Yes, ma'am," said Lucy meekly, but the tears were running down her cheeks.

"There! — there now, don't cry, child; you're doing your duty anyway, and a boy will be a boy, I suppose, until he dies!" With which annunciation of a solemn fact, delivered in a most solemn tone, Aunt Hester went to her own room, to put aside her Sunday gear.

No sooner had she shut the door, than her quick eye detected a change in the position of the bedclothes. Suddenly the thought of her trunk, and the large sum of money she had so carelessly left there, flashed upon her. Had there been thieves in the house, and had they made way with her trunk and the boy too?

But, no, there was the trunk just where she had left it—*locked.* She smiled at her own foolish suspicion, and was more ready than ever to adopt Lucy's idea of the truant

bird-nesting, particularly, as she remembered, her attention turned in that way, that Ned Grisbey had not been in his seat at church.

"It was a laid plan," she said to herself indignantly; "that boy Ned will be the ruin of Frank yet. I wish he was in Joppa!" but in spite of this charitable wish, and the conclusions which had led to it, Aunt Hester did not feel quite easy about the uncommon appearance of her bed. Surely the wind could not have pulled the bed-spread awry in that way, and no thief would have left the trunk with the money locked in it. What did it all mean? Half mechanically, she took out the key from its usual place in her drawer, with a little more perturbation as she noticed a pile of handkerchiefs, which lay near it, was overturned and somewhat scattered. The trunk was speedily opened, and the empty purse left no doubt of the robbery.

As Hester Trueworthy stood there,—still, rigid,—her first thought was not of the money, but of Frank. He had seen the man pay her for the oxen; he had stood by her side as she turned the bills over one by one, and carefully counted them; he had followed her to her room, and watched her while she took the key from her drawer, unlocked her trunk, put the money in it, and put it back in its place; she had hardly thought the boy was with her, at the time, for she was so used to having him follow her whenever and wherever any thing was going on,—but now!

Hester Trueworthy threw herself upon her knees, hid her face in her hands and shut out the light, as if by so doing she could also shut out the dreadful suspicion which would force itself upon her; then she began to pray. It seemed to her there was no one but God to whom she could confide her fear,

no one else in the wide world who was able to help, to direct her. Oh, if she could but hear Him speak, could be sure what to do! Poor Aunt Hester! she had meant to have given ungrudgingly of her very best to these orphan children, and what was the return. In justice to her, it ought to be said that still she did not think of herself, only of the boy. At any rate, whether he had any thing to do with this robbery or not, he must be found; for the first time in her life, she almost blessed what had hitherto been to her the cruel trick of bird-nesting. If Frank was only in the woods,—even if it were Sunday, —and if his hands were full of eggs, what a relief it would be! Lucy must never know what had happened; she would go with her to the places in the woods, where the children had been every day for the last week together; if Frank was there, a slight—oh how slight!—reprimand would do, and they

would return happy. But Jonas must hear all,—not her suspicion of Frank, Aunt Hester felt as if she could tear her tongue out before she could mention that,—but of the robbery.

Never was there a person in a state of more thoroughly dazed amazement than was Jonas when his mistress told him of the theft. If she had hoped for any help from him, she found her mistake soon; so she called Lucy, explained to her in as few words as possible what she wanted her to do, and the two, with Max, went away in the direction of Bent's woods, Jonas watching them with mouth and eyes wide open in astonishment.

"Sunday, and she (meaning his mistress) going a-gadding off into the woods! Goodness gracious, is the 'arth coming to its end!" Jonas would have thought so, had he known all.

It was a lovely Sabbath afternoon. Lucy, peeping now and then under Aunt Hester's sun-bonnet, was glad in its beauty, though she saw no answering pleasure there, as they walked quickly and silently along.

XIV.

A SUNDAY WALK.

WHEN the three boys found themselves safe in the cave under the rocks, they sat down and looked at each other, in a shy and awkward way, without speaking. Silas had the stolen money buttoned up in his pocket, and now and then passed his hand over it, as if to assure himself that it was safe; but instead of any direct reference to it, after awhile, Ned asked abruptly,—

"How did you get off, Frank?"

"Get off!" echoed Frank. "Why, I came with you."

"No; I mean how did you fix the old woman?"

"Who's the old woman?" asked Frank innocently.

"Poor lamb!" said Silas, mockingly. "He begins to want to go back already, don't he! Don't know no old woman now, does he? It's Miss Trueworthy."

"If you mean my aunt," said Frank, with a good deal of dignity for a naughty boy in such company, "I told her I was sick, and she gave me a hymn to learn and said I might stay at home. I most wish I hadn't."

"I did it up better than that," said Silas with a forced laugh. "I tied up my clothes, drank up the milk on the sly, emptied father's tobacco box, hooked his best jack-knife, peeked in at him and my step-marm readin' an old yellar-covered book turn and turn about, snapt my fingers at 'um both softly, turned on my heel, and here I am—good

for as good a time as a fellar wants to have, I can tell you!"

Ned was silent as to the circumstances of his escape, but they were these. Mrs. Grisbey knew that her husband's parish—and that meant the support of their large family—depended upon the minister's Sabbaths, and, though a negligent, and often a very hindering, wife on other days of the week, on the Sabbath she made every thing bend to his interests. The noise of the children was hushed, the meals were promptly served, and cooked with an eye to his choice, and best nutriment; his own personal wants were thoroughly cared for; no minister in any parish in the county went into his pulpit with whiter linen, or more dustless clothes; worn they were in seam and elbow, but neat to an extreme. Between Ned and his mother there had been a perpetual Sabbath war waged. The restraints of one day in seven

were very irksome to him, and he evaded them when possible; this, however, he was seldom able to do; his mother was vigilant and decided. If he did not set a good example, who would? There was no end to what was expected from the minister's only son. It was, therefore, quite a piece of good generalship, in Ned's estimation, when he could stay home from church, or make his escape "for a lark" with some of the roguish boys around the town. He had been planning what he should do on this Sabbath for some time, and determined, as did Frank, to be sick; now, sickness in his case was not so easily managed as in Frank's, whose truthfulness as yet Aunt Hester had seen no reason to doubt. Ned had used up all the sick excuses, unless he was willing to take a large dose of castor oil, which medicine his mother administered with unction. He determined to take this, to throw it away if

possible, but if not, to drain the cup to its dregs; after all, it was a slight penalty to pay for a life-long freedom; so he packed his bundle, carrying it away after dark on Saturday night, sliding down the lightning rod, which unfortunately ran close by his chamber window, thus affording him a chance for many an unknown night escapade. He came whining down in the morning, refused to eat his breakfast, laid down on the sofa binding his head up tight with his handkerchief the moment prayers were ended. He did look pale, partly from the dread of the impending dose, and partly from fear of the consequences of the action now before him, should he be detected, and arrested; this helped him to blind his mother, particularly as when the inevitable cup with larger contents than usual was given him, he drank it without a word. His mother felt a little troubled as she took back the empty cup;

surely he was sick, very sick, if this unusual thing had happened; perhaps he needed a doctor, or that she, too, should stay away from church; of course, against both of these proposals Ned protested.

In these last moments—as he hoped they were—of being with his mother, a choking feeling filled his throat; she *had* been kind and indulgent to him, and he *had* given her trouble, and often pain; just on the eve of committing the greatest sin of his life, Ned was the nearest being a good unselfish boy that he had been for years. His mother came in to his room the last thing before she left the house for church, and kissed him good-by. Ned, who had usually been indifferent or cross on the occasion of such caresses, returned it heartily; she remembered this afterward. When all were assembled in church, Ned let himself as softly out of the house, as if his parents and seven sisters

were there, and crept away, crouching from sight under the fences and walls as he went.

When at last Silas gained the courage to take the money from his pocket and look at it, he was surprised at the largeness of its amount. He spread one bill after another out upon his knee, naming the sum, until Ned, who was a quick arithmetician exclaimed,—

"Three hundred and sixty-two dollars! More than a hundred apiece! It's dreadful, dreadful!"

"What's dreadful?" asked Frank looking around in a terrified way.

"You stop," said Silas hastily gathering up the bills. "If you suppose I am going to do all the stealing, and run all the risks, to share even with you two fellars, you are just mistaken. You'll take what you get, and no more."

"If you don't go even, I'm off," growled

Ned. "A hundred dollars is a mighty little sum for a minister's son to leave his home for, I can tell you, and I won't go a cent short of my third, or"—looking askance at Frank —"my two thirds. Frank will trust me to carry his, with mine. Won't you, Frankie?"

"Yes," said Frankie, "my pocket is full."

"So it is, and so is Ned's," said Silas with an ugly leer. I'm the purse-bearer for the band. We're a band of robbers, you know, now, and this is our first beginning. We'll have a pile of gold as high as the sky before we are through."

"You don't come that dodge, Silas Bent," angrily retorted Ned. "You may just hand us over our part of the money, or take the consequences. Come, Frank, I know where Sheriff Blunt lives, and we'll see whose legs are the longest, his or Silas Bent's."

These boys were fast coming into a noisy quarrel, when they were suddenly inter-

rupted. Hester Trueworthy and Lucy had gone straight to the woods by the same path Frank had chosen, and it was not long before they began to find the articles with which he had strewn the way.

Lucy's astonishment over every one was unbounded. "What could he be taking such things with him, bird-nesting for, Aunt Hester?" she asked again and again; but Aunt Hester's face grew every moment more and more troubled, and she made only evasive answers.

When they came into the woods, Lucy examined each tree upon which they had found nests together; there was no appearance of their having been recently climbed. But here was a tin cup, and here an old screw-driver; here one odd sock, and here, a bunch of strings, every one of which poor Aunt Hester knew had been purloined from her stores. Oh, she would have given half she

possessed, if she could have put them back where they belonged, and know—*know* certainly—Frank had never touched them. So they went on, without finding the boy, Lucy's eyes growing wider and wider in her surprise, until they came to the place where the cave was. Now Lucy had been enjoined by Frank, over and over again, never—let come what might—to reveal to any living being its existence, and she would not have done so even now, but Aunt Hester had been in it years and years before these children were born; so she put her finger upon her lips as a sign for Lucy to be very still, and stealthily approached it.

She heard, before she reached it, the sound of the boys' voices, and knew she had now only to plan a complete surprise. She whispered to Lucy to stay where she was, kindly wishing to spare the child the grief which she herself must bear, then climbed up a

narrow, steep path by which, from the top of the rock, she could look down through a fissure, unknown to the boys. What she saw, we well know; only the quarrel in the midst of which we left them had somewhat subsided, the bills were spread out on the ground, and they seemed greedily gazing upon them. As Aunt Hester saw them, she could hardly restrain a significant grunt, but she did. Frank was standing up, looking down at the others, evidently feeling that in some way he had been wronged; his face expressed much surprise and disappointment.

The aperture which gave entrance to the interior of the cave could not by any means have admitted the tall and rather stalwart Miss Trueworthy, but it did allow the whole of a very indignant face to look in suddenly upon them, while at the same time it blocked up the only means of escape.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," said Aunt Hester, putting her long arm and strong hand out until it almost reached the appalled and shrinking boys. "Silas Bent, Ned Grisbey, I will take my money." Ned pushed what he had eagerly into the hand, Silas turning away, tried to secrete the largest bill in one of his torn pockets.

"It's no use," said Aunt Hester calmly. "I'll take every red cent of it, if you please, Silas Bent, and—you'll take the consequences. There'll be a stone pulled to the door of this sepulchre, which the sheriff only can roll away. Boys, I should wonder at you, if I didn't know you; you've been gallows birds ever since you were born. Ned Grisbey, think of your poor father!"

By this time, Ned, pale as a ghost, was whimpering loudly, but Silas said sturdily,—

"We are only taking what your nephew

there," pointing to Frank, "gave us; he's the gallows bird, *not* we."

"*Not you!*" repeated Aunt Hester, with much scorn. "Every word you say is a lie! Frank Trueworthy, come out of there," and the hand grasped Frank so unexpectedly that it gave him no time to escape, and before he knew what was taking place, Frank found himself outside the cave, alone with his aunt.

"Foolish boy—wicked boy!" said poor Aunt Hester, trying in vain to hold back her tears. "Tell me the truth, Frank, did you take this money from my trunk at home?"

"No, Aunt Hester," said Frank without a moment's hesitation.

"Who did then?"

"Silas Bent," said Frank promptly; "and I was going with the boys to see the world."

"I thought so. Poor little fellow!" and Aunt Hester's voice was so choked with tears, she could not utter another word. After a few minutes of silence, during which Frank did not dare to take his eyes away from her, she struggled with her grief; then, looking once more into the cave, she only said, with a tone of command which few boys, even under more advantageous circumstances, could have resisted,—

"Boys, every cent of that money! Quick now, quick!"

It was at once pushed into her hands. She sat down, and deliberately counted it over; ten dollars was wanting. "Silas," she said sternly, holding out her hand again. Very reluctantly Silas obeyed. She recounted it, then rolled a large stone, the boys could not stir from the inside, before the opening, took hold of Frank's unwilling hand, called Lucy, and without another word led

the children toward Rosebrook. The boys in the cave did not hear the footsteps die away, but they knew they were as truly prisoners as if already shut up in the awful state-prison.

XV.

PUZZLED.

AFTER a few steps, the children drew their hands away from their Aunt Hester, and fell behind together. Aunt Hester strode on in no very amiable frame of mind. She felt wronged, out of her place, uncomfortable in every way. What had she done in her simple life that required the Lord to pour out His vials of wrath so full upon her? Was she a greater sinner than all the other single women in Allston? Had she not cared for father and mother until they need-

ed her no longer? Had she defrauded any one? To whom had she ever sold an article from Rosebrook at other than its honest market value? When had she withheld her hand from paying—even if she couldn't vote—all taxes of Church and State? Had she sent the poor and needy away from her door unhelped? Had she been a backbiter, or a meddler in other people's matters? Was she more selfish than the ordinary run of human beings?"

In this way, Hester Trueworthy, unlike most others, took herself severely to task for what had happened. It was only now and then that she blamed the children or the way in which they had been previously educated. "Children are like animals," she said grimly to herself; "it's how you treat them that makes them good or bad; and when Hester Trueworthy is what she ought to be, the little ones will come right fast

enough!" But now, striding on with her long steps, unheeding every thing about her, even the lagging children, it came to her that she was making a mistake, that the children had a royalty of their own in which they must be taught to govern as well as she in hers. It was a generous mistake, let us not blame her.

Now Frank had been a partaker in an actual crime, and Hester Trueworthy recalled with a pang, how her brother, Frank's father, had been suspected more than once of practices which brought upon him the fear of the law. Had his boy inherited this trait? *Was* the sin of the father to be visited upon this child? and was there no mercy, no relenting of the heavenly Parent from the fulfilment of this awful threat? What *could* be done? Aunt Hester had asked herself this question so many times since the children came to Rosebrook that she had worn herself out

waiting for an answer; but now there was no waiting, the two boys who were prisoners must be dealt with at once.

She could see their parents, but this would involve telling the whole story; and then what of Frank? Was the boy's future life to be branded by this one foolish act; for in spite of her head, her heart persisted in refusing to allow any other name for it. Should she have to part with him, after so short a trial; send him to jail, or, what was as bad, to a school of reformation? Not a pretty trick Frank had, of tone or manner, not a gentle, loving word he had ever said to her, not a kiss which sometimes, though rarely, he had ever given her for some unexpected favor—a ride, a turnover, a big doughnut, or a big bone for Max's dinner—but came freshly back to her. It was a lonely heart they had touched, had even begun to fill.

There was no time to waste; something must be done, and there was not an earthly being to turn to for advice.

"Frank Trueworthy," said Aunt Hester stopping suddenly as she came in sight of the house at Rosebrook, "come here!"

Frank slunk away; he had no mind to meet any punishment, however richly he deserved it.

"Come here," repeated his aunt, not unkindly, but decidedly.

Frank knew he must obey, and went up to her sidewise, putting both hands behind him.

"I suppose it's no use," she said, trying in vain to catch his eye, "to ask you what all this means. Are you a thief? Answer me —yes or no."

"No," said Frank stoutly.

"Not guilty," repeated Aunt Hester, drawing, in spite of her better sense, a long breath

of relief. "Then why did you see my money taken without my leave?"

"We—we—wanted to—to go somewhere," blubbered Frank.

"We! Who are we?" catching at the word.

"Ned and Silas and I."

"Ned and Silas and you," she repeated slowly. "A precious trio! And where were you to go?"

"Out in a big ship to see the world," said Frank promptly.

"Fools! I thought so; Ned and Silas and—my nephew, Frank Trueworthy—*my* boy," with a strong emphasis on *my*. "Now what's to be done? can *you* tell me?"

"I want to go back; I don't want to go home," said Frank looking her boldly in the face.

This roused her temper. "Look here, Frank Trueworthy," she said taking hold of

him with a grasp that made his arm tremble, "you're a naughty, wicked, wicked boy, and must be punished severely. I told you, I forbade you, going with Ned Grisbey, and you disobeyed me; now, for all that I can see, you must go to prison; must live on bread and water; must be punished. Do you hear me?" with a good shake—"must be punished!"

So they went on into the house, she dragging Frank into a large, dark closet that opened out of the unused parlor, locking the door, taking the key, and saying sternly to Lucy who, pale and trembling, but not daring to ask any questions, had followed her,—

"Don't you dare to speak a word to Frank Trueworthy. Go to your own room!"

Poor Aunt Hester! Evidently she was not equal this time to the emergency.

Then she went to find Jonas Holt, to

whom she said, "This is a bad piece of business. I can't see my way through it."

"Marm!" said Jonas.

"Don't say marm; tell me, if you have an ounce of sense in your head, what's to be done?"

Then she sat down on the edge of an old hay-cutter, and waited as if she expected an oracle to open its mouth—but it didn't.

"They're shut up under the rocks," she said after a moment's silence. "I suppose it won't do to starve them; I most wish it would."

"Who?" asked Jonas, opening his eyes very wide.

"Don't be any more stupid than you have to, Jonas Holt." Then she went on to tell him all she knew.

When she had finished, Jonas said,—

"Go tell the minister Ned is there, and

don't say nothing more. Can't have folks a-calling our boy a thief, when it's a put-up job, and he as innocent as a new-born lamb—can't do it, Miss Trueworthy," bringing down his brown fist on his knees, with a loud knock.

"I don't know about your lamb," said Aunt Hester; "he's a naughty, wicked boy, and he's locked up in the parlor closet; but that isn't a bad idea," catching eagerly at any help. "Go yourself, Jonas Holt, and tell Mr. Grisbey—not the minister's wife, but the minister himself—where Ned is. Let him find him there. As for Silas, it don't much matter; he's bound for the gallows anyway, and if he's saved, it will be a miracle and a pity. A not very Christian sentiment in which to indulge on Sunday night," she said, with a conscientious scruple after its utterance; "but make haste, Jonas. If by any means the boys should push the stone away, they would

be out of sight and hearing before Mr. Grisbey could catch them."

Jonas made all the haste he could, but it was not sufficient to please his impatient mistress. She almost pushed him out of the barn as he was crowding down his Sunday hat over his head, then watched him as he went ploughing along up the road, as if he had the large plough and a yoke of his best oxen before him. The truth was, Jonas was working far harder than if he had been afield, and would gladly have exchanged his unpleasant errand for the roughest subsoiling in which he had ever been engaged.

XVI.

CONSULTING DR. CLARK.

AFTER watching Jonas until he was almost out of sight, Hester Trueworthy went slowly and sadly back into her house, into the parlor, and up to the closet door. She expected to hear angry kicks, and calls, such as she remembered used to fill the house when the other Frank had been similarly punished, but all was ominously still. She bent down and looked through the key-hole, not a thing was there to be seen but dense darkness. She tried the latch softly, thinking she had perhaps forgotten in her

perplexity to turn the lock, and the prisoner had escaped, but it was tight.

Walking to the window, she looked out upon a yard full of Deacon Simpson's hens, but instead of rushing at them pell-mell, as was her wont, she only said aloud,—

"I think the good deacon has forgotten to read his Bible to-day, if it is Sunday, for there he would have found 'Love thy neighbor as thyself';" then she went back to the closet, and listened again. The same death-like stillness filled her with unpleasant doubts. Had she smothered the boy? Was he quite dead, or was there yet hope? Turning the lock with such trembling fingers that they almost refused to do their work, she saw Frank lying flat on his back, breathing heavily, but sound asleep; one cheek red with the stains of a jar of currant jelly which stood on the edge of the shelf just within his reach, and grasping in one hand a large

bunch of raisins, in the other as many "company cookies" as his little brown fingers could hold. Sleep had surprised the tired boy in the midst of his petty larcenies, and there he lay with them all confessed, but he was alive, and not smothered! If he had eaten every dainty which this choice store-closet held, it is doubtful whether at this moment even in her heart of hearts, his aunt would have blamed him.

"Poor little fellow!" she said, with a true tenderness born of the relief she felt; and falling down on her knees beside him, the soft kiss she put upon his cheek was a prayer, too, for his best, his everlasting, welfare.

If Mrs. Grisbey, at this very moment wrung with grief over Ned's faithlessness and untruth, could have seen Aunt Hester on her knees, she would have felt avenged! Indeed Miss Hester Trueworthy was a little

ashamed of herself as she got up, stole softly up-stairs on tiptoe, and came back with a pillow which she put carefully under the young rascal's curly head. How like his father he looked, so soundly asleep! "Poor little fellow," she said again, "he's tired almost to death, and no wonder!"

Then, remembering Lucy, and the rough way in which she had sent the child to her room, with renewed compunctions—indeed they seemed hydra-headed, and to spring up everywhere—she went to look after her, and there she was, her head on the window-sill, sound asleep also. Her little cheeks were pale, and covered with tears, and the handkerchief she held in her hand, had been wet through with her crying.

"It beats all!" said Aunt Hester, stopping short and looking at her, "and it's the Lord's day too. It seems as if there never would come an end of it."

But Lucy's grief went straight to her troubled heart, and lifting the sleeping girl from her uncomfortable position, so gently as not to wake her, she laid her on her bed, shut in the blinds, and again tiptoed —a new walk for Aunt Hester—down the stairs.

"They are both safe now, and I'll take a long breath," she thought as she went out on the porch, where she was accustomed to spend the twilight of her lonely Sunday nights. How long ago it seemed since that time! how peaceful and sweet they were! Why had she prized them so little? and would they ever—*ever* return?

All over Rosebrook there lay that soft purple light which comes at no other season—almost, it would sometimes seem, on no other night. The deacon's hens, happily for themselves and Hester Trueworthy, had hopped in the long line she called in her

congregational enthusiasm, "The line of apostolic succession," back into their owner's premises, and there was nothing to disturb the quiet rest of the scene—nothing outward; she did not think, as indeed very few of us ever do, that often it is by these indirect ways—a lovely twilight, a fine sunset, June beauty and June gladness, bird song, flowers, sky and clouds, rain and shine—that God comes near, speaks to, directs, comforts, consoles us. Hester Trueworthy, sitting there on her porch, with the homely nasturtium and the old-time morning-glory climbing up around and shutting her in, was in as direct communication with her Father in heaven as if she had been in her closet with shut doors, and the answer to her troubled cry for help was immediate.

Looking up the long, brown road, hoping to see Jonas coming back, she spied the old, white horse and little sulky bear-

ing Dr. Clark to see some patient. Dr. Clark had been their family physician for years, had soothed her father and mother, peacefully as might be, to their graves; he had snatched her from the very jaws of death twice. No one in all Allston she loved and trusted more. Was there a family secret that had not been for good and sufficient reasons trusted to him, always? What better, safer adviser could she have now? Hadn't she tried the minister, and hadn't he signally failed? So it happened that when Dr. Clark came opposite Rosebrook, there stood its mistress waiting for him.

She held up her hand with a gesture which from any one else might have been considered imperative, but Dr. Clark understood it, and reined in his horse.

"Well, what now?" he said in a gruff voice. "Who's sick? Not you, though you do grow peaked,—Hester Trueworthy, you

age wonderfully of late!" looking her over with professional eyes,—"and not Jonas, for I saw him staving away down the street like all possessed; and not the children, eh?" in an interrogative form.

"Come in, Dr. Clark," said Hester curtly. "It's the Lord's day, if it is most over, and we won't have any more nonsense than can be helped."

"So that's the way the wind sets, is it?" remarked the doctor, getting slowly down from his buggy, but stopping with his last foot on the step. "Is it a case for the little trunk, or not?"

"Let your trunk alone, and come in," said Hester, trying bravely to hide her trouble, at least until they should be within doors.

The doctor fastened his horse, and without another word followed her.

"Step softly," she said, leading the way to the parlor, the doctor coming after her as

noiselessly as his well-trained boots would allow. She led him to the closet, and pointed down at the sleeping boy, who did not seem to have moved since she last saw him.

The doctor stared for a moment in silence, then whispered, "Sweetmeats! Give him a dose of castor oil, as soon as he wakes up."

"Castor oil!" repeated Hester Trueworthy indignantly. "An ocean of it wouldn't purge him clean," then unceremoniously she took hold of the lapel of the doctor's coat, led him back—he with a most quizzical expression on his face—to the kitchen, where she pushed a chair toward him, closed every door carefully, then came and seated herself beside him.

"He's been at your preserve pots; he needs a purgative," said the doctor, without waiting to be questioned.

"Doctor, why don't you tell me he has

a nose on his face?" said Aunt Hester shortly. "The currant jam hasn't any thing to do with it."

"But I tell you it has. Don't you see it all over his cheek? He's stuffed with it—stuffed with it, and raisins, and cake, till he can't stand another thing. Why don't you see his hands even, are full? He needs medicine—a good dose; and, now I come to think of it, give him rhubarb and senna; make it strong; he won't hook your sweetmeats again, soon, I'll promise."

"Sweetmeats!" Aunt Hester answered with great contempt. "Doctor, do you see these?" spreading out the bills, which she yet carried in her pocket, on her knees.

"I do," said the doctor; "and, Hester Trueworthy, I thought you were too good a Christian to be doing business on the Sabbath, and, if you do, too prudent a woman to be carrying all that money loose in your pocket."

"Those are the sweetmeats Frank has eaten;" she answered, her hand trembling as she tried to gather up the money.

Dr. Clark took in the situation instantly, and instead of replying got up from his chair, and began to walk up and down the floor, she sitting rigidly still, and watching him; at length he stopped before her,—

"Tell me all about it," he said gently. "How did it happen?"

Then Aunt Hester told the story, or as much of it as she knew, the doctor walking restlessly, or stopping still before her, as his agitation would allow. When she had finished, he went to the window and began to drum softly on the sash, a trick which his patients knew betokened troubled thought. Hester Trueworthy did not interrupt him, but a great feeling of relief as if at last,—at last,—she had found some one who could and would help, came over her and made

her draw a long sigh. The doctor heard it and turned round.

"It's a bad business," he said. "Those boys, Ned and Silas, are at the bottom of it; but there's something rotten in the character of a boy who will associate with such fellows. 'Birds of a feather flock together.' I don't see my way out of it. You ought never to have taken those children, Hester Trueworthy; you're no more fit to manage them than you would be to control a roaring lion."

"I know it," said Hester with a touching humility that told at once on the doctor's good heart.

"They'll put you in your grave," he went on a little more kindly. "I give you, at this rate, nine months longer to live."

"That's neither here nor there," said Aunt Hester impatiently. "The thing is, what's to be done?"

"Flog him! flog him with a cowhide!"

"Nonsense!"

"Nonsense? Yes, that's true woman. Let me take him in hand then, I'll fix him so he won't want to go with those who steal again. What *did* you want to keep so much money about the house for, Hester Trueworthy? You're too old to be guilty of such a folly; you ought to have known better."

"I know it," again answered Hester, with even greater humility; and again the doctor relented.

"I am at my wit's end," he said after a moment's pause.

"I am always at mine," said Hester gravely. "I won't have the boy called a thief, doctor, and I won't have him horsewhipped."

"No? Did you now, Hester Trueworthy," glaring down upon her, "did you now,—upon your honor,—*did you* give the boy those sweetmeats, to comfort him for his theft?"

"No," said Hester curtly.

"He stole those then?"

"I won't have him called a thief, Dr. Clark. I tell you again, I won't hear it!"

"Then ask advice from some one else beside me," said the doctor, now wholly irate. "He is a thief, and I shall deal with him only as such." He caught up his hat, and was out of the door before Hester could stop him; but something in the pallor and dejection of her face, as she sat there with folded hands, brought him back to her after he had untied his horse.

"I haven't any advice to give now. I am going to old Jim Short; he has had another shock; he'll probably be dead before I get there, but I must go all the same. I'll stop in again when I come back. If the boy wakes up before that, remember the rhubarb and senna,—a strong dose,—it will act morally as well as physically; he'll never for-

get it. I've a great mind to season it with strychnine; it would serve him right."

After which rather savage joke the doctor drove slowly away, shaking his head as in deep thought he was wont to do; but he forgot to leave the medicine.

XVII.

THE PRESCRIPTION.

HETTY TRUEWORTHY, after Doctor Clark left her, busied herself in making preparation for tea. Dinner, or rather a semi-dinner and tea meal which takes its place in New England towns on the Sabbath, had been entirely forgotten in the excitement; but now somewhat relieved by Jonas Holt's message to the minister, and Dr. Clark's voluntary assumption of responsibility, she began to feel hungry herself, and to remember the children, or rather Lucy; Frank had taken care of himself.

While thus engaged, a slight noise made her look around, and there in the door stood Frank, very rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed from his refreshing sleep. His face had a half-frightened look, and in his hand he held the jar of currant jam.

"Aunt Hester," he said, without the least hesitation, "I am very sorry, but I was as hungry as a bear when you shut me up in the closet, and I have eaten every thing I could lay my hand on,—jam, cookies, and—and—I looked for the nuts, but it was so dark I couldn't find them. I'm sorry I've eaten so much; it was so dark I couldn't see, and it tasted smacking good!"

Aunt Hester opened her eyes very wide while he was talking; when he had finished, she said dryly, "Put that jar down on the table, Frank Trueworthy, and go and wash your face; you are as dirty as a pig;" but she had hard work to restrain herself from

putting her arm around the boy's neck, and hugging and kissing him in her joy.

"That boy a thief! Never—thank God, never!"

As he passed her on his way to the sink where he usually washed himself, he stopped, caught up her hand, pinched it in rough boy way, then laid his cheek on it and half kissed it. Had Hester Trueworthy been in her teens, and this kiss the first one of her first lover, it is doubtful whether her cheek would have turned any deeper, or more painful crimson than it did now. What did it mean? Was this boy old enough and wicked enough to try to coax her into a forgetfulness of his crime, by this confession, and these blandishments? or were they the simple, natural outbursts of an untainted child? It would have taken a head much more deeply versed in child-life than Aunt Hester's to have answered these questions, and

that she knew too well to attempt it. She pretended not to notice the caress, while in truth it was tingling through her blood from head to foot.

Pretty soon Lucy came in, fresh and rosy too from her sleep, and smilingly happy; for she had heard Frank's chatter and Aunt Hester's replies before she reached the room, and had concluded that all was well with them.

When they were at the tea-table, Dr. Clark's large frame darkened the door.

They had not heard his sulky stop, and the children stared in amazement at the bulky figure and the big face framed with long white hair that smiled down upon them as he came in.

"So, so!" he said. "The youngsters have waked up, have they? Well, well, sleep's good for tired folks, better than medicine; by the way," turning to Hester Trueworthy,

"I forgot to leave that dose; but it don't seem to be so much needed now. If I can see you a moment alone, I would like to prescribe."

Aunt Hester pushed back her chair from the table with emphasis; somehow it did not seem to her half so necessary to prescribe since Frank's ingenuous confession. She almost wished she had not consulted the doctor, and fully determined, if he insisted on the senna and rhubarb, to throw it away; so she was quite stately,—very unlike the Hestre Trueworthy of an hour before,—as she placed the big rocking-chair for the doctor's accommodation.

He saw the change, and a droll smile played over his face.

"He has you," he said, nodding back toward the dining-room.

"He's as noble a little fellow," incautiously said Aunt Hester, "as there is in Allston."

"Humph!" said the doctor more expressively than politely.

"He brought to me the jar of jam, and told me about the cake and the raisins," said Aunt Hester triumphantly.

"He's a worse boy than I suspected," answered the doctor in a troubled voice.

"Now, doctor, don't be a fool!"

"No more of one than I can help. There are some congenital causes for which we are not responsible," said the doctor with a smile.

"Nonsense, you know what I mean!"

"I know what you say; but, Hester Trueworthy," solemnly, "this boy is worse than I thought; he's been coming it over you,—blarneying you, soft-soaping you. I am positively ashamed of you, you show so little discernment."

This was an echo of Aunt Hester's own suspicion, and she wilted under it at once;

but she repeated carefully every thing that had taken place, but the caress, she could not bring herself to mention that, and the doctor listened attentively; then he got up, and walked back and forth across the room; at last—it seemed a very long time to Aunt Hester—he said,—

"I'll take Frank to ride with me part of the way home. Let him put on his cap."

"But, doctor, you won't—"

"Don't dictate to me, Hester Trueworthy. I have brought up six boys, and there is not one of them I am ashamed of. Tell him to put on his cap, and come—or, stop, I'll call him."

"Frank!" he said, stepping back into the dining-room and laying his big hand tenderly over the little curly head, "your aunt says you may ride with me down to the watering-trough. I ain't as young as I was once, and I need a little chap to unhitch

old Billy's head. Do you think you are tall enough?"

"Yes, sir," said Frank, starting up and looking eagerly in Aunt Hester's face.

She nodded to him her consent, and the two went off smilingly together.

Dr. Clark never gave a very minute account of what had happened; he sent back this note to Hester Trueworthy, roughly pencilled on a scrap of the paper upon which he usually wrote his prescriptions,—

"He's a victim. He thought it was his own father's money. Those boys shall catch it! Give him a piece of pie, send him to bed early,—omit rhubarb and senna,—send him to school to Mr. Short to-morrow (Monday) morning.—T. B. C."

"Pretty well," said Aunt Hester, with a load taken off her heart. "His own father's

money! Well that's not so bad for his morals as for his head; the child must be a dunce. And as for Mr. Short's school, who is to pay the bill, I should like to know? As if the public school wasn't good enough for him? A pretty piece of business!" But in her heart she was so much relieved that she would willingly have paid half she owned in the world for the advice. She then was to give the boy a piece of pie, and send him to bed, because he was "a victim." Who spoils him now? she asked, not without a spark of triumph; but she willingly obeyed, making her excuse for the unusual favor, however, in his having left the table before the pie was cut.

There is no good disciplinarian but must see at once how feeble this way of managing a boy was, particularly when the offence was so serious; surely it will either spoil or make him—depending entirely upon

the amount of material there is in him; but, at any rate, the experiment is too doubtful to bear imitation.

Sunday night, even at Rosebrook where life dragged a little heavily for these children, was a pleasant one. Aunt Hester could sing good old hymns, in a good old-fashioned way, and these same hymns and tunes these children's father had taught them when they were younger and he was purer; indeed strains of these pious melodies lingered with him, as almost the one remaining link that held him from utter outer ruin, until, with his dying lips he feebly prayed—

> "Other refuge have I none,
> Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
> Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
> Still support and comfort me."

To sit in the stillness of this June twilight on the porch, Aunt Hester between them,

and to sing until the darkness hid every thing was to be at home, was almost to be with the father and the mother once more, Max joining the family group with his nose on Frank's unusually quiet knee.

To-night Aunt Hester sang every hymn she could remember, which had in it confession of sin and promise of amendment. It was her way of conveying the reproof she could not conscientiously omit, and had Frank an ear for any thing but the melody, it would doubtless have been one of her excellent indirect ways; but he was a boy, and he was only ten years old.

Jonas Holt returning from his errand was, in his own words "struck all aback," first by hearing the singing as he came toward the house, and then by seeing the three sitting together in such pleasant twilight companionship.

Anxious as she was to hear the result of

his errand, she did not stop the singing, but finished the full list of penitential hymns; then, with an earnest injunction to ask God, for Christ's sake, to forgive them all their sins, she sent the children to bed.

Jonas Holt was milking, making as he did so a queer chuckling sound, when she went out to see him.

"Well, Jonas?" she said by way of question.

"Well, marm," answered Jonas, increasing in chuckle, "the old woman swore at me right and left, and ordered me out of the house."

"Swore! Mrs. Grisbey swear!" repeated Aunt Hester in astonishment.

"Why, no, marm, I don't mean exactly that; but she looked as if she'd like to terribly if she only durst; and she said I lied."

"But what did Mr. Grisbey say?" eagerly inquired Aunt Hester.

"That's just the joke of it. She'd got kind of frightened when she went home and didn't find no Ned, and she'd sent the minister off to see Jim Short, who has had his last stroke, folks say, and there wasn't no way but to tell *her*, and be done with it. Now, wasn't she as mad as a March hare, and didn't she tell me, I lied! But," laughing a loud, obstreperous laugh that was not at all Sabbatical, "I had her there. All I said was, 'The proof of the pudden is in the eatin', and you may fitch him, or leave him, it's all one to me.' The joke is, I came home round that way, and I heard the fellars a-tugging away at the stone like mad, they couldn't move it an inch, nor she can't nuther," and the irreverent man laughed again.

"That's true, Jonas," said Hester Trueworthy thoughtfully. "Mr. Short will die to-night, and Mr. Grisbey will stay there

until all is over. Mrs. Grisbey can't move that stone, if *I* did put it there, and she won't dare to ask any one to help her. You must go, Jonas Holt, and do it yourself."

"Couldn't put me to a job that I should like better after she had a tug at it; let her sweat over it for awhile, and I'm your man. Lied, did I? We'll see, which on us?"

Serious as the occasion was, Hester Trueworthy could not repress a smile at Jonas's exultation, nor could she banish a wish that, hidden, she might be a spectator of the scene; but she went quietly back to the house, and, seating herself in her chamber window, waited with much curiosity to see what would happen. Night had come on, stars were thick in the unseen sky, soft, gentle breezes, laden with the fragrance of fragrant June, filled the delicious air, and in the silence only the hum of insect life was to be heard.

XVIII.

JONAS TRIUMPHANT.

IT was long past the good orthodox time of going to bed on Sunday night in Allston before Jonas Holt made his appearance again at Rosebrook. Then Hester Trueworthy was relieved from the anxieties she was beginning to feel, by hearing the same chuckle that she had heard when he left, come on before the tramp of his heavy boots. This at once assured her that all was right, and she went out to meet him.

"Done it up brown," he said as soon as he saw her. "Didn't hear nothing about my lying after she had a tug or two at the

stone. Wasn't she huffy though? This the way of't, Miss Trueworthy. When I got there, she was a-talking to the boys; so, as it wasn't proper to interrupt a sermon, I just stood still—kind o' hid behind the trees, you know—and waited. Says she,—

"'Edward Grisbey, you've broken your mother's heart! You'll bring her gray hairs down in sorrow to the grave! Push, I tell you, push! I can't move this great stone an inch!'

"Wasn't those boys hush, though. You could have heard a pin drop!

"'You needn't pretend you are not there! Ned, dear Ned, come out! I won't blame you any more than you richly deserve. How can you, Ned, and it's growing dark! You know your father always has prayers early Sunday night!'

"Not a blessed sound, and then she got her mettle up.

"'Very well,' she said tartly. 'You can spend the night there if you prefer. Your father will come for you to-morrow morning. Who's there with you?'

"Bless those boys, if they didn't keep still in spite of her; so up she gets, and makes a great fuss as if she was going away, that brought them down, and Ned called out, as scared as a big fellar had any need to be,—

"'Mother! I say, ma!'

"'So,' she said, wheeling round as if a snake was arter her, 'there you be, be you! Well, I knowed it all along! Now push—*push*, I say!'

"So she pulled, and the boys they pushed; but never an inch moved that are stone. You must have been Goliath himself, when you put it there, Miss Trueworthy. I guess the boys began to whimper, for I heard her say,—

"'Yes, that's like you! Cry like a baby,

now, will you? Edward Grisbey, I don't believe you will ever get out; you'll have to die there!'

"Wasn't it a howl then! I most wonder she didn't hear me laugh; but she didn't, and I let her tug on till she'd groaned about enough to pay me for the names she'd called me, and then I just stepped up.

"'Mis' Grisbey,' I said, kind of mild-like, 'perhaps I can help ye. I'm used to lifting stone.' Didn't she jump though? and, if you believe it, marm, she kind of turned her back on me, as if she didn't mean to be helped anyway. I'd most a mind to come away and leave her, but I thought if I did maybe you'd be for sending me back; so I edged along up to her, and says I, 'Mis' Grisbey, you be sure now them boys are in here. 'Cause if they're not, I'm sort of in a hurry, and I'll go 'long.'

"'Go 'long,' says she tartly; and off I went,

in t'other direction; but pretty soon I heard,—'Mr. Holt! Mr. Holt!'

"I stopped short. 'Be they there, or be they not?' I said crossish-like.

"'I am afraid they are;' and then she kind of broke down as if she was a-crying, and I can't never stand that, noways, it cuts me up so to hear a woman take on, and I turned back.

"'Maybe, Mis' Grisbey,' I said, sort of comfortin'-like, 'it ain't so bad now as it seems. We'll let um out, if you think they are in there. I don't want to heft that big stone for nothin', you know; it might break my back. If you say they are there, we'll have a pull at it.' You see it was kind of ugly in me, but a man don't like to be called a liar for nothin'. And what do you think the crittur — I mean Mis' Grisbey — said, tart enough now?

"'If they are there, Jonas Holt, you'll

know it when they come out. Move that big stone! Move it at once, I say!' kinder stamping her foot.

"'Pears likely I shall, Mis' Grisbey,' says I; 'but when a man is a-going to 'ndanger his life for ye, it's kind of perplexing not to know it's necessary'—"

"Oh, Jonas Holt!" put in Aunt Hester, laughing slightly.

But Jonas didn't mind her, and went on,—

"'Be they here, or be they not, Mis' Grisbey?'

"'They be,' says she, whispering e'eny just.

"'Wall then, seeing I ain't a liar, I shall feel a little more courage for the lift. Heave ho!' and over it went, terrible easy for the way it looked.

"'Now come out, Edward Grisbey!' said his ma, kneeling down before the hole with her hand all ready to grab him. But not he; Ned had felt that hand afore, I 'magine by the way he shirked it. There was a kind

of wild animal fight inside, one boy pushing the t'other to come first, I thought; but as they didn't seem to make no great headway, I put in my hand, and I got hold of a leg, and after a terrible squalling and kicking, out came Ned.

"'What did I tell you, marm?' I said, sort of triumphing-like. 'Is that Ned Grisbey or some other fellar?' But she's plucky, now, I say for't, she's plucky. She just took hold of his coat collar, in a way that would have made my head go way down into mine, and she yanked him along pretty considerable smart. They went out of sight before I could say Jack Roberson. Then, when they had fairly gone, I said, says I,—

"'You, Silas Bent, come out there. You and I have some accounts to settle up by good rights,' and out he came—and—Miss Trueworthy—I think things are about square. The next time them boys, ary of them, med-

dle with our Frank, I think we shall know it. So I'll be getting to bed, I guess; it's kinder late, and the work will drive to-morrow."

"Good-night," said Aunt Hester kindly. "You're my right hand man, Jonas Holt."

We must do Hester Trueworthy the justice to say, that, instead of going to sleep, she staid awake and meditated quite as much upon poor Mrs. Grisbey's grief as upon her own. There was no love lost between these two women. Mrs. Grisbey saw in Hester Trueworthy only the woman whose rejected lover she had married, and Hester Trueworthy saw in the minister's wife only the mother who failed in most of her motherly duties, and the wife who never seemed to remember her husband. Two capital failings, not easily forgiven by a determined, healthy woman like this maiden aunt. She made no allowance for the wear and tear of nerve consequent upon small means and a

large family; unjustly she demanded from this hindered life the full fruition she demanded from her own. Yet to-night she was sorry for her, and tried to think of some way in which she could help her; nor is it to be laughed at if all her endeavors settled down upon sending to her minister's wife a fine, large ham which, hanging uncut in her chimney smoke-house under the eaves, would furnish many dinners for the growing, hungry children. Only on one point was she positive,—at whatever risk, all intercourse between Ned and Frank must stop at once; it was not to be allowed another day. It was natural to slide out of pity into stern resolve, and Monday morning was the latest time for her to begin to put some of her rapidly formed plans into execution. First and foremost, Mr. Short's school. Aunt Hester was not an aristocrat; she believed as firmly as any other New England woman in liberty

and equality; therefore since the establishment of this expensive and rather private school she had frowned upon it. She never went to one of its Exhibitions, though probably she was the only woman in Allston who voluntarily staid away; she did not even go to her window when the select boys, with a full band hired from a neighboring city, drove by, banners flying, band playing, and boys shouting in true boy way. And now Dr. Clark, than whom she recognized no better adviser, told her Frank must go there to school; must go at once. The expense was large; but what did the good doctor care for that? "*Must go*," was all he had to say.

Yes, he *should* go, that was the result of her night's vigils. If things went wrong with him in the future, she would not have herself to blame, but Dr. Clark; so as a result of this decision, Frank was told after breakfast on Monday morning, to get his

cap, and come with her to see about his school.

"School!" the boy repeated in open-eyed wonder.

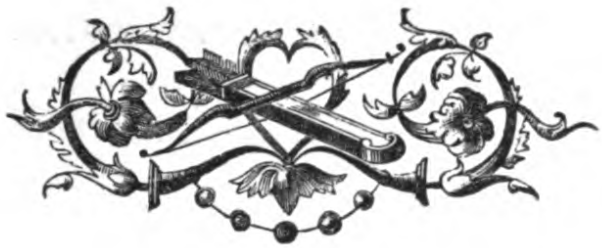
"Yes,—are you deaf, Frank Trueworthy? —school! I've had enough of your idling around with bad boys."

To her great amazement, Frank burst into a loud, hearty cry.

Nothing he disliked more than the confinement of school, and in truth he was not over fond of his books. When his mother had sent him there, which was but seldom, he had idled, and played truant, and never been found out. He had pleased himself with the thought that, now he had come to Rosebrook, all that drudgery was over, and he was almost a full-grown farmer at once; but here it was again, and something in his aunt's face assured him that this time the "fun" of the thing, for

lorn as it had been, was over. He must go, and must behave himself.

Just what the effect of the treatment he had received was upon him, it would be difficult to say. Dr. Clark had shamed him into a strong feeling that he had done a mean and unmanly thing, to take from his aunt, instead of protecting her in what she had; he had also shown Frank, in a simple way, how little claim, either on his own or his father's account, he had upon any thing at Rosebrook, and how kind his aunt was to let him off without a flogging; but to-day Frank felt so injured and insulted by the prospect before him that he almost wished he had been sent to prison, or, better still, had succeeded in running away.



XIX.

GOING TO SCHOOL.

MR. SHORT was busy making preparations for his morning school, when a very decided ring of the door-bell arrested him. Now if there was one thing more than another which the teacher disliked, it was to be disturbed at just this hour; those who knew him always avoided doing so, and these who did not, scarcely liked to venture on another Monday. This morning he was not a little astonished to see Miss Trueworthy coming in, hauling along (for it was little else) her nephew after her. He had heard of her opposition to his school, on ac-

count of its supposed aristocratic tendencies; but, as she had no sons to send, had troubled himself very little about it; now here she was, and the boy in hand made the meaning of her visit plain.

"Mr. Short," she said with very little ceremony, "here is this boy, my nephew, Frank" —she hesitated a moment, then added bravely, "Frank Trueworthy, he must be educated. Will you do it?"

"Sit down, Miss Trueworthy," said Mr. Short with a smile. "Let us talk a little about it. Do you want him educated for a farmer or a profession?"

"Neither," said Aunt Hester, shortly. "I want him educated to be a Christian gentleman, and the rest may be as it will be, it's in other hands than mine."

"I thought he was an orphan," said the teacher.

"He is; but I've read of a Father in

heaven who has a special care of orphans, Mr. Short."

"Oh, yes!" said Mr. Short, nonplussed, "I asked because we like a little notion of what a boy is to be, in order to adapt our training to that. If I am to fit him for college, I shall train him differently from what I should if he is to own Rosebrook."

"That's neither here nor there," said Aunt Hester impatiently. "I want him taught to do his duty, his whole duty, honestly, fearlessly, truly. I want him to make what God has given him—his mind, his will, his heart, his temper, his loves, and his hates—his servants, not his masters; that's the kind of education I want him to have, and that's what I have brought him here to you for. I want him master of himself, and I want him to have the discipline in books and government that will make him so. It's learning for this purpose, more than for

any other; the rest will take care of itself. He is ten years old, in days, but—" she stopped, looked at the boy then at the teacher, and left her sentence unfinished.

"I think I understand you," Mr. Short said slowly, "and I am not sure that I am the right man. When you come to talk about teaching a boy Latin or Greek or mathematics, I think I can do it; but when you come to ask me to take a child of whose proclivities I know nothing and make of him a Christian gentleman, I confess I feel very weak in attempting it."

"And for that very reason," said Aunt Hester, her face lighting up with her own honest smile, "I am the more willing to give him to you. Take him on trial, and I hope for all our sakes," looking down with a tender look into the boy's troubled face, "I hope he will be worthy of you, and repay you for the pains you will take with him.

He shall be in his place at nine this morning, and good-day to you."

"Good-day," said Mr. Short, accepting the responsibility with a reluctance new to himself, for his school was barely remunerative, his wants large, and a new pupil heretofore a joyful event; but never had one been placed under his charge with the requirements which Miss Trueworthy had made for Frank.

"I can but try him, as his aunt suggests," he said relating the conversation to his wife. "The boy is not stupid, but looks as if coming to school were equivalent to coming to numberless floggings. I never saw reluctance more plainly written on any face."

He had a cheerful little wife, and she always knew how to suggest the right thing in the right place, so he was not at all surprised to hear her say,—

"I wish the majority of parents were half

as sensible as Miss Trueworthy; she should have had a dozen children of her own."

"Then probably she would not have been half as sensible," said her husband with a smile; and so the thing was decided.

Frank sulked all the way home. Singularly enough no notice had been taken of him personally; Mr. Short had nodded to him when he came away, but what he wished, or he did not wish, seemed to have been left entirely out of the question. Now it was "Frank do, or do not." His mother had planned and consulted with him about his own matters from babyhood, and he very much preferred it. Then, his name had been given as Frank Trueworthy, and his name was Herbert; his mother always called him so, and wrote his name so, and so he would be called, Aunt Hester or no Aunt Hester.

"Now, Frank Trueworthy," said Aunt Hes-

ter when he was leaving for school as she put his cap on to the back of his head, trying her best to arrange it as a bonnet is worn, "I'll have no playing truant, and if I hear of your being with either of those wicked boys, Ned or Silas, I shall punish you on the spot. Do you hear? *I shall punish you!*" drawing the words out, and uttering them very slowly. "You understand me?"

"Yes'm," said Frank, nervously jerking his cap into its proper place. Then he went out, Aunt Hester wisely having sent Lucy with him to be sure he reached the school-room in time.

It was a very out-of-sorts boy that she left at Mr. Short's school-room, and saw stared at and unceremoniously knocked about by each boy that passed him while he stood irresolute on the step.

At length, one kinder than the rest stopped to speak to the little pale-faced stranger, then

put his arms around him and gently drew him inside the door.

Lucy's eyes by this time were so blinded with tears that she could see no more, and she went back to Rosebrook the most broken-hearted little girl there was in Allston.

"Oh, why did God take her dear mother and leave them to Aunt Hester! it was dreadful, dreadful!" and she could not bear it another hour. When she reached home, Aunt Hester saw a face all tear-stained, and it annoyed her.

Wasn't it enough to have this trouble with the boy, without having the girl a big cry-baby?

Lucy was not much comforted by the sharp request to go about her morning work, and "keep her eye out for the hens in the yard; she must do her own and Frank's work, now he had to be sent to school," and the first thing Lucy did was to forget them.

Busy in dusting the parlor, where the blinds were always kept closed, she was recalled to her duty by her aunt's voice calling, not in its pleasantest tone,—

"Shew! shew, there! Shew, I say!" with a sound of stones or sticks of wood flying about the yard in a startling succession. One unfortunate intruder had been caught in the very act of flying over the fence, and its screeching would have made one think it knew it had fallen into the hands of a mortal enemy. Then there followed an animated conversation between the captor and captive.

"So I've caught you at last, have I? The worse for you."

"Cut–cut–cutdardy cut!" in tones of woe.

"No, you needn't try to get away. I've got you, and I shall keep you. What do you mean by coming over here every day? I'll teach you to stay at home," said with some

impressive clutches which drew forth a more desperate—

"Cut–cut–cut–dardy cut–cut–cut–!" fading away into a half inarticulate hen-moan.

"You needn't pretend you're killed. There, now, poor biddy—poor biddy! Get in there, I say," dropping it down into a close box made for a prison, "and the next time you'll remember it, or I'll cut your head off."

"Cut–cut!" very mournfully now, but broken off by a handful of tempting yellow corn which fell over its head into the cage.

"Lucy," called her aunt's voice the next moment from the kitchen.

Lucy tremblingly went to the call.

"You're not worth sixpence about the hens; take this water out to the cage," so Lucy went, and her aunt, watching her from the window, drew a long, deep sigh.

XX.

PUBLIC OPINION.

FRANK thus happily disposed of, Aunt Hester thought it was time to turn her attention more directly upon Lucy.

So far since the child had been with her she had been only of secondary importance, owing partly to her desire to do what was pleasant to her aunt, and partly to a natural shyness which kept her from ever intruding herself in any way upon notice; but in spite of this, Lucy was a positive character with the strongest of likes and dislikes and a determined will. Unfortunately for all, there was so much about Frank's misdemeanors

which was painful to her aunt, that she concealed the particulars from Lucy, only saying to her in a general and rather curt way, "that the boy was naughty, very naughty indeed, and deserved severe punishment;" so Lucy began to look upon Frank as a sort of martyr, and in her heart considered him severely and unjustly treated. This made her even more shy, a shyness that looked, and was, very like sullenness; so she went about the few tasks Aunt Hester gave her to do in a dogged, unwilling way, looking and feeling unhappy. Hester Trueworthy had begun to think her almost unamiable, certainly unlovely, and to turn to the boy who, if he was not as good, was much more pleasantly demonstrative and affectionate. She therefore hailed with joy the opening of the High School, and the consequent opportunity to have her out of harm's, and also—sad to say—out of her own way.

Lucy was informed in so decided a manner that it admitted of no reply, even had she a wish to make one, that, a few weeks from the day Frank had gone to Mr. Short's, she was to enter school.

Lucy was too old and too mature not to know that her education was incomplete, and must be continued somewhere; but the constant trouble in which she seemed to herself to have been since they came to Allston, the utter strangeness of place and people, not a girl in town having so far been to see or spoken to her, made her dread the school even more than Frank had; nor did it make the least difference to her, that Frank grew every day happier at school, and came more and more into favor at home. At any hour she would willingly have gone away from Allston, from Rosebrook, from her Aunt Hester, and from the dreaded school.

The morning for the opening of the school

however came quickly, and dressed in her neat mourning, Aunt Hester standing with her own bonnet on ready to go with her, and "settle her down," she was startled by her aunt's saying in her most decided way,—

"No Herbert about your name while you live here, remember, Lucy Trueworthy."

Lucy did not answer, but quietly made up her mind what to do. She ran to her room, and returned with a sealed letter, which she put into her aunt's hand, saying,—"Read that please, Aunt Hester. My mother told me to give it to you, if it was ever necessary."

Aunt Hester with a frown on her face, broke the seal, and began to read the following,—

"My Dear Sister:

"You will doubtless be surprised, perhaps pained, by the change which I have made in the children's name. I did not tell you, be-

cause I wished if possible to spare you the pain the circumstances which required the change would give you, and I shall now only state them in the briefest manner, trusting entirely to your judgment and affection to do as you shall think best.

"Poor Frank—your Frank, as well as mine committed a forgery which would have sent him to state's-prison, if the seeds of death had not already been doing their work. In consideration of this, the gentleman—the same who is to write to you about our children after my approaching death—refused to make it a legal matter; but, as it was widely known, he made it a condition of his forbearance, that the children should not go into life burdened by a disgraced name. You surely will not think this a great penalty to pay for the comforts of home which surrounded the last days of your brother, and smoothed his passage to

the grave; and I hope you will also feel less hurt by the change, when you remember that this gentleman was an entire stranger to the family, and did not know how True and worthy the name has always heretofore been considered in the state where Frank was born.

"Hoping this will seem plain, and that God will help you bear the deep affliction it will bring to you, I am

"Your affectionate and dying sister,

"HELEN."

Lucy watching her aunt as she read the letter, saw her turn pale, and stagger to a seat, then after a few minutes, during which she looked fixedly at the floor without speaking, she said in a voice which was so changed it made Lucy start—

"Go to school, Lucy Herbert, and God help you, poor child!"

It was a very sad young face that went out, between the full-blossoming, old-fashioned lilac bushes, on its way to school. If parents could only see, could only feel, how surely this curse of their sin will be visited upon the child, what a different world this would be! All the gladness and beauty of the glad June morning had died out of it for this young girl. What could it be that her mother had written and her aunt been so stricken by? Was it the same thing that had killed her mother? for young as she was, Lucy had been old enough to see it was grief more than disease, that had made her an orphan;—and what connection had it with her name? Lucy was only eight years old when her father died, and her name was changed. It was to her only one, the least of the many mysterious changes which that death had wrought; and it was now because she could not in obedience to her mother's

strict injunctions, take back the old name, that she had delivered the letter with which she had been charged; but this was not a cheerful preparation for the strange school life.

The ordeal of entering school proved more formidable even than Lucy had anticipated. Going up the broad steps that led to the main entrances, little groups of boys and girls gathered together, hit each other's elbows, and whispered—she felt sure about her. Some of them giggled, and spoke loud enough for her to catch now and then the words,—"Old Maid Trueworthy's girl! Wonder what she's come for?"

"Ain't she stuck up, 'cause she lives at Rosebrook? Too good to speak to any of us, eh? Well, I wouldn't live with that old post for all her money. Why, don't you think," and then the voices sunk into a low whisper, Lucy failing to hear any more.

When she was standing in the large hall, not knowing which of the many doors to open, or where to go, crowds of children passed, staring at her, but without offering aid, nor could she summon courage enough to ask it. At last a girl a little larger than herself came to her, and said with a sweet smile,—

"You are a stranger here. May I show you the way into our room? My name is Susie Loomis. My father and mother know your aunt. I am so glad you have come to school; I have looked at you every Sunday and hoped you would."

Then she took hold of Lucy's hand, and the two went together up into the third department; before they had reached the upper flight of stairs they were sworn friends, and Lucy had no more trouble to anticipate in the High School.

Aunt Hester stood at the window and

watched her niece until she was fairly out of sight, then she sat down with her letter and her shame, to take and adjust them into her life as best she could.

It seemed to her that all God's waves and billows were going over her, and the Rock,—the higher Rock,—in her poor floundering way, she was for the time utterly unable to reach. That her brother had fallen, she well knew; but she hoped, with the stout resolution to believe so natural to her, that he had not fallen very low; that he was more unfortunate, perhaps more sinned against than sinning.

Max came and put his nose upon her hands; he knew she was in trouble, and he offered her all the sympathy he could. With great reverence Hester Trueworthy took this brute answer, as an answer to her troubled cry, and said, stroking the animal's head gently,—

"Poor old Max! Good Max! good Max! You won't fail me, let come what may! Good old Max!"

Whereupon Max wagged his head significantly, and rubbed his nose with a loving touch again and again upon his mistress's cold hands.

Aunt Hester had to bear among her many other troubles, a consciousness that since the Sunday when Frank had left his home with Ned and Silas a change had come over the manner in which her old aquaintances in Allston treated her. To be sure, she had never been in the habit of having any intimate friends. Rosebrook was too far out of town, and her own life too busy, to allow much visiting; but she had a few persons whose friendship she valued, and with whom she was always in the habit of exchanging pleasant words. Latterly, on some slight excuse, these had hurried away

from her; and old Mrs. Bronson, only the last Sunday, had said to her that she "was growing old terrible fast, and she was afraid she had made a mistake when she took those children; children was bad enough for their born parents to bring up, but when it came to one tooking um who hadn't never had no sperience, then there was ginerally—*ginerally*," with an ugly emphasis on the word, "mischief enough to pay." Mrs. Bronson was Allston's gossip, and her impressions were the pulse of the town's feelings and words, often it almost seemed in some mysterious way of their thoughts. Hester Trueworthy utterly despised and seldom listened to her; but she was just in the excited state that made any opinion expressed with regard to her relation to the children, no matter from whom, a matter of importance. Joined to this, was Mrs. Dean's, her most respected, and in a way beloved, friend's cau-

tion,—"Hester Trueworthy, don't expect old heads on young shoulders, and don't pull the reins too tight; use silken reins, Hester, so they won't feel them. No use in making them restive; they will be too much for you if you do. Gently, gently; get their hearts, make them love you if you can, or, if you can't. Love is the greatest helpmeet in the world."

Poor Hester Trueworthy! No person in Allston was so thoroughly convinced as she that there was very little, if indeed there was any thing, about her for children to love. Mean what she would, do what she would, and that too in the gentlest and kindest spirit, every thing seemed turned away, leaving her only trouble and disappointment.

When she looked in the glass, which she did more and more seldom every day, she was startled to see how old and gray she grew.

"I look older than my mother did when she died," she said pityingly to herself, "and I want ten years of being her age. Why, Methuselah will be a baby to me, if I keep on!"

XXI.

THE THUNDER SHOWER

LUCY and Frank had not been long in their respective schools before they became conscious, in an indistinct way, as such things generally come to children, of being objects of a certain kind of pity to their companions. It was shown to Lucy after the first few days when her sweet face and gentle manners had begun to recommend her to the children, in a kind of pitying petting, which was most agreeable to her. She heard two little girls say once, as she was approaching them,—

"Oh! here is that poor Lucy Herbert; how

dreadful it is that her parents are dead and she has to live with that awful cross old aunt of hers!" To which the other replied,—

"Yes, my mother says it must be dreadful, dreadful! and I must be just as kind as I can to make up; so let's go and meet her, and put our arms around her neck; we do love her, you know."

Lucy was puzzled. Was her Aunt Hester so cross and disagreeable that every body knew and talked about it? That she was not happy at Rosebrook, Lucy knew full well; but that she was badly treated, and needed just the kind of sympathy the children seemed disposed to give her, she was not so sure of; however, as no little girl has ever yet been found who does not covet all the love she can receive, so Lucy from her happiness in its bestowal, began to wonder if there was not more truth in what was so often hinted to her than she had supposed,

and to look upon good, kind Aunt Hester with averted eyes. With Frank the boys were outspoken. They told him openly that he "was a fool to be thumbed around by an old maid; that if they were going to be 'bossed,' it should be by some man; they should just like to see the woman who would try to tie them to her apron-string."

Strange how brave and Samson-like many boys will be when they find a believing and attentive listener, and Frank both listened and believed. So pert and disobedient did he become that, before he had been a month at school, Aunt Hester waylaid Dr. Clark, and with tears in her eyes told him of it. To her no small surprise, and distress, the doctor only answered testily,—

"Well, well, you're too impatient! Rome wasn't built in a day. You draw the reins too tight, and you're looking all the time for perfection. Boys will be boys, and you bet-

ter not make a fuss about it. Let the child alone, and don't pick at him."

"Don't pick at him!" What did Dr. Clark mean? Was she in the habit of picking at the boy. She despised it in others. Constant fretting and fault-finding made more wickedness than it cured, she was sure of that. Had she then, when she thought she was kind and careful, when she meant to do her best, her *very* best, had she made a lamentable failure? Was it that for which people looked at her so coldly, and almost shunned her? Aunt Hester's trouble grew with these long, summer days, until she hardly knew what to do with it. Yet, very much to her credit be it said, she relaxed not one jot or tittle of what she considered her duty toward these children; indeed her sorrow made her gentler, and even kinder. Lucy was conscious that she was saddened, but never gave a thought to

the cause; and as for Frank, he was only in a hurry to eat the nice things she piled so generously on his often emptied plate, do as few of the "chores" which she required of him as he could, and hie away down into the fields where Jonas Holt was at work, and he could set his squirrel traps, look out for woodchucks, or rifle birds' nests at his pleasure. Aunt Hester was only a hindering commodity, often very much in his way.

Things were in this situation, when an event occurred which had long been looked for in Allston.

Five miles higher up, on the river which turned Silas Bent's grist mill, there was a large factory town. The water-power of this town was made by a dam so huge in its proportion that the otherwise quiet river was forced by it to do a great work. It had often been noticed and commented upon, that after a sudden and violent rain, this quiet river

became more turbulent than many larger streams in the vicinity; and also that at such times the whole fabric of the dam seemed to sway in a threatening manner. Still, as time went on, and there came no bad result from the motion, people living around the dam became familiar with it, and almost forgot the dreadful possibilities which were suggested; indeed, with a recklessness which was surprising, the building of the houses of the operatives in the mills, by one of those sudden freaks which so often occur in the midst of a varying population, took a sudden turn; the builders forsook the safe, high hills which surrounded the narrow valley where lay the bed of the river, and settled down close as might be on its green and cheerful banks. Here, within the last five years, had risen scores of small, neat houses; trees began to cast quite long shadows up, and down, the pretty yards before them, and many a well-kept garden

gave evidence of the care and thrift of the busy operatives. Land was at a premium, and there was some talk of a store, and of building a small chapel for the benefit of this thriving new settlement. In the meantime, the rains came and the dam trembled, and the mill-owners and the dwellers under the eaves of the mill grew more and more unmindful of any warning voice that was uttered.

One Saturday afternoon, it was in the middle of a hot July day, Lucy and Frank had asked leave to go for a long afternoon in the woods which skirted the sides of the river for miles between Allston and Munson. Aunt Hester had consented reluctantly. She had many things which she wanted the children to do at home; but she, well disheartened, hardly had courage left to carry out any plan even for their good, so she reluctantly consented.

Something however in her troubled face touched Lucy's heart. She came back after they had started to kiss her aunt, and ask if she was quite willing to spare them.

"Quite willing," Aunt Hester had replied, after a little struggle. "Only, if there is a shower, run in somewhere, so as not to get wet, and keep Frank with you, Lucy; whatever happens, keep him with you."

Lucy promised, and the parting was pleasanter than that of many a previous Saturday afternoon.

Toward night, Aunt Hester saw the clouds drawing themselves together slowly toward the north-west. Once or twice she left her work, and went to look out of the window, then as the long dark lines began to streak up toward the sun, she went to find Jonas Holt, and talk with him over what was needed to be done, in order to make every thing close about the farm, in prospect of a hard

shower, and wonder, with him to answer her, where the children were, and if they would be wise enough to come home.

Jonas, who had been a most troubled observer of the wrong way in which home life was going, was shy in his answer. He knew how much was waiting for Frank to do, "work only fit for a boy, and not worth a man's time," as he often told Aunt Hester; and he knew, too, that the additional care of the children, the cooking to be done, and the steps to be taken, wore on his mistress, who was no longer young; he thought the children should have been kept at home, and been shown there was something in life besides play; still he loved them dearly, for they had clung to him in their estrangement from their aunt, and like Hester Trueworthy he was divided between his wish for their best future and their pleasant present; so now he only grunted, looked up at the

dark clouds, looked round at the lowering sky, then managed to say,—

"If they weren't children, now, they'd took to their heels a half hour ago; but there's no telling what they'll do. Jist as like as not, they be arter some jimcracks, and won't know nothing about it until they get wet to their skins. But they ain't sugar or salt, Miss Trueworthy, and if I was you, I wouldn't worry, not a grain. Wetting never hurts young folks, and they'll hide away somewhere, you may be sure."

"But the thunder shower, Jonas! and they in the woods!"

"Yes, marm, it's bad, it's kinder dangerous, I 'low; but, arter all, I've been hid under trees many a time when it rained cats and dogs, and the thunder nearly drove me mad, and the lightning it ran round just like fiery snakes; but here I be, Jonas Holt,

never was struck, and, I hope to marcy never may be."

"I hope not, Jonas," said Hester Trueworthy absently.

There was evidently nothing to be done. She would willingly have gone out in search of them, but she knew well these long woods, and how impossible it would be to find them. Surely, this unnecessary worry was owing to her being tired; she would go in and rest quietly. But there was very little rest to be found; the muttering of the thunder was changed rapidly to deep and angry growls; the clouds were now one great, dark, rolling mass, coming up, up, until it seemed to her they were settling down directly over the tops of the woods, which she could only dimly discern in the gathering darkness, and knew were the trees under the shelter of some of which the children must bide the issue of the storm, whatever it might be.

Pretty soon great drops began to knock against her window panes, then came a furious wind, then sharp and sudden flashes of forked, purple lightning; then, such thunder as she had never listened to before, and the rain poured in torrents.

Jonas had taken refuge in the kitchen after he had seen every thing safely disposed of on the premises, a rude kind of chivalry made him feel that his place was with his mistress in any extremity; so Jonas and Miss Trueworthy sat waiting until almost an hour had passed, and there was a small rift in the clouds, when, as if the solid heaven had fallen, there came a crash, a roar as of a world of water suddenly let loose, a mingled rush and din, and Aunt Hester thought she heard cries of human agony.

XXII.

THE MILL—DAM.

HESTER TRUEWORTHY and Jonas Holt, after waiting a moment to see if the noise would not cease, finding it only grew louder and louder, went to the outer door. The rain yet fell in blinding torrents; great black clouds, rent and ragged, lay low in the sky, lightning in curious zigzags playing over their dark faces; the wind had lulled, but in its place was heard a curious moaning, now strong, and now broken by a crash.

"It's the end of the world, sure," said Jo-

nas, coming close up to his pale and anxious mistress."

"Don't be a fool, Jonas Holt," was her tart response. "It's the dam at Munson! It's given way at last. Heaven help us!"

"Marm," said Jonas in a dazed and helpless way.

"Don't stop to say marm, Jonas Holt; put the horses to the large wagon—get ropes, chains—hurry, man, hurry, there's lives in peril!"

Jonas almost mechanically obeyed. Sharp hailstones filled the air and drove in his face as he went toward the barn.

Once he stopped, the wind had cut across the corner of the barn, and fairly lifted him from his feet; but Hester Trueworthy saw his irresolution, and shouted to him in a voice so shrill that even the storm could not drown it,—

"Go on! Go on, Jonas Holt!" and Jonas

went on, clinging to every thing upon which he could put his great, strong hand.

Miss Trueworthy began at once to make her own preparations. She gathered together every warm article of covering she could find, with an indefinite idea that she was going to save drowning people, and should need it. She even remembered to stow away a large basket of provisions, with housewifely forethought. She took coils of rope, and strong string, and put in two soft pillows. Jonas was not a little surprised, when he came urging his unwilling horses to the door, to see all these articles ready, and Hester herself standing under a dripping umbrella waiting for him.

"I wouldn't," he said. "Jist hand me them 'ere traps; it ain't no place for a woman, now it sartan ain't!"

"Put these in, Jonas," she answered only, then getting in herself, they drove in the

teeth of what seemed to be a second shower toward the river.

They had nearly reached Allston, before they met a living person; then it was Silas Bent who was hurrying, pale-faced, to his mill.

"Yes, the dam was down," he said, "and all Allston were rushing up to Munson; houses were going and—and—" but Hester Trueworthy did not wait to hear him finish his sentence.

"Go on Jonas Holt," she called loudly; "put on the whip! Hurry! hurry!"

"They beent at Munson, be they?" asked Jonas, the rain stifling his voice as he spoke.

"Put on the whip!" was his only answer, and the horses, warming to their unaccustomed task, dashed rapidly on.

And now in spite of the storm, the streets began to be full; men, women, and even

children, with terrified faces were hurrying along the road toward Munson. Some women had forgotten to put on their bonnets, or protect themselves in any way from the shower which pelted them mercilessly. One mother had a baby, wrapped up in an old blanket shawl, in her arms, while her own shoulders were wet through their thin covering; another was dragging along two little children, one in each hand, the children crying piteously from fright. Both of these mothers had husbands who worked in the Stone Mill, that overhung the dam. *Where* were they now?"

Hester Trueworthy stopped her wagon, and bade Jonas lift into it the mother and the baby, then stopped again for the mother and the two little ones, taking the largest child into her lap and wrapping it up carefully in her ample waterproof; then again for a poor old man who, bent and crippled by

the rheumatism, had forgotten the cane, without the help of which he had not stepped for years, and was hobbling along with a speed he would have thought impossible an hour before.

There was Mrs. Crane whose whole family of sons and daughter were in one or the other of the mills at Munson. Aunt Hester recognized before she had overtaken her, and though there did not seem to be another inch of spare room in the wagon, she could not resist the mute appeal of the agonized face as she was driving past.

If the road had been much longer, the wagon could not by any means have supported what the large heart of its owner required of it; indeed, had it not been for the little child crooning to itself in the great comfort it had, cuddled up in Hester Trueworthy's ample lap, she would have trusted to her own stout powers of locomotion, and given up her

place to the many needing ones she passed now helplessly by.

As they drove on, her eyes were trying to penetrate every nook and corner, made by rock or tree, where children would be likely to hide away; but in vain; neither Lucy or Frank were anywhere to be seen, and the people in the narrow streets were increasing in numbers, the roar of the water grew louder and louder, voices as of men in mortal peril, and of others in deadly earnest, began to be distinctly heard; and, suddenly as it had come up, the rain ceased, the great clouds rushed away as if panic-stricken over the desolation they had caused, and out upon a deep blue sky the sun shone cheerily.

Every one took heart. It was almost to these hurrying, frightened wayfarers as if an audible voice had spoken to them words of comfort and hope.

As Miss Trueworthy came in sight of the

river, such a scene broke upon her eyes as she could never forget. The river, generally only a narrow stream, moved by the rushing water of the dam was now like an angry sea. It had overspread the low lands lying along its banks on both sides, and tossed and tumbled with waves crested by foam, and luminous with the direct rays of the great, overhanging sun. Tossed about, almost like bubbles, were houses and barns, wrecks of the dam, wrecks of mills, pieces of fences, gates and, most terrible of all, here and there fighting its way among this *débris*, a human form, corpses, too, were being flung on shore; children with the beautiful young life just crushed out; women with their work in their hands the cruel water drowning them at their tasks; old men who had no warning, but passed over their narrow remaining strip of life at one short stride; sick people, in their beds, never to rise again; weak people

whom fear had paralyzed,—all these were on the water, floating unresistingly, or struggling fiercely and vainly for life. Some of these had been in houses so lightly built that the first crush of the water had rent them in twain; some had come out, flying for safety, and been caught, wedged in among the floating timbers, and killed instantly. But after all it was more of the living than of the dead that the crowding spectators thought; for in the houses that were tossing hither and thither, from upper windows, and even from the roofs, clinging to reeling chimneys for support, the living were calling frantically for help. Mothers held their children from open windows, and begged and prayed some one to catch them when they tossed them out. One man let himself from a balcony, and hung by his hands over the seething waters until he could hold no longer, then dropped with a groan which the as-

sembled crowd echoed back, and was seen no more.

So great was the confusion and dismay that there was in reality much unnecessary loss of life, and to those waiting this loss seemed the only one worth trying to avert, though thousands of dollars in valuable property was going too, for amid the panic-stricken, the mill-owners were not an exception; strange as it may seem, the first and most sensible mode of relief that was carried into practice, came from Hester Trueworthy and, under her direction, from her man Jonas Holt.

The long ropes and chains she had brought with her were put into instant use, and Jonas was sent out—tremblingly there was no doubt, but too accustomed to obey that voice to utter any protest—upon floating timbers, or on a bit of wedged machinery from which he could throw a rope or chain to those

who in the water still retained self-possession enough to catch it firmly in their benumbed hands.

Then rafts were put quickly together, and temporary bridges were attempted to be made, in order to reach the floating houses; but the trouble was, in this land-locked town, to find men able and willing to manage them. Many a man that day owned to himself for the first time in his life that he was an arrant coward; while to others, this hour of deadly peril was their birth-hour of a noble heroism which they would carry with them to their graves.

The few there were of this stamp ventured much, ventured bravely, and the shouts which went up as one after another of the rescued ones were helped on shore, were the least of their rewards.

As the night began to come on, even the late darkness of a July night, Hester True-

worthy heard her name called repeatedly from among the crowd.

"Here I am," she answered, stepping from the place where she was rubbing and feeding a half-drowned girl.

"Your children are in that house yonder," pointing to an old workshop that had drifted away among the others, and was caught and wedged in between two ponderous beams of the dam on one side, and an overturned house on the other. The three seemed to form a sort of bridge, touching the land on the side of the beams which had been driven deep into the ground, and remained there.

Along over this perilous passage made by the upturned side of one of these beams, a person with steady nerves, cool head, and intrepid courage, might walk, probably, in safety to the shop.

Hester Trueworthy asked no qnestions, but, with lips firmly set and face deadly pale,

made her way without an instant's delay to the spot designated, Jonas Holt staggering along after her, fairly overcome by the stress upon body and mind to which his mistress had ruthlessly subjected him. Poor Jonas! he had not a drop of hero blood in him; he was only faithful, and given, to an unusual degree, an almost dog-like instinct that would lead him to obey the one he had set in authority over himself. He heard something now about children, saw Hester Trueworthy beckon imperatively for him to follow her, and went.

When they came in sight of the floating workshop, Aunt Hester saw two children's faces looking out from the open door which had been made, as is common in a carpenter's shop, from the second story.

They were alive and unharmed then! It gave back to her the control over herself of which the thought of the dreadful possibili-

ties had deprived her, and followed by the crowd the new peril had drawn after her, she came to the side of the beam, so much of which was water covered, and stopped.

XXIII.

HESTER'S TRIUMPH.

HESTER TRUEWORTHY, as she stood there taking the possibilities, more, the probabilities, of a venture over that narrow, water-tossed bridge, was closely watched by others.

Not a man among them all would have gone. The children were strangers; even their father, with whom many of them had played in boyhood, was almost forgotten, and with so much deadly peril around them, what daring they had, they thought had better be reserved for a more pressing occasion.

Even the mothers there, with all the developed instincts of maternity strong within them, were at once conscious of a doubt, whether had their own little ones been in the shop, they should have attempted to save them in any other way than that of appeal; these children were doomed; it would take but a few blows from the heavy *debris* that was swiftly coming down upon them to shatter the lightly-built shop and crush them to death amid the ruins.

While all this was passing through the minds of the gazers-on, Hetty Trueworthy only gave herself the wise delay required for whatever cautionary measures could be taken. She had drawn with her one of the ropes she brought from Rosebrook; then, only saying in an every-day way to Jonas Holt who, close behind her, was ready to follow wherever she should lead, even to that dreadful watery death,—

"Stay there, Jonas Holt," pointing to a spot near by on the banks, "and don't you move an inch unless I call you. Hold this end of the rope!"

Jonas took his post, and no power on earth could have stirred him from it, which it would have been possible for him to resist.

Then, without one look behind her, she went down on the slippery, slanting beam, with a firm step and an earnest, piercing, silent cry for help, for the life of those little ones; as she did so, up from the crowd rose a shout. It was short, and quickly stilled by their breathless anxiety. As she heard it, she stopped, half turned, waved her hand backward as a farewell token, and then again, with slow and cautious steps, went on, Jonas uncoiling the rope as he felt her pressure upon it, and thus affording her a security without which she soon found her passage along the beam would have been impossible.

As soon as she was near enough for the children to hear her voice above the roar of the many waters, she called,—

"Lucy! Frank! Stay where you are; I am coming!" And come she did. The last few steps were rather a sharp incline, but fortunately the beam had lodged on a platform built with unusual strength, in order to support lumber for the carpenter's work, and a rough railing surrounding it offered her a support to which she could cling and draw herself up. She entered the shop through the swinging, leaning door, and had both children in her arms, thanking God audibly. Not a moment was to be lost; just above them, tossing about at the mercy of the wild waters, was coming a large spiked arm of machinery, that if it struck the shop, it could not withstand. To get them out of it, anywhere, even if it was only upon the beam, was to gain at least a reprieve, and kissing

them, almost as if she were taking a last farewell, she said,—

"Little ones, Aunt Hester has meant to be kind to you, and only kind; you must forgive her if she has not, and—kiss me once more—and say—do say, you would have loved me if you could."

"Dear Aunt Hester," said Lucy, putting both arms around her neck and kissing her tenderly, "dear Aunt Hester!" But Frank only burst into a loud cry. The terror into which for the last few hours the boy had been thrown, had proved too much for him; he would hardly have had a word of affection even for his own mother. Still he kissed his aunt, and putting a very cold and trembling hand into hers, clung to her. To cross alone had been venturesome enough, but to return over the same dangerous pathway with two children, seemed, as it was, doubly perilous. It was obvious that they

must go together, and that a misstep of one, would be the death of all.

Fortunately for Aunt Hester, she had been reading only a short time before the way Swiss guides ensure safety to those they conduct over perilous mountain passes, by means of a rope going from one to the other. If the building only would remain where it was for even a short time longer, she could fasten one end of the rope to the railing of the platform, and while Jonas, with several men who, now seeing a way, were ready to help, held the other end firmly, they could cross clinging tightly on to it.

"Lucy," she said quietly, "you must go first. Take firm hold of the rope, look at Jonas, and walk carefully. The water will come over your feet; but don't be afraid, it won't hurt you, don't look down, look across, and God keep you my darling!"

Lucy gave one frightened look before her,

then, perfectly understanding what was required, with Aunt Hester's firm hand steadying her until she was safe upon the beam, and had tight hold of the rope, she went a few steps, and stopped, waiting evidently for the others; but Frank for a time could not be persuaded to run the risk; the cold water into which his feet sank at once, sent a chill to his heart; he shrank back to the peril of all, until Aunt Hester, with a terrified look at the now rapidly approaching beam, caught him in her arms, stepped bravely down with him, and slowly and carefully, now and then saying a word of praise and encouragement to Lucy, who walked before her without faltering, bore him to the shore.

No sooner had they put their feet upon the dry land, than there went up another shout,—a hearty shout of appreciative triumph.

Surely Hester Trueworthy was recognized at last!

The rope was cut quickly away, and this was hardly done before down upon the shop, with a force it did not for an instant resist, came the great arm. A shudder passed over the crowd; but Hester Trueworthy hardly noticed it. Every thing else was lost to her in one deep, grateful burst of thanks to Him who had held even these turbulent waters in the very hollow of His hand.

And now night was settling down fast upon this scene. Many homes which when that day broke were happy and prosperous, were gone forever. There was weeping and wailing around the streets of the devoted town: fathers and mothers with drowned or missing children; children with drowned or missing parents; old and young, all suddenly—almost as it were in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye—made in some way desolate. Hester Trueworthy sent Jonas home with the children, charging Lucy to have supper and go at once to bed, and Jonas to return with all he could find of food or warm covering; but she remained, working hard all night, tired and wet as she was, among the sufferers. Many in Munson had known her personally, and others had heard of the maiden lady who forced to take children that did not belong to her, had treated them cruelly. Under any other circumstances, Hester Trueworthy would have found herself with the cold shoulder turned toward her as decidedly in Munson as in Allston; but to-day, through all of this dreadful afternoon, who had equalled her in daring, in tender care, and in almost princely almsgiving? Who had saved those same children, and by what an act of dauntless heroism! The story of the rescue had flown

through the town with all the exaggerations it would naturally receive at such an excited time, and for the first and only hour in her life, Aunt Hester found herself the object of hero-worship.

It was in the gray light of dawn that she left Munson for her own home. The water in the river had poured down with its wrecks, until it had spent its violence over the large reach of land it covered. When the sun broke on the next day, it was almost like a quiet summer sea, if you except the singular burdens stranded along its course.

She was very tired, and, moreover, she was conscious, that a chill succeeded what seemed to her burning fever. The wet clothes had not dried much during the damp night, neither had she taken any of the preventives she administered so freely to others; but she was never sick, and gave no thought to any consequences that might follow her

prolonged exposure. To reach home, assure herself that the children were really there, safe, was what she longed for, and never had Rosebrook been so dear as it was when her tired horses and tired driver stopped the wagon before its door.

The early sun was just rising; she could rest before the children would wake, and need their breakfast; so she sought her bed at once and, to her own surprise, went directly to sleep. When she had slept profoundly for hours, she started suddenly. Lucy was standing by her bed, calling her. She did not know what it meant for a moment, but looked strangely around, and Lucy seeing the look and supposing it was one of reproof for the adventure of yesterday, said quickly,—

"You told us to go in somewhere, if it rained, Aunt Hester, and we were in the woods, and did not see the shower until it

began to thunder, then we ran into the old shop, and while we were there it all happened!"

"God be thanked!" said Aunt Hester reverently. "I will get up. Make the fire, Lucy," and then she tried to rise, but it was to be many a long week before Hester Trueworthy was to leave that bed again, and, in the meantime, she was to go down to the gates, and wrestle with the angel of death. People who had maligned and distrusted her, were to learn even a little more of the royalty over which she had so resolutely reigned.

XXIV.

SICK UNTO DEATH.

A MORE desolate house for severe sickness to come into can not well be imagined. Two young children and an old serving man, all accustomed to feel a firm hand guiding them, to have suddenly the reins dropped, and to be left to go hither and thither, without a word, as was now the case at Rosebrook, to have sharp necessities that needed instant and sharp remedies, and no one to apply, or even suggest them, was to be in a most deplorable condition.

Lucy after waiting for some time for her aunt to come down, went again to her room,

and found that she had sunk into a heavy sleep, from which she did not dare to wake her. She stood silent by the side of the bed looking at her, pale, with her mouth a little open, and dark rings under her eyes, breathing heavily too. With an undefined dread of something wrong, she went back to the kitchen, and began to busy herself in getting the breakfast. It was already a late hour for that meal, and Jonas had put a troubled, hungry face several times inside the door, to see what such an unusual delay could mean.

When he came again, Lucy said, "Aunt Hester is sound asleep, I don't dare wake her up, again."

"Sound asleep!" repeated Jonas. "Wall, now, I have lived here twenty-five year come next March, and never knowed the like afore. Sound asleep! it beats all!" Then he went away, but was soon back.

"I say, Lucy," he said, "you better go up and take a look at her; it ain't natural now, it sartan ain't."

So Lucy went up, and found her aunt awake and trying to dress herself; but the busy, tired hands for the first time refused to do their work, and with something very like a groan she sank on the side of her bed, just saying,—

"Jonas Holt! Send Jonas to me!"

Lucy hurried down, and in a moment Jonas, so much frightened that he knocked his hat on to the back of his head instead of taking it off, came stamping up, making however a most ludicrous attempt to crush the creak out of his big cowhide boots by stepping on their square toes.

"Mis' Trueworthy, now, marm, what's to pay?" he said standing in the door, and nearly filling it with his ample frame.

"Jonas Holt," she said, and even then her

voice seemed strangely changed to him, "take the horses to the river and tie them tight by the rope—don't get them near the beam, that's coming down you know; and move those rocks up behind the barn; you can feed the boys then, when you feed the chickens, and—and—" sinking her voice into a whisper—"Don't let them get hold of Frank. You can hide him up in the pigeon cot, if they come after him,"

Then starting up, and looking him full in the face she said crossly,—

"Jonas Holt! what are you standing here for? Why don't you go at once and see to your work? Have you milked this morning? and—and eaten your breakfast? or did you give it all to the sufferers at the dam?"

Jonas Holt had stood open-mouthed, without making any sign while she was speaking; now, he turned abruptly on his heel, cleared the stairs at a few bounds, said to

Lucy as he passed through the kitchen, "Your aunt is as crazy as a loon; don't neither you or Frank go nigh her. I am a-going for the doctor," and away he went, the children running out after him and hiding in the barn.

When Dr. Clark came to Rosebrook, there was not a sound to be heard or a person to be seen. He was alarmed by the stillness and emptiness, as he quickly fastened his horse, took out his little black trunk and entered the house. Not a room in it but he knew well; so he went straight to the one where Hester Trueworthy was tossing, now wide-eyed and restless, on her bed of pain.

"Well, Hester Trueworthy," he said, as she looked at him in surprise, "I must say for an intelligent woman you are doing a very foolish thing. Why didn't you send for me before? What business, I should like to know, what kind of business, have you to be sick

without letting me know about it in season to stop this thing? Lie down now—and here, don't fidget so; let me have your pulse."

"Dr. Clark," said Aunt Hester trying to assume a more orderly position than that in which he had surprised her, "don't make a fool of yourself, and don't come where you are not wanted."

"Not wanted," said he, with what he called his dry laugh, "I dare say not; but somehow I am hardened to that. Now Hester Trueworthy, I am going down-stairs for ten minutes; when I come back, let me find you properly in bed, or I shall put you there."

"You'd better try it," answered Aunt Hester jollily. "Wouldn't you with your big hands make a nice lady's maid;" but the doctor went down-stairs, and the sick woman, under a fortunate freak of obedience, took off the clothes she had attempted to put on, and

with a great sigh of relief, threw herself once more upon her bed.

When the doctor came back, she had a little more realizing sense of her situation, and said to him quietly,—

"I believe I am a sick woman, Dr. Clark. I have not the least idea what is the matter with me; but if I am in for it, or if I am going to die, you must see me through and—and—do look out for the children; they couldn't be much worse off than they have been with me, and I meant—I did indeed, doctor—I really tried to do my best! God forgive me, that I have failed!"

These were the last rational words Hester Trueworthy spoke for weeks.

Dr. Clark answered, "Nonsense! Nonsense! Put all that out of your mind, and go to sleep like a sensible woman. The children have worried your life most out of you, and the dam has finished it. Now take this;

don't push my hand away, down with it. You needn't set your teeth; I forced them open once when you were a baby and I can do it again if there is any need of it. There," as she swallowed the dose, "that's well. No talking; I am going to drive after Betsy Day, she's at liberty, and she'll see to things until you are about again.

Hester Trueworthy made no reply, she sank back on her pillow and fell instantly asleep.

Dr. Clark left the room shaking his head slowly as was his wont, when he was alarmed about a patient. "She may pull through," he was saying to himself, "but it's a chance; and not a kith or kin to care for her!"

Seeing the half-eaten breakfast in the dining-room, he hunted for the children, and found them hidden in the barn.

"Go in children," he said encouragingly.

"Your aunt is asleep now, and I am going to bring round a good woman to see to things. You're old enough to be a little housekeeper, Lucy. Keep your eyes open, and move along as you did when she was round. Don't be afraid, it will all come right, I hope; and tell Jonas Holt, I depend upon him."

Poor Jonas! one would have thought he was not much to be depended on if he had been seen after he came home. It was as if his right hand had been cut off, or his right eye plucked out, to miss the familiar face, and the familiar snubbing, seen or heard, every half hour in the day; but he meant to be dependable, and in a certain way no one would have been more so.

In a short time, Dr. Clark came again, bringing Betsy Day with him. Betsy was the head nurse in Allston. To have her in case of sickness was considered by the good people there to be a greater assurance of

recovered health than any council of physicians; but she was a nurse after all, and sometimes it seemed as if all the peculiar traits of this peculiar class were centred and increased in her; but this was where she had not, as she would have here, absolute control. She was now to be, for a time, mistress of Rosebrook; the children, and Jonas Holt, having nothing to do but obey. Fortunately, she was more capable of filling this position than many others. She was orderly, economical, prompt, and, unless crossed, in the main, good-natured. She had moreover, a love for children, born from the scores of the helpless ones she had fed and trotted from the first hour of their existence; and while she believed in prompt and unquestioning obedience, let the command be ever so onerous, still she was seldom unreasonable, and had besides a pleasant voice which made the mandate more acceptable. She had not

been in authority a day before Frank minded her with an alacrity he had never shown toward his Aunt Hester.

As for Miss Trueworthy, she was so soon lost in the bewilderments of a brain fever, that she neither knew nor cared what took place around her.

"It's all the anxiety, and the worry, and the dam on the top of it," Dr. Clark said in answer to the many inquiries which were made about her. "I don't know how it will end; Betsy Day and I shall do our best, and the rest is in the Lord's hand. 'Man proposes, but God disposes.'"

When Dr. Clark used that phrase, every one knew that the event was even more doubtful than he chose to allow, and the reaction with regard to Hester Trueworthy grew apace.

All the particulars of the rescue of the children in the mill-dam disaster were told

over and over again, and not only these, but every kind word and deed of Hester Trueworthy's through that eventful afternoon and night was heralded from Munson to Allston, and from Allston back to Munson, until Aunt Hester would have been entirely unable to recognize herself in the heroine. Suddenly this lone, quiet woman, whom few knew and still fewer felt the slightest interest in, became a wonder. It was perhaps well for this wide-spread popularity, that its object was unseen and unheard, so the public could idealize her at their pleasure. Even Mr. Grisbey preached a sermon on the text, "I was a-hungered and ye gave me meat," in which he touched with a rather unsparing hand upon the late incidents, and ended by commending "the noble sick sister who had so long been an ornament to her church and to her town, to the tender mercies of an ever-protecting God."

Mrs. Grisbey made a few sharp criticisms upon the sermon to her husband after their return home; but as they were alone in the study, it did not much matter; it was only what he had expected.

And all the time this exaltation was going on, the object of it, tossed, weak, and fretful as a little, sick child, on her uneasy bed, Betsy Day alone turning her hot pillow; Betsy Day giving her food and drink; Betsy Day petting and scolding her, as if she were indeed the sick baby that she seemed; and Dr. Clark coming in and going out with the same look of care on his face, and wholly unrecognized by the unconscious patient.

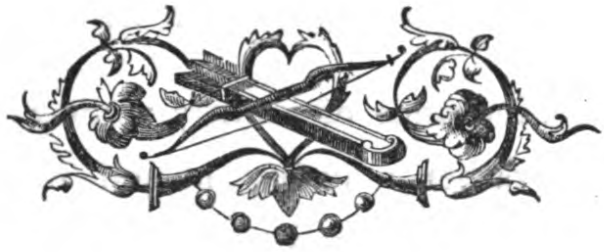
At last, however, there came a morning when he was accosted with,—

"Dr. Clark, *what is* it?"

"It's all right," he said quickly, his face beaming with joy, but the tears starting

into his eyes. "Hester Trueworthy, my old friend, I am right glad to see you back!"

And then she smiled feebly, and tried to lift her hand toward him, but she only stirred it, and he lifted it for her, and held it in a grasp so tender and gentle that new life seemed to pass from him to her, and the eye she turned inquiringly up to him had back its old sweetness, the sweetness he thought of its glad young life; and so he went out of her room, and said, "Hester Trueworthy *will* live," and Allston told it to Munson, and many hearts were made glad.



XXV.

HOME AT ROSEBROOK.

HESTER TRUEWORTHY'S active life came back slowly to her. When she began first to sit up a few minutes, then to have the children come in and out of her brightened room, it seemed to her, almost as if she was born again; and when one day Jonas Holt made his appearance at her door, and said, rubbing his eyes with the back of his big, brown hand,—

"I'm glad to see you gitting round agin, I sartan am," she felt as if she owned Rosebrook, and Jonas Holt, and the children, indeed a whole new world. For a time, she

bore the hindrance of a tardy recovery quite patiently, rather amusing herself by Betsy Day's eccentricities, and tricks of ownership; but the day came, when she began to rebel against the many restrictions with which the wise doctor and nurse surrounded her, and one by one, with leave or without, to assume her wonted cares.

During all these weeks, the comfort Lucy was to her, no words could tell. The child had learned during her sickness more of her aunt's true worth than she would have done in years, perhaps, of the unwilling, half-rebellious life she had been living. She devoted herself to the convalescent, with something of the beautiful tenderness she had shown to her mother through her long sickness, and as for Aunt Hester, she clung to the child with a fondness touching to see.

It was now August; the days were hot and dusty, the grass, so green when Hester

Trueworthy took to her bed, as she looked again out of her window was burnt by drought, and all her broad acres of ripening crops told her how the weeks had marched on, doing their work, wholly unmindful of her absence. Jonas Holt had faithfully done his part, not a neglected thing met her eye; but then it must be remembered that eye had a more softened medium than before through which it looked. Now she even saw the truant roosters lead in their train of hens, crowing triumphantly, and shaking their wings in her pale face, with very little excitement; to be sure, Max had in some marvellous way been trained when he was at home to keep the yard clear. She could never do it, hard as she had endeavored to for years; but Frank had succeeded in a few weeks—it was little short of a miracle to her! Her flower garden, the one pet of her long, lonely life

over which she had lavished so much of her uncared-for love, she found in the nicest order. Her stately rows of dahlias were already lifting their gorgeous heads, aflame with the rich autumn hues; golden coreopsis, purple, white, red, pink, ruby, maroon asters; long stems heavy with particolored, gay gladiolus; yellow lilies, than which there are none blossoming of richer fragrance; beds of deep-dyed pansies, and flaunting petunias,—all nodded a happy welcome to her as she looked down upon them. Dear old friends they were every one! and their interchange of silent greetings, who else might know!

Not a weed in this little garden! Never, even in her prime, had Aunt Hester kept it in so perfect a condition; surely Jonas Holt was developing a value far beyond any she had ever dreamed of his possessing, so she thought wonderingly until one evening when

Dr. Clark called her to the window, pointing downward to the garden, with his long finger, but without a word.

There knelt Frank, clad from head to foot in a coarse pair of overalls, which he had drawn on carefully over his nice clothes.

"That's the boy for you!" said the doctor, gleefully rubbing his hands together. "Took to it, like a duck to the water; has been out there working like a hero every night, rain or shine, since you've been sick; and if there's a flower garden in Allston that can beat it for neatness, I should just like to see it! Hester Trueworthy," stooping down, and whispering in her ear, "that's the boy you saved! Do you hear me? *That's* the boy you've *saved!*"

Hester Trueworthy answered not a word; but when the doctor looked in her face, he saw her lips were trembling.

"He's done it all," he went on in a very

cheerful way. He only had to be allowed, not sent. I saw him once stealthily picking out some weeds; he hid them under the grass when he saw me coming, but I called out to him,—

"'That's right, my boy, have them up, every one of them. Your aunt never let one grow there as big as a pin. Now, sonny, I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll keep that bed clean,—mind, *clean*, I say, no other person shall touch it; it shall be yours. I'll tell Jonas Holt, and all of them; only you must wear overalls, or when your aunt gets well I shall hear of it. Come, Frank, is it a bargain? Because if it is, jump into my chaise and we'll have those overalls here in less than no time!' and the boy jumped in—and—there's your flower-bed. Now, Hester Trueworthy, suppose, instead of that—look at him, see how neat, and handy, and thorough, and how happy he is—suppose, just suppose,

when we were all carping at you, you had given up, and put him where so many would, to have rid themselves of him, in a boarding school, where would he have been now? I tell you, you have done well. You're a pattern woman, after all!"

Not a word, still, spoke this convalescent; she only gazed down into the garden,—at the flowers, at the boy,—and then she folded her thin, white hands together, almost, Dr. Clark thought as he looked at her, as if she were silently and very gratefully returning thanks.

And so, with busy children—busy at school and busy at home—the work of restoration went bravely on, until one day Aunt Hester summoned courage to tell Betsy Day that her reign was over, and that she would assume her official position in her own royalty once more.

Betsy Day had found it a snug harbor of

rest. She was not ready to leave; but she knew as her patient's step grew firmer, her hand stronger, and her mind took up again its broken threads, that her time had come.

When the last glimpse of her brown alpaca dress disappeared from behind the lilac bushes, Aunt Hester smiled to see Frank standing on his hands in the yard, his feet performing a series of joyful gymnastic feats, while Max, as if he fully understood the joy of the occasion, whisked around the acrobat uttering short congratulatory barks.

"So after all," she said, a little tremor of delight setting her weak nerves into quickened motion, "the boy is glad perhaps to get his old aunt back. God be thanked!"

Even Lucy, orderly and proper as she strove to be, and generally was, showed her joy at the return of old times and old ways.

"Now," she said, laughing loudly over Frank's feats, and hugging and kissing her aunt—"now we shall have the home again, dear Aunt Hester!"

"Dear Lucy," said Aunt Hester, half laughing and half crying, "so you too are glad to have your cross old aunt back again! *You are glad!*" repeating and dwelling upon the words.

"Glad—oh so glad! And we will be good, Aunt Hester," looking her steadily in the face. "Frank and I—we are very sorry we have been so—"

"There—there, child!" interrupted Aunt Hester, "don't say another word about it. You're alive and well, and we'll begin all over again. God has spared my unprofitable life, and we'll begin anew. It's *home*, now, at Rosebrook, Lucy, and we're Barnum's happy family." And so the new life began.

XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

EIGHT years have now passed, and there comes another summer day in Allston. This is the anniversary of the mill-dam disaster at Munson, and it has been kept as a peculiar, almost a sacred, day, in both these towns. The dead are with the living through all its long hours, as at no other season. Hearts upon whom time, the friendliest of earthly friends to the bereaved, has done its kind task of soothing and of comfort, open now and bleed afresh. Oh, the voices, the hushed voices, that are speaking once more! Oh, the eyes, the closed eyes, that

look back love for love, into those dimmed now in tears! Oh, the memories of words and acts that there is no grave deep enough to hide! They are all here to-day; here, with a vivid truthfulness which owes its existence, at least in its vividness, to the new sorrows and the new graves this hour has brought.

There are two young men to be buried from the church, and the bells have been tolling, tolling, as never before since the long line of hearses brought their still occupants to this same church, a few days after the memorable disaster; but to-day, Mr. Grisbey takes his place as one of the chief mourners, and there is a new minister to perform the funeral ceremonies.

Silas Bent and Ned Grisbey are to be buried. The boat was upset which they were trying to row on the same river, that was once so wildly mad, and did its terri-

ble work, though it was calm that day as a summer sea, hardly a ripple on its bright, clear bosom, only pictures which its little waves set dancing, as it caught them from the pretty clumps on its tree-covered banks. The hands that held the oars were nerveless, and the temper of the young men, quarrelsome; so it happened, it was never to be known how, that when the boat came bottom side up to shore, it was too late to save those who had gone so suddenly out of it from time to eternity.

It was Sunday night, just as the minister stood upon his steps, his wife by his side, ready for the evening service, when Deacon Whitcomb, with a white face, pushed open the front gate, and came with unsteady steps up the front walk.

"What has happened, Deacon Whitcomb?" said Mr. Grisbey, meeting his trouble half way.

But the deacon looked with frightened eyes at the mother, and said with difficulty, "I want to see you alone in your study, Mr. Grisbey. May God support you!"

And then, when he turned to shut the study door, there was Ned's mother, and she said not a word, only took hold of the back of a chair and looked him steadily in the face.

"It's your son," said Deacon Whitcomb slowly.

"Ned! not Ned!" she almost shrieked. "Not Ned! Ned couldn't die!"

"Drowned," said the deacon.

"Into thy hands," said the minister, solemnly, dropping on his knees, "oh my Father in heaven! into thy loving, forgiving, merciful hands I commend his immortal soul!"

"Amen!" ejaculated the deacon fervently; nor by word or sign gave he warning to the

crushed father that hours ago, his son had passed the boundary line beyond which no prayer of faith can save.

Then there was heard the sound of a slow-moving cart toward the house, and Deacon Whitcomb knew what burden it was bringing. He went out from the study, closed the door behind him, and left these parents alone with their grief and their God.

Poor Ned! his life had been one mistake almost from its beginning to its sad end. Even his mother's great love for him was wearied out—if a mother's love can ever die. All her ambitions, all her hopes were gone long ago; perished in his persistently downward course; and here, now, was the almost expected end—sudden, and dreadful, but *here!*

Silas Bent had long ago been homeless and friendless. Some people said he broke his father's heart, and that but for him

the old grist-mill would have been running still.

Silas's body was taken to the poorhouse, and to-day there's a plain pauper's coffin standing side by side with the flower-covered one in which Ned lies so still. Some kind heart, for humanity's sake, has laid a little cross, made from pure white flowers, close up to the black lid. Touching emblem in its purity and its whiteness of the only power in heaven and on earth which could have presented that poor lost soul spotless before the throne of its Judge on the great white throne.

Reverently leave we the question of the respective guilt of these two dead men, to the kindness and the justice of this Judge. One sinned against much, the other against the little which a hard, neglected life could offer a motherless boy.

Among the first in the church, sitting with

a peculiar look upon her face which not a person there could have understood, with hair grown much whiter, erect figure bowed, but the clear, gray eye undimmed and the firm mouth only a little quivering about its set corners, was Hester Trueworthy. On one side of her was a young woman in the sweet unconsciousness of maiden loveliness. She is taller than Aunt Hester, and by no stretch of the imagination could you discern the faintest resemblance between the two in feature; but their expression is not unlike, only Lucy's is much more gentle and quiet.

It is not herself that she is fanning, but the dear old aunt beside her. Lucy Herbert is the last person whom she remembers, but not the last of whom the aunt thinks.

"Staff of my old age!" "Light of my eyes!" "Joy of my heart!" These are a few of the names Aunt Hester calls her, when she is praying for her. No one hears them

but God; but, around the whole of Lucy's life they throw their gladness. It is not, after all, outspoken affection, pleasant as it is, that alone makes us happy. Aunt Hester has mellowed during these years,—was mellowed by those hours when she went down almost into the valley and shadow,—and her royalty, while it has lost no jot or tittle of its own peculiar worth, has sunlight and beauty, flowers and fragrance springing up within it, from the young, beloved lives without.

On her other side sits Frank, a young man fully grown, though he is yet in his teens. In his sunburnt face, his close cropt hair, his tall, sinewy frame, you would have hard work to recognize the little, curly-headed, blue-eyed, uncertain-looking boy we saw last weeding Aunt Hester's flower-bed. He is her right-hand man now, standing even above Jonas Holt, who is "a leetle,

just a leetle, failing of late," who prefers to have Frank handle the colts and does not make much objection if he both holds and drives the plough; but there are many useful years yet before this faithful old man. He and Max have earned a right to be pensioned off carefully, but very carefully, never letting them in the least suspect what has taken place. Max still drives out the poultry from the yard with much of the bitter resentment his mistress used to show, never losing a chance to scatter the intruders with a resounding bark, and sometimes a hearty shake of their downy feathers which he means them not soon to forget. He is always at his master's heels; he will be there, petted and patted, until the day comes, when from the comfortable kennel love has prepared for him his stiffened limbs fail to move.

Frank is owner of Rosebrook. It was a

foolish thing in Aunt Hester to do; but we have not now to be told, she was capable of that.

"She thought," she said apologetically to the lawyer, whom she called to make the deed of gift, "that perhaps she didn't know what was best, or right, but it seemed to her, as Frank didn't take to his books, or to any other kind of business, and did to farming, it might steady him and keep him happy at home to know that what he did was for himself; that," with a laugh that had in it much of the gladness of younger days, "it might be selfish in her, and if it was, she hoped she should be forgiven, but it made her so happy to see him happy and doing well, that she didn't want to die; she was rejoiced to be able to make him the present before she was under the sod, unconscious of it all."

Let us hope and expect that Frank will always prove worthy of this trust and affec-

tion. He is reading a solemn lesson anew to-day; but thanks to Aunt Hester, it was taught him years ago and taught him well; he never forgot it. He is appalled as he looks at these two coffins; but for her his own might have been there beside them. Was she not wise? was she not kind? If ever in his royalty there was a trace of the firm uprightness with which she had governed hers, to whom should he owe it?

His was not an introspective or a retrospective life; but he was in earnest, and to be that, is often to be successful and happy. Let us hope also that this earnestness was deep and strong enough to look beyond time, laying hold of an endless future.

Dr. Clark stood in the door of the church as the solemn procession filed out; he had kept his eye on the occupants of Hester Trueworthy's pew through the services. There were many things passing before his vision,

as there were before Aunt Hester's, that were unseen by others, and therefore she was only half surprised to hear him whisper as she passed him,—

"Hester Trueworthy, you're a woman of ten thousand. I told you you had saved *that* boy. What do you think now?"

And Aunt Hester with a sudden joyful recognition of the truth, answered softly,—

"Dr. Clark, it was all of God!"

THE END.

SHOULD BE IN EVERY CHILD'S LIBRARY.

Little Folks in Feathers & Fur,

AND OTHERS IN NEITHER.

By OLIVE THORNE MILLER.

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS.

HANDSOMELY BOUND IN CLOTH.

In Two Series, price 5/- each.

Each Series is quite complete in itself, and has Eighty-six Illustrations.

Or, Complete in One Volume, bevelled boards, gilt edges, price 9s.

CONTENTS.

The Babies that Live in a Ball.	The Oddest of All.
The Laziest Fellow in the World.	A Crusty Family.
The Story of a Beauty.	A Bear with a Bed-Quilt.
Droll Little Coats of Mail.	Story of a Wild Baby.
A Funny Little Log House.	A Droll Candle.

ETC. ETC. ETC.

"To begin with, dear unknown Reader, this book makes no pretensions to be a scientific work. Indeed, it is scrupulously otherwise. It is merely a collection of sketches, telling what is interesting to know, about a few of the millions of creatures that live on our globe. It is written for little people, but will not be without interest to anyone who is curious about the ways of our little neighbours, and who does not already know too much about them."

Extract from Preface.

"Enough to make human little folks ardent naturalists to the end of their days."
The Christian.

"Facts conveyed in this telling way are not easily forgotten."
Hand and Heart.

"A delightful volume for young people."—*Court Journal.*

"A charming book, which in attractiveness for little folks will vie successfully with many a collection of fairy tales."—*English Independent.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Stories for Home Reading.

JEAN LINDSAY, THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER.

By Emily Brodie. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"Be good, my maid, and let who will be clever."

"A book so pleasant and so wholesome."—*The Christian.*

THE HAMILTONS; or, Dora's Choice.

By Emily Brodie, author of "Jean Lindsay."
Crown 8vo, Illustrated, cloth, **3/6.**

"Full of sustained interest from first to last."—*Word and Work.*

ALICE BRIDGE, OF NORWICH.

A Tale of the Time of Charles I. By Rev. Andrew Reed, B.A.
Crown 8vo, cloth, **6/-.**

"The author has produced a work well adapted to give a clearer perception of a period that has passed away. We hope the work will obtain a wide circulation."
English Independent.

FIGHTING THE FOE; or, Every-Day Battles.

By Fidelité. New Edition. Crown 8vo, with Illustrations, cloth, **5/-.**

"A clever combination of narrative and allegory."—*Churchman's Magazine.*

THE HOME OF FIESOLE.

WITH A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SAVONAROLA.
By the Author of "Children of Seeligsberg."
Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-.**

"Prettily and carefully written, and quite to be recommended as reading for young girls at that age when they thoroughly enjoy any historical tale not overweighted with information."—*Guardian.*

THE LOST JEWEL.

A Tale. By A. L. O. E. New Edition, with Illustrations, cloth, **3/6.**

"Most earnestly do we recommend our readers to place 'The Lost Jewel' in their libraries."—*British Mothers' Journal.*

MOORE'S FORGE.

A Tale of Work for the Master. Small 8vo, Illustrated, cloth, **3/6.**

"'She is my alabaster box of ointment,' Faith's mother had said when she gave her to this work; 'and if Christ will accept and say of her, She has wrought a good work on Me, I break the box and pour it on His head.'"—*Extract.*

"*Just the kind of story to be read, enjoyed, and thought about.*"—Rock.

MARCELLA OF ROME.

A Tale of the Early Church. By F. Eastwood.
Small post 8vo, with Illustrations, cloth, **3/6.**

"A powerfully-written tale. No Christian, we think, will read it without receiving a fresh impetus to faith, hope, and love."—*The Christian.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Stories for Home Reading.

THE GABLED FARM;
Or, YOUNG WORKERS FOR THE KING.

By C. S. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"A charming story."—*Evangelical Magazine.*
"A deeply interesting volume."—*Christian Age.*

NELLIE ARUNDEL. A Tale of Home Life.

By C. S., Author of "The Gabled Farm."
Crown 8vo, Illustrated, cloth, **3/6.**

"Cleverly written and healthy in tone, the story is one calculated to do not a little good."—*Literary World.*

TRUE TO THE END.

The Story of a Sister's Love. By Rev. Dr. Edersheim.
New Edition. Illustrated. Cloth, **3/6.**

"An interesting story from the pen of an old favourite."—*The Rock.*

LADY BETTY'S GOVERNESS;
Or, THE CORBET CHRONICLES.

By L. E. Guernsey. Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-.**

"An unusually successful attempt to reproduce the manners of the 17th century. The book, which is well and simply written, will give pleasure to its readers."
Saturday Review.

LADY ROSAMOND'S BOOK;
Or, DAWNINGS OF LIGHT.

By L. E. Guernsey. Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-.**

"A well-told story, written in quaint old-time style, the plot interesting and well sustained, and the tone good."—*Leeds Mercury.*

WINIFRED.
AN ENGLISH MAIDEN OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

By L. E. Guernsey. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"An admirably told story of a brave little Puritan maiden."
English Independent.
"A truly delightful story drawn to the life."—*Leeds Mercury.*

THE EARL PRINTER.

A Tale of the Time of Caxton. Illustrated. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A welcome picture of the times of the great master printer."—*Daily Review.*

"RAGAMUFFINS;"
Or, THE ARABS OF LOVE LANE.

By Jessie Sale Lloyd, Author of "Ruth Everingham," &c.
With Illustrations. Small 8vo, cloth, **2/6.**

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Tales of English Life in the Olden Time.

BY EMILY S. HOLT.

Price Five Shillings each. Cloth.

LADY SYBIL'S CHOICE.

A Tale of the Crusades. Crown 8vo, with Frontispiece.

"A most charming addition to this truly admirable series of historical tales."
The Christian.

"The book charms from the naïve simplicity of the heroine and from the skill with which the authoress has preserved the spirit of the age."—*The Graphic.*

MARGERY'S SON; OR, UNTIL HE FIND IT

A Story of the Court of Scotland. Crown 8vo.

"Carefully studied and well-written. The story is admirably told."
British Quarterly Review.

LETTICE EDEN;

Or, THE LAMPS of EARTH and THE LIGHT of HEAVEN.

Crown 8vo, cloth.

"We promise its readers a rare literary feast."—*The Christian.*

CLARE AVERY.

A Story of the Spanish Armada. Crown 8vo.

"An admirable story, full of life and vigour."—*The Rock.*

IMOGEN.

A Story of the Mission of Augustine. Crown 8vo.

"Illustrates with equal beauty and fidelity the characteristics of an eventful period of our history."—*Record.*

THE WHITE ROSE OF LANGLEY.

A Story of the Court of England in the Olden Time. Crown 8vo.

"An admirable, instructive, and very interesting volume."
English Independent.

VERENA;

Or, SAFE PATHS AND SLIPPERY BYEWAYS.

A Story of To-day. Crown 8vo.

"The naturalness and brightness of the dialogue forms the charm of the story."
City Press.

ROBIN TREMAYNE.

A Tale of the Marian Persecution. Crown 8vo.

"The book is extremely well written."—*Athenæum.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

TALES OF ENGLISH LIFE
IN THE OLDEN TIME.

BY EMILY S. HOLT.

Price Five Shillings each. Cloth.

ISOULT BARRY OF WYNSCOTE.

A Tale of Tudor Times.

"The book is as charming as it is profitable."—*The Christian.*

ASHCLIFFE HALL.

A Tale of the Last Century. NEW EDITION.

"A remarkable example of a really good religious tale."—*English Independent.*

SISTER ROSE;

Or, THE EVE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW. NEW EDITION.

"The story is well conceived, and well written."—*Literary World.*

Price Three and Sixpence each. Cloth.

THE MAIDEN'S LODGE;

Or, None of Self, and All of Thee.

A Tale of the Reign of Queen Anne. Crown 8vo.

MISTRESS MARGERY.

A Tale of the Lollards. NEW EDITION.

"A page in history which our young men and maidens will do well to saturate with holy tears."—*The Sword and the Trowel.*

Price Two and Sixpence each. Cloth.

FOR THE MASTER'S SAKE.

A Tale of the Days of Queen Mary. Small 8vo. Illustrated. Cloth.

THE WELL IN THE DESERT.

An Old Legend of the House of Arundel.

"We wish these volumes could be placed in every Sunday School Library and every Protestant home. It would be a good thing for the sons and daughters of England to become acquainted with such reading as we find in the writings of this gifted authoress.

Evening Hours.

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

STORIES BY L. T. MEADE,

Author of "Great St. Benedict's."

THE CHILDREN'S KINGDOM;

Or, THE STORY OF A GREAT ENDEAVOUR.

With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-**.

WATER GIPSIES.

A Tale. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"It is full of incident from beginning to end, and we do not know the person who will not be interested in it."—*Christian World.*

"It is a long time since we have read so impressive and touching a story. We accord it our warmest praise."—*Literary World.*

DAVID'S LITTLE LAD.

With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"A finely-imagined story, bringing out in grand relief the contrast between quiet, steady self-sacrifice and brilliant, flashy qualities."—*Guardian.*

SCAMP AND I.

A Story of City Byeways. New Edition. With Illustrations.
Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"Little Flo', with her industry and skill, her motherly instincts and efforts to keep her young brother Dick, the crossing-sweeper, honest; the good-natured, agreeable, clever young thief Jenks; and, above all, the dear dog Scamp, with his knowing ways and soft brown eyes, are all as true to life and as touchingly set forth as any heart could desire."—*Athenæum.*

YOUR BROTHER AND MINE.

A Cry from the Great City. Illustrated. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A story of intense power and pathos, sketching the career of one of the little waifs and strays of our great cities, and his rescue, by the loving effort of a little child, after sad experiences of the neglect and indifference too often manifested."

DOT AND HER TREASURES.

A Tale. With Illustrations. Cloth, **2/6.**

"One of the tales of poor children in London, of which we have had many examples; but none finer, more pathetic, or more original than this."
Nonconformist.

WHITE LILIES, AND OTHER TALES.

With Illustrations. Cloth, **1/6.**

"Stories of a singularly touching and beautiful character."—*Rock.*

LETTIE'S LAST HOME. Cloth, **1/6.**

"The details of Lettie's devotion to her baby-charge are very touchingly told, and may help to make the tale as popular with elder readers as many of Hesba Stretton's records of London life are."—*Aunt Judy's Magazine.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

STORIES BY L. T. MEADE,

Author of "Scamp and I."

GREAT ST. BENEDICT'S.

A TALE.

New Edition. Crown 8vo, cloth, with Illustrations, 6/-.

"From the first page to the last, reads more like truth than fiction; and very interesting it is throughout. The old maiden lady, with her learning and her commentary on the Book of Job, and her strange, lonely old house in the tanyard, is clever and characteristic. The gradual growth and development of the character and noble nature of Dorothy Shelley is well worked out."—*Athenæum.*

"The description of Dorothy's life is excellent."—*Spectator.*

"At once a noble book, and a most interesting story."—*Court Circular.*

"We have read this admirably-conceived and powerfully-written tale with extreme interest. It is so much above its class, that we cannot speak too highly of it for family reading. The religion in it is of the healthiest tone, and it would be worthy of all praise for this reason alone, did not the graphic writing and fresh incident add additional subjects for commendation."—*The Christian.*

A KNIGHT OF TO-DAY.

A TALE.

New Edition. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, 6/-.

"The author has appropriately dedicated the volume to the memory of Charles Kingsley. It is praise to say the book is not unworthy of the dedication. The book is a religious tale of a practical kind, showing much insight into human character, and full recognition of the noble possibilities which underlie life amid the most sordid surroundings."—*Athenæum.*

"A finely imagined story of a good man. It is a book well worth reading."
The Guardian.

"There is no mean evidence of power in this book, interest in the story, and vigour in the delineation of character."—*Spectator.*

BEL-MARJORY.

A TALE.

Crown 8vo, cloth, 6/-.

"Most interesting; we give it our hearty commendation."—*English Independent.*

"Full of pathos, showing a thorough insight into the intricacies of human character. Miss Meade tells a well-conceived tale in the most able and effective manner."—*Leeds Mercury.*

"A powerfully-written tale of the deepest interest."—*The Christian.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW. E.C.

STORIES FOR BOYS.

BRAVE GEORDIE.

The Story of an English Boy.
By GRACE STEBBING, author of "Walter Benn," &c.
With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"It is refreshing to meet with such a spirited and thoroughly good story."
The Christian.

PRAIRIE DAYS;

Or, OUR HOME IN THE FAR WEST.

By M. B. SLEIGHT. With Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-.**

"Parents will find this a capital book to read to the children when assembled round during the long winter evenings."—*Literary World.*

By J. HARRISON.

MARTY AND THE MITE-BOXES;

Or, BOY LIFE AND BOY WORK. Illustrated. Cloth, **3/6.**

"A capital book for boys—the style taking, and the whole teaching thoroughly wholesome."—*Watchman.*

PAUL THURSTON AND HIS LITTLE BOOTS.

Illustrated. Cloth, **3/6.**

"Will delight hundreds of boys."—*Bookseller.*

THE BOY'S WATCHWORD;

Or, THE STORY OF THE OLD BACK ROOM. Cloth, **3/6.**

"An excellent story, and full of beautiful teaching."—*Athenæum.*"

GEOFFREY THE LOLLARD.

By F. EASTWOOD. NEW EDITION, with Illustrations, cloth, **3/6.**

"Will fascinate any into whose hands the tale is placed."—*Christian World.*

BASIL GREY; OR, TRIED AND TRUE.

BY REV. W. J. BETTISON. Illustrated. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A thoroughly good and hearty story for boys, we heartily recommend it."
Freeman.

THE HOUSE IN THE GLEN,
AND THE BOYS WHO BUILT IT.

By the Author of "ELLA'S HALF SOVEREIGN."
Crown 8vo. Illustrated. Cloth, **3/6.**

"Exactly what boys like. It looks at the world from their level, and is at the same time full of the spirit that is best for them."—*Guardian.*

FIGHTING THE FOE; OR, EVERY-DAY BATTLES.

By FIDELITÉ. New Edition. Crown 8vo, with Illustrations, cloth, **5/-.**

"A clever combination of narrative and allegory."—*Churchman's Magazine.*
"Admirably worked out and not overdone."—*Edinburgh Daily Review.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

STORIES FOR GIRLS.

THE OLD HOUSE ON BRIAR HILL.

By I. G. MEREDITH. A Real Girl's Book. Illustrated. Cloth, **3/6.**

"Full of bright, wise precepts, veiled under a pleasant guise of story-telling. A charming work."—*Christian World.*

TIM'S LITTLE MOTHER.

By S. PUNOT. With Illustrations. New Edition. Cloth, **3/6.**

"An affecting, unaffected story of London life."—*The Christian.*

THE ODD ONE; OR, THE NICHE FOR ME TO FILL.

Cloth, **3/6.**

"This story has pleased us much. It may be very serviceable to a young girl, and will certainly be read with pleasure."—*English Independent.*

ELSIE'S SANTA CLAUS.

With Illustrations. Cloth, **3/6.**

"A charming Christmas story."—*English Independent.*

MINNIE GREY; OR, FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE

New Edition. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A pleasing, well-written tale. Deserves hearty commendation."—*Record.*

Price Eighteenpence each, cloth, with Illustrations.

ASTRAY AND AT HOME;

Or, Little Mollie and Her Brother.

OLD DAVID'S LASSIE; OR, LOST AND FOUND.

Foolscap 8vo.

WILLOW BANK; OR, ONLY A WEEK. New Edition.

STORIES BY F. F. G. **1/6** *each.*

DICKEY-BIRD;

Or, A Nest Wanted, and a Nest Found.

POLLY AND WINNIE;

Or, The Story of the Good Samaritan.

LITTLE NAN; OR, A LIVING REMEMBRANCE.

"Full of wide and useful teaching—written with a purpose, and well written."
Sunday School Teachers' Magazine.

By the Author of "Lonely Lily." **1/6** *each.*

WANDERING MAY; OR, COME UNTO ME.

CLARIE'S LITTLE CHARGE. New Edition.

JOHN F. SHAW & CO., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Eighteenpenny Present Books for Boys.

In Attractive Bindings, with Illustrations.

THE YOUNG ARMOUR BEARER;

Or, CHOSEN TO BE A SOLDIER.

New Edition. Cloth.

LITTLE TROUBLE THE HOUSE.

By Aunt Penn, Author of "Those Boys." Illustrated. Cloth.

"THOSE BOYS."

A Story for all Little Fellows. By Aunt Penn.

"A book the 'little fellows' will appreciate."—*Watchman.*

HAROLD; or, Following the Footprints.

Illustrated. Cloth.

TOM KNIGHT; or, Who Gives True Honour.

Illustrated.

POP AND PEGGY; or, How Tom was Rescued.

By Yvonne, Author of "Worth a Threepenny Bit."

"Too pretty a book to be left unnoticed."—*Guardian.*

By M. L. C., Author of "Lonely Lily."

LEFT AT HOME;

Or, THE HEART'S TRUE RESTING PLACE.

THE HAPPY LAND; or, Willie the Orphan.

CHARLIE AND LUCY;

Or, THE LONELY HEART MADE GLAD.

By Marianne Smith.

MAY LANE; or, Love and Duty.

By C. M.

"An invaluable little book for the young."—*Daily Express.*

TOM CARTER; or, Ups and Downs in Life.

By the Author of "England's Daybreak."

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

Stories for the Little Ones.

ATTRACTIVELY BOUND, WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY T. PYM.

BY ISMAY THORN.

PINAFORE DAYS.

The Adventures of Fred and Dolly by Wood and Wave.

Square, cloth, **2/6.**

"A book for every child's heart; it should be sold by thousands."
Christian World.

"A capital story for children."—*Daily Review.*

ONLY FIVE; or, Pussie's Frolics in Farm and Field.

Square, cloth, **2/6.**

"The story is exceedingly diverting, and the pictures are admirably drawn."
Court Journal.

ROUGH THE TERRIER.

His Life and Adventures. By EMILY BRODIE. Square, cloth, **2/6.**

"A clever autobiography, cleverly illustrated."—*The Christian.*

BY YOTTY OSBORNE.

JUDY; or, Only a Little Girl.

Square, cloth, **3/6.**

"A capital book, delightfully illustrated; altogether one that can be recommended."—*The Beehive.*

PICKLES.

A Funny Little Couple. Square, cloth, **3/6.**

"A sparkling volume for children, the exquisite outline engravings, illustrative of child life, being alone worth the price of the book."—*The Baptist.*

TWO LITTLE TURKS; or, Getting into Mischief.

Small 8vo. Fully Illustrated. Cloth, **2/6.**

"Is perfect in its way for very little people."—*Evangelical Magazine.*

"WORTH A THREEPENNY BIT;"

Or, General Weissel's Grandchildren.

By YVONNE. Cloth, **2/6.**

"Told with a freshness and reality not unworthy of Miss Edgeworth. We have not for a long time read anything so bright and sparkling."—*Guardian.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW. E.C.

Happy Sundays for the Little Ones.

By A. L. O. E.

HAPPY SUNDAY HOURS.

With Texts, Hymns, and Pictures. In Two Handsome Boxes, each, 5/-.

By Mrs. Carus Wilson.

SCRIPTURE QUESTIONING CARDS.

A New and Improved Series, in Two Parts. Sold separately, each, 1/6.

By Lady Scott.

SCRIPTURE ACROSTICS.

A Sabbath Pastime for Young Persons. Price, 1/6.

By A. L. O. E.

GOSPEL PICTURES.

From Old Testament Story.

New Edition, with Plain and Coloured Illustrations. Cloth, 3/6.

This Volume brings out, in the Author's most striking and attractive form, some of the precious Gospel lessons taught in the typical offerings of the Old Testament dispensation.

By A. L. O. E.

SCRIPTURE PICTURE PUZZLES.

Ten different Series.

With simple descriptive Narratives and Bible Questions.

In Improved Boxes, each, 1/6.

Each Box contains Four Picture Puzzles, and is complete in itself.

1.
Cain and Abel
The Lost Piece of Silver
Noah and the Flood
The Marriage Feast

2.
Abraham and Lot
The Prodigal Son
Isaac and Rebekah
The Pharisee and Publican

3.
Jacob and Esau
The Sower
Jacob
The Wheat and Tares

4.
Israel's Wanderings
The Good Shepherd
Joshua's Victories
The Unjust Judge

5.
Samuel
The Rich Man and Lazarus
David and Goliath
The Labourers in the Vineyard

6.
King David
The Good Samaritan
King Solomon
The Ten Virgins

7.
The Story of Joseph
Five Pictures.

8.
Abraham's Faith
The Prayer of Moses
Crossing Jordan
Esther

9.
Naaman
Elijah
Sennacherib
The Captivity

10.
Moses
Christ and the Little Children
Two Large Pictures

"WILL INTEREST LITTLE ONES BY THE HOUR."—*Watchman.*

"These, with their bright pictures, simple stories, and excellent questionings, will be hailed in many a home."—*Evening Hours.*

"Of the Scripture Puzzles we can speak in the highest terms."
Churchman's Magazine.

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

FAVOURITE SUNDAY BOOKS.

By the Authors of "Doing and Suffering," &c.

THE OLD PICTURE BIBLE;

Or, Stories from the Life of Christ. Cloth, **3/6.**

THE OLD PICTURE BIBLE;

Or, Stories from Old Testament History. Cloth, **3/6.**

Each volume Illustrated with 48 Plain Engravings and 12 Coloured Plates. Small 4to.

*** Two of the most attractive of the many Sunday Books for Children.

SIXPENNY SUNDAY PICTURE BOOKS.

Each with eight plain and two coloured Illustrations.

OLD TESTAMENT.	NEW TESTAMENT.
The Story of Adam and Eve	The Childhood of Jesus
The Story of Abraham	The Friends of Jesus
The Story of Joseph	The Parables of Jesus
The Story of Moses	Christ's Wonderful Works
The Story of Samuel	The Story of the Cross
The Story of David	Stories of the Holy Land

Simply and lovingly written, printed in large type, and profusely illustrated, these little books will be welcomed by the little ones in every home.

TEXTS FOR THE NURSERY & SCHOOLROOM.

On Roller, **1/-.**

To Parents and Sunday-School Teachers.

SCRIPTURE OBJECT LESSONS AND OUTLINE TEACHING.

By Rev. H. C. McCook. Small 8vo. Cloth, **3/6.**

"We strongly recommend this work to all who are desirous of interesting the minds of children, while they impart to them the knowledge of Scripture facts and principles."—*Watchman.*

"Teachers will find the volume exceedingly useful"
Sunday School Teachers' Magazine.

"We earnestly urge every teacher to read this book, and make use of it. It is invaluable."—*Sword and Trowel.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW. E.C.

One Shilling Present Books.

LONELY LILY.

By M. L. C. New Edition. 1/-.

"Our boys, like most others, are not fond of dry books, but this they devoured greedily, and gave it their highest praise."—*The Sword and the Trowel.*

TWICE FOUND;

Or, The Heavenly and the Earthly Father. 1/-.

THADY MARCH; or, The Story of My Boyhood.

Cloth, 1/-.

TERRY; or, Trying to Follow.

By L. E. D. 1/-.

"A pleasing story well worked out. Decidedly good."—*The Rock.*

LUCY'S LIFE STORY;

Or, Sunshine Without and Within.

A True Story. 1/-.

WE GOT AGATE OF SINGING;

Or, "Jesus, Tender Shepherd, hear me."

New Edition. 1/-.

"Full of pathos and quiet power."—*Sunday School Teachers' Magazine.*

LITTLE ORANGEES;

Or, A Friend for the Friendless. 1/-.

By J. Harrison, Author of "The Boy's Watchword," &c.

"A pretty Sunday-school story."—*Guardian.*

A GOOD JACK MAKES A GOOD JILL.

By the Author of "What put my Pipe out."

HOUSEHOLD NAMES,

AND HOW THEY BECAME SO.

HOUSEHOLD PROVERBS FOR MEN.

HOUSEHOLD PROVERBS FOR WOMEN.

HOUSEHOLD PROVERBS FOR EVERY ONE.

STORIES FOR WOMEN.

Should find a place in every School and Parish Library.

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW. E.C.

B 14

SUNDAY SCHOOL REWARDS.

FLOWER STORIES FOR LITTLE GATHERERS.

Small 8vo. Illustrated. Cloth, **2/6.**

Selection from Contents.

BINDWEED; OR, UNSELFISH LOVE.
BUTTERCUPS; OR, TRUE RICHES.
MEADOW SWEET; OR, DAY BY DAY.
DAISY; OR, THE CHILD TEACHER.
HAREBELLS; OR, SO NEARLY LOST.
ETC. ETC. ETC.

"Peculiarly pleasing and profitable."—*Christian Age.*

CHRISTINE; or, The Bible Girl.

By S. PUNOT, Author of "Tim's Little Mother." Cloth, **2/6.**

"We scarcely know whether to admire most the skilful ease of the writer, or the genuine wisdom and beauty of the religious teaching."—*Christian World.*

NELLIE'S SECRET;

Or, Brown's Alley and Sunnyside.

By M. M. POLLARD, Author of "His Grandchild," &c. Cloth, **2/6.**

"An excellent Sunday-school prize; will be read with eager interest."—*Record.*

HIS GRANDCHILD.

A Tale of North Harbour.

By M. M. POLLARD, Author of "Nellie's Secret," &c.

New Edition. Cloth, **2/6.**

A wholesome and interesting story."—*Rock.*

LEOLINE; or, Captured and Rescued.

A Story for the Young. By EMILY GRACE HARDING.

With Illustrations. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A very simply-written and interesting story."—*Yorkshire Post.*

By J. HARRISON, Author of "The Boy's Watchword."

LITTLE BOOTS,

AND THE STEPS THEY TROD IN. Cloth, **2/6.**

"A beautiful story of a mother's training of her boy."—*Watchman.*

LITTLE BOOTS GROWN OLDER;

Or, The Soldier of the Cross. Cloth, **2/6.**

"Teachers and elder scholars may read the book with profit."
Wesleyan Sunday School Magazine

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW. E.C.

STORIES BY BRENDA,

Author of "Froggy's Little Brother."

LITTLE COUSINS; OR, GEORGIE'S VISIT TO LOTTY.

With Illustrations by T. PYM. Square, cloth, **3/6.**

VICTORIA BESS;

Or, THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A DOLL'S LIFE.

With Illustrations by T. PYM. Square, cloth, **3/6.**

"A charming little book for little girls, told with just a touch of humour and abundance of gentle pathos."—*Literary World.*

A SATURDAY'S BAIRN;

With Illustrations by W. J. PETHERICK. Crown 8vo, cloth, **5/-.**

"A charming tale, over which tears and smiles contend."—*Christian World.*
"An admirable story."—*Court Journal.*

LOTTY'S VISIT TO GRANDMAMA.

A Story for the Little Ones.

With Fifty Illustrations by W. J. PETHERICK. Small 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"An admirable book for little people. We most cordially recommend parents and others on the look out for the replenishment of the children's book-shelf to get this."—*Literary World.*
"A very pretty little story, written in just the vein to interest and delight young readers."—*Bookseller.*

FROGGY'S LITTLE BROTHER.

A Story of the East End. With Eight Illustrations by "CAS."
New Edition. Small 8vo, cloth, **3/6.**

"Has an individuality and beauty of its own which makes it very pathetic and yet comical reading."—*Guardian.*

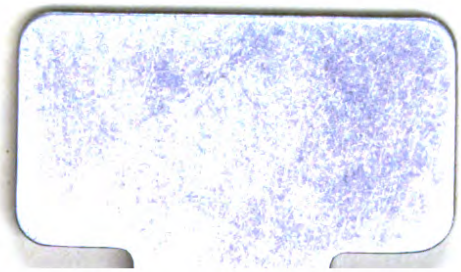
NOTHING TO NOBODY.

With Illustrations. New Edition. Small 8vo, cloth, **2/6.**

"A very pretty story, and will serve as a gift-book, either for rich children or poor; both will find something to interest them."—*Athenæum.*

ESPECIALLY THOSE.

A Story on the Prayer "For all Conditions of Men."
Small 8vo, cloth, **1/6.**

"A very touching little story. Will help to turn for many a form into a reality."—*Guardian.*

JOHN F. SHAW & Co., 48, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.