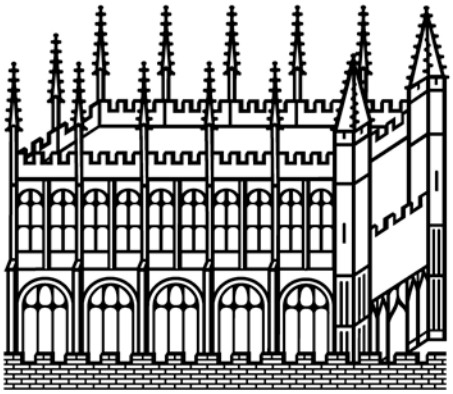


HOME
IN
HUMBLE
LIFE.

A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

See page 40.

HOME

IN

HUMBLE LIFE.

"If solid happiness we prize,
Within our breast the jewel lies,
And they are fools who roam;
The world has nothing to bestow,
From our own selves our joys must flow
And that dear hut, our home."

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CONTENTS.

HOME IN HUMBLE LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HOME MANAGEMENT.

A LITTLE after four o'clock one fine afternoon, Susan Taylor, the respectable wife of a respectable working man, giving another glance at her sleeping babe, and taking her knitting in her hand, stepped down the court in which her house was situated to look into the street, thinking it was about the time the infant school broke up. Presently her quick eye discerned two little beings toddling along hand-in-hand, and attracted right and left by everything they saw. In a few moments she was between them, encouragingly helping them on, and asking what they had been learning.

"We got this for you, mother," said the elder, a boy of about five years old. "Teacher told us to bring it, and I haven't dropped it in the dirt."

Susan took a neat-looking note from the child's hand, and her face brightened as she read it.

"Didn't we bring her a nice letter, Milly?" said the boy to his little sister. "What is it, mother? what is it for?"

"Ah, what is it, Mrs. Taylor?" said a neighbour, who was standing at the end of the court, with her hands on her sides, a dirty black cap half off her head, shoes down at the heels, and a torn apron dangling over a ragged stuff gown. "Ah! what is it, if one may make bold to ask? Something mighty pleasant, I should think, by your face."

Mrs. Taylor looked up at the rude speaker, and for a moment felt inclined to give some short answer, and turn into her own house; but suddenly recollecting herself, and the kind of person who addressed her, she smiled kindly, stopped, and bidding the children listen at the door, and come and tell her if baby cried, she said—"Yes, thank you, Mrs. Watson, it is something very pleasant; an invitation to a mothers' meeting in the great school-room, for all the mothers whose children go to the school. I wish, Mrs. Watson, you would let yours go."

"I'm much obliged to you for wishing, Mrs. Taylor," said the woman, drawing herself up, "but I know my own business best. My children must work for their living as soon as they can; I can't afford to bring them up scholars."

"But you want them to be obedient and industrious before they can be of any use; and if they don't learn what God says about honouring parents, and following the Lord Jesus Christ, perhaps they won't mind what you wish by-and-by."

"Oh, but I will be minded when I choose to make them mind," said Mrs. Watson, with a determined gesture; "and I don't hold with setting little things in rows for hours together when they ought to be running about."

This was an objection against infant schools which she had heard somewhere, and so she used it boldly, though she knew perfectly well that it was better to "sit in rows" than to "run about" like little savages, as her children did, to the annoyance of the whole neighbourhood and their own ruin.

"But surely, Mrs. Watson, they should not run about the streets while we can't be looking after them. It might do in the country in some nice field, but, not here, among bad companions, and ways we could not bear them to imitate. I assure you, I thank God every day for the infant school where my little ones are kept safe and taught something, just in my busiest time. I can get my house cleaned up, and everything comfortable while they are away. But, Mrs. Watson, don't I hear your baby crying? and one of your sons is just gone in."

"Crying! most likely; he's never done anything else since he was born, and I dare say that lad has been waking him;" and, muttering an angry threat, the mother rushed into her house, flung her boy aside with a blow, and set the wooden cradle rocking, with a kick which nearly overturned it, and made the little frightened inmate scream ten times louder than before.

Susan sighed as she heard the uproar, and took her children into her own comfortable home.

"Robert, dear," said she, presently, "do you think I can trust you to go and bring the milk for me, when the man comes to the end of the court?"

"Yes, mother; I won't spill a drop," said Robert, bravely.

"I shall give you a can too large for what you will

get; so if you are careful, I'm sure you won't spill any. My little man likes to help mother, I know."

"Yes, I'm ever so big now. I'll go to work with father soon," said the little fellow, stretching himself as high as he could.

"Where are you going?" said Mrs. Watson's boy, as the child passed down the court.

"Going for the milk, to help mother," said Robert.

"If I was you I wouldn't. You'll upset it, and be thrashed, and get no supper; like me, when I tumbled down and broke the jug."

"This won't break," said Robert, looking at his adviser, and then at the can, which had a lid that fitted tight and close, and a handle by which to hold it. And if he could have explained, he might have told that he was never punished for an accident that could not be helped, and that his kind mother always tried to distinguish between that and wilful mischief, or disobedience, whatever its annoying consequences to herself at the moment. Nobody believes that a little child falls down and upsets his supper on purpose; or when in an agony of terror and distress at the sight of the broken jug, that he really meant to ruin his parents by wasting their money. But Mrs. Watson never reasoned in such cases; she flew at the consequence, and never thought of the cause; and though she had bought jug after jug at the hawker's "cheap china shop," which regularly visited the court, she still rather sneered at the precaution of Susan, whose one expense of a good strong can saved her from all such vexations.

But little Robert brought the milk safely, and set

his own and his sister's seats at their low table, where they sat to their supper, while their mother fed baby; then she washed them, tied on clean pinafores, made all ready for the return of their father, and gave them leave to sit on the top step at the door to watch for his coming.

About half-past six a young working man, with his jacket over his arm, and face and hands rather the worse for the day's toil, came up the court and was greeted with hearty welcomes and kind looks. Soon the dirt was all washed away, and William Taylor, in a clean cool jacket which his wife had made, was seated among them, baby crowing in the cradle, Milly on his knee, and Robert standing beside him, repeating the new things he had learned at school, while Susan made tea. And happy enough was that little domestic group in the home of a working man.

But, says a neighbour who looks at the dark side of things, Mrs. Taylor's baby can cry and be troublesome like other people's babies; and her boy and girl can be rude and mischievous too, for she knows for a fact, that one evening they wanted something on the tea table, and got scrambling up in their chairs to reach it, overturning teapot, milk-jug, and all, over the nice clean tray. And more than that, William Taylor is not always in the best of humours, nor Susan the happiest of wives, for she was caught crying bitterly one day just after her husband went to his work, and he had banged the door after him.

True, very true; and these were in a great measure the very reasons for the state of comfort just related. Susan had been obliged to learn by experience, and it is a happy thing when such a teacher is not disre-

garded. That affair of the scramble over the table, and the imminent danger of a scalding to the two scared young culprits, had reminded Susan to get a small low table for the children's use; so that there was now no excuse for climbing on high chairs, and no falls therefrom, with the uproar natural to wounded and disappointed adventurers of their age.

Then, her third child certainly did seem sometimes sadly in the way, though the mother could not bear the thought, but always smothered it under a torrent of kisses; and William had once or twice looked irritated at its crying. The cries of a first baby are a novelty, and excite only anxiety in the father, who fears for its health; those of a second are endured patiently; but by the arrival of a third, the novelty has worn off, the anxiety has subsided, the patience is exhausted, and "the noisy urchin," or "the squalling brat," is pitilessly wished further off; in order to which the poor mother must disappear also, and the father must sit by himself until he is tired, and despairs of ever getting a quiet, social fireside any more as it used to be.

So Susan tried her utmost to have all the crying to herself, and to preserve the peace if possible for her husband; and as most babies in health are tolerably good-tempered after a meal of a wholesome kind, and a proper quantity of it, she managed to get baby fed just before William came home, and then instead of being a hungry nuisance, she crowed and kicked in her cradle, a welcome addition to the circle, or went to sleep, having nothing else at present to do.

Again, once—indeed more than once—William, who had not perhaps by nature the very best temper

in the world, had spoken hastily, and Susan feeling it unkind, had answered hastily, and then, alas! we know how it is that

> "Ruder words will soon rush in,
> To spread the breach that words begin;"

and William and Susan quarrelled.

It was not a noisy quarrel; but stinging and bitter things can be said quietly, no matter how it began, or what it was about. Most quarrels begin about a trifle; and when William, with a cloud on his brow and a load at his heart, went away to his work without saying "Good morning, Susan," as usual, she sat down and gave way to a passionate burst of tears, in which she was found by the gossiping neighbour who "suspected there was something wrong."

But Susan had a conscience, and after a while she listened to its voice. Her bitter recollection of something William had said, reminded her of what she had said before it, and so offence after offence was traced back, until she remembered the foolish petulance with which she had replied to the first hasty word. "I never will answer him again in that way," thought Susan; "I was wrong there, though he ought not to have said what he did. But oh! how shall I help it? I am so quick to feel, and then I speak before I think; oh, if I could but think before I speak!" And then Susan's subdued spirit turned to Him, who in order to make the words of the mouth acceptable and righteous, must sanctify the meditations of the heart by his own gracious, guiding presence. She had, indeed, forgotten "the meekness and gentleness of Christ;" she had forgotten that he, "when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to

Him who judgeth righteously." She had forgotten, just when most she needed it, "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," with which all women professing godliness should always be adorned; and now she prayed earnestly to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, to cause his Holy Spirit perpetually to uphold her, to keep the door of her lips, and to restrain her feelings when hurt by haste or unkindness; that as she trusted in Jesus Christ for her soul's salvation, she might live and act and speak as one who, having "hope in Him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."

Poor William, in the meantime, puffed himself up with indignation, and nourished his displeasure until dinner time. He wouldn't go home, he thought; but hunger was unpleasant, and he got more cross at the idea of it, for his work did not lie convenient for getting anything to eat; and then, to be sure, he had no money with him, he had given all to Susan to take care of. Then he would go home—why not? should he not be master of his own house, be it big or little? and he would have his money too; and if she were not in a better temper, he would go to the public house: not that he would drink, but just to frighten her, and show her who he was.

So, after the clocks struck twelve at noon, he strode home, and with a determined air walked in. Susan had almost counted the minutes, and with a smile on her lip, though tears were struggling to her eyes, she spoke cheerfully, said that dinner was just ready, and placed upon the clean white table cloth a savoury dish which she knew her husband particularly liked.

"Well to be sure," thought William, "the temper

was a little better at any rate; but he should keep his rights—he meant to be master;" but his countenance cleared, and every minute it got harder and harder to be disagreeable and sulky, with a nice dinner comfortably disappearing, and a kind companion quietly and gently doing all she could to please.

"I want my money, Susan," said he (rather gruffly she thought), when dinner was over. It was an unusual demand, for he often said he liked her to keep the ready money for weekly or daily use, that he might always have time to think before spending it.

At another time she might have asked indifferently what he was going to buy, but she was on her guard now, and went immediately to get it, and placed the little purse in his hand.

He certainly expected that she would have asked, and then he could have informed her that he was master, and would do what he pleased, and go where he liked, and buy what he thought proper, without asking her leave; but the simple act without inquiry, or reluctance, or assumption of any right over the money—why, it acknowledged the very thing he meant to teach, and he looked as if the purse were burning his fingers.

Susan stood by, expecting he was going, and as he paused with irresolution for a moment, she gathered courage, and looking up in his face with a meek, tearful look—"William," she murmured in a broken voice, "I am so sorry for all I said this morning. Will you forgive—"

There was no need for more; the confession of error is infectious when both parties are in the wrong;

and all honour to the hero or the heroine who has the noble humility to begin. William was conquered by her who, by God's help, had first conquered herself; and let who might be master now, he walked off to his work a happy, light-hearted man; acknowledging that "a prudent wife" is a gift from God, and protesting to himself that Susan deserved all he could ever do for her, and a thousand times more.

So the money went back to its former safe-keeping, and William was saved from a snare that would soon have deprived him of a house to be master of at all.

CHAPTER II.

AS SIN HAS MADE IT.

THE Mothers' Meeting, to which Mrs. Taylor had been invited, duly took place, and passed off to everybody's satisfaction. A large number of the women of the neighbourhood whose children attended the schools, assembled on the occasion, and accepted, with pleasure and gratitude, the proof of sympathy and interest from wealthier friends. Many ladies, themselves occupied in the care of young families, presided at the tea tables, and talked pleasantly of those hopes, and feelings, and duties in which mothers of all ranks in life should be earnestly interested, of the responsibilities laid upon all, and the sweet rewards to which all may lawfully aspire. It was a subject common to every mother's heart, linking in one tender bond of sympathy thousands of the human race, from the mother of princes to the lowliest peasant in her realm who knows not where, but unto God, to look for her children's daily bread.

One of the little pleasures of the evening, intended to gratify the parents and to excite them to deeper interest in their children's welfare, was to present before them the rewards which had been earned by good conduct and punctuality in attendance during the past half year; and for this purpose the children were to be brought in by the head teachers at the appointed time.

Susan Taylor, who was pleased to find herself at the same table with her much-respected visitor Mrs. Ashton, saw also seated there one of her own neighbours to whom she had often tried to be useful, and whose interest Mrs. Ashton seemed anxious to excite in all that was going forward. This was a pale, thin, haggard-looking woman, dressed (if shawls and bonnets could tell tales) in a present from Mrs. Ashton expressly for this occasion. She seemed uncomfortable and "out of her element," her restless eyes wandering idly round, and her ear uninterested in either the hymn of praise, or the kind words of affectionate exhortation to discharge parental duty in the light of God's holy word.

Now and then she looked towards the door, as if intending to escape through it at the first opportunity; and half rose when it opened to admit the happy children who were coming for their prizes. But there was one face in the little band whose earnest, loving look caught her eye, and kept her to her seat. Then when, in his turn, "Peter Grey" was called up, and that thin, sharp-featured boy, with blushing cheek and beating heart, stood at the post of honour, she strained her eyes to see, and her ears to hear; for that child was hers, the last one left out of several who had died at various ages, victims of neglect, and the only creature in the wide world who loved her. She had a husband, but he had long sinned away character and happiness, and would have led his son in the same evil course but for the timely interference of Mrs. Ashton, who had rescued him from crime and ignorance, paid for his instruction at school, and now watched over him with Christian love.

As Peter Grey received into his careful hands a copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress," bound in blue with gilt-edged leaves, and heard the kind words of praise that came with it, his heart leaped with joy, and he turned to look towards his mother. A tear seemed to glisten in her eyes, and her features softened with the tenderness of a mother's love, which, for the moment, drove away the deadly stamp that sin indulged was fixing there. "There is yet hope," thought Mrs. Ashton, as she called Peter to his mother's side, and spoke words of kind encouragement to both.

For a little while Mrs. Grey felt proud and pleased, and showed the prize among her neighbours, some of whom could not but wonder how it came to pass that her boy, of all the boys in the world, should have been so successful. Then the book was wrapped up carefully, and put into a little box on a high shelf.

However, there was no improvement in Peter's home; he left it in the morning with a heavy heart, and returned to it in the evening forlorn and sad. But amidst the dearth of earthly comforts, the little half-starved child was learning where to seek for "the bread of life," of which "he that eateth shall live for ever;" and his young heart, bruised and grieved with earthly sorrow, was finding sympathy and peace in the bosom of his crucified Redeemer. When Peter thought of him he almost forgot that the miserable lodging to which his mother's sin had reduced him was the cellar of Mrs. Watson's house in E— Court. But he was roughly reminded of the fact when Mrs. Watson, bending over the little area as his mother came down the steps, called out, in no gentle tone,

"You'll be good enough to bring some of my rent to night, I say. I want it, and I shan't wait any longer."

To this Mrs. Grey gave an equally ungentle reply, then went in and banged the door, to the landlady's great indignation.

In the large street not far off were many shops, but with two of them Mrs. Grey was well acquainted; and that night, into the one lighted up like the rest, and distinguished by three great yellow balls suspended over the door, glided her thin figure wrapped in a faded old shawl drawn over her head. She held a parcel hidden within the shawl, and whispered to herself, "It's for the rent, the poor lad must have a roof to cover him;" and when the man behind the counter having dismissed prior customers, called gruffly to her, "Well, what for you?" she offered the parcel with a trembling hand, and turned away while he unfolded a copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress," bound in blue and gold.

"Eh, very pretty; honestly got, I hope. Ah, I see," for the inscription opposite to the title-page explained its history. To that man it was no matter of feeling or thought, it was just a matter of business; and giving upon it the lowest sum he could venture to name, he placed the book among other things, with the bonnet and shawl which had been worn not very long before at the Mothers' Meeting.

The miserable woman felt her degradation for a moment, and burned with anger at the coolness with which her honesty had been called in question; but she might have known that her frequent errands to that shop were enough to justify suspicion in one

accustomed to deal with the worst side of human nature. He knew that it was sin and crime rather than want that brought him business; and his shrewd guesses at the mischiefs to which he was content to minister were not often wrong. But that was not his affair, he thought; he was not his "brother's keeper."

As Mrs. Grey left the shop, she saw a stream of people passing in and out of the very next house, where a blaze of light shone upon haggard faces and reeling forms, and whence sounds of confusion and a strife of tongues came forth at every swing of the door. She did not hesitate; she pressed eagerly in among that reckless throng to drink the intoxicating poison that was ruining her, body and soul.

More pale and wretched than before, she slowly passed along, till at a street corner another of these flaring houses caught her eye; again she entered and drank, and yet again, until her brain wandered, her step faltered, and every trace of feminine feeling gave way to the mad passion before which she had prostrated her reason and her moral nature. Then meeting her landlady, who happened to be entering the court at the same time, a quarrel about the rent began between them, which was on the point of ending in blows, when the sight of a policeman drove the fierce antagonists within, and put an end, for that time at least, to the public scandal; and Mrs. Grey had enough sense left to know that Mrs. Watson's conduct had betrayed a fact she would gladly have concealed, and that she had no longer a right to blame in others a sin to which she was herself becoming a slave.

"Mother," said Peter, a few days afterwards,

"will you be so good as to mend this hole in my jacket? I've cobbled it twice, as well as I could, and it isn't fit to go to school or to church in on Sunday."

"What a plague the boy is, with his church and his school!" cried his mother, angrily; "do you think I've nothing to do but make and mend for you?"

Alas, it was little enough of either that she ever did for the poor boy, and he saw there was no hope of a remedy just now; but he felt sorely ashamed to stand in the clean neatly dressed class in those ragged old clothes, which had held together much longer than could reasonably be expected at his time of life. But Peter was not giddy now, he had very little of what the boys call "spirit;" and often when they went to their dinners and then to play, he sat by himself reading his Bible, and finding spiritual food and happiness which nothing on earth could give or take away.

But something must be done about his clothes, for Peter knew that his absence from school would not only be sorrowful to himself, but would grieve his kind benefactress, so he wisely resolved to tell her the simple truth. It was very painful to him to be constantly a tax upon the charity of one who had done so much for him, for Peter had delicacy of feeling, being now a Christian child; but there was no other way, so he went at once.

"Look, mamma," cried Frank Ashton, as he came down the steps with his mother, with whom he was just going for a drive, "there is your little schoolboy, Peter Grey; he looks as if he wanted you."

"Do you want to speak to me, Peter?" said Mrs. Ashton, in that gentle, kind voice that always made

Peter think how happy Master Frank was to have such a mother. And then she came close to him and laid her hand on his shoulder—yes, on that ragged old jacket—for she felt for the little thin form it covered, and loved the warm heart that beat within it.

"I have been wanting you, Peter," she said, as he hesitated how to tell his errand; "you are needing some clothes, and I have a nice warm suit that will just fit you, I think." And she smiled on him, and thought she fully understood all that was half choking him with wonder and thankfulness. And she went in again, and with her own hands brought a large bundle from her store-room, and asked now what he had come to tell her.

"It was about this," said Peter, with glistening eyes. "I was not fit to go to school, but oh! now—"

"I am so glad, so very glad, my little friend," said the lady, looking almost as pleased as the child himself, and that afternoon she especially enjoyed her drive.

On Saturday evening hour after hour passed away as Peter sat alone in his cellar, preparing his text and answers for the next day's Scripture lesson, until all was nicely learned; and then he began to feel hungry, for his mother was out, and he had tasted nothing all day but a piece of pie and a crust which Mrs. Taylor had given to him in the morning. She often wondered, she said, how that poor boy lived; and excepting when he had a meal at Mrs. Ashton's, perhaps her own kindness supplied the best answer to that wonder.

After some time Peter recollected how the nice talk of Christian and Faithful had often made the hours fly

happily; and attempting to reach down his precious prize, he discovered his sad loss, too truly guessing the cause of its disappearance. "Well," thought he, as he sat down again and took up his little Bible, "I have still got this, and it tells me how the Lord Jesus did about everything; but ah! poor mother shouldn't have done so;" and tears, more for his parent than himself, slowly rolled down his pale cheeks.

It grew very late, and after looking out several times, Peter decided to lie down and sleep off his hunger if he could, rather than sit up and seem as if he wanted anything. "To-morrow will be Sunday," thought he, with delight, "and I shall go and learn more about the Lord Jesus, and sing my new hymn:—

"Lord, a little band and lowly,
We are come to sing to thee;
Thou art great and high and holy,
Oh, how solemn we should be!"

Then it suddenly occurred to him to lay his nice new clothes ready to put on in the morning, and he looked for them in the corner where he had so carefully laid them: but in vain he searched every crevice in the dwelling, they were not to be found.

Poor Peter now remembered that his mother had done nothing to earn a penny that he knew of all the week, and yet had evidently taken a great deal to drink every day. Where did she get the means? Alas! alas! it was all too plain now, and, fairly overcome, he lay down on his pillow of rags and wept long and bitterly. At last he tried to recall his texts, and a verse of a hymn he was very fond of:

"Art thou my Father? I'll depend
Upon the care of such a Friend;

And only wish to do and be
Whatever seemeth good to thee.

Art thou my Father? Then, at last,
When all my days on earth are past,
Send down and take me in thy love,
To be thy better child above."

And soothed and comforted by these sweet thoughts he fell asleep at last.

Towards midnight a face bent over him for a moment, and the fumes of liquor burned close to his cheek. The miserable wreck of once blooming womanhood stood there muttering to herself in the idiocy of intoxication, but she did not rouse the child from his happy dream of the heaven to which he was going soon.

CHAPTER III.

A WAY TO MAKE TROUBLES.

"THERE now," said an honest, prosperous working man to his wife as they stopped at the door of a clean, newly painted house in a small street, out of the noise and bustle of the town, "will this do for you? here's no dirt to begin with; it's as clean as a new penny:" and Richard Moore good-humouredly began to point out all the comforts and beauties of this new home.

Mrs. Moore looked pleased and satisfied, and said there would be some pleasure in keeping things nice now that she should get away from the smoke and dirt of their present neighbourhood, where she never could keep anything clean and tidy, if she tried for a hundred years.

So they moved into the pretty clean house, and very nice it looked for a week or two. There was a little parlour, and a comfortable kitchen, and two airy bedrooms, and a good supply of water; and Richard put shelves and hammered in nails and hooks, and left nothing undone that he could do, to make "a place for everything," hoping that Betsey would remember her part of the proverb, and keep "everything in its place."

But, alas, a change soon came over the scene; and the collector, who called punctually for the rent, declared that it was of no use to paint and paper for

such people, for whatever the husband might be, the wife had "no notion of things at all;" and he privately wondered how long the rent would be forthcoming in such a disorderly state of household affairs. A dirty, torn blind hung loosely from a window in which cautious spiders had made themselves and their families quite at home, while a broken pane was stuffed with a good apron which was much missed from its proper use; the floors were dirty, the once neat walls were picked by little fingers that found pleasant occupation in peeling off the paper to find out what was underneath, and, in short, no one ignorant of causes and effects would have known the house again.

One morning, as Mrs. Moore sat in the rocking chair in the kitchen with a baby in her arms, and two other children, not much beyond babyhood, tumbling about at her feet, while a neighbour stood leaning against the dresser in the midst of an idle and mischievous gossip, a gentle tap at the door announced a visitor. Betsey Moore looked vexed, and gossiping Mrs. White, with a quick "good-day," hurried off; while Susan Taylor, in her morning gown, clean apron, and neat bonnet, walked in.

"Mother is staying with the children a few minutes, Betsey, so I just ran here to see if I could do anything for you," said she, cheerfully.

"Do? there's plenty to be done," said Betsey, peevishly; "I can't get this child to lie down for a minute, and how can I put things straight? There, just look at the mess those brats have got into while I—" was gossiping with Mrs. White, she might have said, but she did not. Moreover, she had so

accustomed the baby to the rocking chair, where she chose to sit talking, or doing nothing but swing backwards and forwards, deluding herself into the idea that it was wholly on his account—that he certainly did behave as if he meant to live in it altogether.

Susan looked round in dismay, then seizing a brush, swept up the ashes, and tried to "coax" back the fire which had almost dwindled to its last spark. The breakfast things stood unwashed on a table, the chairs looked as if suddenly stopped in a jig; here stood an empty kettle, there a candlestick and saucepan had rolled together; here a piece of crust had found its way into an old shoe, and there on the floor the two children were delighting their minds by stirring up their bread and milk left from breakfast with a long-tailed comb.

In a very few minutes, however, Susan set the chairs in their places, filled the kettle, gathered up stray sundries, and began to wash the breakfast things, talking kindly, but anxiously, to her sister all the while. "It is past eleven, Betsey," said she, presently; "Richard will be in to dinner, I suppose, soon after twelve; perhaps you've got something doing in the oven for him."

"Perhaps I haven't," said Betsey; "I can't do everything. But there's some cold meat in the cupboard, and may be some potatoes too, for I boiled too many yesterday. I wish, Susan, you would make Richard see that he ought to keep a servant for me; I've no peace of my life now. I'm sure I'd never have married him if I'd thought to come to this," and she rocked away with redoubled vigour.

Susan was just then busy with the "cold meat," which, with bones, bits of fat, and a quantity of cold potatoes all mixed up in a dirty pie-dish, did not look very tempting. "You won't be offended, Betsey, will you, if I just make this into a little Irish stew? It isn't nice for him in this state."

"Well, if there's time—and you're very handy to be sure; it would be nicer of course, and I think there's a bit of a chop hanging in the pantry as well;" and Betsey did look rather ashamed.

The saucepan had to be washed, salt pinched up from the bottom of a box, pepper hunted after in a drawer where Betsey knew it must be, because the children had often made themselves sneeze terribly by inquisitively opening the paper in which it had been left; then an onion had to be searched for which had rolled off the shelf the other day, and must be somewhere about; and at last Susan contrived to make out of all, a savoury dish more likely to tempt a hungry man than that with which Betsey seemed to expect him to be satisfied.

"Now, dear Betsey, give me the baby while you just wash those little ones, and smooth your own hair; you always used to keep it so nice, and when it hangs as it does now you don't seem like the same person."

"Well, I've no time to keep myself nice," grumbled Betsey. "To listen to you one might think you didn't know what it is to have a lot of children running about your feet, and always in the way. I'm sure I don't know what to do with them, they're the plague of one's life."

"Oh, Betsey, don't say that. They are sent to be

blessings to us, if we receive them from a good God who bids us bring them up to love and serve him; and they should take away our selfishness, and make us careful how we live and speak before them."

"It doesn't much matter about that," said Betsey, "for whatever you say or do, they always choose to do wrong."

"Well, they have got naughty hearts, poor things; but oh, Betsey, isn't it sweet to know that we may take them to the Lord Jesus, and ask him to save and bless them?"

"Oh, you always bring in your religion about everything so, as if it could help one in such a muddle as I'm obliged to be in."

"It keeps me out of a muddle, dear Betsey," said Susan, earnestly. "Oh, I do wish you knew the comfort of having God's blessing in your home; it helps wonderfully to keep things straight, both in our tempers and our work, and it makes like sunshine of everything."

"It's no use talking, Susan; I don't see why I should be a slave from morning till night just to please Richard, when he cares nothing about home now."

"Ah, Betsey, it was just that made me come here this morning; for Richard was no less than four times last week in a public house drinking and playing games, and last night William made him come to our house instead, and he talked reasonably enough; but he said—I hardly like to tell you, Betsey."

"Oh, you may tell, for anything I care. I know this, that the other night when the children were in bed, I set to, and scrubbed and cleaned till my arms ached, and I got a lot of clothes washed, and Richard

could see I wasn't idle; but all the praise I got was his going off in a huff, saying he didn't want to be swilled into the street, nor swept into the grate, and that he hated to sit where things were hanging to dry. So I gave up there and then, and sat down and nearly cried my eyes out."

"Oh, Betsey, Betsey, did you really do all this with your husband in the house wanting to rest quietly after his day's work? Indeed, I don't wonder he went out."

"It's very odd to me that you always take the husband's part," exclaimed Betsey, angrily.

"Well, I must not stay any longer now, only just let me say this, Betsey; let us try with all our hearts to do the duty we both promised to do when we married, and let us be quite sure that no fault can be found in us before we begin to find fault with our husbands. Do try more, dear sister, for Richard's sake, and your own and the children's sakes, to make your home more comfortable for him. Indeed you don't know what you are doing by vexing him so as to make him go out when he ought to have a happy fireside to sit down to."

She then went to lay the baby down in a room upstairs, and returning for a moment while she tied on her bonnet, added, as she kissed her sister's clouded face. "Forgive me for speaking so plain, dear Betsey; and do think it over yourself. And now, couldn't you just say to Richard that you'll have a nice warm supper for him in the evening, for you know this is but a scanty sort of dinner; and if you don't give him good food, he'll think he must make it up in drink, and then—"

"Oh, that reminds me," interrupted Betsey, "do you know about that neighbour of yours, Mrs. Watson? Why, Mrs. White says—"

"Don't tell me anything," said Susan; "I'm afraid she's going wrong, and I've been trying to make friends with her for the sake of her poor children."

"Make friends with her? Indeed you'll demean yourself, I can tell you, if you do that. Mrs. White says she drove her husband into bad ways with her temper, and now they both drink away all they have to live upon."

"Oh, that dreadful drink!" said Susan, earnestly. "May God help us to keep ourselves and ours from it; we don't know what we may come to when that begins."

"Come to, indeed! You don't think we are coming to that?"

"I can't tell; but I know that our hearts are deceitful, and we need God's good Spirit to set us in the right way and keep us there. And I can't help seeing too, Betsey, that we, wives of working men, have just as much in our power to make or mar happiness as any lady in the land. We've our trials, to be sure, but we've great blessings too, and duties as high and holy as God's word can make them. Oh, let us ask him to teach us how to do them for him day by day."

"She's as gloomy as mother, with her religious ways," said Betsey to herself; but the only gloom over that peaceful heart was caused by increasing fears for the happiness of her sister, which she saw was sorely perilled through idleness, selfishness, and a discontented spirit.

As Susan glided away at one end of the street, Richard Moore came sauntering into it at the other, and putting his head in at the kitchen door, "Got any dinner for a hungry fellow, to-day?" he said, half good-humouredly, half doubtingly.

"Come in, and see," said Betsey, feeling really very glad that Susan had paid her so kind a visit. She had drawn the table before a cheerful fire, found a clean cloth to put over it, and had things set upon it with some degree of order.

"Well, now, that's nice and comfortable; and, Betsey, I do believe you've been to the hairdresser; you look like my own little wife to-day. Come, where are the little ones? let's have dinner together like Christian people."

Ah, where were the little ones? In mischief, no doubt, for they were wonderfully quiet. Yes, they were in the front room, where they had been forbidden to go; one busy unravelling grandmother's knitting, and much enjoying the curious little curls in the worsted, as row after row came beautifully out; the other was trying her new teeth upon a piece of soap which she had found in a corner, and of course thought it was something nice to eat.

"Oh dear, dear! did ever anybody see the like?" exclaimed Betsey, rushing to the rescue of the stocking.

"Ah, you should have put it out of reach," said Richard, half laughing; "how should he know what it was? Can't you do it up again?"

"I do it up again! what time have I to do it, I wonder? You talk like a goose."

"Do I? Well, let's have dinner. Scold them when I'm gone, if you must scold about it."

Betsey could not wait, but did scold, and not very gently either; she knew her mother would not blame the child—no grandmother ever did—and she would be thought careless for not putting the knitting away, when she saw it lying on a chair. Why did not Susan see it, who was so sharp-sighted to see things out of place? Poor Betsey forgot in Susan's behalf, a saying she was often repeating on her own, that "one pair of hands couldn't do everything." So Richard Moore's dinner was spoiled after all, for he could not endure to hear the children cry, and after making a hasty meal went out again; while his wife, intent upon herself and her hardships in having a house and three children to manage, allowed him to go without a kind word or look to induce him to suppose she cared whether he came home in the evening, or went to spend his time and money among those who would entice him to forgetfulness of wife and children, home and its responsibilities, as well as of its disorder and discomfort.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHERS' INFLUENCES AND SOME RESULTS.

"WILL you ask your mother to let me speak to her for a minute, my little friend?" said Mrs. Ashton, kindly, to one of the dirty, rough children who were playing at Mrs. Watson's door.

"Mother, somebody wants you," bawled the boy, without moving, as he fillipped down the steps the stones of some sour plums he was eating. Mrs. Ashton gently pushed them together saying, that they might cause some person to fall down if left scattered about.

"That would be good fun," said the boy, laughing; but in an instant his merry look was succeeded by one of surprise and terror, and starting up, he scampered up the steps, followed by the whole party, who seemed to disappear together at the back of the house.

Mrs. Ashton looked round to discover the cause of the panic, but could only see a tall policeman quietly surveying the court.

If she could have known the connexion in the children's minds between those plums and the policeman, she would not have been surprised at the effect of his presence. But she had not seen the wicked contrivance to upset a poor woman's basket of fruit, the scramble for the scattered contents, the filled pockets, and the run home to enjoy the feast. The children

were suffered to run about idle, and Satan had found them "work to do." His best scholars are among such; for when he "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," as the Lord Jesus Christ declared he does, the idle, whether great or little, are pretty sure to fall in his way first.

Mrs. Watson at last appeared, and with a very ill grace bade the lady "walk in."

To describe the room as it was would be thought an exaggeration; but there is no discomfort or untidiness to which people may not become accustomed in time, and Mrs. Watson made no apologies, as if the state of things were at all uncommon with her. There was a poor neglected baby in a cradle, kept quiet by a girl with unwashed face and hands, who was "minding it," by stuffing its mouth with something sweet; and Mrs. Ashton gave to both, from regret and pity, the notice she was always ready to bestow from choice and pleasure.

"I have ventured to trouble you this morning, Mrs. Watson," said she, "just to mention that the fever which you may have heard of in other towns seems to have reached us, and to tell you of such precautions as may, by the mercy of God, prevent it from being so fatal amongst us."

"Much obliged, ma'am; I hope it won't come here: we've trouble enough without sickness to make things worse."

"Temperance and cleanliness are urged upon us all as means in our own power," said the lady, looking carefully into her tract bag. "Would it be very troublesome to you to allow your rooms to be whitewashed, Mrs. Watson? The landlord has kindly

authorized me to make the offer to any of his tenants in this district."

"Well, I think it would. I can't be bothered with it now, except Mrs. Grey's room, perhaps; if he likes to do that he may, for it's dreadful dirty, and her child's very sick, I believe. She needs your good advice, I can assure you."

"She needs much more than I can do," said Mrs. Ashton, "for she is indulging in what she knows to be sin, and must lead only to ruin and misery. In fact, she is a living proof of the frightful degradation to which the love of drink can reduce one who might have been the blessing of a happy home. Do not think me unkind or officious, Mrs. Watson, if I entreat you and every mother I meet, to teach your children to shun this special sin, this curse of our land, and to train them up in the knowledge of God's word which contains such warnings against it."

"I'm very busy, ma'am," said Mrs. Watson, with the colour rushing over her face; "I should think I know my duty, and I rather wonder that ladies don't know better than to take up poor people's time."

"I beg your pardon for doing so; but if you think for a moment what sickness might do in your family, and what sin must do for their souls unless they learn of Him who came to heal and to save, I hope you will forgive me for intruding upon you in earnest and affectionate anxiety this morning. May I leave a little book or two for your children?" and Mrs. Ashton looked towards the girl who lounged by the cradle.

"I can't read," said the poor matted-haired child. Alas for the parent who "knew her duty," but did it

not! Alas for the children whose minds were thus left to their natural impulses, ignorant of the commonest means of knowledge and improvement!

With a saddened heart Mrs. Ashton descended to the lodging in the cellar, where she knew one face would welcome her with smiles. Peter Grey had not been seen out of doors since the unhappy night on which he discovered the loss of his book and his Sunday clothes; he was not ill, he said, but he could not run or walk as he used to do, and wanted to sit quiet; and if mother did not bring him much food it did not matter, for he was not at all hungry now.

"Mother," he had just been saying, as he placed his thin fingers between the leaves of his little Bible at some of his favourite texts, and seemed to hold it with an anxious grasp, "Mother, you won't take this from me, will you? not this, mother, I can't spare it yet. I want it till I die."

"I'm not going to take it, child; what ails you to think so?" said Mrs. Grey, while her eyes ranged round the desolate apartment in search of something to turn into money, for her thoughts were not pleasant, and she wanted to drown them.

"Mother," continued the boy, "can't you sit down awhile? I want to tell you how happy I am."

Happy? what a word from a child of sorrow, whose young life was withering away through neglect, unkindness, and starvation! But so it was, and the miserable parent stood looking at him with wonder.

"Yes, so happy. Jesus Christ is my good Saviour, and I think I'm going to him soon. Don't be sorry,

mother. Let me say my nice hymn for you that tells about it." And he began:—

"Around the throne of God in heaven
Thousands of children stand,
Whose sins are all through Christ forgiven—
A holy, happy band,
Singing glory, glory, glory!"

"Nonsense, child," said Mrs. Grey, struggling to keep out the thought that there was something unearthly about the expression of the careworn little face, lighted up as it was at that moment with heavenly joy; "you aren't so bad as that, I know. I must get a doctor to come and see you."

"It's no use, mother; but do let me say something I want so much. Mother, when I'm gone, will you give up the —— will you learn about Jesus, I mean, and come after me to heaven some day, mother?" Then bursting into tears, and throwing his arms round her, he sobbed out, in a whisper, the wish he could not utter aloud. "It's the only thing that makes me sad, mother; for all else I'm happy and glad to go."

Mrs. Grey could not, dared not, be angry; but with a confused, wild look and feeling, pushed him from her, and rushed out of the cellar, leaving Mrs. Ashton, whom she met in the door-way, to soothe and comfort the excited child. It was plain that his life was really hastening to a close, that "the Lord had need of this floweret fair," gathered and cherished by the hand of Divine grace out of a wilderness of sin and sorrow; and the visitor felt that even years of otherwise fruitless labour would have been well bestowed and richly repaid by this one soul to whose eternal salvation she had been God's honoured instrument to minister.

It was pleasant to pass on to Susan Taylor's neat, clean house, with the row of plants in the window, the chairs one need never hesitate to rest in, the children one need not be afraid to touch—and to receive the ready welcome of Christian love. Susan was ironing at the table, the children were watching her, and helping or hindering by laying the neatly folded things in the clothes basket, while she was helping them to sing how "Jesus little children blesses," and commending to their love and care the pretty baby who lay in the cradle beside them, and whose every smile or movement was instantly told with the greatest glee.

Susan had learned to sympathize with the poor little being who has "nothing to do," who in consequence gets into mischief, and is in everybody's way; and as she never sent her children to play amongst a herd of young ruffians in the street, when they got troublesome in the house, she found it her interest, as much as it was her duty, to provide them with occupation of some kind. And great fun it was to little Robert to help rub the furniture, and ecstasy beyond description to polish the grate and dirty his hands with his mother's leave; and if occasionally he thought he could make something else look nice with a black-lead brush, his zeal was rewarded with a kiss, while he was taught a little lesson about the different uses of black lead to brighten, and soap and water to whiten.

Some mothers in such a case would have boxed and scolded, and have made no difference between ignorance and disobedience. And here the question is suggested concerning the habits of busy working people in their social relations. Do their children,

after passing out of nursing arms, know half enough about that sweet word *love*, or the feeling it expresses? Oh, if they were allowed to live more in its influence, the refinement of mind, and gentleness of manner in which they are often so grievously wanting, would be found as attractive and graceful among them as among the apparently more favoured classes. There is nothing necessarily uncouth and rude in busy work, or honest poverty, and a mother's tender voice and loving smile and kiss might, in one sense, educate many a child who is now left like a wild colt for others to drill and tame.

Surely our circumstances are to us just what we let them be. God never sends any that need harden our hearts, and leave us no time to be gentle and kind; for love is his great, good, blessed law for our life's happiness, as much as it is his own glorious nature for our everlasting praises. Children hear about it in texts and hymns at school, but do they see it, and feel it in practice at home? Home is the real educator after all; a few hours' daily drill is as nothing compared with the real, natural, unrestrained character and speech and manner of father and mother and the ways of home, be that home a parlour or kitchen, a garret or cellar. There is a Power that can turn all to good account, and make peace and happiness to abide in the meanest dwelling; it is the Holy Spirit of God in the heart, purifying its thoughts and intents, and causing us to find good in everything, and not to make mischief out of anything ordered for us in providential wisdom and love.

"I do not come to talk to *you* about cleanliness, Mrs. Taylor," said the visitor, "but I wish you could

advise and help some of your neighbours a little on that subject. I fear you may suffer through their neglect if sickness should come among them."

"I do my best indeed, ma'am, when I can," replied Susan; "but I often get told that it's no use to be so particular, and that children thrive best in the dirt."

"One must suppose such is a common opinion," said Mrs. Ashton, "to see the condition of so many in our streets. I often wish to try if a little soap and water would not make more blooming, pleasant faces among our working people, for it is quite certain that health and beauty do not appear to distinguish them as it is."

"I'm afraid it will go hard here if the fever comes," said Susan; "but we must trust in God to keep us safe, for we can't go away from the danger."

"No, but it is a great comfort to know, that He who fixes the bounds of your habitation has you under his gracious care, Susan, and will make everything work for good to you. I wish I could feel the same assurance for many others, but they are living without God in the world, and so have no hope in sickness, no comfort in sorrow, no heavenly Friend to look to in time of need."

"Little Peter Grey has all," said Susan, eagerly; "he is a wonder among us in this court."

"True, and he is on the way home, Susan. I wanted to ask you to do what you can for him when his poor wretched mother is away, and I believe it will be accepted as done unto his Lord."

Susan's kind heart had anticipated this request, and she had already done for him much of a mother's

duty, but the need did not last much longer. The meek young spirit was ripening fast; and one night when his wicked parents were in the depth of their degrading enjoyment, silencing conscience, and forgetting the terrible future, their child, breathing prayers for them, and tended by the hands of strangers, gently sank to rest, and found in heaven his first true home. The parish buried the body, and angels bore away the spirit to be "present with the Lord."

CHAPTER V.

"REFORMERS," FALSE AND TRUE.

IN the yard of a large manufacturing establishment, a crowd of workmen one morning assembled together instead of passing, as usual, each to his particular department. Some were whistling, more were talking; most of them had their hands in their pockets, trying to look independent, and all their countenances bore some expression of defiance. Two or three other men stood on the opposite side of the yard, waiting anxiously for whatever was to happen. It was not that anything was going on, but rather that everything had come to a stand, excepting tongues, whose business it seemed to be to make eloquent excuses for the idleness of other members of the body.

The principals were in their office, engaged in consultation; and at any sign of their appearance, the hum of voices ceased outside, and all was eager expectation. At last a gentleman came forth and spoke. "Once more, my men," said he, "I remind you of fair wages and constant employment, early hours, punctual payments, and fair play for all: these should content industrious men."

"They content us, sir; we are ready to go to work," said William Taylor, stepping forward boldly from the little group who were of the same mind, or

rather, perhaps, of the same resolute principle: for men, like sheep, often move in flocks, thinking to find in numbers the strength that is wanting to individual character and sound judgment.

"Turncoat! traitor! coward!" muttered several of the crowd; but Taylor was not a man to care for names, when he had the quiet approval of a good conscience, and was acting as in the sight of a greater than earthly masters; and if he felt a pugnacious twinge at the insulting sounds, he tried to overcome it in the name and strength of Him who "bore the contradiction of sinners," and "when He was reviled, reviled not again." But let it not be thought a little thing for an athletic, high-spirited labouring man to control his temper and restrain his strength before the provoking and unjust taunts of his fellows. It may cost a mighty struggle in his manly heart, and whatever may be thought or noticed about it down here, it is heroism of the highest quality in the sight of God, who ranks the ruler of his own spirit above all the military conquerors that ever astonished the world. Would that this were more remembered among our people when "grievous words stir up anger," and blows and clasp-knives are made to settle quarrels with the terrible ferocity of revenge.

But to return. The spokesman of the larger party then impatiently demanded of the employer, "Do you agree to our terms, or not?"

"We do not," said the master, firmly; "we are resolved."

"Then so are we," shouted the men; and a great noise and confusion, and tossing up of caps, and three cheers for liberty and independence, and so forth,

completed this curious act of self-deception, called "a strike." The men were quite delighted with themselves, and what they called their "principles;" and considering that they had done a most valiant deed, and conferred a benefit on society, went off in great excitement to make jovial holiday in honour of it.

The consequences, however, fell also on the few who were willing to work; for until new arrangements could be made, business could not proceed in any department; and the masters, notwithstanding their full satisfaction in William Taylor and his companions, were obliged to dismiss them, and for the present to close the establishment.

When the yard was emptied, the neighbouring public houses filled, for nothing could be done without drink in the important matter of bringing employers to "their senses"—a process which some of these "reformers" seemed to think might be forwarded by losing their own, over a drunken discussion in the bar. Very few of them reached home with much of the last wages in their pockets, and very few found a welcome there when they arrived, for the wives did not enter into the spirit of the thing at all. Moreover, they were not accustomed to have their husbands lounging about the house doing nothing; and perhaps they too truly anticipated consequences to themselves and their families not quite in keeping with the boastful declamations about the "better times" which were coming through the wisdom, boldness, and self-respect of this clever enterprise of the "strike."

William Taylor went home too, but not to reproaches or discontent, for Susan knew that his dismissal was not through any fault of his own, and even

if it had been, she would have tried some better way to show her regret. She was ready, with love and kindness, to put the bright side of things forward, and to cheer him with hope for the future.

"I can't be idle, you know, Susan," said he, as they talked over the matter together; "and if our masters and men don't come to terms, I must go elsewhere and seek work."

"Yes, I was afraid it would come to that," said Susan; "but you needn't think I shall let you keep on a house for me while you are wandering away."

"I shall be sorry to break up our nice little home, though," said William, sadly; "but perhaps we might get our things taken care of; and if you didn't mind lodgings for a bit, you could come to me directly I get work, you know."

"I shan't mind anything that makes it easier for you," said Susan, affectionately; "and, with God's blessing, we shall get on, never fear. Don't let us forget who makes 'all things work together for good to them that love him,' dear husband; and we do love him—don't we? though not half enough."

"Yes, I hope so—I'm sure so," replied William; "and we'll trust him too, for He who cares for the birds of the air, and clothes the flowers of the field, will not forget us. No, he will supply all our need according to his mercy in Christ Jesus. Thank you, my dear wife, for reminding me, for I've been apt to be a little down-hearted like. Just let us read that chapter that seems made on purpose for us now, if you've time to spare."

Yes, Susan had time for that; and settling the little ones as quietly as she could, they read and prayed

together, and perhaps were never more thankfully happy than in this hour of unexpected difficulty. So sweetly does faith sustain and comfort the spirit that meekly takes its burden where God's word bids his people cast it.

Poor Mrs. Moore, whose husband, against his better judgment, had joined the "strike" party, soon came round to complain to her sister, and to grumble about all the miseries and afflictions which she was sure were coming upon her. Susan bore with her as patiently as she could, taking occasion to hint how much careful industry might do to prevent some of these troubles, and how a peaceful trust in God would help her to bear them if they really came.

"I'm sure," said Betsey, giving the baby she held in her arms rather a rough jerk, "I'm sure I wish I had religion, or anything else, to make me shut my eyes to things I don't like: it's the queerest thing to me how you manage it."

"I don't manage it, Betsey; it is the Spirit of God who helps all that wish to give up their own way to his. I cannot make myself contented and peaceful; but oh! if I pray that God will make me so, should I not expect an answer to my prayer?"

"Well, I don't know anything about it, not I; I've enough to do without——"

"Without praying, do you mean, sister? I thought you wanted something to make you satisfied to bear things you can't help and don't like; but you can't expect it if you won't ask for it."

"We shall need all the help we can get, wherever it's to be had," said Betsey, "for the club allowance is nothing like Richard's wages; and then one can't

tell how long it may be before they get to work again. Well, I must run home, for I left the children with Mrs. White, while I came just to hear what you think about this stupid business." And with a great sigh, and another rough toss of the child, she rose to go.

Susan sighed too. "Poor little thing," said she, kissing the little creature that seemed such a nuisance to its foolish mother; "don't let your heart get hard against those who were sent to soften and bless it, dear Betsey. It's a bad sign when a mother makes trouble out of God's gifts."

"Nonsense; I like it well enough when it's good," said Betsey, half laughing, as she nestled the child under her warm shawl; "it's only such perfect people as you that can like them when they're naughty, I suppose."

"Our Father in heaven commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," said Susan, softly. "If we try to feel for our children, as God does toward his, we shall not go wrong, though we are not perfect."

As Mrs. Moore was leaving the house, she turned suddenly to call Susan's attention to the very bright glare which shone through Mrs. Watson's window; in another minute screams were heard, and several young heads appeared in the light, making frantic efforts to break the glass. Susan rushed to the door, but it was locked. Assistance, however, was soon at hand, the door forced open, and the half-suffocated children handed over to kind neighbours, while the men put out the flames of the burning cradle, where the cries of the poor infant had sunk into piteous moans.

In the midst of the confusion, Mrs. Watson, excited by drink and terror, came struggling through the crowd, and snatching her baby from the arms that held it, began to ask questions, make excuses, and exclaim against her hard fate, all in the same breath.

William Taylor quietly went to call the nearest doctor to the suffering child. The neighbours, with significant looks, gradually withdrew, leaving the wretched woman quailing beneath the fierce question of her husband as to the cause of the scene before him, when he entered his house.

"I was only gone a minute," said Mrs. Watson, trembling with terror.

"Where to?" he sternly demanded; but he saw too plainly where she had been, and how her "minute" might have been an hour for anything she knew about the time. "Can a mother forget?" Yes, drink can make her forget everything good and holy, and change her into an unnatural fiend.

The arrival of the doctor interrupted a fearful scene of domestic strife; but he shook his head when he saw the child, for he could do nothing to hinder its fluttering life from passing away beyond the reach of neglect and pain for ever. Could any one be sorry? The verdict of the whole inhabitants of the court was short and strong; it was mercy, they said, mercy in every way, to the child of such a home.

Mrs. Moore had stood by through the chief part of that exciting scene, learning a deep lesson for herself; and when at last she moved away, her sleeping infant was clasped to her bosom with a tenderness not often there. Then she hurried home, in fear lest her gossiping neighbour, Mrs. White, might be neglect-

ing the other children in some talkative temptation, and some such fate befall them.

Richard having found an empty house after his evening stroll, was just coming out again; but Betsey so earnestly implored him to stay at home, that he hesitated. "Do come in, Richard," said she; "I'll have things comfortable in a few minutes, indeed I will. Oh! I will try to do better, only do stay with us now."

Richard stared curiously at his wife, wondering if she had gone out of her mind; but again she repeated her promise of amendment, and related to him what had just happened, while he sat down with the little ones, and looked on as she busied herself in "putting things to rights." At last her excitement seemed to calm; she got the children to bed without a single grumble, holding them up to Richard for a good night kiss, and bestowing many herself upon them, as she laid them down. Then she came and sat beside him, and slipping a Bible into his hand, "Will you read a bit, Richard?" said she; "I want to be as happy as Susan is, and she says nothing can go right if we don't care about God. I want to do right; oh! indeed I do." And she burst into tears.

Richard was wonderfully astonished: he knew little enough about religion, but he admired its results in his good, wise sister-in-law; and he thought if it could make his discontented wife more happy and industrious, it was well worth having, and he would not be the one to throw cold water on her efforts for amendment. So he began at the beginning of the New Testament, and found the story so interesting, that he went on and on, and learned more about the Saviour

than he ever knew before. It was a wonderful history, to be sure; he must read another night; he would come home on purpose, and so he did. And was it not a good sign, when that precious Book, rescued from dust and indifference, began to be studied? In it were words to warn the sinner and comfort the penitent, to stimulate effort and encourage hope, to awaken the soul and win the heart; and when the Spirit of God takes up his "sharp and powerful" sword to convict and convert, who or what can resist a reformation, whether it be a Luther, at whose voice nations shall shake off the bonds of superstition and falsehood, or a hidden one, whose victory over self and sin shall bless the lowly home of one of the "sons of toil?"

CHAPTER VI.

TRAINING UP THE CHILD.

"If I were you, Will, I wouldn't take such a little lad as that to a place of worship," said Richard Moore, as he walked with his brother-in-law, William Taylor, one Sunday morning.

"Why not?" asked William.

"Oh, he can't understand anything yet; it will only make him cross and tired, and perhaps troublesome to other people."

"Well, I've heard it said so before," replied William; "but I have thought about it, and so has Susan, and we think it comes nearest to God's word to take the children to the house of prayer on the Lord's day, as soon as they can be taught to do as they're bid. You see we want them to be obedient, and where can such a good lesson be more kindly taught? I don't hold with sending them to the Sunday school to push my duty off upon other people; and good and blessed as the schools are to thousands and thousands all over the world, they can't excuse me from teaching my own children what God has taught me."

"Well, I should have supposed you would do that at home perhaps."

"To be sure I do, but the Lord Jesus promised to be wherever his people are gathered together, and I like to have my children in my arms where I'm right

sure and positive he is in the midst of us. I think of that poor woman who got what she wanted for her daughter; and the blessing is to come to me and mine in the same way, just by faith you know."

"I don't think I could attend to anything with a restless child to keep quiet," said Richard. "I wonder how you manage it."

"I taught him first that God is love, and bids his children come and ask him for all they want; and has fixed a day when we may have nothing to do to keep us from spending a happy time in getting to know more of his will, and live more in his holy presence; and I told him that God loves little children as dearly as grown men and women, and would let Robert praise him and pray to him if he did so with all his heart. The child was delighted to go with me; and if ever he fidgets and looks about, I tell him I can't worship God, who is so kind and good to us, while anybody hinders in that way, and we shall have to go home without a blessing, because Robert wouldn't let me ask for it. This has made him so still and gentle, that if the boy gets no other good he learns to control himself for the sake of others."

"Well, I shouldn't have thought of it," said Richard Moore, apparently much interested; "but I have seen children behave so badly in church that I thought it was a pity they were brought there at all, to make it seem like a punishment or a trouble to them."

"Perhaps they'd behave as badly everywhere when they couldn't just have their own way," said William. "I've seen them too; but the children that wouldn't behave decently in the house of God were not the

most obedient and tractable in any other. We are told to train them in the way they should go, and it's a queer thing to leave the Lord's way and the Lord's day out of the training, if we expect them to come to any good."

"So it is; that's common sense now," said Richard. "I've a good mind to try what I can do, for I've left poor Betsey with all the children tumbling about her, and she with everything to do while I took it into my head to go to church this morning. I wonder she didn't ask me to take one of them with me."

"Well but, Richard," said William a little anxiously, "hadn't you better make the child a bit obedient to you at home first; else, maybe, if you don't find it answer at once, you may give up and think you can't do any good with him at all. You must make him love and respect you while you speak to him for God. I don't mean anything unkind, Richard, but it won't do for a father to be obliged to turn away from the eyes of his own child when he takes him to hear God's word."

"You mean when he himself takes no heed to what it says. But do you know, Will, I'm thinking about it, and I don't mean to swear if I can help it, nor drink so much either; and somehow I don't feel comfortable about this foolish strike: but my word's given, you see, so I must bide by it now."

"I'm right glad to hear all this," said William, joyfully; "but no man is obliged to bide in the wrong when he sees what's right. Now, Richard, wouldn't it be nice for you to take Betsey to church in the afternoon or the evening; and if you will just bring the children round to us we'll keep them safe

till you call for them again. I like to take Susan, but we can't often go together, except a friend does this turn for us now and then."

"I'll tell her, and thank you too. But what's your boy looking at there?" and he pointed to little Robert who had been strutting before them, being honoured by leave to carry his father's Bible.

"Look there, uncle," said the child, "isn't that a big spider?"

William could not help smiling as Richard, much puzzled, asked how he could call a house a spider. "It's a way I took to make an impression," said William, "and he remembers enough to show that it's done."

"Come, tell us what you mean, my little chap," said Richard; "what about a spider?"

"It's that great, fine house there at the corner," said the child. "They've only just built it, and it says like my little story,—

'Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly;
It's the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy.'"

"Well, and did the fly go in?" asked Richard.

"Yes—

'It buzzed about a little while, but it went in at last;
Then up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held it fast;'

and that's what the drink does to the people who go in there."

"I must tell you," interposed William, "that we have seen this grand public house growing up for weeks past, and Robert would ask what it was for, so I told him; and because he's very fond of that fable about the spider and the fly, I told him how a spider

spinning its web would be a good sign to put up when it's finished ready to entice people in; and he caught at it so sharp; and when we pass a public house and hear the noise, he says, 'Oh the foolish flies! they're caught, aren't they, father?' and I hope he'll remember to keep out of the web as long as he lives."

"Well now, I shouldn't have thought of teaching a lesson like that," said Richard Moore, thoughtfully.

"Yes, you will by-and-by when you think what the world is, and what a charge the Almighty has given you in your children to train them to get safe through it," replied William.

"I'm afraid the man who is building this place hasn't thought much about it," said Richard. "I know him a little; he made a deal of money by a gin-palace he kept in the town; and his second son used to get so drunk and turned out so bad and hopeless, that at last he fitted him out and shipped him off to Australia. The eldest had a good education, and was meant for a gentleman, only he couldn't keep from drink, and lies dying at this very time of disease brought on by it. The old man has had a paralytic stroke this summer, and just creeps about with one foot in the grave as it were, and yet he is going to put another son into this same business at the 'big spider' here. It seems like madness, doesn't it?"

"It's awful," said William; "it's like being given over to 'a reprobate mind,' as the Scripture says. But we'd better take heed to ourselves, for it says too, 'Be not highminded, but fear;' and, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.'"

Just then they approached the church; and though William advised his friend to sit at some distance from

him lest he should feel disturbed by the child, Richard determined to keep close and make his own observations on the propriety of taking him there at all; "for," thought he, "that lad is too sharp to be quiet long anywhere, I'm thinking."

William Taylor rented two sittings, not because he was too proud to sit in the free seats, for in reality he liked them better than his own, but because he thought it right to leave such accommodation for those who could not afford any other, and because, as God had prospered him, he wished to be as ready with his earnings for spiritual as for temporal purposes. His case was altered just now, and possibly he might again be very thankful for a free seat.

Little Robert was perfectly quiet and well-behaved; for if he felt at all disposed to be fidgetty, there was something in the glance of his father's eye that seemed to subdue the impulse. At rather more than half of the service, however, to Richard Moore's great surprise he saw William looking tenderly on the child, whose eyes occasionally closed, and the little head gave a very significant nod or two. Richard expected William would be angry; but no, the kind father drew the little one closer within his arm, laid the head upon his breast with the gentleness of sympathizing love, and there the boy slept peacefully, while his father in uninterrupted comfort listened as peacefully to an excellent sermon.

"Why, Robert," said his uncle as they came out, "I never expected you to go to sleep. I thought you too much of a man for that."

"I couldn't help it," said the child; "father isn't vexed."

"No, it is no sin for him," said his father; "and it was a comfort to me, for I knew he was safe and happy, and I couldn't help thinking of that verse, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust;' and I want just, in faith, to lay my head as it were on his bosom, and rest as quiet there as Robert did on mine. Times have changed with us since last Sunday, and there's nothing but child-like faith in God's love and goodness to keep a man safe and steady when he's got to face trouble."

"I don't like to hear you talk about trouble, brother Will," said Moore; "maybe the masters will come round by-and-by."

"I don't expect it, and what's more I don't think they ought this turn," said William. "But I don't want to talk about it to-day. There's something a deal better to fill hearts and heads, a blessed Master to serve here, and a happy home to go to when it's time for rest. I often think none but the Lord Almighty would have thought of setting apart one day out of seven to be spent with him, and to be a blessing to the whole earth."

"Well, I don't know, but some of us might have wanted to give ourselves a holiday now and then. I'm not so covetous as to like to work seven days in the week," said Richard.

"Ah, but would it be a holy day too, if we'd had the doing of it?" said William. "A holy day gives holiday to all, and that's what the Lord meant to do; but men who want holidays for themselves always make somebody else work. These people that make

such a talk about the poor man's holiday, they only do things by halves you see; for them that's to be pleased others must be pained, and that's not fair play. It's a queer mess we make when we think ourselves wiser than our Maker, and want to mend his laws."

"Well, I haven't much to say about it, for I'm afraid I've done pretty much as things turned up of a Sunday," said Moore; "and I know I'm always more tired and stupid and lazy that day than any other."

"Don't you think that is because you've thought it your own to do as you like with, when really it's the Lord's day, and only the Lord's people know what to do with it?" suggested William. Richard was thinking something of the kind himself, and walked on in silence.

"You see, brother," added William, "a man can't make himself love to spend a holy day, nor it can't be that to him, until he loves God as he is in Jesus Christ; but I do think it's very good to make ourselves do what he tells us—that's as plain as A, B, C; and depend upon it his blessing isn't far off then. What we do to please him, he'll soon make please us, too, better than any way we could choose for ourselves."

Richard shook hands warmly, and went home. Poor Betsey was in a sad fuss, for she had been trying to do things better, and somehow they wouldn't be done, and the children were more troublesome than ever. Richard soon took them off her hands for a while, and told her of William Taylor's kind proposal. "And will you really take me, Richard?" said she, brightening up.

"Yes to be sure, and this lad too if I thought he'd be good."

Betsey's opinion was against that possibility; and Susan too advised that he should stay with the others, for she knew that he had not been trained to obey, or think of any one but himself, and was afraid that he would spoil the pleasure she anticipated for his parents. He roared vigorously when he found he was not considered good enough to do as his cousin had done, and perpetrated sundry acts of mischief in revenge for the disappointment. At last, however, he was prevailed on to look at Robert's nice book of Sunday pictures; and being rather awed by the appearance of Moses striking the rock, and Aaron in his priestly robes, he did not venture to tear it as he at first felt disposed. Daniel and the lions restored good humour, and the next thought was to have just such a book of his own as soon as anybody would get it for him.

CHAPTER VII.

NO FELLOWSHIP WITH EVIL.

"WHOM the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." William Taylor was "a son," and the tender discipline of his heavenly Father was not lost upon him. He drew closer to his Saviour's side, more earnestly sought the guidance of his Spirit, more frequently consulted his word; and while his hopes brightened heavenward, the ties and attractions of the world were gently loosened from his heart, and he found his mind and judgment calmly settled on many subjects on which he had wavered and doubted before. The sturdy integrity on which he had prided himself in doing his duty to man, was now brought under the pure, high influence of Divine grace, and the honour of it given to God. It was a hard thing for an industrious, healthy, able man to be out of work, and it was a new thing to William Taylor. He felt very uncomfortable to be spending and not earning; and, hearing very poor accounts of business in other parts just then, he determined to turn his hand to anything honest that he could find to do. It was true he had saved a little money, but it would soon be gone notwithstanding Susan's good management; and to see her stinted of the plain wholesome fare, and deprived of comforts to which they had been accustomed, was a very painful thought.

But Susan could rise and brighten in adversity with

her husband; and the trials which sink and degrade others, always, sooner or later, make God's dear children better and happier. Not that anything of the kind is joyous or pleasant, nobody pretends to say or suppose that it is; but there is a soothing, precious consciousness of God's love and care, a certainty that the temptation shall never exceed the strength given to bear it, and a patient waiting for the "way of escape" when the right time comes for it to appear. All this urges to closer communion with God; and it is next to impossible for the humble, faithful Christian to sink from such sanctifying fellowship into the ways and habits which are so often palliated and excused on the ground of poverty.

There are women with young children who go out to earn money to swell the scanty pittance on which their families subsist, and there may be cases in which it cannot be helped: but it should be the very last resource, when all other means have failed; for the mother's place is home, be it ever so poor and lowly; and her own children, who have souls to be cared for as well as mouths to be filled, are her first duty. The additional shilling or more that she earns is very hardly purchased at the price of their safety amidst the mischiefs to which her absence exposes them, and from which it is in her power only, under God, to shield them.

There are Christian ladies who remember this when they employ extra female labour in their laundries or kitchens, and who, while seeking to promote the comfort of their own homes, and to secure leisure for their own more pleasant duties, do try to provide that the poor mother's home shall not be left quite desolate,

nor her poor children wholly neglected. Either the working time is shortened, or she is spared to run home and see how things are going on (and not sent empty-handed either), or some little plan is found to prove that self does not reign, but true charity dwells in the head of that household. May the number of such be multiplied, and the blessing of the poor and needy, with the approving record of Him by whom "actions are weighed," reward their thoughtful kindness.

"Why don't you go in doors? why don't you stay at home?" has been said to little creatures full of mischief, and begrimed with dirt at street corners and alley steps, where perhaps a crying infant is being jogged and knocked about by a little sister scarcely able to bear the weight. She may be doing her best, poor child, or she may be a little virago detesting her occupation and longing to run and splash in the mud; but the answer is—"Mother's out washing," or, "Mother's gone charing;" and so home is no more home while the mother is out, and this supposed result of poverty sinks dismally into the inquirer's heart. What can be said, what can be done in behalf of the little neglected beings who thus spring up "thorns in the eyes" of their parents, and pests in society, the future population of jails and houses of correction? First, and in the very spring-time of thought and habit, let the mother ponder this who inclines to prefer a good meal and a grand gossip in the houses of employers to the humbler fare and infant companionship of her own lawful sphere.

There were those who, knowing something of the orderly habits of William Taylor, and well aware of the

probable necessity to which the stoppage of work must expose him, determined yet to get the sanction of so thoroughly respected a workman to their foolish proceedings. A respectable name is something in a doubtful cause. So one evening a person of rather self-sufficient air and patronizing manner called at his house, and professing the most friendly interest in his welfare, congratulated him on the comfort of his home, and the appearance of his promising family, adding, how grievous it would be if anything should happen to interrupt his present prosperity.

William, for some reason or other, did not seem in the most polite of moods, and made rather a short reply.

"The funds of the club are pretty good, Mr. Taylor," continued the visitor, "and knowing that, however you may think it best to act, your good sense and knowledge of right must be with your fellow-workmen, it has been resolved that you shall be no loser after all by the strike; so you will just take an allowance for a time, till we see how things go."

"I'm much obliged, sir, to you and them," said William, steadily; "but what I am I am, and with God's help my actions and my conscience shall pull together."

"Nobody wants to interfere with your conscience, my good fellow. You have nothing to do but take what's kindly meant; and now that's all done, and you can get no good by standing back, why shouldn't it happen that you see things in a better light?"

"I see them just as I did the day I tried to answer your speech, sir," said William; "a few words, and they of the best sort, are all I've got to say still: 'Be content with your wages;' 'Exact no more than

is due;' 'Thou shalt not covet.' It is no good talking to a man that's determined to stand by God's word 'short and strong.'"

"Well, well, I know you are rather obstinate, but let us look at things in a reasonable way; and bear in mind that the offer made to you now is a thoughtful provision by well-wishers against trouble that don't seem to have entered your own head. Now just suppose work not to be had (and unless the masters give way, they must keep aground I can tell you, here and elsewhere), and your comfortable house broken up, your furniture seized for rent, your good wife and pretty little ones without a home but the workhouse—what then, Mr. Taylor? It mayn't come all at once, but come it will by degrees, and break your heart, and ruin your health into the bargain."

"Sir, I'm no speechifier, and I can't make up words into pictures to frighten weak-minded people; but this I do know, that if it pleases my Lord and Master in heaven that my two hands can't provide things honest for my family, why then he'll just do it himself, and I'll not mistrust him. And if he chooses to do it by the workhouse, then thank God for a workhouse, where, through no fault of mine, they may be fed and kept. It's a stupid bit of pride that dreads such a provision of a Christian land, and thinks it a disgrace to take God's goodness in that way, when a man has done all he can and ought first; but it is, ay, it is a disgrace, and a deadly one, to come there through drunkenness and idleness, and dissatisfaction with honest pay for time and labour."

"Why, Taylor, I did not think you held such views as these; but they sound well in theory only,

man. You would find it a different thing in practice, and shrink like others from seeing those you love best driven to the last resort of helpless destitution."

"Well, sir, I'll risk it rather than join hands with them that are going the way to find worse quarters than a workhouse. They know best what their motive is who set workmen against their masters, and you can't go a quicker way to get up riots and mischief. First, our men are stirred up to discontent, then they stop work and turn idle, and now a set of foolish fellows, who are nothing but tools in the hands of others, fancy they can make better laws instead of obeying what they've got, and talk about equality and such like, just because they've thrown away their own and covet other people's. Why, any one with his eyes open may see that there can't ever be equality while man has to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, for "the idle soul must suffer hunger;" and if all the men in England were made equal to-morrow, the bad ones must make a smash among their betters every week to keep them so."

Before the visitor could frame his answer to these plain truths, one of the workmen, according to a preconcerted plan, walked in to add his influence. "Come, Will Taylor," said he, kindly (for the poor fellow was a genuine dupe himself, and thought he had done a fine thing for his country), "come, you and I have worked side by side many a pleasant hour, and I can't bear to think of you coming to want. Join us at once, and we'll carry the day together. You've a right to the best wages in the land, and you shall have them too. Don't forget that you're not alone now, but have got a wife and children to keep."

"I don't look upon that as any trouble, I'll assure you," said Taylor, coolly.

"Well no, perhaps not until you've no bread to feed them."

"I'd just like to say a bit of my mind about that," returned William. "I do hate to hear a man talking about having a wife to keep, as if a good wife could make him poorer. I say she is no expense, but keeps herself and saves money. Why, who would wash and mend and make for a working man like his own wife? It costs a deal more to pay somebody else to do even that. And when she makes his home so that he's happy in it, isn't she saving his money, ay, and for aught we know, under God, his soul too? She's just the best blessing on earth to him if she's what she ought to be. Of course I mean one that knows her duty and loves to do it; not one of the foolish, dressy things that aren't fit for this world nor any other, and oughtn't to think of taking up with an honest, industrious man. And so, as for my wife and children, I feel they make me rich, and are just so many reasons why our Father in heaven will provide for us and bless us, come what may."

"Well, you'll persuade us that black is white next," said the first visitor, laughing.

"No, it isn't I that put darkness for light, nor light for darkness," said William, gravely; "but I've no more to say, only this, that I've a mind to 'fear God and the king,' and not to 'meddle with them that are given to change.' Those are my orders from Him who separates the light from the darkness, and gives us a light to our feet in the safe path."

"Well, Mr. Taylor, I see it's no use to talk to you

who are so wise in your own conceits; but don't forget, when you are half-starved or quite, that you threw off your best friends, and scorned their generosity."

"Susan," said her husband when the men were gone, and she sat by him again, hushing her baby to sleep, "we will not wait any longer before making a change. When we see what's right, it's no use to dawdle over the doing of it."

The poor man's house is as much "his castle" as the lordly domain of the rich and great, and the pain of giving it up is just as keen as if it contained the treasures and luxuries that adorn a palace. But William and Susan could do it and bear it as their appointed way when prudence saw it needful. "It won't be giving up a home after all, Susan," said he, "for where you and the children are must be home, even if it was a room without anything else in it."

So notice was given about the house, much to the landlord's regret, and he desired that William would stay as long as it suited him, and pay the rent when convenient. But William dreaded debt, and knowing that he could not earn in any other business or occupation the good wages he had received in his own, he would not be tempted to exceed what he might be honestly able to afford.

He decided to take two unfurnished rooms, into which to put the most useful and necessary portion of his furniture; to sell the rest, and seek employment until he found it; no matter what it might be, he could ask God's blessing from the lowest place in which his providence placed him, and with that

he would be thankful and content. Some mischievous spirit, however, had prepared for him many a rude reception as "one of the fellows who had struck for wages at —— establishment," and his attempts to explain that he was not one were impatiently rejected. He had resolved to obtain a statement of the truth from his former masters, when a circumstance occurred which changed his plans.

CHAPTER VIII.

OVER-THRIFT AND LITTLE COMFORT.

In a rural district, a few miles from the market town, was a small but productive and well-managed farm. The house or rather cottage was one of those old-fashioned dwellings, with a low roof and long lattice windows, which look pretty in pictures, and fall in with poetical ideas of English country life. It was as white as a new coat of whitewash could make it. There was a garden in front with straight walks bordered with box, and laid with broken shells, and the trees at measured distances were clipped to a regular shape and size. It was a great annoyance to Mistress Hayes, the chief manager of the domestic part of the farm, that she could not educate her live stock as she did her trees, for then there would assuredly have been no wilful pigs nor disorderly hens on the premises; but she did her best notwithstanding their dulness, and finer specimens of their kind never went to market.

Farmer Hayes was a blunt, honest countryman, knowing little of the world beyond the market town; but he had a kind, warm heart, and no one ever lacked a good turn that it fell in his power to do.

He came home from his fields a little earlier than usual one cloudy afternoon, kicked off his great ploughing boots in the outer kitchen where bowls and platters were ready placed for the supper of the

three or four labourers he had been employing that day, and came on to the inner one where Mrs. Hayes sat knitting by the fire.

The floor of red tiles was "clean enough to eat your dinner off any day," as the master said; the large fire-place had a bench on each side of it, with a niche above on which stood always ready a pipe or two, and an heirloom of unknown age in the shape of a tobacco box. There was a round-backed chair with a green cushion in it for the master, but Mrs. Hayes indulged in nothing more tempting than the upright oaken one which had been occupied by the mistresses of the cottage for three generations. The long window-sill was ornamented with a few small plants in flower pots at stately distances, and the polished oak table before it was as bright as a looking glass; Mrs. Hayes having long proudly pointed to it as a proof of the superiority of good rubbing with bees-wax and turpentine, over the modern invention of that "lazy stuff" called French polish. The ceiling was richly hung with bacon of every shape, from the head to the tail of Mrs. Hayes' matchless pigs; and there was not an article of tin or pewter against the walls in which the farmer said he might not have seen his face at every turn.

Into this comfortable kitchen walked Jonathan Hayes, and seating himself in his round-backed chair, and throwing one leg on to the bench, looked into the fire for some time without speaking. At last, when he began to feel warm, the powers of speech seemed to thaw. "Wife," said he, abruptly, "I'm thinking—" and he paused.

"So am I," said Mrs. Hayes, quietly knitting

away; but the subject on either side did not seem to be forthcoming.

"What about, I wonder?" said the farmer.

"Your sister's letter."

"The very thing," cried farmer Hayes, with a loud slap on his knee. "Now I wonder what you are thinking about it."

"You needn't wonder long. I'm thinking what fools people are not to know when they're well off."

"Whew! is that all?" said Jonathan, much disappointed.

"It's enough for me," said Mrs. Hayes. "Better let well alone, and not be quarrelling with it to make it better, like the dog and his shadow that was taught me when I was little."

"Well now, I'll tell you what I'm thinking," said the farmer, rather cautiously it seemed. "Susan is my own sister's child, and she was always a good lass. Don't you remember how she saved her wages and gave them to her mother to come here and get well?"

"Yes, to be sure I do."

"Then it isn't her husband's fault that he's thrown out of work, you know."

Yes, Mrs. Hayes knew; and she began to know also that Mr. Hayes had got some other thought behind these, which he did not choose to blurt out in his usual way for some reason best known to himself.

"It's expensive work keeping a family when a man's earning nothing; and so, wife, wouldn't it be a good opportunity to ask Susan to come and pay us a visit just now?"

"Susan? Well, I'd have no objection to see Susan; but what about the children?"

"They couldn't well be left behind, I suppose," said the farmer, slowly, and trying to look very serious as he observed his wife cast an uneasy look round her beautiful kitchen.

"I never thought to have little dirty children running about my house," said she, dropping three stitches in her knitting, one for each child, and declining further remark until she had caught them up again.

"Well, I don't believe a lass like Susan would let them trouble you much; and I dare say they would be mightily amused about here all day long."

"They shall have the room over the dairy then, and one of the fields; and if I catch them anywhere else—"

"Then I'll just scrawl a line, and take it for to-night's post," said Mr. Hayes, joyfully, without waiting to hear the consequence of being found on forbidden ground; "it would make my heart ache not to lend a helping hand to keep them from want while we've enough and to spare."

And so it would Mrs. Hayes', too; but she was too much engrossed with the order and cleanliness of her little household to have originated the thought of such a terrible invasion as that to which her husband's hospitable feelings had doomed her, and she spent an hour or two the next morning in clearing off the flower pots from the window, and any of her bright-faced treasures from the hooks or shelves which she fancied within reach of young mischief-makers.

The farmer himself secretly rejoiced in the commotion he expected the children would make; he had a little bit of a grudge against that ever bright red floor, and looked complacently on any sign of a footmark,

provided it could not be proved to be his own; and once on a time when Mistress Hayes did the wonderful fact of upsetting a great basin of hot broth over her polished table, the broth making an immense splash down upon the floor, he had a merry twinkle in his eyes nearly all day afterwards, notwithstanding a storm that threatened to spoil his hay.

It certainly was a pity that so clever a housekeeper as Mrs. Hayes, in her dread of dirt and untidiness, had rushed into the other extreme, and become a troublesome fidget to all about her. Poor farmer Hayes, though never in his life obliged to wait for his meals, nor allowed to sit down to an ill-cooked dish, nor to see a neglected hearth, did not feel that all this rigid regularity made "home" after all. It was disagreeable to be reminded of some careless trick that set things out of place, or the wet shoes that had soiled the floor, or the five-minutes-behind time that had spoiled the potatoes, or cooled the gravy. But "men never cared about spoiling things, nor wasting other people's time," she said; "they thought all the world was made for them, and everybody must keep to rules except themselves."

Then farmer Hayes had a grumbling fit in his turn; he would like to know what dinners were for but to eat just when he could come and take them; and what was the floor for but to set his feet upon; and what was home to a man if he couldn't do as he liked in it? He was more comfortable in anybody's house than in his own, he said.

Ah well, if she were not too old to change, Mrs. Hayes thought she would let things take their chance, and see how he would like them just the other way;

then he heartily wished she would, for she had been altogether too perfect these many years for a poor fellow who wanted to be comfortable. Mrs. Hayes had made her speech, and disdaining further argument proceeded to prove her perfection by wiping the foot-marks away, eating her dinner with unusual speed, and leaving her husband to "take his time" alone, while she went to scold her little servant-maid, and make an extra commotion wherever she could spy anything out of place.

It has unhappily come to pass that when one hears of a "very clever manager," and "first-rate housekeeper," one is rather inclined to picture a sharp-tempered woman, rarely given to smile, whose accompaniments are always a broom and a duster, and who cannot endure a contradiction or excuse a mistake; so the good-humoured sloven after all is preferred, and valuable qualities which brought into exercise at the right time and in the right place deserve respect and honour, are associated with everything unlovely and troublesome. That is the best management which never intrudes rudely upon the liberty and comfort of those who ought to have the real benefit of it; and she is the wise housekeeper who keeps her house for its proper purpose, the home of her husband's heart and choice, the sphere in which the virtues, and not the foibles, of her own character may expand, and where she should reside in the spirit of love and peace.

Farmer Hayes, in his short, kind note, did not allude to the news he had heard about the change in his niece's circumstances; he merely gave an earnest invitation to herself and children to come and make a

long visit at the farm; and William must come too for as long as he could find time.

The letter arrived just when William and Susan were making a list of the things that had better be sold, and of those which would fill the two rooms they purposed inhabiting. It seemed to them to come from a higher hand than that of their kind relative, and they gratefully accepted it.

Susan felt some misgivings about her aunt's particularity, but the fear of being involved in debt was greater, and the comfort of having her children for a while in the healthy air and freedom of the country was irresistible. William had decided to go to a distant part of the country where he heard that the masters were determined to engage a new set of hands, and where, if he were successful, Susan should follow him as soon as possible.

About six o'clock one evening Mrs. Hayes began to listen for the wheels of the market cart, for the farmer was gone with it to the station to meet the expected visitors. The tea-table was set with liberal care, and Mrs. Hayes had not forgotten a nice cake for the children, nor a jar of her best preserves; for though she professed something near akin to a dislike for all human beings under eighteen or twenty years of age, she had no notion of starving them at any age. Presently she put her knitting out of reach, and went to the door in time to see the cart drive up. It was impossible to help giving a genuine welcome to "niece Susan," and Mrs. Hayes, to her own great surprise, found herself carrying the baby into the house as if there were anything to welcome in that;

while the farmer lifted the others from the cart into the kitchen at once, lest, as he said to himself, they should set foot in some mud and begin with a bad impression.

"Now, is the room over the dairy ready, wife?" said he.

"Nonsense, no, at any rate not to-night," said she, as she began to look at the children a little more closely, and wondered in her heart to see live things so still as they stood to have their coats and hats taken off, though evidently looking about them with inquisitive delight.

Tea over, it did Mrs. Hayes good to see Susan spread a thick shawl on the floor and lay the baby down to roll, desiring Robert to "take care" of her, while she quietly put their tea-things ready for washing, and wiped up any crumbs they had made beneath the table, talking all the while to her uncle, who was asking a great many questions about her husband and his prospects.

"We shall do, I see," thought he; "wife's got a help instead of a hindrance, or I'm not as 'cute as I take myself to be."

CHAPTER IX.

A REVOLUTION.

A LESS interested observer than farmer Hayes, and a less anxious one than Susan Taylor, might have found amusement in watching the curious efforts of Mistress Hayes to maintain her usual severity and sharpness of speech and manner, and yet to show hospitality to her youthful guests. Her notion of children had for many years been chiefly derived from the rude, selfish, unmannerly tribe of her own sister, who were never welcome at the farm, and indeed seldom desired to go there; for however pleased they might be with the kindness of their uncle out of doors, the undisguised animosity of "cross-grained aunty" against romps, rudeness, and dirty shoes, forbade all hope of sight or taste of any good things within; and when no cakes, jams, cream, or syllabub gladdened their hearts after a dusty walk, they settled it as worse than waste of time to go.

Mrs. Hayes often gave a long sigh for her sister's hard fate; she had never been the same woman, she said, since she had five or six children scrambling and fighting round her. Poor thing, it was too true, and she did not know how it began, but some who knew her did; *she spoiled her first child,* and the rest followed their leader by natural consequence. Mrs. Hayes was satisfied with one specimen of family life, and concluded that all must be classed under the same

head, until, to her surprise, she saw that Robert and Milly were accustomed to mind what was said to them, and to obey at the first bidding. To surprise succeeded interest and almost admiration, when the children took it into their heads to show her that they were not quite perfect either.

Some days had passed very comfortably, when, one morning, the farmer took the children with him to the fields, and having amused them there until he thought they must be hungry, he conducted them back to the gate of the yard, and bidding them run in by the back door, and not "make a mess lest aunty should be angry," he hastily turned away to attend to his own work.

Now, not far from this gate was a small pond, sometimes nearly dry, but just now tolerably well filled by a night's rain. A family of young ducks, under the conduct of their parents, came waddling down to make their first essay afloat. There was a more eligible duck-pond elsewhere, but this was a sort of ducks' academy, where grave elders taught the young ducklings to swim preparatory to launching on the watery world, where more skill and experience in ducking and diving were required.

Robert and Milly, the children of a town, in an ecstasy of delight ran to the pond to see the little yellow brood plunge after their stately leaders; down they went fearlessly one after another head foremost into the water, leaving nothing but the little tail visible for an instant, then righted themselves like a life-boat, and sat supremely happy in the enjoyment of their nature's privilege.

"How I should like to do that!" said Robert. "Oh Milly, if we could but sit upon the water!"

"You be drowned, Robby," said Milly, oracularly. "I try in our tub when we're washed, but I always go to the bottom."

"Well, suppose we wash our goloshes, Milly. See how dirty they are."

Susan had been thoughtful of her aunt's floors, and had given very decided instruction about the use of these goloshes. Off they came in an instant, and presently were made quite clean, inside as well as out.

"I wonder if goloshes can swim," said Robert; "let's try, you put one and I'll put one."

It was a very gentle venture at first, but ideas come thick and fast on such occasions, and a load of stones and a piece of string were the next suggestion. Milly ran to gather stones in her pinafore, and the goloshes being duly loaded were launched just to see how they did, while Robert turned out his pockets to find a string. But, alas, the little barks were no sooner pushed off than down they went, foundering within sight of land. Milly made a desperate effort to catch at hers, but fell with both arms in the water, while Robert, having dragged her up, rushed to the faggot pile, to get a stick wherewith to poke after the wrecks. The ducks, in high displeasure, quacked and flapped away; and Robert, very hot and red, and troubled too at the failure of all his schemes, looked disconsolately at his weeping sister, and could only say, "Oh, Milly, what shall we do?"

"Let's go and tell mother," sobbed Milly.

"Mother will be angry; you know what she said."

"Yes, but we will tell all. I did forget; I want to go to her now, Robert."

Milly could not express the thoughts that filled her

little heart; they were there by her good mother's teachings, and not by process of reasoning; but she felt that she could neither play nor be happy again until her fault was confessed and forgiven.

"I wish we had known the stupid things couldn't swim," said Robert.

"We know now; we shan't ever do it any more. I wish we had kept away from the pond," murmured Milly; then looking at her brother, and her own pinafore, "Come, Robby," said she, coaxingly, "we are so dirty, let's go to mother before aunt sees us."

"But I'm not so very, very sorry," said Robert, irresolutely; "I liked to see the ducks, and play out here: I only care for the goloshes, nasty things."

"Oh, you'll be sorry when you see mother look sad, Robby, 'cause we've been naughty;" and sliding her hand into his, Milly gently drew him along.

The running after stones and sticks in a farmyard had not quite suited shoes that were intended to be worn under cover; and the consequence to Mrs. Hayes' beautiful red floor—ah! how can it be described? The farmer stood aghast at the door when coming up for his lunch; the state of things revealed itself to his view. All over that inimitable floor were the marks of little feet, beginning at the entrance with appalling distinctness, and fading off into dull patches as the mud was gradually expended.

On the dresser, shoeless, sockless, and woe-begone, sat the two children, while Susan, on her knees before a pail, was just beginning to wash away the footmarks. Mistress Hayes, with a perturbed, irresolute countenance, stood looking at the children and their mother by turns, and remonstrating with Susan in a tone so

new on such an occasion, that Mr. Hayes, instead of drawing back and going off without his bread and cheese, as his first alarm prudently suggested, stood still to listen.

"There, there, Susan, just let it alone, I say; we'll make it all right by-and-by; you needn't make such a fuss about a bit of dirt."

"It isn't the dirt so much, aunt," said Susan.

"Why, what in the world is it then, child?" asked Mrs. Hayes, in amazement.

"It's the disobedience. They have done two things that I told them not to do, or there would have been no dirt here."

"Well, well, they'll remember next time. I'll forgive them this once; so come, let them come down off there, and you let the floor stop till after dinner."

"No, thank you, aunt," said Susan, respectfully; "they must sit there and see the trouble they've given me by not minding; and when I've done they must lie on the bed till the shoes are dry."

"What! haven't you any more?"

"Yes, but not for to-day. It would be wrong to make no difference between an accident and disobedience."

The tears were gently coursing down Milly's cheeks, and Robert looked as if he were swelling with the effort to restrain them, so the farmer, quite unable to stand it, burst into the cause. "Come, come, Susan, let's have no more about it; it's all my fault, they got dirty along with me."

"No, we didn't," said Robert, bluntly; "you told us to go in, and we didn't; we went to the pond instead, and we drowned the goloshes."

"Heyday!" cried the farmer, with a curious sensation in his throat between admiration at the boy's truthfulness, and amusement at the fate of the goloshes. "Then you won't be helped out of a scrape, it seems; so I've done, and must leave you to your mother."

"But I haven't," cried Mrs. Hayes, in the tone of a thorough champion; "I'm mistress here, it's my floor, and I forgive them; and if you don't get some more shoes, I shan't stir till these are dry, Susan; so don't cry, children, you shall sit by the fire comfortable, and have a big slice of my good cake."

The children looked at their mother; she rose and stood by them. "Am I angry for the dirt, Robert?" she gently asked.

"No, mother, only 'cause we've been disobedient."

"And do I forgive you both?"

"Yes, you always do when we tell the truth; and I'm sorry now."

"But what will happen if you are not corrected or made to remember that you have done wrong?"

"I shall be very bad, and do Satan's ways."

"And what does the Bible say of children left to themselves?"

"'A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame,'" said Robert, faltering.

"You would not like to bring me to shame, Robert, so I think it right to let you feel a little of the consequence of doing wrong. Aunt kindly wishes it all forgotten at once, but I wish you to lie still and wait for these shoes because they ought not to have got wet; and then, besides being sorry for grieving me, you will feel it disagreeable and troublesome not to

remember, or to do different from what you are told. Now, children, should you touch that cake?"

The children turned from the tempting plate which Mrs. Hayes had meantime taken from a closet, and hiding their faces in Susan's neck, murmured, amidst flowing tears, "Mother knows best; we'll go up stairs, please."

The farmer turned away. "Bless 'em," he muttered, "they'll never bring her to shame. Wife—wife, let her alone; she knows what she's about, depend on it, better than you and I."

Mrs. Hayes, dearly as she loved her own way, and highly as she valued her own wisdom, was silenced. She, too, turned after her husband, saying as she went, "Ah, if poor Dorothy had brought up her children like this, one needn't have been scared at the sight of them a mile off. I hope Susan won't be too hard upon them though, poor little things."

"Well done, children," thought the farmer, a merry twinkle chasing the tears from his eyes: "only to think of it! It's much if aunty don't spoil 'em herself after all."

Good cause had Mr. Hayes before long to rejoice in the reward of his generous thought for Susan in her time of adversity; for Mrs. Hayes was an altered woman. She sat by while those children were taught by their Christian mother, and listened to their texts and hymns, and found in their simple prayers expressions for her own newly discovered need. She, too, became "as a little child" seeking the kingdom of heaven. Her voice softened, and her brow smoothed; and the scoldings, if scoldings there were still, were carried on out of the children's hearing. They fol-

lowed her about among poultry and calves and pigs, and were allowed to do little services, which, a few weeks before, she would as soon have trusted to a wild bull. "But these," she said, "were children trained 'in the way they should go;' so no wonder they made older heads thoughtful, and older hearts kind." She began to think perhaps even her sister's children might benefit by their example, and, to the farmer's perfect amazement, charged him with an invitation for the whole family the next time he passed their way.

Susan was too wise to expect much benefit; she rather dreaded the effect of "evil communications" upon her own children, and resolved not to lose sight of them during the visit.

"Aren't you very miserable here?" asked a rude boy when he thought Susan could not hear.

"No, we're very happy," said Robert; "we only want father to come."

"What, don't you hate aunt, the cross thing?"

"No, I love her; she's not cross; you shouldn't say that."

The boy stared, and was about to reply in his own impudent fashion, when he caught Susan's reproving eye, and dashed off to see what mischief he could do to amuse himself.

"Ah, Susan, you must begin at that poor lad's home if you want to do him good," said the farmer; "go and talk to his mother. She has been the ruin of him, I'm afraid."

As for farmer Hayes he never was so comfortable in all his life, nor so much at home in his own house; and if William Taylor got no work for twelve months

to come it would be no matter so far as he was concerned. "Why," said he to himself, "if Christianity did nothing more than cure bad tempers and make one's home what it ought to be, it's a good and blessed thing; but there's more in it than that I suspect, and I'll find it out too before long."

CHAPTER X.

LITTLE LIGHT-BEARERS.

In the street of a long, straggling village stood the principal shop, where most things needed in those parts might be had, from potatoes and pitchers which stood outside the windows, to the lace edging and satin ribbon that hung temptingly within them; from the "finest tea just imported" to a halfpennyworth of peppermint for the fortunate urchin who earned or found one, or to the farthing candle for his poor mother.

A middle-aged man was behind the counter occasionally, and a girl about fifteen or sixteen stood at the door with a crochet needle and cotton in her hand, her hair thrown back from a bold broad face, and tied up behind with two long streamers of red ribbon; a crochet collar of a sprawling pattern spread its large points over a muslin dress with hanging sleeves, and a small black apron without strings was pinned by its narrow band to her waist. This was Miss Bella Martin, who propped the door-post and helped to "mind" her father's shop.

While thus occupied, a light spring cart drove briskly up.

"Well, Bella, how are you? I've brought a friend to see you," said the cheerful voice of farmer Hayes, as he jumped down, and turned to assist Susan, who, with her youngest child, was his companion.

Mr. Martin came out to welcome his guests with a tone of mingled pleasure and trouble. "The missis is very poorly," said he, in reply to his brother-in-law's inquiry, "and we're all at sixes and sevens; but come in, you're always welcome, and Mrs. Taylor too; come in."

Bella had rushed up stairs to astonish Susan with a green glass brooch which she fixed to her collar, and then sailed down impressed with the superiority of her own appearance.

Mrs. Martin did indeed seem very ill, and her friends were startled by the burning heat of her hand, while occasionally she shivered violently. "You should be in bed, I think," said Susan. "Please not to think about us, we can come some other day."

"I can't go to bed, my dear, thank you; it's only a bit of a cold I've caught. Things won't go straight if I'm out of the way, you see, and master doesn't like minding shop all afternoon."

Farmer Hayes and Susan both turned at once to Bella, but that young lady did not, or would not understand their appeal; and just at the moment a great boy burst in, with a noisy greeting to his uncle, and a tremendous pull at Bella's streamers, which brought her hair down, and roused her passion up. She screamed so loudly as to startle her mother almost out of her chair, then flew after the boy and overtook him in the shop with a furious blow.

"Shame on you, lass," cried farmer Hayes, indignantly; "have you no more feeling than that?" But it was of no use to talk, for a scuffle ensued in which the sleeve of Bella's dress was torn; and her brother laughed loudly at her dismay. "I'm right

glad," cried he; "now it won't dip in my gravy again in a hurry, nor skim the cream off Patty's milk: I've done for your fine fashions, Miss Bella, now."

"Hush with your noise," said Mr. Martin, following them. "Never mind him, Bella, you can be revenged on him somehow; but I do wish you'd put on a gown fit for what you have to do. See there, you've caught that ink-bottle: there it goes."

Down went the ink-bottle, as the words of warning were spoken, with a terrible black splash, and a hundred small spots spattered over the neighbouring stores. But Mr. Martin always favoured Bella; and, only bidding her make haste and clear it up, he ordered his son off to the "Plough," giving him money from the till, to be quick back with a quart of the best ale.

"What will you do, Susan?" asked her uncle. "Will you stay here till I come back from market, or go with me at once?"

"Can I be of any use to you if I stay till the afternoon, ma'am?" asked Susan of the poor invalid; "or should I be in the way?"

"Oh, not in the way, my dear; but I'm afraid there'll be a poor dinner. Bella doesn't like peeling potatoes, and I'm too ill to make the apple-pudding master wanted, so there's only cold meat."

"I will stay, uncle, if you please," said Susan at once; and the farmer, nodding his head to prove his full comprehension of her motive, tossed up the baby in his strong arms two or three times, and remounted his cart, promising to call for them on his return by-and-by.

"Stop, stop," cried Mr. Martin, who had been

watching for his son, "we'll have the ale here in a minute."

"I don't drink except I'm thirsty," said the farmer, "thank you all the same. And here, brother," added he, bending down to whisper, "don't send the lad such errands as that; be sure you'll rue it one day if you do. And can't you make him think more for his poor mother, and not vex his sister that way; it's such a pity, for he's a fine lad."

"Very fine," said Mr. Martin, putting his hands into his pockets, as the farmer drove away, "very fine; you know such a deal about it, you that aren't plagued with either sons or daughters! Only you try it, and see if they'd mind you any better, that's all."

The farmer met young Martin blowing the froth off the top of the ale, and drinking as he could on the way; and Mr. Martin solaced himself with the rest by his desk in the shop.

In the meantime Susan had been upstairs, made the bed, and prevailed on Mrs. Martin to lie down; and hearing that the children from school would be in at twelve o'clock, she coaxed Bella to show her where to find the things needful to make tea for the invalid, and apple-dumplings for the family, which she assured her there was time yet to prepare. It was very hard to interest Bella even in apple-dumplings; and she stared with astonishment when Susan asked her if it wouldn't be very nice to make a big one for Jim, and, by returning good for evil, make him sorry for being so rude. "Did you ever try that way, Bella?" said Susan, kindly, as the girl lazily peeled an apple by her side; "if you would just think no more about his naughtiness and do him a kindness, I feel

sure he'd be better to you: boys are rough sometimes, and sisters are sent to make them gentle and kind; scolding and quarrelling only makes things worse."

"Well, mother always takes Jim's part," said Bella, sullenly; "and I shan't stay at home, I know, to be torn to pieces. I shall get a place."

"But you'll have a deal to put up with in service, Bella, from them that are not mothers and brothers. Better learn first to be a dutiful daughter and kind sister, and have the pleasure of doing things for them that love you while you can."

"Are you going to peel potatoes?" asked Bella, abruptly, as Susan began that operation. "They'll stain your hands; I never do it."

"I never trouble about consequences when there's anything right to be done," said Susan; "it makes a deal worse stain in our hearts to be above our duty. Your mother will be happier if she knows they've all had as good a dinner as if she'd been down to get it. But now won't you just go gently up and see if she has enjoyed her tea, and give her a kiss, and tell her we're doing quite comfortably down here?"

Bella lounged away, and presently came back, saying her mother had enjoyed her tea and thought she could go to sleep; but whether the kiss had been given Susan could not tell. She then kindly stitched up the torn sleeve, talking all the while to the disagreeable girl as if she had been a willing hearer; and the fascination of Christian love so won upon the hard and selfish heart, that Bella found herself following Susan about, and doing little things at her suggestion with some alacrity and willingness, besides even condescending to notice the baby.

The apple-dumplings gave immense satisfaction, and Susan insisted on giving the largest one to Jim, because Bella had made it; and so he must not tease Bella any more, but let her love him and be kind to him. Jim looked sheepish, and nothing impertinent occurred to him, so dinner passed off to everybody's satisfaction; and when farmer Hayes came for Susan, there was a general entreaty that she would stay all night for Mrs. Martin's sake, who had become worse, and wanted good nursing. So Susan consulted with her uncle, and then yielded to their wishes.

When the farmer reached his own gate, Mrs. Hayes and the children stood to receive him, all looking blank surprise at missing Susan. Milly looked at Robert, and her lip quivered as if she were ready to cry.

"Never mind," whispered Robert, manfully, "we'll ask what he's done with her."

"Come now, and tell me," said their uncle, as he seated himself in his corner, and drew the little ones each within an arm, "can you do without mother for one night, do you think?"

"Will you tell us where you've put her?" asked Robert, half disposed to be angry.

"Yes, my honest man; but answer my question first."

"Does mother want us to do without her?" asked the child.

"Yes, my dear, she does; she is staying to be kind to poor Mrs. Martin, who is ill; and Bella is not wise and good like your mother, and doesn't know what to do. So she sends her love and kisses for you, and bids you remember to do what will please God, and to love one another."

"Very well, uncle;" and they tried to be satisfied.

"And so I've brought you something to make up for mother to-night," added Mr. Hayes, bringing from his large pocket a box of tea things for Milly, and a little paint-box for Robert, by means of which he was to enjoy the pleasure of daubing the prints in the "Illustrated News" to his heart's content.

"Susan was only afraid you might have too much trouble with them; but I thought you wouldn't mind, for your poor sister's sake," said the farmer to his wife.

"Trouble! not I indeed; they've been as good as gold all day:" and Mrs. Hayes enjoyed a secret satisfaction in the proof that Susan could trust her kindness and care.

Bed-time came, and after singing each a little hymn at their uncle's knee, Mrs. Hayes took them up stairs. Presently she returned, looking much perplexed. "Jonathan, there's something wrong, I wish you'd just come up a minute. They've said their little prayer, the same as usual; but they won't let me put them in bed. I don't want you to be angry, only to help find out what it is."

Farmer Hayes went up in much surprise. There stood the two little figures in their night dresses by the side of the bed, looking very sad, and a little frightened. "What is it, dears?" said he, kindly; "you must either jump into bed this minute, or tell us why not." He was trying to do as he thought Susan would, were she present. Oh, how truly kind it would be if friends would always act so, when they know the parents' mind about the training of their children in obedience and duty.

The children looked at each other, and then at the two friends bending over them: it was a touching sight as Robert with unusual tremor in his voice, replied, "Uncle, mother always prays for you and aunt before she puts us in bed, and for father too, besides our little prayer."

"Bless her, does she?" murmured the farmer, touched to the heart.

"And won't you pray with us now mother's away?" added Milly, beseechingly. "We like mother to pray; and I'm sure she won't forget to-night." There was an emphasis on "she," as if that were a reason why they should not forget either.

Mr. and Mrs. Hayes looked at each other. Could they have the heart to refuse such a request? What should they do? Mrs. Hayes drew her husband towards the door. "Do you try, Jonathan," said she; "I couldn't for the life of me speak out before those children, more shame for me."

Jonathan's spirit was mightily stirred within him; however, pray he could not at such a moment; but a thought struck him. "Children," said he, "you know the words your mother uses, I'm sure; so you just say them, and aunt and I will kneel by you, and then we shall know better what you mean: now try." So they knelt down, the four by the little bed, with beating hearts and covered faces. Then Robert began, and the soft voice of his little sister filled up any pause, and refreshed his memory.

First, in simple, homely language, came a prayer for the absent father, that the dear Saviour would comfort and keep him by his Holy Spirit, and give him work in his own right time, and patience to wait

till then; and that his children might be growing in wisdom and knowledge as Jesus did, and be blessings to him when they met again. Then for the kind friends who were taking care of them, that uncle and aunt might be blessed very much, and know and love Jesus for their own dear Lord and Saviour; and that some day he would bring them to his heavenly home, and say to them, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." Then a pause and a soft timid addition, evidently their own, for their dear mother, that she might be kept safe, and brought back to them next day.

The little ones rose with lightened hearts; the farmer rose too, and clasping them both in his arms with a fervent kiss, the tears falling upon their upturned faces, he left their room and shut himself up in his own.

"Why does uncle cry?" whispered Milly, as she was laid tenderly in bed by Mrs. Hayes.

"I don't know exactly, dear; perhaps it's because he wants to be like your mother, and love Jesus as she does."

"Oh then tell him he needn't cry about that, for Jesus wants every one to love him; and so he'll help uncle to do it. Now, aunty, a text. Mother always gives us a text, and sometimes we give her one."

Mrs. Hayes was not so much at fault here, for she had learned several texts of late. So she bent down and said, "I will both lay me down and sleep in peace; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

"That's nice, aunty; now you have this," said Robert, "'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'"

Mrs. Hayes went down and laid a Bible on the table. Presently the farmer joined her with a flushed face, but unusually subdued in manner. "Wife," said he, wiping his spectacles and opening the Bible, "we must do differently; we've lived many a year to no good purpose that I can see. Let us become like those little children, and begin over again."

"I'm right thankful for your word, husband," said Mrs. Hayes; "it's what I've been thinking myself these many days. Surely you picked out a blessing blindfold when you asked Susan to come here;—and to think I wanted to put those children in the garret!"

"Well, you didn't, you see; and I'm mindful of how you've done by them all; and I've never been so glad of my wife as I am now; and suppose we just call Peggy and Joe in, because they've got souls like us you know, and I'll read a verse or two; and, wife, is there a book of prayer anywhere about, do you think?"

"Oh, Jonathan, the heart's the best prayer book by a man's own fireside. Ask what we all want, just the Lord's pardon and blessing, and help to live as Christians ought, and to love him back again because he loves us; the words don't matter if the hearts agree."

So Peggy and Joe came in from the outer kitchen, and the master read a chapter from the New Testament. Then they knelt down, and there was a pause, until the deep voice of a real penitent broke the silence with the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to us sinners!"

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

THERE was a state of general consternation at Mr. Martin's: not that the mistress was worse, though such was the fact, but that Mrs. Hayes had sent a message to say that, if Susan would return to the farm, where she was sure she would prefer to be, she, Mrs. Hayes, would come, and nurse and manage for her sister until she got well again.

There was not a pleasant countenance in the house when the news was announced. Mr. Martin said he should go to the "Plough" oftener than ever; for, bad as it was to be with a set of quarrelsome children, it was ten times worse when Dame Hayes got among them, boxing one, upsetting another, scolding everybody, and finding fault with everything: he shouldn't stand it, he knew, 'specially without the missus downstairs to take off the keen edge of her temper, by bearing it first.

Jim began to think what he could do to vex her so badly that she would be forced to go home again; and, as he was particularly practical in the expression of his opinions, there was no doubt he would do his best to enforce them on this occasion.

Bella, who, notwithstanding her hatred of trouble, had condescended to do many things at Susan's request for the comfort of the house and of her in-

valid mother, declared that she would "give up" altogether; and, after dressing herself in all the flounces and finery in her possession on purpose to set her aunt lecturing, she would get out of the way and leave her to it.

The younger ones looked half frightened; and, in fact, Susan had not before fully understood the change which must have taken place in Mrs. Hayes since her relations had had an opportunity of judging.

As for the poor invalid, she declared she must pretend to be well, as the best means of getting rid of such unwelcome care. Susan, however, thought things would turn out differently from all these forebodings; and, after staying three days, gave place to her aunt, and gladly returned to her children, promising that she would again exchange duties if Mrs. Martin continued to need such constant attention.

"Bella, dear," said she, just before leaving, "may I speak to you very plainly? You have been kind to me; and I am very much obliged to you, and very sorry to see that you don't like your aunt."

"Like!" exclaimed Bella; "why, I hate the very sight of her."

"Oh fie, Bella; that is very, very wrong. Isn't it because she is interested in you that she speaks about faults? and you know she is next to your mother, and wants you to be right in everything. But I just wanted to say that, if you would be a little more thoughtful and industrious and obliging, there would be no need for her to come at all. You see that you are not learning to manage the house, or to help with the children, or anything useful; and so, when your poor mother is laid up, you have to be helped instead

of taking the lead, as a good daughter should, and setting an example to the others."

Bella said nothing, for she knew it was true; and though Susan's words were not palatable, she spoke in such a low, kind voice, and drew Bella within her arm so affectionately as they stood together, that she could not be angry.

"May I say more, Bella?" she asked.

"You may say what you like: I'll take it from you," replied Bella, bluntly.

"Well then, dear, it is this. Do you know that your dear father will ruin his health, and his family too by-and-by, if he goes out drinking so much? He is very fond of you, Bella. You are his eldest daughter, you know, and it's quite natural; and I do think that if you showed him love back again, and tried to be kinder to him, and made his home more comfortable, he would soon like to sit with you all of an evening, better than going to the 'Plough;' and wouldn't it be a pleasant thought for you, Bella, when your parents are laid in the grave, that you did your very best to make them happy while they lived? Oh, if you would read what the Bible says about our duty, dear Bella, you would never go on neglecting yours. People sometimes say if they knew what to do, they would do it: why, they have only to open their eyes upon God's word first, and then on all about them; and, though you may fancy the duty of others seems plainer than yours, I don't believe there's anything plainer in the world than the duty of an eldest daughter in her father's house, where she may be the best blessing it contains. Won't you try, Bella, and ask God to help and teach you?"

Bella made no answer; but, dragging her streamers from her hair, she put a comb into Susan's hand, saying, "I wish you'd put this right for me: you said I didn't look as modest as I might; and I've hated to look at myself ever since."

"I'll show you how it would be nice," said Susan, instantly. "I used to dress my young ladies' hair; and I have not quite forgotten, I think."

A transformation was soon made in Bella's appearance, so great that one of the children exclaimed, on seeing her, "Why, I declare, if our Bella doesn't look nice;" and Bella, blushing and tossing her head a little, was not insensible to the compliment, and its implication of what was thought of her appearance before.

"I don't know what I shall do without you, Susan," said poor Mrs. Martin; "and I can't think how you've been able to manage with my sister: why, I should as soon have thought of taking my children to a tiger's den. She'll keep us all in hot water all the while she's here."

Susan wanted to turn the conversation to another subject; so she merely replied, that Bella promised to do what she could to make things comfortable.

"Bella!" exclaimed the mother, sadly. "Ah! she's a spoiled child: it's no use expecting anything from her."

"But, aunt, isn't Jim a little spoiled too? and wouldn't they both be better if they were treated more alike by the same parent? I'm sure you love them all just the same."

"Of course I do. But then master spoils Bella, and if I didn't make much of Jim, you see, it would be very hard for the poor lad."

"And so they're jealous of each other, and make you both unhappy between them," said Susan inquiringly.

"Ah well, my dear, it's too late to do different; I can't help it now."

"Oh yes, indeed you can," said Susan, energetically: "it is not too late to correct what has been wrong if we go the right way about it."

"Why, my dear, what would you do, I wonder, with naughty, quarrelling, disobedient children, if you had them?"

"I would take them to God, and ask him, for Christ's sake, to give us all new hearts together; to teach me my duty to them in everything, even in loving them. I do fear, aunt, if you will not be displeased with me for saying it, that you forgot to ask him to help you to rule your dear children; but it is never too late to ask, and nothing is too hard for him to do. If you 'seek,' you will surely 'find;' and, with God's grace in your own heart, and his blessing in your house, you would soon find a difference in everything. I don't mean that you would have obedient, good children all at once; for what a man sows that he must also reap; but, if you begin to sow good seed, you will reap good in time: be sure of it."

"Well, to be sure, I never thought religion had anything to do with it: I thought they ought to be good, naturally."

"Let us look into our own hearts, and see how we have treated our Father in heaven, aunt; and why do we expect to be treated differently by our children?"

"It's worth thinking about, that is," said Mrs.

Martin: "it will come in my mind as I lie here, Susan; and, if you'll just put your hand up on that shelf and give me down my own poor mother's Bible, I'll read a bit now and then when I can."

Mrs. Hayes went for a fortnight; and, the patient being then sufficiently restored, her husband brought the whole party from the farm to fetch her home.

"I'm very sorry you're going, sister," said Mr. Martin, "and very much obliged to you for what you've done. We haven't been so straight this long while." And Mrs. Martin was more than sorry: she felt as if a prop were going to be taken from her. "I can't think what it is," she said quietly to Susan, "but I never saw such a change in my life."

"It is the grace of God," said Susan. "'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' And now, dear aunt, you will not despair for yourself and your dear children."

Mrs. Hayes kissed Bella and Jim before she got into the cart; and they asked if they might come to the farm as soon as mother was quite strong.

It was Christmas Eve, that glad gathering time when old and young, high and low, rich and poor, have many things in common; and, first and best, that grand event to celebrate in which all have a common interest who truly profess one common faith in "the Word made flesh;" when "Glory to God in the highest," the angels' ceaseless song, was first blended with the "glad tidings of great joy; on earth peace, good will toward men."

Farmer Hayes had brought in a large bundle of

beautiful evergreens, with which, he said, his house should look as gay as a palace; and Mrs. Hayes and Susan delighted the children with wreaths and festoons in all directions. The plants reappeared in the long window sill, and all the bright ornaments hung as of yore on the walls.

"Uncle, shall we go to church to-morrow, and hear the pretty hymn, 'Hark, the herald angels sing, Glory to the new-born King?'" asked Robert.

"Yes, my man, I dare say we shall; and I wish you 'a merry Christmas and a happy new year' with all my heart."

"Father was with us last Christmas Day. I wish he was here now: don't you, mother; don't you, Milly?"

Milly warmly agreed, and Susan could not help joining in the wish; but she checked it and went on with the wreath. She had heard regularly from her husband, and shared, as fully as letters would allow, in all the experiences he thought proper to communicate; but he kept to himself the deep longing he felt to see her and his children again, and spoke as hopefully as he could of his prospects. He had wandered many a weary mile, obtaining only short engagements for work now and then; until, at last, in a town at some distance he had just obtained the notice of a gentleman who was commencing a small business in the manufacture with which William Taylor was well acquainted. His wages were very inferior to any he had formerly received; but he was thankful for a permanent situation, and the comfort of being with a few fellow-workmen who had learned a painful lesson from "the strike," and were willing

to profit by it. He had written to fix the time for his family to join him; but kind Farmer Hayes would not hear of it until William could afford to accommodate them with something of their former comfort; and he guessed truly that it would be hard to do that at present. Thus it came to pass that Susan and her children were the welcome inmates of the farm that Christmas Eve.

"Do you know, Susan," said Mr. Hayes, giving a puff from his pipe as he sat in the chimney corner, where something seemed to make him unusually restless that evening, notwithstanding the beautiful fire, the singing kettle, the plentiful table, and the cheerful aspect of all around him,—"do you know I used to have no thought about Christmas Day, but a good dinner of roast beef and plum pudding, and cracking walnuts or roasting chestnuts over the fire all the afternoon. I hope I think differently now; and though we should remember every day of our lives about the mighty wonder of the Son of God coming down 'to be a man and die,' as Milly's hymn says, yet I think it's very right to keep that glorious birthday in a special way."

"Father told me three things why Jesus came to be like us, and have a birthday just like ours," said Robert. "It was last Christmas Day; and he said, if we lived, I was to tell him them again next Christmas; but I can't, because he isn't here."

"Well, you can tell me instead," said the farmer: "I want to hear them now."

"It was, first, that He might 'put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;' that's a text, you know; second,

to bring God and man together again as friends; and third, to show how much he loves poor sinners."

"Very well remembered, my boy: I wish we may all think of those reasons as they deserve. But, Robert, you seem to be thinking a deal about father to-day."

"I dare say he's thinking about us: don't you, mother? Oh, how happy we should be if he was here! I like you and aunt and everything very much; but it isn't quite home without father: is it, Milly?" Milly's grave little face spoke her response.

"Well, it is hard, when there are so many happy meetings for others, that there shouldn't be one for you," said Mr. Hayes, throwing down his pipe and rising.

"Oh no, not hard, uncle," said Susan, smiling up in his face through a tear which would come in spite of her: "if it is God's will it must be good and right."

"I don't believe it is his will though," muttered the farmer, going to the door. "Hark, I hear something; and what's Jowler barking for, I wonder?"

"Oh, it's Joe come back with the light cart, I dare say: he said you had sent him somewhere," said Robert.

"Ah, so I did. Here he is, then. I wanted a big parcel from the railway;" and what children ever failed to run when a parcel, great or small, was to be seen?

"Here it is," exclaimed the farmer, in uncontrollable delight, as the cart rattled up to the door.

"Now, children;—well, if it isn't a big one, and a live one too!"

Susan sprang from her chair, and the children screamed with rapture, as the manly form of the dear husband and father so loved and longed for gladdened their sight; and, as William clasped them in his arms once more with a fervent thanksgiving, the full hearts of their kind friends overflowed with tearful sympathy.

It was their own kind work: they had furnished money for the journey in a way that William could not reject; and so it was a happy Christmas Day indeed at that hospitable home. And if it did happen that there was a good dinner to be eaten, and walnuts to be cracked, and chestnuts roasted too, there was also spiritual pleasure in every heart, and the voice of humble prayer and the song of grateful praise.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FEVER.

THERE was a time when sanatory laws were not in such favour as they are now, and when the permission of poor people had to be asked to do certain things for the purification of their dwellings, and the preservation of their health. On one occasion, when a desolating pestilence was rapidly overspreading the land, several gentlemen, professional and others, volunteered to visit every house in a certain town, and commend approved rules to the careful attention of the people. One gentleman, more of a scholar than a district visitor, and better qualified to address an educated assembly than to speak as a friend at the poor man's fireside, made in his turn a kind of speech to the astonished families. The hour chosen was towards dinner time, when the men might be found at home; and entering without ceremony, the benevolent scholar, with many efforts to be understood, commenced his oration.

"My friends," he said, "we are come to warn you of approaching danger, and to help you, if possible, to escape it. The hydra-headed monster whose ravages have desolated other countries has at last found access to our shores; he is devouring thousands of our fellow-countrymen, and is hastening towards us; he is even now at our very doors." Some of these expressions were evidently understood, for terror overspread every face: the husband dropped his knife and fork, the wife

clasped her infant to her bosom, the children stared with open eyes and mouths, and a lad more daring than the rest crept softly behind the door to get the first view through the crevice of the devouring monster whom he understood to be there ready for a spring.

But the figure of speech, however out of place just there, was not at all an inappropriate one; for pestilence is a devouring monster, and though sometimes seemingly indifferent about the character and the class of his victims, it oftener seems to follow a natural instinct in choosing them. It is as if its calculations were made from experience, and that intemperance, neglect, and wilfulness were its well-known friends.

The drunkard, with poison in his veins and delirium in his brain, seldom or never rallies from the stroke of the destroyer; he has but prepared himself to fall at once.

The ignorant and self-sufficient who in spite of warning persist in keeping their windows shut, their rooms unventilated and unclean; stifling their children and themselves in the midst of impurity by night, sending their troublesome tribe to play among choked drains and rubbish heaps by day; careless about the food they eat, and the atmosphere they breathe—these are often as easy and sudden a prey. Who can wonder, and who in Christian pity regret, that the little neglected ones sicken and lay their weary heads on the startled mother's lap, and one by one pass away to a purer world? Laws may do much to regulate and purify the external aspect of neighbourhoods, but only individuals in their own houses, men in their personal habits and lives, and women in their duty as guardians

of domestic cleanliness and comfort, can ever do the real work that will contribute most to the general health, and confer the most lasting benefit.

The house in E—— Court vacated by William Taylor was immediately entered by Mr. and Mrs. White, Betsey Moore's gossiping neighbour, who rejoiced in the cleanliness of her new abode, protesting that it would not want paper, paint, or scrubbing-brush she couldn't tell when. A nice clean house saved her "a world of trouble," she said, but she forgot that, to keep it so, she must do as Mrs. Taylor did—work a little more, and talk a little less.

Mrs. White was very clever as a clear-starcher, and was well paid for the fine shirts and muslins which made dazzling contrast with the clothing of her children; and everybody wondered to see the beautiful and delicate handiwork that Mrs. White could accomplish—*for money*. She did not choose to work every day, but after her earnings were secured she rested and enjoyed herself after her fashion. She always turned the children into the street to play when she was busy, provided them a plentiful meal when she was not, and never dreamed that anything more was in the line of a mother's duty. She thought the business of life was to get money, and the pleasure of life was to eat, drink, and talk, which latter was apparently as needful to her existence as either of the other enjoyments.

Mr. White took life much after his wife's plan: he worked industriously when he chose, and spent his money liberally upon self-indulgence; and so they were among the easy-going people who constitute so large a number of all classes. To expect them

to think much about another world who had to work for their living in this, was a conceit which amused them exceedingly, as they carelessly looked over a tract which Mrs. Ashton on her weekly round had asked permission to leave. Sunday was their only day, they said, for taking a little treat; and as for the children, poor things, there was time enough before them to learn the way to heaven without seting them up at school on a Sunday like little methodists.

Mrs. White considered that her clear-starching talent would always command an income, and not having known want, anticipated no reverses. Great therefore was her surprise and indignation one morning, on calling for her usual work at the houses of her best customers, to receive a message instead.

"Mistress has heard that the fever has broken out in your part of the town," said a servant, "and she would not like anything to come from there at present. She bade me say that if you like to have some chloride of lime to wash your floors, or some whitewash for your walls, she will be very glad to pay for it, and she hopes you will do all you can to keep off the danger of infection. We have some nice soup, too, for those who will come for it."

"Much obliged," muttered Mrs. White, suppressing what she would willingly have added if she had not feared the loss of favour; and having received similar disappointment at other places, she hastened to vent her displeasure among some of her particular friends, instead of going home to make better use of the time thus unexpectedly left upon her hands. She thought labour valuable only as it gained money; the idea that

it might save money was not a part of her domestic economy.

"To think of it!" she exclaimed to a neighbour. "Chloride of lime and soup, indeed! as if I didn't know how to clean my house and feed my children. But the fever isn't in E—— Court yet, and my lady may catch it and die as well as her washerwoman, I can tell them that."

Failing her own weekly earnings, Mrs. White asked her husband for more money, which he was unwilling to give, as it would have curtailed some of his own peculiar enjoyments; and he said she must manage better with the usual supply. This was not easy to one who squandered thoughtlessly all she got; and after two or three angry contentions on the subject, Mrs. White felt so particularly ill-used and miserable, that it was right the whole neighbourhood should be aware of her troubles. So she talked more than ever, and had a strong temptation to try and get up a sort of "strike" in order to bring such husbands to their senses. Perhaps it would not have signified much if she and such as she had "struck." There would surely have been a deliverance from the strife of unruly tongues; and if the house were to be left to its fate, it would at least be a quiet one. There is nothing so wretched in the working man's home as the discontented voice of a talkative vixen. If "in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," so in the repetition of complaints there wanteth not misery.

"It is some comfort to speak one's mind," say many such "foolish women;" but it is the comfort of a fiend, and not of one who should be a help-meet for him to whom she has pledged obedience and affection.

Meantime the destroyer was advancing, and made many a street in the devoted town like Egypt on the night of her crowning sorrow. Here a parent, there a child—sometimes both parents and children—sickened and died. Those who recovered were long very weak; and where strong men broke down, and could no longer work for their families, poverty was added to the trial.

There were mothers who refused to be comforted for their long-neglected and now lost children, and who would have laid down their own lives to recall those they had often called troubles and plagues. Alas that the latent affection which should have found holy exercise in judicious care and orderly management, should be reserved only to waste itself in useless lamentation!

E—— Court suffered a full share in the calamity, and in the stifling room where the windows had not been opened since Susan Taylor left it, the disease began. By the time a third child lay helplessly in her lap, Mrs. White sat pale and silent, the picture of despair, and conscious that warning symptoms were pervading her own frame.

"Oh, Mrs. White," said a low kind voice, as a figure darkened the doorway, "I heard of your troubles, and I couldn't help coming round to see how you are. Poor, poor little thing, is there no hope of this one?"

The mother looked up vacantly into the face of Betsey Moore, the only one of her "particular friends" who had ventured to give this proof of interest.

"You'd better go away," she said; "I'm going to be stricken down myself, I believe, and no matter;

but oh, Mrs. Moore, take care of your little ones while you've got them;" and the tears fell fast upon the dying child.

"Mrs. White," said Betsey, kneeling down before her, with a voice of earnest sympathy, "do you know why I came? It is because I was afraid lest you haven't altered what you used to think about the Bible, and about the Lord Jesus Christ; and I knew you couldn't have comfort in your sorrow now."

"Will He give me back my children?" said the poor woman, with a fresh burst of grief.

"He will love them and save them," said Betsey, timidly. "Oh, do believe what the Bible says of the love of Jesus to lost sinners."

"Are you turned preacher, and to me?" said Mrs. White, with a flush overspreading her pale face: "haven't you helped me to laugh at religion?"

"Oh, I don't forget that," said Betsey, shuddering; "but by God's mercy in his dear Son it is forgiven, and I came to ask you to seek the same forgiveness. I helped to make you bad; oh, if I might help you now to goodness, and peace, and hope."

"Go away, I tell you," said Mrs. White, in a gentler tone. "I have neither peace nor hope; it's all one now what becomes of me."

"Oh! no, no! Jesus says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Say you will ask him; only try how true he is. I have asked, I have tried. I may die of the fever, but if I do I shall be with Jesus, and all is right. Oh, do believe in Jesus, that you may be saved if you die, and good and happy if you get well. God

help and comfort you, and give you his good Spirit." And thus the subdued and once worldly neighbour sought to share her blessing where once she had shared in sin and folly.

She could not stay long, but she ran round when she could, and did many offices of Christian kindness to the sick woman and her remaining children, always leaving with her some portion of God's word that tells of sin in self and salvation in Christ.

She risked something by going into that infected atmosphere; but she thought of the perishing soul, and went again and again, while her kind mother took her place for the few minutes at home.

It was joy to Susan's heart to read in her sister's own handwriting the assurance that she was indeed thus changed.

"The fever has been terrible," she wrote, "and Richard has been so ill, I was afraid he had got it; but thank God he is better now, and he says if the house was like it used to be he would have died, but things are a bit different, dear Susan, now. Mother has been very kind—I don't know what I should have done without her; it's a blessing to have a good mother. I hope my children will say as much of me some day. They go to school nicely, the two biggest, and baby begins to walk alone. There are such changes here. Mr. and Mrs. Watson both took the fever and died, and their poor children are gone to the Union; Mrs. White lost three children, and is still so ill herself that we are much afraid she may not get well. I try to tell her what you told me, and she takes it kindly now. Richard reads for me very often in the Bible, and he says Sunday isn't a

dull day, and he won't go pleasuring any more. Dear Susan, I miss you very much, but I am so glad you are safe away from the fever. I was very frightened at first, but I did ask to be made submissive to God's gracious will, and to be his child in life or death; and though we are not as well off as we were, I'm very thankful for what he gives us still. Richard means to try for work as soon as he's strong again, and never to strike any more: he says the Bible shows him it's all covetousness. We send our love, and no more at present, from your loving sister—Betsey Moore."

CHAPTER XIII.

TEMPTATION, AND THE WAY TO RESIST IT.

THE "Red Lion" was once a respectable, quiet public house in its way, but had been converted into a "palace." It's master was bent on making a rapid fortune, and seemed likely to gain his object, judging from the multitudes of working men who poured into his till the fruits of their daily toil, earned by the sweat of their brow. And of poor, pale, haggard women, and even young boys and timid girls, not a few added to his gain.

There was a "bar," and within, a "bar parlour;" and there on the last Saturday of a closing year sat a respectable looking man with a book of entry and a money-bag before him. He was paying workmen; and it did not seem to strike him to notice at all how few of those men, as they passed out with their money, got beyond the enticements of the tap. It was not his business: his business was to pay money, not to superintend the spending of it. Was he the keeper of other men's characters and consciences? What right had he to interfere with them out of the work-yard? Ah, just the right, springing from our common relationship, to speak a kind "word in season" when temptation abounds and resistance is doubtful. The foreman, however, would have found it difficult to warn the men against the temptations

of the "bar" while paying their wages in the "bar parlour."

The last man was paid, and, passing through the bar, was quitting the uncongenial scene, when he was accosted by the landlord, who, with his hands in his pockets, was complacently observing the constant succession of comers, and waiting until the last moment to count up the contents of the till. "Why, how's this?" said he; "surely you are not going without drinking your master's health, and doing something for the good of the house?"

"I never drink for compliment, sir," replied the man.

"What, not even to-night, to wish the old year well out and the new one in? Come, it will do you good; and it shan't be said that I'm none the better by a pint or so for one of D——'s men."

"I'm very much obliged to you," replied the workman, steadily, "but I can wish you well without drink. I wish you a happy new year with all my heart. May the Lord bless you, and show you the good and right way to be happy."

"What! then perhaps you don't think I'm just in it, Mr. Parson, eh?"

The name of the Lord was not "as ointment poured forth" in his hearing, evidently.

"I don't judge anybody, sir; I only expressed what I wish for everybody. If they know the right way they won't be offended, I'm sure; and if they don't, my wish could not be better timed."

Some of the noisy crowd who had been shouting, laughing, swearing, caught the conversation and paused to listen.

"You don't mean to say there's any harm, I hope, in a jug of my good ale, or a glass of spirits and water after a week's hard work; so why can't you do as others do? Out with your argument if you've got one: I'm not afraid of a regiment of total-abstinence fellows, I promise you."

"Sir, excuse me," replied the honest speaker, in a low voice; "but, if you would walk with me to the street where I am living, I could show you twelve or fourteen arguments against stopping here to drink after wages are paid. There are poor women waiting for money to buy to-morrow's dinner; there are children whose shoes can't be got for school and church till the father takes home money to pay for the making or mending. Drinking men can't get credit even for a day if it's known; and the very soap that's to wash the shirts on their backs has to be got yet before their wives' day's work is done. I know what I'm saying, sir, I assure you. Good night, sir."

"Stuff! nonsense! all a got-up tale," cried the landlord, as he angrily turned away; for the speaker was quickly beyond the flare of the "Red Lion;" and while the uproarious group were laughing and shouting, "A saint, a saint!" he went in to share brandy and water at the master's expense with the foreman of the D—— works.

The Christian workman hurried along; and as he turned into the street where he dwelt, a woman with a basket on her arm came past. Poor thing! she too had been to the "Red Lion," and begged a few shillings from her husband who was sitting in the bar, and with them she was hastening to get pro-

visions and necessaries for the family, which could not be got in the immediate neighbourhood: the rest she would run out for the next morning. And now, instead of sitting down to calm and soothe her spirit and retire to rest in peace, her day's work seemed beginning in earnest. She had so much to do that it was impossible to tidy up at all before she slept. True there was no supper to get that night, for her husband never wanted any after finishing the week at the "Red Lion;" and a crust and a drink of water would do for her while she worked. Then he never got up until very late on Sunday morning, and was so cross that the longer he lay in bed the better. So poor Mrs. Barnes settled it at last, that if the drink on Saturday night made him idle and kept her up till after midnight, it made him sleep on Sunday long enough to save his temper from troubling his family for an extra two or three hours.

The fact was Barnes was a weak man, with light enough in his mind to know what was right, but without grace in his heart to cause him to do it; therefore his conscience was uneasy until he succeeded in drowning its voice. Alas! that may soon be done when we turn from its warnings, and set ourselves to do evil. He had been led astray first by that very plea which had just been tried on his fellow-workman, the propriety of "doing as others did;" and when conscience in a sober hour reproved him, he was cross with all around him.

Barnes had married a thoughtless young servant girl, who, after a brief period of comparative comfort, was now the hard-working mother of five children, trying to keep them as decently as she could, but

sadly deficient in method and management. She was full of grumbling discontent, and living without God in the world because she thought she had not time to find him, and supposing that her hardships in this world would be set against any want of personal religion that otherwise might affect her acceptance in the next. Religion, she thought, was intended for the rich; certainly not for poor women with large families, and not very temperate husbands.

Long ere Mrs. Barnes and many like her had left the wash-tub, or seen the embers die out in the little grate before which the Sunday pinafore, or shirt, or gown, was drying for the next day's wear, the chimes of the old parish church had rung the dirge of the passing year, and welcomed in with a vigorous clang the moment of a new year's birth. But what mattered it that time was flying fast, which brought so little change to them? They best knew the proof in the wear and tear of health and strength, and the increase of trouble and anxiety. The pleasant chimes sang no news that affected them, unless, indeed, an overpowering sensation of the weariness and sameness, year after year, of a toiling, striving life brought a flood of tears to the heart's relief.

But need it be so? Oh no; there is for the poor man's wife as loving a smile to cheer, as strong an arm to sustain, and as rich a hand to bless, as for the truest Christian lady in the land, who brings her cares and burdens to a Saviour's feet. The difference is not in rank, position, wealth, or education; it is between that state of heart which is content to go grumbling through life without God and his grace, and that which looks up from the

appointments of his providence in sweet assurance of the love that dictates all, and affectionate obedience to the word which connects all real happiness with faith in Jesus Christ.

There was one lovely contrast, however, in that very street. The Christian workman passed on to his home; which, though very inferior to any they had known before, was like home to him now, for his wife and three children were there. The one room to cook, and wash, and eat, and sit in, was neat and clean; the fire was laid ready for lighting in the morning; and the breakfast things stood ready on a side table with a clean cloth thrown over them. The husband's shoes (though there is no denying that it is very proper for a working man to clean his own dirty shoes) were as bright as those of any gentleman in the town; for it was a very loving, indulgent wife who presided over this humble home; and she never thought it a trouble to do anything to please her husband, and make him look, as well as feel, respectable and cared for. So the shoes stood ready, and two little pairs beside them, and goloshes too; for the drowned ones had been fished up by kind farmer Hayes, and were in as tidy a trim as ever.

And though, by understood arrangement, the fire was not burning after ten o'clock, hearts were warm with love and thankfulness; and William and Susan sat and talked and read the word of life together; and while the sweet bells rang in the new year's morn, they knelt in earnest self-dedication before the God of all their mercies, as the first act on the record of another span of time, and the best

offering in their power to Him to whom they owed their all:—

"The past they own with grateful praise:
The future, be it years or days,
They fearless leave to Him,
Whose loving-kindness full and free,
In Jesus' life and death, they see
Has put away their sin.

"If they are Christ's, with him 'joint heirs,'
'All things' in heaven and earth are theirs,
All fears are soothed to rest;
While in his marred and loving face
God's blended attributes they trace,
And know his will is best."

The new year came in with the day of rest. The first day of the week was new year's day; and very pleasant it was to associate with the first hours of a new period of time the hallowed peace and refreshing services of the "Lord's day."

For the first time, too, the little child, watched with delight by its patrons, Robert and Milly, lay in its mother's arms during morning service, and behaved with surprising propriety; so that it seemed no impossible thing for a whole family to be present together under certain good management, and with certain willing hearts. Susan could have gone out if her child had been restless; but she was not one of those mothers who seemed to think the possession of a baby is a perpetual excuse for neglecting many things that ought to be done, and doing many wilful things that had better be left undone.

The good pastor whose sermon claimed their solemn and interested attention gave a new year's motto to the Christians present, "My grace is sufficient for

thee," and supposed many cases for its valuable application. "And so it is, Susan," said William, as they walked home together. And the sight of Mrs. Barnes at work sweeping and looking fagged and miserable as they passed her house, reminded him of its encouraging assurance for a trying duty which he thought he saw before him.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FELLOW-HELPER.

"It's little enough for a week's hard work, isn't it?" remarked a tall, stout fellow-workman to William Taylor, jingling his money with his hand in his pocket, as they walked away from the Red Lion together after receiving their wages one Saturday night.

"It's honestly earned at any rate," replied William.

"And you mean it to be honestly spent, don't you now—mine as well as your own?" said the other with a significant smile. "I caught your eye as I passed the tap."

"I felt a bit anxious, I confess," said William: "it would be worse than the sow to her wallowing in the mire, if you go back to your drink after keeping sober and manly for these few weeks past. Do you know, when I got you home that time, and saw your fine strong frame, and the noble head of a man that was first made in the image of God, lie in the helplessness of childhood and the silliness of an idiot through your own sin and folly, I felt tears of shame come into my eyes. Is this a man? I thought to myself, and more still, a husband and a father?"

"And you resolved to save me if you could, and bring back strength to the arm and sense to the head of the idiot. And yet I struck you, Taylor,

fool that I was. You can't say I was helpless then."

"No, you were a madman then. Drunkards go through all the characters that the devil has invented to dishonour man; until at last, having disgraced themselves and done as much mischief as they can here, he has them to torment for ever, unless they repent and seek forgiveness through Christ."

"I wonder you forgave me, Taylor. I couldn't forgive a blow."

"Did you ever say 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?'" asked Taylor: "there's a deal of meaning in those words;" and the two men walked on in silence.

"I was saying our wages are little enough for families like ours," at last remarked Freeman.

"Well, the times aren't the most prosperous for everybody just now, you know; and employers can't alter all their ways to suit them as easy as you and I can. They have to pay many a tax that never touches us; they have many a loss that we know nothing about: and yet, if their credit is to stand, business must go on, on, on. I've seen the anxious look and pale cheek of more than one or two among masters, while the men took their own as usual, never heeding the thoughts that made the hand tremble that paid them."

"I never thought of that, to be sure," said Freeman: "you've got the queerest way of turning one's notions upside down that ever I saw."

"Don't you remember the Lord's apostles were accused of turning the world upside down, when they only wanted to set things in their right places?"

answered William. "To my mind there's too much difference, and too great distance between masters and workmen; but the fault is as much on our side as theirs, depend upon it."

"Why, they are rich and we are poor: they want their work done, and we do it for them. Sure that's a mighty difference, and no fault of ours, that I can see."

"Well, I never could look upon my employer as nothing better than a cash-box," returned Taylor; "and I see no harm in lessening the distance between him and me, by thinking of him as the same flesh and blood, the servant of the same great Master, and, if he follows the Lord Jesus Christ, the sharer of the same blessed home in the world to come."

"Ah, you should say that to employers; it would do them more good than saying it to us poor fellows that they like to tread upon in this world."

"I've never seen the master yet that dared to tread upon an honest workman who was doing his duty before God and man," said Taylor, warmly; "but I have seen many a workman trying or wishing to drag down them that God has set above him, like a madman pulling his own roof about his head. No, no, this is just the distance I mean: there's too much expected from employers, and too little felt for them by their dependents. Men have come to think of each other only in the place where they see one another, and forget that each has his duties and temptations, and affections and trials, and should feel for each other in twenty ways that have nothing to do with the workshop or the pay-office."

"Well," returned Freeman, "I don't believe our

master thinks we're made of anything but a couple of hands to do his work, and as many feet to carry us to it."

"I'm sorry to hear that, for I'm thinking of trying what he does think of us; and if a few steady men will stand by me, I expect we can show him what stuff we are made of."

"You, Will Taylor? Why, you don't mean to strike, do you? I thought you said you were contented with your wages?" exclaimed Freeman, in eager surprise.

"There, isn't it as I said? you think of a master in his cash-box, and want as much out of it as you can get. I am thinking of him in his place before God, who will call him to account for other responsibilities than his money. No, I'm not going to strike; but I am going to try, God helping me, to speak a few words of truth, humbly and quietly, and try if something better than wages can't be got by it."

"I'll stand by you be it what it may," said Freeman.

"Well then, don't you think if your good wife had her share of your wages in good time on Saturday, she might have things comfortable, and get some of her family, and perhaps herself, to public worship on Sunday? And if we could be paid somewhere away from a public house, don't you think some of us would be the better for being kept out of temptation?"

"The last I'm quite sure about," said Freeman; "but as to poor Martha, you see, we've a large family, and she's always at work somehow, and is in more fuss on a Sunday than any day in the week. How could the wages help that?"

"She's up good part of Saturday night; and she markets on Sunday morning: perhaps she's too anxious about your dinner. Now, if she could buy and prepare on Saturday afternoon, there need be no fuss on Sunday. If my wife had to stay at home and cook my dinner instead of going to public worship, I should be ashamed to eat it."

"Ah, Taylor, good management is a great thing; and perhaps you've never been so very poor as to slip out of good ways without minding it."

"No, God forbid we ever should," said William, reverently; while his tall, sturdy companion remembered with shame the wretched reason why he and his had done so. He had poured down his throat the value of cloaks, hats, shoes, furniture, that should have made home and family neat and respectable; and now how dared he wonder that both were destitute and miserable?

"My wife is a good manager, I'm thankful to say," continued Taylor; "but many a poor man's wife might be the same, if she'd a little more of good thoughts in her head, and a deal less of dull care in her heart."

"You always argue everything into religion, somehow, as if you could make one believe that religion has anything to do with good management," retorted Freeman, half testily.

"Just so," said Taylor, quietly.

"Well, I know my wife would laugh at your notions: but how do you make it out?"

"It's no mystery that I can see," answered William. "It's just believing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ, and knowing that he has taken us

under his care, and will make everything work for our good, if we will but take up our cross and follow him. Now poverty is a cross no doubt, and gives us the privilege of following him close; for he was so poor 'he had not where to lay his head;' but he always made the best of everything; and when he had but a few loaves to feed a field full of hungry people, he gave thanks and made it do."

"But that was a miracle, man: we can't do anything like that."

"Well, so it was; but I've often thought it's very like that when we take in thankfulness and faith what is provided for us, and make it go as far as it will; that is good management I think, and I don't fear but the Lord will make it enough somehow. At any rate the feeling that we are following his steps, and minding what he said, brings peace and contentment with little, which some who have much know nothing about. Better is a dinner of herbs where love to God is, than a stalled ox and hatred or indifference to him therewith."

"I never used to think it right and respectful to mix up religion with everything in this sort of way," remarked Freeman, after a long pause.

"It's just the life and soul of everything," returned William, earnestly. "Is not Jesus Christ the foundation of everything good? Can there be anything pleasing to God that has not his own dear Son at the bottom of it? He's our rock; and the character and ways and doings and tempers that are built on him can't be shaken down or broken up by winds and waves of trouble, blow and drive they never so fast."

"If it is as you say, I'm sure I wish poor Martha

could go and learn all about it; but she thinks she can't ever get out of a Sunday."

"Well, if she really can't—and she has indeed a deal to do, poor thing—there's another way that she might begin with," said Taylor, thoughtfully.

"Ah, you mean she should read the Bible; and so she might, sure enough."

"No, I don't. Paul said, speaking to wives who wanted to know something particular about the doctrine, 'Let them ask their own husbands at home.'"

"But what if the husband knows nothing himself?" asked Freeman, quickly.

"More's the pity, and the shame too, in this Christian land. If a man has a wife and family, it's his bounden duty to help them all to know and do God's holy will. It's a teaching he'll never repent; and may be they'll bless him for it through life."

"Well, it's clear it isn't quite the thing to be running after one's provisions on a Sunday morning; and if we can help it in any way I think we'd better," said Freeman, after another thoughtful pause.

"My heart sinks at the sight of these back streets on the Lord's day, Freeman; women and children in and out of the shops, that look just like any other day. Now if there were no buyers, there would soon be no sellers."

"Ah, but you and I can't reform the streets like that, if we never went into a shop, nor bought a penn'orth of anything."

"No, but we should not be 'partakers of other men's sins;' we should clear our consciences in the

sight of God, so far as wilful neglect of his law goes; and when a man reforms his own ways, there's no knowing where his good example may end."

"And do you mean to ask our masters to do anything towards it by paying wages in good time?"

"Yes; and if three or four steady men will stand by me, we'll ask the favour in the name of the Lord we want to serve and honour."

"Then perhaps it won't be of any use for me to offer to go along with you," said Freeman, in a saddened tone.

"Yes it will," answered William. "You are steady now, and you mean, God helping you, to keep so."

"Well, thank you for that; for I was afraid you'd be ashamed of your company before them that know what's past."

"I've sought your soul, and I've pitied them that belong to you, Freeman, else I should never have sought your company; and now that the Lord seems answering my prayer, I'm not likely to change my mind towards you."

"I'm thinking, Taylor, you might just drop in some evening, and talk a bit about things, and just ask for a Bible, will you? and I'll take care to rummage one up ready for you. And then perhaps you wouldn't mind saying a bit of a prayer for us, and may be things might get different by degrees."

"That I will, the Lord permitting, and with all my heart," replied William.

"And, Taylor," added Freeman, with some hesitation, "you needn't be saying that text before Martha yet, you know, about asking husbands at home. If she takes to the Bible, she'll find it out sharp

enough for herself; and I'd like to be ready if she did try it; for I'll warrant she'd wonder enough how I learned any good."

"The Lord God the Holy Spirit will teach you if you ask him," said Taylor, solemnly; and the rough hands of the fellow-workmen joined in a hearty grasp. They were most likely friends for life; and the working man, in the working man's home, was the best Scripture reader or home missionary that could enter there.

Martha, who would have been in a great fuss at the approach of a formal visitor in clerical costume, was no wise daunted at the sight of her husband's friend, who had been the means of keeping him sober for several weeks; and, when he led the conversation heavenward, she paused to listen, drew near and hushed two or three troublesome children who were interrupting, heard a few words of Scripture read out of a Book that mysteriously appeared from somewhere, and was surprised into kneeling down and an attempt to pray.

A wholesome train of thought arose within her; she looked back upon her past life, and burst into tears; and by and by she will look forward with hope, and upward with smiles, and will know that God is the working man's friend, and the gracious helper of the working man's wife in all her trials, and will encamp around their humble dwelling with a love as true, and a care as great, as ever were manifested in days of miracles; with this only difference, that those who walk with him by faith are privileged to glorify him more than those who walked by sight.

CHAPTER XV.

REAL GRIEVANCES AND RIGHT REMEDIES.

"In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct thy paths." So read William Taylor, ere quitting his home for work.

"You won't forget me to-day, Susan," he said, as the children scrambled up into his arms for the parting kiss. "I'm not much given to meddle with matters that may be thought too high for such as I, but many will be benefited if I succeed, and none harmed if I fail."

Susan did not forget; and her humble home duties were not the worse performed because now and then from the depth of her affectionate heart rose up, in the midst of them, a prayer for her brave husband in the warfare of life.

There is "a time to speak" as well as "a time to keep silence;" and the word which no mere personal inconvenience would have urged from the quiet Christian workman must be spoken, for the honour of God and the good of immortal souls.

At twelve o'clock the foreman was requested to inform Mr. D— that a few of his men asked leave to speak to him at any time he would be pleased to appoint.

"What is it all about?" said Mr. D—, hastily; "are they dissatisfied with anything? Because those who don't like my service are at liberty to leave it."

"They have some request to make, I believe, sir; but they wish to see you themselves about it."

"Quite useless, you can tell them; for I am not one to yield to the evil spirit of the times, which is for changing the places of masters and workmen."

Seeing, however, a cluster of heads outside his office, Mr. D— stuck his pen through his hair, put on his hat with a resolute, made-up-mind sort of look, and putting his hands into his pockets, came and stood at the door to contemplate his petitioners. Among them were two known until recently, according to the foreman's estimate, as good workmen, but sad drunken fellows.

William Taylor stepped forward, and in a few, simple, respectful words, stated the wish of the majority of the men to be paid somewhere away from the temptations of a public house, and at an hour more convenient for the comfort of their homes and the observance of the Lord's day.

Mr. D— was quite unprepared for requests like these; he expected something about increase of wages, or shorter hours, and was for the moment as much at fault as if he heard for the first time that his men had homes, and were as much bound as himself to respect the fourth commandment.

"I should not have supposed, from the recommendation your former employers took the trouble to write for you, that a public house was a temptation to you," at last he said, looking with a half-doubting, sarcastic expression at Taylor.

"Sir, he speaks for me,"—"and for me," eagerly interrupted the two reformed men: "there's no fear for him; but he has seen what it is to others."

"As to what you say about the inconvenience of evening payment, it only proves the bad management of the week that you are penniless on a Saturday. I do not consider it my business at all."

"Sir," replied Taylor, "we do not deny that in some cases there may be bad management, but only those who live from hand to mouth as it were, know the difficulties of managing well with families to provide for; and with means to do better, if the opportunity is given, the blame of Sunday trading and godless homes will fall in the right place. I would respectfully say that it would be well to take away all excuse; for if some of us can slide our sins upon other people's shoulders, justly or unjustly, we aren't likely to mend."

"Well, if anything should incline me to your way of thinking, you will hear of it. At present I don't think of making any changes."

No one who saw Mr. D— as he turned abruptly away from his men, at that moment, under a thorough misconception of the nature of their relative positions, would have thought him the same, who, an hour afterwards, trod with noiseless step and anxious tenderness the sick chamber of his children.

"I'm afraid we have not chosen a good time, friends," said William Taylor to his companions; "there's something wrong, but we can't help it. Let us wait patiently, and leave our cause in higher hands."

On the following morning Mr. D— was accompanied by a fine bright boy, who ran about the premises peeping at the workmen, and seeming very much disposed to be friendly with some of them; but

he was watched and called off perpetually by his father, who dreaded such contact for the child.

At last, dragging his father by the hand towards the place where William Taylor was at work, he begged hard to be allowed to see the working of the machinery.

"My dear boy, it is dangerous; you must not go there."

"Oh, papa, this man will take care of me, won't you now?" he cried, looking pleadingly at William.

"Is there no risk? Can you spare a minute for him?" said Mr. D—, following up his boy's request.

"If you think proper, sir; and I'll take the care of him that I would of my own," replied William, respectfully.

"Well then, Archy, keep close; mind what is said to you; and, when you have seen what you wish, you can come back to me;" and instinctively certain that the boy would be safe, Mr. D— left him with his new friend.

Archy was not to be shaken off after his first curiosity had been gratified; and he chatted away, revealing several little circumstances connected with his family, which William heartily wished he had known before.

"I shall ask to come again to-morrow," said the child, as he was called to return home; "and mamma will let me if my sisters are no better. The doctors will come again to-night to see them."

The next morning Archy bounded across the yard to claim acquaintance.

"How are your little sisters?" asked William.

"Very ill, no better," answered Archy, becoming serious in a moment. "Mamma was crying when she kissed me at coming away with papa. Oh, here's papa, and I want to stay with you, may I? Papa, may I stay with this kind man? I like him very much, he can tell me many nice things; he has got a little boy just as old as I am."

"If you promise not to hinder, you can stay a little while."

"Sir," said William, raising his cap, as Mr. D— stood before him, "I feel very sorry that we intruded our little troubles upon you just when you are called to bear great ones. Your son has told me what shows it was not a right time."

"Oh, it is of no consequence," hastily replied Mr. D—, surprised at the delicacy and sympathy of a common workman; but no, alas! not a common one either, though many with hearts as kind lack courage for the straightforward, opportune expression of their feeling.

"Yes, sir, it is of consequence, for you must have enough to think about just now; and I only wish we had known it somehow."

"Why," said Mr. D—, "you would not have me bring my domestic anxieties into the work-yard, would you?"

"Yes, sir, that's just what I would," replied William. "We can all see that something is going wrong, and we've hearts as well as hands, and know how to feel for them that are above us, as well as for each other."

"I should have thought you would wonder what you had to do with my private feelings."

"It's a mistake, sir; we are the same flesh and blood; and if we do your work with a good will, we should regard all your concerns with kindly interest. One word to show that you cared for our sympathy would have brought all hearts here round you in no time; and though we can't help you ourselves, may be the prayer to Him who can would not be despised."

"You have children," said Mr. D—, in an altered voice.

"I have, sir; and I pray God to spare you the pain of parting from yours."

Mr. D— held out his hand; a rush of new feelings bursting through the icy barriers of pride and caste; and the rough palm of the working man grasped it with honest pleasure. It was the "one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin," the electric message of a humanity common to each, and the pledge of a relationship honourable to both.

"You needn't fear, sir," said the foreman, as he saw an anxious glance searching across the yard for Archy; "the young gentleman is safe enough with Taylor. The yard isn't like the same since Taylor joined us; for those who don't care to listen to his good words, begin to take heed he shan't hear so many of their bad ones."

"Do you believe his wife ever markets on a Sunday?" asked Mr. D—, glad of an opportunity to hear something more.

"No, sir, she's quite a different sort of person from that. He is speaking for others, not for himself. I once had a bit of a grudge against people who pretended to be more religious than their neighbours;

but, sir, to my mind, this man's religion has got something real and practical about it."

"Well, then, since you see the difference, you can keep your grudge against pretenders if you like; but let us honour the real thing wherever we are favoured to find it."

The foreman was pleased; for, though there was not much in the words, they were spoken in a tone of unusual urbanity and kindness. After all, Mr. D— was not above profiting by a lesson when he was happy enough to receive one.

For some days little Archy was a constant visitor, and then he came no more. Sickness had prostrated him also; and very sad was the look with which Mr. D— responded to William's daily inquiry for the child. It was a fiery ordeal for the parents as they saw each little life threatened with dismissal; but after long and severe suffering they all rallied through it, and the worst features of their complaint then seized upon Mr. D— himself, worn as he was with long nights of watching in almost hopeless anxiety. But he also recovered, and with his whole family was ordered off to spend the winter in a milder climate.

William Taylor had been a daily inquirer at the house, frequently apologizing for giving the trouble of answering him, but always receiving a kind assurance from the servants that they were glad to see him, for he was often mentioned by Master Archy in his illness. So it was not wonderful that when the carriage was at the door to convey the family away, the coachman's assistance was gently set aside, and the kind hands of William Taylor lifted his little friend into it.

"I'm getting well, I'm coming to see you again," whispered the pale child, smiling in William's face; "you'll show me the engine again, won't you?"

Then came Mr. D— himself, so reduced, so altered, that William could scarcely conceal his feeling at the sight; and the master rested his hand on the workman's strong arm to help him to his seat, and then drove away in search of health and strength.

In the mean time alterations had been making progress at the small office in the work-yard; and on Saturday afternoon a notice appeared outside the door—"Wages paid here; dismiss at four o'clock."

The foreman stood there to observe the effect upon the men, who chiefly read and passed on with a triumphant smile. But there was only humble thankfulness on Taylor's countenance. He knew the value of the boon, and rejoiced in the triumph of principle over covetousness and indifference. It was a proof, too, that a working man's cause may command attention when stated with straightforward earnestness and common sense; while threats and violence only provoke opposition, and widen the estrangement of those who should support, encourage, and help one another.

"Three cheers for William Taylor," shouted one of the men; "he has done us a good turn, and we shan't forget it."

"And as for the Red Lion, I don't know but what I shall go in once more just to drink his health," said another, slily.

"Take care you don't injure your own by it, Barnes," said William, nodding to him as he passed on.

"He's a right brave chap, that," said Barnes; "I wish I had got half his notions."

"You can get them where he got them if you've a mind, I dare say," said Freeman; "I'm looking after them myself."

"Why, where?"

"Just out of his Bible, and nowhere else. It's an honest old Book that never flatters one, you know. Bad is bad, and no mistake; and good is good of the right sort. We'll all find our pictures there if we look for them."

Three months passed away, and then Mr. D— reappeared among his men with a step as firm and a mien as erect as ever. They had learned when to expect him; and as soon as he entered the yard they gathered round to greet him with a hearty British welcome, thanking him for conceding their wishes, and assuring him that if work needed finishing after the hour appointed for dismissal, they would willingly stay and do it, rather than allow him to be a loser by his kindness.

Mr. D— turned to thank them, but his heart was full; he was surprised, and for the moment overpowered, and instead of the word he would have spoken, he held out his hand, which every man in the group pressed forward to grasp with genuine pleasure, and then turned off to their work with a feeling that would, if need be, risk life and limb to serve him.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRUGGLE AND VICTORY.

THERE are two classes of character among working people; one, the prudent, who strive to keep out of difficulties; and the other, who sink under them, with a miserable idea that they were "born to bad luck," and once down, it is labour in vain to try to rise above them again. Left to their idle fatalism they fall lower and lower, until their sad history often ends in workhouses, jails, or penal servitude. Happy are those to whom some whisper comes that bad may be made better instead of worse, and to whom a hand is stretched out to help as an earnest of its truth. So God deals with fallen sinners, and so should his redeemed deal with their fallen neighbours.

It is very pleasant to witness thrift and industry, and to commend them accordingly; but it is perhaps more pleasant still to witness the upward struggle, the tear of penitence that gladdens angels, the successful effort that shakes off the stupor of despair. In this hopeful stage was poor Martha Freeman's experience, as she tapped one Saturday afternoon at Mrs. Taylor's door.

"May I come in a minute?" said she. "I'm so glad you are at home, and Mr. Taylor not here just now."

"Oh, yes, pray come in," said Susan, cheerfully, and setting a chair for her visitor, who looked very

worn and tired. "You won't mind me going on with my work, I'm sure." Susan was running a string into a clean blind for the clean window.

"Please don't let me hinder you;—but, dear, dear, what a nice smell of something cooking!"

"It isn't very nice at this time of day, I think," said Susan, smiling; "but it's our dinner getting ready for to-morrow."

"It's all quite true what Freeman says," ejaculated Martha, looking round with a sigh; "our room is never a bit like yours. I used to say no place could be decent with a drunken husband; but Freeman is sober now, and we don't seem much better yet."

"Oh, but you will be by and by. Don't be cast down, Mrs. Freeman: step by step, you know, brings us up the hill at last."

"I've made up my mind to go marketing no more on Sunday," said Martha; "but I've not been used to get things ready the day before, like you; and now that I've got the money in good time, I came to ask you, Mrs. Taylor, how I'd best do. Might I know what's cooking there for your dinner to-morrow?"

"To be sure," said Susan, "just come and look;" and she lifted the lid of the steaming pan: "it's a beef stew, which is both very good and very economical, and makes us a good many dinners, if done carefully. See, here are the bones, they stewed all yesterday afternoon;" and she took a plate of perfectly whitened bones from the cupboard.

"Dear me, did they come as clean as that?"

"Not quite; but this is what I got off them at the last, and with a little of the liquor put to the bits nicely seasoned, and a small bit of bacon chopped

among them, it is something for my husband's supper or breakfast, you see;" and Martha looked admiringly upon a gelatinous mass formed in the bottom of a basin, which Susan turned over into a plate and begged her to taste.

"It's beautiful," said Martha; "it's just like a dish that used to go on the breakfast table where I lived housemaid. Why, Mrs. Taylor, your husband must live like a gentleman if you do things for him like this."

"Why should he not?" said Susan, smiling; "he wants his meals just as much; and if a little handy-work, and a little pains-taking will make things look nice as well as wholesome with no extra expense, why shouldn't it be done for one's husband as well as for one's master. William doesn't encourage any extravagance, I assure you; but he knows I like to make everything as nice as I can for him, out of what we can afford to buy."

"Ah, I dare say you lived cook somewhere and learned how."

"No, I was a nursemaid when I was in service; but I learned a little of anything useful whenever I could, and it's come in very well for me since. The thing is, I think, in keeping one's home comfortable, to do everything in the very best way we can, and never let untidy makeshift ways get the upper hand, for they're much harder to shake off than nice clean ways are to begin with."

Mrs. Freeman knew this very well; but she said, "It's very hard to do things nice though when you're in a hurry."

"There's a text that keeps me up to it," said

Susan, modestly, "if I may just say it to you, Mrs. Freeman: I'm sure you'll think it ought, since our Lord provided it for just such as you and me, knowing our difficulties and temptations: 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.' You know we couldn't be untidy and slovenly in the name of the Lord, could we? nor 'give thanks' to him for things that we didn't strive to use the very best way in our power."

"Well, I'm sure it seems there's nothing like the Bible for keeping people right. Perhaps if I'd minded it before I shouldn't have been as I am now; but the truth is, Mrs. Taylor, Freeman has set his heart upon me going to church with him to-morrow morning; and though I said I'd rather wait till we get better off, and things comfortable about us again, he said it was no use waiting, we must begin to make things better at once, and at the right end too, which he says is to go and hear the Lord's message in his own gospel, on his own day, and show him we want to be under his blessing; and I can't put him off it, though I told him I wasn't fit to go as a respectable woman ought to go."

"Oh, don't try to put him off it," said Susan, entreatingly; "go any way; never mind the outside; for 'the Lord looketh upon the heart,' you know."

"And that's a deal shabbier than my gown, if I dared but look into it. So you see I can't stop at home to cook anything for dinner, and I want us to have a bit of meat done nice; for we've only had potatoes these two days past, because we want our money to get things out of pawn as soon as ever we can."

"There's no time for a stew like this now," said Susan, thoughtfully, "for the real good of it consists in its being properly done." Then after a minute she added, "I dare say you've got something to do yet, so if you just get a bit of meat as you go home, and if you won't think it officious of me, Mrs. Freeman, I shall be very glad to come and help you for half an hour by-and-by; and when you've washed the children and got them to bed, we can soon think of something for their dinner to-morrow when all the rest is done."

Washed the children! Mrs. Freeman had no regular time for washing children, and she looked somewhat confounded at this new item in the list of duties. That it would be well to consider it, however, she was very sure, for not an hour ago she had denounced two or three of them as "the dirtiest grubs that ever lived."

"I'm sure I'll be very much obliged to you," said the poor woman gratefully; "for I just feel as if I should give up trying to do right because everything is wrong; and we are so down in the world now, it seems as if it wasn't worth while to struggle against it;" and the tears sprang to her eyes.

"Oh, yes, indeed it is, for your husband's sake, who is likely to be kinder and better to you than ever he was; for your dear children's sake, who are old enough to profit by your example; for your own sake, Mrs. Freeman, for God loves you, and has put it into your heart to wish to do right. Don't trouble about to-morrow, but let it be a happy day for you all."

"You are very kind," said Martha. "I will try,

yes, I will; and you'll show me your way to make up something when you come." And away she went with a lighter heart: somebody would put a hand to her burden to save her from being crushed under it. Oh, precious sympathy! the kindness of a queen with wealth at her disposal could not have done for Martha the true effectual benefit which Susan conferred, when she offered her sisterly hand to share the actual drudgery of redeeming her neglected home.

A bright thought had struck Susan; and when William came home and she told him what had occurred, he willingly agreed to it. So, after the little one was in bed, leaving Robert and Milly to entertain their father, she set off, after her own not very light day's work, to assist her poor neighbour over the difficulties of preparing for a new manner of Sunday life.

She carried with her a large covered jar, and peeping in at the door to see that nobody was in the way, she found Mrs. Freeman washing one of the children by the fireside; and much the little creature seemed to enjoy its bath.

"All the others are done," said Mrs. Freeman, "except Maggy and Johnny, who are gone with father to get each a pair of shoes, instead of my best gown out of pawn. I couldn't let the poor things go barefoot on Sunday any more; and now they can go to church."

"That will be very nice; but you don't give up going yourself, Mrs. Freeman, I hope," said Susan, anxiously.

"No; but I minded what you said about the Lord looking on the heart, and I said to myself, 'Why

should I mind about my gown if I couldn't have a better just yet? so down with your foolish pride, Martha Freeman;' and it's almost gone. My old cotton gown will be clean, I've taken care of that: see, it's all ready for ironing there."

"And I've brought you my large merino mantle, Mrs. Freeman, if you'll please to wear it till you get your own things again: it can't serve a better purpose. Don't speak of it; you're very, very welcome: I'm sure there are good times in store for you yet. Now may I put in an iron, and do the gown while you get the water away, and the hearth swept up?"

"Thank you; but the dinner, you know; I would rather you tell me about that. I got a few bits of meat as I came along, but they're only a shabby dinner after all, except I can cook them your way."

"Well, William and I want you to do us the kindness to accept half of our stew for to-morrow, Mrs. Freeman; and I think it will serve you all if you do a few potatoes to eat with it."

The poor woman was overwhelmed with amazement. Why, how could they afford such a present? Not often certainly; but both the generous donors would rather have gone without any dinner at all than suffer Freeman's wish to be disappointed on the morrow, or his poor anxious wife to be overcome by her many difficulties just when she was trying to meet them in a right spirit. What a burden was removed! All the family would be fed comfortably; and before Sunday came round again, Martha would be better prepared with provision for

it. Herrings and bits of bacon, however good in their way, would no longer be the Sunday resource for Saturday's poverty or mismanagement; and the neighbouring shops would miss one customer from the graceless throng who jostled one another at the counter or stall, in haste, covetousness, or dishonesty.

Susan having ironed the gown, and done sundry little kindnesses besides, and seeing the room neater and nicer than it had been for many a week, had scarcely escaped from Mrs. Freeman's earnest thanks, when the father, and the two children in a perfect ecstasy over new shoes, came in. There was a little more washing to be done then, after which Martha was able to sit down and rest; and her husband, looking round with an approving smile, said it was a blessing to feel happier at "home" than ever he had felt at the Red Lion in all his life.

Sunday morning at half-past six o'clock found Martha stirring; it was a great effort, which only those who have conquered self-indulgence in the particular snare of dozing away the early hours of the sabbath morning can appreciate: all honour to those who have been thus victorious. But Martha wanted things comfortable before her husband got up; and moreover, she wanted the help of her eldest girl in making them so.

"Maggy, dear Maggy, get up," she whispered into a little closet that just held the bed of three of the children. "Come and help mother, Maggy, won't you, this morning?"

"What is it, mother?" said the child, rubbing her sleepy eyes.

"It's Sunday, dear, and we're going to church to-day, you know; and I want to be all in time."

"Oh, yes, and I've got new shoes; I'll be down stairs in no time, mother."

Poor Maggy had very nearly fallen asleep again notwithstanding the new shoes; but another gentle call, and she jumped up. The children were dressed, the fire lighted, and breakfast ready, when Freeman came down stairs. The sight of things there made him turn round and scramble back again quicker than he came; for how could he go and sit down with unwashed hands, uncombed hair, unshaven, and but half dressed, among those clean smiling faces?

Martha had not forgotten to set him a basin of water, and the best towel she had, on the old drawers that served for a dressing table, so there was no excuse; and as soon as he could he appeared again in another fashion before his assembled family. Now he could look as cheerful as any of them; he could hold the newly bought Bible and read a few verses, and clasp a pair of clean hands, in a short earnest prayer for clean hearts and right spirits to be bestowed on himself and the kneeling group around him.

And brave, victorious Martha went to church in her old cotton gown, covered nicely though it was with Susan's mantle, and a shabby old bonnet which had neither cap within nor ribbons without, but a pair of washed strings to hold it on, which she wisely thought better than dirty streamers; but there was a clean, bright face inside it, and a sense of peaceful self-respect better than all the finery of a milliner's show-room.

May God's blessing meet thee, sister, and all like thee who, triumphant in his strength, thus struggle upward and onward over pride, vanity, idleness, and the thousand hindrances that seem to stand like "lions in the way."

CHAPTER XVII.

SYMPATHY AND HELP.

"WELL, to be sure, what can she want here, I wonder?" exclaimed Mrs. Barnes, involuntarily putting her hands to her head to feel that her cap was there, and to tuck up her hair under it; then dashing some straggling things, unsightly to behold except in their right places, into an inner room, she went forward to admit the lady who stood at her door. There was no appearance of tracts to denote a district visitor: the lady was pleasant looking, and very simply dressed; and much Mrs. Barnes wondered what brought her there, as she offered a chair, and, standing before her, waited to be addressed.

"Won't you sit down also?" said the lady, who, lady though she was, seemed embarrassed and uncomfortable, and nervous. "I have only called to become acquainted with you. Your husband works for mine, and so I thought we ought to feel a little interest in each other."

Mrs. Barnes was quite amazed. Then this must be Mrs. D—; and what in the world made her come now, she that had never darkened the door of one of the work-people before?

Ah, if Mrs. Barnes could have known what made her come now, she must have looked back a little while to the sick house, where precious children and a beloved husband had lingered between life and

death; where prayer had been offered in agony of heart, and answered in pitying love; where the affectionate interest of the Christian workman had been spoken of with surprise and pleasure; and where the reception given to a restored master had not been without its influence on the heart of the gratified mistress. How could she testify her gratitude to God and them better than by giving up a little of that personal ease and leisure to which the labour of their hands contributed, that she might minister to the well-being of their families, and at least acknowledge, as opportunity might permit, their claims on her sympathy and notice? This it was brought Mrs. D—, in the first warmth of her gratitude, to search out among back streets and courts and lanes the dwellings of her husband's workmen. She was new and strange to the work; and, as only God could know the feelings which filled her heart, it was not surprising that the people on whom she called failed to respond encouragingly, and rather stared and wondered in vulgar silence than seemed disposed to adopt her as a friend on the spot.

Mrs. Barnes managed to mutter that she was much obliged, was very glad to see my lady, hoped the family were quite strong again; to all of which Mrs. D— replied kindly, and then tried to lead her to speak of her own family, their prospects and occupations. Poverty evidently was here, and Mrs. D— knew the cause; but she soon knew too that poor Mrs. Barnes was a grumbling slave, needing very much that some gentle voice should breathe sounds of peace and love over the inharmonious feelings that were hardening her heart against God and man.

There was danger that if she succeeded in winning this poor woman's confidence, her tongue would burst all barriers, and an eloquent flood of complaints and wrongs would overwhelm the hearer, and crush any latent hope of rendering service in her unhappy circumstances.

But just then four or five children came rushing into the house, fresh primed from some scene of dirt and mischief, and quite disconcerted their mother, who would not for anything that their introduction to a new patroness should have occurred in this rude uproarious style. In vain she commanded silence, threatened, scolded, and drove them out again; they were quite resolved to share the novelty of the lady's company, and pushed, scrambled, and quarrelled at the door until no other voice could be heard; and Mrs. D— was glad to beat a retreat, promising to call again some time when Mrs. Barnes was "not so busy."

"Bless her, when does she suppose that is to be?" said Mrs. Barnes to herself—"just like them though; they've got their leisure, and forget that such as I have none; but she'll see how that is, come when she may."

Mrs. D— had not found either Mrs. Freeman's improving family, or Mrs. Taylor's neat though humble dwelling; and, weary and dispirited, she paid a visit on the way home to the valued friend who had encouraged her to make the effort just commenced.

"I am afraid, dear Miss L—," said she, "I shall do no good after all. I don't know what to say to those I find living in wilful neglect of the

common decency and comfort of home: it will never do to begin with finding fault."

"Certainly not," said Miss L—: "have you found nothing to commend?"

"Very little indeed. I have seen dirty rooms, dirty children, slovenly women, until my heart aches to think what specimens of our sex are the mothers of the rising generation. The daughters will be a degree worse; and fathers, husbands, and brothers must seek elsewhere the companionship and comfort denied them at home. What can we do to help it?"

"Only be more earnest, prayerful, and persevering in what we are doing, I believe," said Miss L—: "we cannot go and clean their houses; but we may try to be more zealous in telling them of Him who cleanseth the heart, and trust that, in time, acquaintance with his purity and experience of his love may bear among its fruits the earthly proprieties of a Christian home."

"It requires very great determination and self-denial to stay many minutes in some of their houses," said Mrs. D—.

"I know it does; but we can exercise that self-denial for Christ's sake, remembering what this world must have been to him, as he moved about among its polluted population with the refinement and delicacy of his perfect senses and holy affections. Ours are but fallen senses, offended by fallen fellow-sinners and their ways. Think of the difference, my dear friend, while you try to tread in his steps. Indeed I think you should draw, from what you have seen to-day, fresh incentives to exert your influence in correcting what you deplore."

"I believe you are right. I must not give up; but I wish I could feel less annoyance, and more pleasure in trying."

"May I say a word or two for, at least, some of our poor sisters?" said Miss L—. "Doubtless, many of them set out in life with pleasant thoughts of how things were to be with them, and good intentions to do their duty well. Perhaps they were soon disappointed and undeceived, and found they had rested their earthly happiness on some broken reed. Knowing no higher nor better resting-place, they droop in spirit and grow discontented: poverty threatens; a young family occupies time, and fills the heart with care; and appliances to which they have been accustomed are sacrificed to fill hungry mouths, and keep a shelter overhead. Perhaps sickness depresses; and there is no energy left to rise out of the untidiness or the confusion in which they have become unintentionally involved. This frets the temper; temper spoils the countenance; and the once happy light-hearted girl, who was bright as a May-day, shrinks and shrivels into crabbed, thriftless, premature age; her children are a trouble; her worst characteristics overpower her better ones; she envies those who she supposes are better off, and considers her lot the hardest in creation. Poverty, sickness, and disappointment, unaccompanied by recognition of the will of God and faith in his promises, are miserable enemies to domestic life, and are too often thought sufficient excuse for just what you have seen to-day. When I look on such a wreck, I try to trace back what she once was, and give her credit for at least having

wished to do well. But think what it must be to lose all that made life seem pleasant, and to have nothing in prospect beyond it. There is no lever, as it were, to lift up the deadly weight that has fallen over the spirit; and a careless, hopeless manner of what they call 'putting on' from day to day serves their daily need."

"But, dear Miss L—, granting all this, surely they might use the little effort that would preserve cleanliness, if not order and industry."

"You forget that cleanliness requires energy, regularity, personal exertion; but the spring of all is gone."

"Then, doubtless, our best opportunity is the moment when the heart feels the shadow of the first approaching sorrow, that we may try to forestall its influence, and point to the bow of promise on the passing cloud."

"And is it not worth ninety-nine disappointments if we meet with that opportunity in the hundredth attempt? I would not give up one case without being fairly driven from the field; but I admit that if we were in time to catch the first occasion, it might be a blessed moment to the tried one. If the first hard thought were crushed, the first ill-humour subdued, the first reproach checked, the first rent repaired, the first child well trained, the first hours well employed, what different scenes might gladden the hearts and homes of all!"

"And may we not add, that the first day of the week well spent, the first thought of the morning given to God in praise and prayer, would so maintain the inner life that the external habits could not go very wrong?"

"Most assuredly. It is useless to attack the branches of the weed: we had better lay the axe to the root, and sow the good seed plentifully. Sin needs the sword of the Spirit, to cut its way to the heart: and we need not look for a harvest if we have not sown the seed. Let us not be 'weary in well doing; for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not.' Let us bear with dirt and incivility and discomfort for one short hour, in hope to carry into the midst of them a blessing that endureth for ever. We may regret what we see, without affectation; but we cannot shrink from efforts to remedy it, without sin."

Mrs. D— persevered, and another day brought before her the cheerful face and practical faith of Susan Taylor, who soon became a valuable assistant in the cause. Through her poor Martha Freeman's upward struggle gained help and sympathy, and Mrs. Barnes was encouraged with hope of brighter days. She said that her husband yielded to bad companions who induced him to drink, when, if he could have broken from them, his wishes were in favour of sobriety.

Mrs. D— found a remedy; and Barnes was favoured with an opportunity to begin a fresh career in a new scene and among new associates. Mr. D— had become the proprietor of a colliery in a neighbouring county, and was sending men to assist in erecting new machinery. He had his own reasons for keeping William Taylor where he was, but, apparently without premeditation, asked him one day if he thought any hands on the premises might be trusted. As he expected, Freeman was immediately named, as being now a sober Christian man; and William

then suggested that, if Barnes were transferred at the same time, it might be good for himself and his family.

"My wife and yours have settled that point already," said Mr. D—, smiling; "and now I want you to go over with them for a week or two only, just to see that they settle in decent cottages with all needful comfort about them, and not too near the public house. I shall take care that they understand you go as a fellow-workman, while I shall feel that you go as my representative to fulfil a duty to my men. They both regard you as their best earthly friend, and will take advice from you which might seem intrusive from me. I heartily wish, Taylor, that these men's souls may help to brighten your heavenly crown."

Bright rose the glow of honest pleasure to the cheek of the Christian workman under this mark of his employer's confidence, while a little voice whispered softly at his heart: "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, be the praise; but unto thee be the praise, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake."

CHAPTER XVIII.

COTTAGE COOKERY.

COOKING is not a very inviting subject, but it is one which very intimately concerns the real comfort of real life; and the useful more than the entertaining being the object of these pages, Mrs. Taylor's good management in that department of her duty, and the economical hints she could impart to her less practical neighbour, must not be omitted in this little record of her usefulness.

It was a pleasant time when the first wife of the human race, in the instinctive fulfilment of her natural duty, needed but to look round among the luxuriant productions of her beautiful neighbourhood to find the banquet ready to her hand wherewith to regale her husband after his healthful industry. But such elegant ease is not for her daughters. She presumed upon indulgence, and made the fatal experiment which laid upon herself and them a burden of toil as well as sin; and the provision of daily food for the hungry husband and children is one of the household cares bequeathed to wives and mothers.

Whether this one was lessened or increased by the permission bestowed on Noah and his posterity that "every moving thing that liveth" might be meat for them, may not perhaps be worth inquiry; certain it is that animal food, especially in a climate like ours, is considered essential to the health and vigour of the

human frame, and the eager question in humble life is not "How shall we cook it?" but rather "How shall we get it?"

When, however, in the kind providence of God, the meat is obtained, it is painful to see thankfulness marred, and temper irritated, by the ignorance or clumsiness with which the cook has contrived to spoil it: the good appetite acquired by honest industry without, should be met by the good provision of the frugal manager within. To obtain the most nourishment out of the smallest quantity, is the wisdom and duty of the working man's wife; and abundance of what is spoiled and unwholesome can never compensate for the absence of genuine nutriment. Messes "warmed up" three or four times over, meat burned before the fire, or boiled at a furious rate over it (as if fire, water, and cook were all too late and must make it up in sound and hurry), may look like a meal, and fill a hungry stomach, but they will not contribute to the vital energy, nor help to maintain the purity of that blood on which bodily health depends. It would be well if there were a little voice in every piece of meat to say, "Now here I am; and it depends on you, good wife, whether I merely fill a gap or diffuse my influence for good through that manly frame, and minister to the current of life which flows through the heart that loves you dearly."

"You see, Mrs. Taylor," said Martha Freeman, as she anxiously inquired about "that beautiful Sunday dinner that was enjoyed so much," "meat is so expensive for us, while we want so many things before we get comfortable again."

"Yes, but little and good, you know, goes furthest

after all; and, if I may take the liberty to say it, Mrs. Freeman, I think the bits of things people often buy to make up a short meal, that hasn't much real good in it after all, may cost more than a wholesome piece of meat to begin with. I don't hold with much salt meat any way, for cheap bacon is seldom good, and it's better to avoid things that make one thirsty if we can."

"Dear me!" cried Martha, "I never thought of that; and very likely many a pint of ale has gone after the salt bacon and the red herrings that we've had to our potatoes."

"I always scald bacon, to take away some of the salt, before I fry it," said Susan; "and when eggs are cheap, we sometimes have them to it. But I think the cheapest dinners we have are made out of a shin of beef that costs about one and ninepence or two shillings.

"But the goodness comes with the stewing. I cut the meat off, and stew the bones in water when I don't want the fire for anything else, taking care to keep the cover of the pan quite tight down, that it shouldn't waste away in steam; and it stews quietly for five or six hours—that is, only the bones, chopped through in several places. Then I pour the stew into an earthen pan to cool, and a cake of fat forms on the top that makes a bit of paste for the pie."

"For the pie? I thought it was all soup."

"A few of the nicest bits of meat mixed with potatoes make a beautiful pie, if you choose. The rest I put into the soup, with meal, or barley, or rice, some pot-herbs, a little pepper and salt, and let all simmer gently together for four or five hours more,

and this will make two or even three good dinners for us all. I allow three pints of water to every pound of stew, and, if properly cooked, I know whoever dines on that has what helps to keep him strong and hearty."

"Why, then, what with the soup, and the pie, and that nice jelly stuff you showed me the other day, made of the pickings of the bones, you have provision for four or five days."

"Yes, with vegetables, and rice or meal; and more too, sometimes, because I don't always give the children what I think good for their father: and then I like a change between. When fresh herrings come in, I do them all sorts of ways, boiled, fried, potted, pickled, stewed, for they're very cheap, and it's nothing but my own trouble, you know. They are wholesome when fresh, and are a nice change for William's supper, too. Sometimes we have a neck of mutton. The best part is done over potatoes at the bakehouse; the rest makes another dinner of meat, and perhaps two dinners of soup; one day with herbs and meal, another day with split-peas. Pea-soup, you know, is very good when it's nicely made. I always take care to have herbs and vegetables as fresh as possible, greens especially, for they get unwholesome when they have been long cut."

"Well, I wish I could remember all this, for it shows how you must have been used to do things, Mrs. Taylor. You make nothing of the trouble."

"Indeed it's very little trouble, if I keep my things in place, clean and ready to use when they're wanted. It is a good plan to have a little rice, meal, barley, and such things in the cupboard. I buy a little

whenever I can afford it, so that I haven't to run away from my work to get them at the shop just as I want to use them. That is always a sad loss of time, besides the chance of not getting time to cook them properly."

"You think a deal about that, I see," said Mrs. Freeman, thoughtfully. "Why, I've often given my poor children cold potatoes when I might have warmed them up, and only a crust of bread when if I'd done right they might have had a dish of comfortable soup. To tell the truth, I hated the trouble, and thought it didn't matter if it only put on through the day and their stomachs were filled with something."

"But you think differently now, I'm sure," said Susan, encouragingly. "You see, if our bodies are to be kept alive by eating and drinking, it's our duty to do it the best way we can, and take proper care of our health when we've got it. Not long since I thought I would do without any meat at all, and as little of everything so that I didn't actually starve, and I made excuses to William about it; but I found that, if I would work and be cheerful and industrious, it was of no use to stint myself of enough food, else there would soon be a doctor's bill to pay, besides the inconvenience to my family of being without my usual strength to do comfortably for them. It isn't economical to be ill if I can help it, I said to myself, and my husband likes best what we share with him. We are very careful, too, about the children and what they eat, and when and how."

"Well to be sure, I never thought to look after anything but setting it for them," said Martha. "Might I ask you what you give them for breakfast and supper?"

"Porridge for breakfast, mostly, very well boiled, and sweet milk to it, and a slice of bread afterwards if they like."

"My children don't like it," said Martha; "sometimes it burns, and then they waste it."

"But it won't burn if it's attended to; and it should be, for though very wholesome and nice made carefully, it is enough to make one turn from it when it's burnt, or only half boiled. I always boil it until it would turn out like a soft cake; and, either with cold milk or a spoonful of treacle, our children like it very much. They have a slice of bread and a cup of sweet milk for supper; or sometimes I boil the bread for them on cold winter evenings. They are never allowed to buy any of those nasty cheap sweets that so many children get sick with; but their halfpennies and pennies, when they have any, are kept for a better purpose."

"That's a good thought," said Martha. "I'll try to make my children do differently about that."

"You see, Mrs. Freeman, one of the things that it's right to look forward about is taking proper care of our children, body and soul. If we don't feed them the best way we can while they are growing, we've no business to be astonished if they get puny and rickety, and grow up fit for nothing but to dawdle about and be a trouble to their friends. I would rather patch their clothes till you couldn't tell what they were made of at first, than not give them wholesome food, though it's ever so plain, that they may be strong and healthy men and women by-and-by. And they should have their food, too, at proper times, and in a proper manner. Why, I've seen poor little

things turned out to the door-step to eat their bread or porridge just as you'd give it to a dog or a cat, and no more thought about the God who gave it than if they lived in a heathen land."

Poor Martha's colour rose, and her eyes fell before Susan's earnest remark. Full well she knew this was true of the chief of the families in the street where she lived, and had been her own habit up to the present time.

"If I had only a crust of bread and a drink of water to give them," continued Susan, "they should come to it like Christians, and thank Him who can make it keep life and health within them, if it does not please him to give anything else to do it. Poverty is very trying, I know; but if we make it an excuse for heathenish ways, and think it isn't worth while to sit down and thank God for our meal because it isn't as nice and plentiful as we should like, we are making it worse to bear, and teaching a bad lesson into the bargain."

"I suppose you don't give your children treats of nicer things when you can afford it," said Martha, "since you think only of what is wholesome."

"I can't bear eating and drinking treats," said Susan. "Children are naturally little gluttons, and if you help them to think about it, you are encouraging a fault. I would rather they should think it a treat to go a walk with their father, or pick wild flowers in the fields, or do something kind and useful for somebody. But if you mean, do I ever give them something they cannot often have, I'm afraid I do, though only what is wholesome. A rice pudding, for instance, an apple dumpling, stewed rhubarb to their

bread, or even an orange when all such things are plentiful and cheap. I think God has given us everything in its season to use in moderation, and I would not have greedy eyes coveting tastes in secret of what I can give openly according to my means. I overheard little Robert one day, when a woman with a basket of oranges stopped near the door, and she asked him if he would like to buy one, 'No, thank you,' he said, 'mother can't afford it yet; when she can she'll give us some.' I felt then that my boy's confidence in my love and prudence was worth all I had ever done for him since he was born."

"Didn't you run and get him one that minute?" asked Martha.

"No," said Susan, smiling; "I waited till they came down to the price I thought right to give, and then they each had an orange more than once. There's no good in making a merit of duty in young or old. Let us set before ourselves and our children the blessed principle of doing right for Christ's sake; and though we know he honours them that honour him, we shall feel that, do the best we may compared with what we ought, we are unprofitable servants still."

CHAPTER XIX.

SHADY-LANE AND SUNNY-SIDE.

ABOUT six o'clock one summer evening a railway train stopped at —— station, and out of a third-class carriage sprang three working men, who began to scramble out as quickly as possible—two women and some eight or nine children, with baskets, bundles, and boxes of all shapes and sizes. All being safely landed, the men rushed to the luggage van, and another kind of load was less carefully turned out, consisting of sundry articles of furniture, which soon lay in a heap by the wayside. Then the guard held up his hand, the engine puffed, panted, and screamed, and in another moment was off, leaving the travellers and their property to find shelter in a strange land.

"Mother, mother, where is our new home?" began one of the little ones, keeping fast hold of his mother's gown.

"Hush, child, I don't know yet; be thankful we've all come safe," said the mother.

"We'll find a home presently," said one of the men, kindly patting the boy's head; "and you must make it a happy one by being very good to mother. See, I think this person is come to tell us where we're to go. Here, Freeman, Barnes," he continued, "you look after your families, and I'll see to the things there;" and William Taylor was met by a respectable looking

man, who said his cart was come to convey anything there might be to carry to the neighbouring village.

"Your overlooker has got a poor woman to take most of you in till you see what to do with yourselves, so we'll go straight to her house," said he; and smacking his whip, the little procession began to move on.

"Stop," he shouted again, "let the little ones ride if they like; lift them in, Ben—there, I'll drive now myself;" and Ben, very much to his own satisfaction, jumped down to change places with his father. He was a country lad, and delighted to talk with the men from town, from whom he thought he could glean a little useful information.

By-and-by farmer Bates turned into a narrow winding lane, overhung on one side by tall trees backed by masses of foliage; on the other side stood several cottages, some together, some detached. "Here we are," said he, drawing up to the door of one of the cottages; "now for some supper, little ones. This is Shady-lane, and here's Mrs. Brooks looking out for us."

A melancholy looking woman in black came forward to receive the party, and after counting heads she declared that she could only find room for the women and children; the men must seek lodging elsewhere. "I reckon they'll be like to go to the 'public,'" said she; "there's nobody about here has got room, I'm afraid."

"Never mind about me," said William Taylor, hastily, "if you can just think of my friends here; perhaps we might ask the favour at some place in the village."

Farmer Bates scratched his head, wiped his brow, and looked thoughtful for a moment; then clapping his hat down upon his head, "I have it," he cried: "we'll see what Dame Palmer can do. Come along with me, you," to Taylor; "and now give 'em some supper, Mrs. Brooks: I told my wife to send you a good can of new milk."

So while Freeman and Barnes unloaded, and put up their things in a shed, Taylor followed Mr. Bates to another cottage just beyond, where a rosy-faced pleasant looking woman was preparing the evening meal for her husband and son, who had lately come home from work. The farmer soon told his story, adding that as these men, none of them, liked staying at the "public," he meant to find room himself for two, if Mrs. Palmer could manage to accommodate the other.

John Palmer and his wife glanced quietly at the man who did not like staying at the "public." They had a spare bed; yes, he who used to sleep in it sleeps in a narrower bed now; it could soon be made up, and they could readily take Mr. Bates' word for the kind of guest he was introducing to them. So the matter was settled; and when the stranger ventured to speak for himself, he did so to such good purpose, that the honest couple decided he should seek no further for lodging as long as duty required his stay in the neighbourhood. On the other hand, William Taylor rejoiced to find in Dame Palmer a friend whom he hoped to interest in the improving characters of Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Barnes. Such a neighbour he thought would prove almost as valuable as his own good Susan, for a very short time sufficed

to show how her skill and presence made "home" what it should be to those she loved.

But a new acquaintance demands a suitable introduction; and, as the reader cannot see that comfortable cottage and its cheerful mistress, a few words must picture them to the imagination.

Shady-lane was a pleasant walk in the glare and heat of a summer's day, but at most other times it was damp and cheerless. No sunbeams ever penetrated those tall trees to shine on the front of the cottages; but, as Dame Palmer wisely observed, the cottages had two sides as well as everything else, and those who loved sunshine could find it at the back, where it was light and cheerful nearly all the day long. And as for the trees, they were beautiful to look at; and moreover what shut out the sun, shut out also the keen east wind, which could do no more mischief than scatter a few leaves about.

There was a small room in front which, if Mrs. Palmer had cared for "a parlour," might have made one; and when a lady, who knew and valued her as she deserved, made her a present of a Brussels carpet, just replaced by a new one, and a neighbour ventured to remark that of course she would put it into a parlour now, the good dame was seized with a merry little laugh at the idea. "What was the good," she said, "of a parlour to such as she? it was only a show place where nobody belonging to her would ever sit down as if it were home, and did for nothing but just for some stranger to shiver in awhile, because the rest of the house wasn't fit to be seen." So the carpet, in spite of neighbourly wonder as to whether the giver

had any idea of its fate, was laid down every afternoon before the kitchen fire. The money that might have furnished "a show place" was spent on substantial comforts for the kitchen; and the books that might have lain in dusty state upon a table were ranged on a shelf in the kitchen, as the mistress supposed they were printed to be read, and not merely to be looked at.

In short, there was no pretension about Mrs. Palmer. She was very thankful for the comforts with which her lot, she said, abounded, and made no struggle after appearances above her; in consequence, she never knew the pang of mortified pride, or the sting of envy which distract the minds and disturb the peace of so many thousands in all ranks of life.

But in her zeal for the useful, had Mrs. Palmer no taste at all for the ornamental? Bear witness a graceful fuchsia in the centre of the long window-sill, well sustained by a delicate dwarf rose on either side, a scarlet geranium and a musk plant. A venerable sampler in a black frame, with "the golden rule" worked in red, blue, and yellow, adorned the wall; and amidst more useful articles on the mantleshelf stood three conspicuous pieces of china, representing nymphs, swains, and peculiar looking trees. These had belonged to a much-loved grandmother, and Dame Palmer daily wiped the dust from the ancient relics which renewed recollections of her happy childhood.

There was an easy chair on one side of the fireplace for the good man; that is to say, no modern invention of springs and morocco, but high-backed oak,

with stout stuff cushions, several other oak chairs with cushions, too, polished tables, large and small, bright fire-irons, and the usual supply of pans and platters, all arranged in perfect order.

"Ah," suggests some housewife with four or five urchins trotting in and out of her untidy home, "there could have been no children to upset everything, and take up her time." Well, there were two daughters out at service, one son away in some foreign land, and another in the coal-pit with his father, and it is to be supposed they were children once: but everything in that kitchen is just as they remember it all their lives, save the Brussels' carpet, and the renewed covers to the cushions; and it was no bad sign that their great-grandmother's china and sampler had survived the natural propensities of young organs of destructiveness.

The back door, which opened at once from this pleasant kitchen, had a rustic porch with a seat on either side, commanding a foreground consisting of a neatly kept garden, with a box-edged walk leading to a brook which came dancing down from a neighbouring hill, bearing a message of refreshment to all who could look and listen. Beyond lay meadow lands, dotted with cattle, a wooden bridge, white houses peeping out from between clumps of trees, stretching away to a range of undulating hills.

But pleasant as was John Palmer's cottage in itself, what would it have been to him without that dear bright-faced "old woman," as he called her, whose presence was the charm of his home?

"Old woman" it may be supposed was a pet term for a valued wife; for whatever Mrs. Palmer's age

might be, very small trace of it was to be seen in the plump rosy cheek, the clear bright eye, and dimpling mouth of the active dame. Her hair was rather gray, to be sure, but as she indignantly eschewed black caps, there was no contrast to strike the eye between the smooth braid and the snowy border tied under her chin.

"Perhaps," suggests some faded matron, with a sigh, "perhaps she had passed happily through life without the cares and sorrows that make some of us prematurely old."

Nay, then, come to the village churchyard, and see there beneath the yew-trees' shade two little graves; one headstone unites the two, bearing the names of "Ellen and John Palmer," one aged three, the other seven years; and close at their feet a longer grave, and another stone marked "Robert Palmer, aged nineteen," who the inscription tells us "fell asleep in Jesus." Say, mother, had not she who parted from these fair young buds, and that more fully blown flower, known sorrow, tears, and heart-wrenchings? And again, another youth for aught she knew might be dead also; he had been away three years, and no tidings had comforted the loving hearts at home. Those on whose graves she drops the flowers on Sundays, she knows where they are—safe at home for ever; but of the wanderer she knows not anything, except that she prays for him, and prays to a prayer-hearing God.

Verily "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and it is a secret that preserves very often health, and always peace, to them that treasure it. Trust in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy-

ment of his pardoning love, and hope of his eternal presence, bare Mrs. Palmer up in all her sorrows; and, joined with obedience to that much neglected precept, "Be content with such things as ye have," adorned her fair face with the sweet expression which gave pleasure to all who looked upon it.

It was a remarkable fact that many a trouble brought in at the door from Shady-lane, by vexed or anxious neighbours, lost its keenness or bitterness on the sunny side of Dame Palmer's house, where sympathy was ready to soothe, advices to guide, and wise judgment brought to bear upon the case; so that it often assumed quite a different aspect, and either became possible to endure, or disappeared altogether under the calming influence of Christian truth and love.

"I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing," was the promise to the patriarch of old, and in this, as in everything else, "the children of faith" are sharers with "faithful Abraham." "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." And perhaps no characteristic of his family is more needed or more useful in humble life than this godlike grace. May every working man's wife who reads of Dame Palmer, or is favoured to know one like her, seek just such adorning as hers, and by-and-by be just such a "dear old woman."

CHAPTER XX.

ITS JOYS AND CHASTENINGS.

THE colliery district to which William Taylor and his companions were sent by their employer lay about half a mile beyond the wood that sheltered Shady-lane; and every morning a number of men bearing the complexion of the Anglo-Saxon race might be seen wending their way to work, and returning every evening black as a troop of savages, some dangling the empty cans which had contained their dinners, some carrying light branches for firewood, which, when useless for other purposes, were considered the labourers' perquisites. Happy the wife whose husband was thoughtful enough to come home thus loaded, and save her the unfeminine labour of getting it herself. When John Palmer and his son brought firewood, they took care also to chop it into pieces of a suitable size, and laid them neatly up in a corner of the garden handy for use.

Well did Dame Palmer know the firm step of her husband and the lighter one of her boy as they came round to the kitchen porch; and her smile of welcome was always ready as the two black faces popped in with a nod and a smile in return, and then disappeared to their dressing-room. Now, does any one laugh at the idea of a collier's dressing-room? It was a clever thought of the cleanly housewife, who, her husband said, "had no love for blackamoors except them that were born so," though she could better tolerate the

coal dust from below the ground than any manner of dust above it. "The dressing-room" was a small shed which had been made weather-proof and safe for the purpose, and furnished with great bowls of water, soap and towels; and there, a few minutes before they were wanted, were placed two suits of well-aired every-day clothes, by which means two clean, cheerful looking persons came forth to the home fireside, and their loving kiss left no black marks on the smiling lips that met them there.

William Taylor's company was no intrusion on a family glad to find in him a Christian after their own heart; and very thankful was he to sit down after his day's work was done, and talk with them of "the loving-kindness of the Lord," taking "sweet counsel together" over John Palmer's great family Bible. The youth, too, had taken a great fancy to him, and William thought he also was "not far from the kingdom of God." But he took care to make it very plain to the boy that "not far from" was not within it, and that the decided step must be taken at the foot of the cross of Christ. *There* is the most solemn view of "the sinfulness of sin;" *there* the highest manifestation of the Father's love to sinners; and there hung the Divine and human link by whom alone the Holy and the fallen can be reunited in happy fellowship.

"I always think," said Mrs. Palmer, one evening, "what a mercy it is to see them come home safe, and no accident happened in the pit."

"So it is, Nelly," said her husband; "but you see there's no place nor calling without one sort of danger or another. That Mrs. Brooks, where your people are stopping," he added, turning to Taylor, "lost her

husband a month ago on the railway. He used to say it was dangerous working in the pit: he'd be in the open air; and one day as he stepped out of the way of one train, another that he didn't see ran over him, and he never spoke again. It was said he was a little in liquor too; and, bad as it may be to die in a moment unawares like that, it's more awful to die unprepared."

"It is dangerous, though, in the pit, father," remarked Willy; "for you know one careless fellow might be the end of us all in no time."

"That's true, too, Will; but to hear the singing and laughing and swearing that sometimes ring through those black alleys, one wouldn't suppose there's any danger to body or soul among us."

"It's wonderful how the heart gets hardened by habit," said Taylor. "I thought when I was down with you in your pit this morning, what a solemn thing it must be to work where, any moment, every human being there might be sent into eternity; and I felt as if I must ask every man I saw how it fared with his immortal soul: but some laughed, some scoffed, and said that was the way people talked who weren't used to it, and that the chances were as good for them as for me."

"And how did you feel for yourself?" asked Willy, inquisitively.

"I felt," he replied, "as I dare say your father does, that 'without God in the world' there is no safety anywhere, and with him real danger is nowhere, not even in a coal-pit; for to them that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with true living faith, to be 'absent from the body' is to be 'present with the Lord.'"

"It is God's providence that directed my calling, Willy," said Palmer, "and I hope yours too, for you know I haven't forced you to take to it; though I do say when the will runs the way of an honest living, it's a good thing for a son to work by his father's side."

"And I always mind that mother's praying for us every day, and nothing can happen before God's time," said Willy, meeting the fond gaze of his mother's eyes, and feeling how happy it was to have such a mother. Happy mother to be loved and honoured by an obedient son, and happy home where Christian peace presides, and faith sees "all things working together for good!" And when that faith is sorely tried, it is good to remember that "though it be tried with fire," it is that it may "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Among the business with which William Taylor was charged was that of seeing to the settling of his two fellow-workmen and their families in comfortable homes. Everything was to be done to afford them a fair beginning in life once more, and it was with great satisfaction that Taylor found the minister of the parish likely to feel interest in his new parishioners. The children were entered at the schools; and the poor widow Brooks having decided to leave her cottage, it was taken at once in Mr. D—'s name, the families agreeing to live together until another became vacant, and relieve kind farmer Bates of his grateful lodgers. This was not the state of things Taylor was ordered to leave behind him; and while he was fearing he would be unable to execute his employer's benevolent plan, an event occurred which made but too many cottages available for the purpose.

Many a scene of mourning, lamentation, and woe has passed in colliery life: and though in that class, as in all others, the Lord God has believing followers, beloved children, yet it is too sadly true that the risk of human life, and the terrible warnings so often seen and heard, seem utterly powerless to check abounding iniquity, and promote thoughtfulness, temperance, and industry. Holiday-making prevails, to the inconvenience of business, and the detriment of family comfort and personal character; and the collier too often seems to think that he may indemnify himself for three or four days' hard and self-denying labour, by selfish and disreputable indulgence on his many voluntary holidays. The happiness of propping the door-post with a pipe in the mouth; talking and drinking in the ale-house, where the most influential opinions are those propounded by the man who can "stand treat" the longest; and playing at pitch and toss in the village street, are not just the kinds of indulgence likely to elevate the character of the middle-aged, or improve the principles of the young. Suddenly some accident occurs, and a whole district is startled into thought; the drunkard refrains a few days from his glass, the swearer checks the curse in his speech, the sabbath-breaker goes to church; but, the funerals over, the vacancies filled, all relapse again into old habits, as if there could be no more explosions, no more pit-floodings, no more treacherous machinery.

About two o'clock one afternoon a messenger in breathless haste dashed along Shady-lane; his gasped words struck dismay into every face he met, and in a few moments the lane was filled with distracted women and terrified children rushing towards the coal-pits.

An explosion had occurred, and brave men were hazarding their lives in hope to arrest some portion of the mischief. Several bodies were brought up in which life was not extinct, and among the first was poor Willy Palmer. His father with desperate efforts had saved him from suffocation, to be crushed with him near the shaft by a mass of falling coal.

There was a kind friend there to place the youth tenderly on his litter and send him home at once; and, commending him to the mercy of God, William Taylor went back to seek the more injured father. John Palmer was respected by all who knew him, and many an anxious kindly gaze was cast upon him as he lay dying on William's breast.

"Can you bear to be carried home?" whispered Taylor.

"I am going home—to Jesus," was the faint reply. "Tell her, 'absent from the body, present with the Lord:' we shall meet again there by and by."

In the meantime Mrs. Palmer, instead of flying along with her neighbours on the first hearing of the terrible alarm, turned, sick at heart, into her cottage again, to ask for strength proportioned to her need whatever it might prove to be. She strove to check the agony with which she saw her boy brought in, and her look of inquiry for her husband went to the hearts of his bearers. They hurried out again to make way for a surgeon, and fulfil some like errand to another bereaved home.

Willy's only cry was for his father while under the operator's hands, and his mother could not be spared to learn her husband's fate. Her thoughtful care was fully manifest in extremity like this; for while in some

of the houses not a scrap of old linen could be found, no warm water to be had, nothing in its place when wanted most, her rolls of clean rags were at everybody's service, her kettle was in hasty requisition, her bed was smooth and ready; and the kind surgeon, understanding her deep anxiety, and admiring her self-control, released her as soon as possible, telling her that he would try to watch the son while she went to seek tidings of the father.

Soon she too was amidst the scene of sorrowful excitement, where, in utter self-abandonment piteous to behold, widows and children were beside their dead. Hers was not the wild paroxysm of ungoverned passion; her deep, true love was chastened and sanctified by a still higher love, which, in this hour of anguish, bade her "trust and not be afraid." The heart that "is fixed, trusting in the Lord," seeks not to be "afraid of evil tidings" when they come, as come they must amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life.

As Mrs. Palmer sought her husband among the crowd, her eyes fell here on the drunkard, often warned, and cut down at last in his sin; there the swearer with his oaths suddenly arrested on his lip; here the indifferent and careless procrastinator, his good intentions at an end for ever; and there, in blessed peace, the God-fearing Christian, his sorrows and wants and toils all over, his spirit fled to "the rest that remaineth."

Freeman, one of the most active among the rescuers, saw the anxious face searching round, and kindly led Mrs. Palmer to the shed where William still supported his dying friend. Quietly and softly she took his place, thanking God in her heart that she had come

in time for the last solemn moment. It seemed as if the spirit had lingered below for her coming. A smile, a gentle pressure of her welcome hand, an effort to whisper, "Peace in Jesus," and the soul of the Christian collier passed to eternal glory, leaving dame Palmer "a widow indeed."

In due time the solemn duty was performed of committing "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and a funeral sermon was preached to an attentive congregation. No more trying task could devolve upon a faithful pastor than that of discriminating for the living without seeming to judge the dead. "One event" had happened "to the righteous and to the wicked, to the clean and to the unclean;" in one sense, "as" was "the good" so was "the sinner," "and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath." But with the gravedigger's spade the similitude ended. Sweet and precious consolation could be offered to those who sorrowed not without hope for the "blessed dead which died in the Lord;" even the grave had a sunny side for them, as they thought of "the spirits" before the throne of "just men made perfect." For the rest, the drawing aside of the curtain which veils their future will be all too soon, when the stupendous difference must be fully revealed between him that serveth the Lord and him that serveth him not. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FATHER'S CHAIR.

YOUNG William Palmer lay upon his couch by the kitchen window, through which came the soft air mingling around him the scent of roses and musk. A small round table was at his elbow, on which stood his own little Bible and his late father's large one, in which he liked to look for the texts often quoted by that dear father's lips, and out of which Dame Palmer had listened for so many years to the evening chapter, that it seemed to come out of it, somehow, more naturally than from any other.

Just by the couch sat William's cousin, Benjamin Bates, who had been sent the day after the funeral to see how he was going on; and Ben having cultivated a very small stock of feeling for any one but himself, felt stupid and awkward, not knowing just what to say next. There never had been much congeniality between the youths, and now there was less than ever. At last Ben hit upon an appropriate idea.

"You won't ever go to the pit any more I suppose, Will," said he.

"Yes, I will," instantly replied William; "that is, I mean, if—if it pleases God to let me."

"Oh," said Ben with a laugh, "you needn't mind speaking that way before me; aunt's not hearing you now, you know."

"No, but God hears me, and he knows best," said William, seriously.

"Well, if he cared about you, mayhap he wouldn't have let you get hurt so badly."

"It was to do me good, and it has done me good," answered William, warmly.

"You'll be telling me next it was good for poor uncle too, and he in the grave-yard," said Ben, half sneeringly.

"To be sure I shall. Why, do you think it isn't good to go almost in a few minutes straight to heaven to the Lord Jesus Christ? It is right good indeed for father, he's got the best of it all." And a bright smile played over Willy's face as his imagination attempted to picture the happiness in which he so evidently believed.

"Well," said Ben, "I know if I was you I'd never work in the pits any more; you're your own master now, you know."

"No, I'm not; I've given myself away."

"Given yourself away! what do you mean?" and Ben's eyes opened wide upon his cousin.

"Why, for one thing, if it pleased God to save my life, he's the best right to me, hasn't he? Then it says in the Bible, 'Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.' Do you know what was given for me, Ben?—'the precious blood of Christ;' 'therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his.' If God will let me do that, he can put me in the best place to do it you know, can't he?"

Ben did not know anything about it, and he felt impatient at it too. "You're growing dreadful good," said he after a pause.

"How are you growing, Ben, upwards or downwards, eh? Oh, Ben, be the servant of Jesus Christ, and he'll love you and take care of you for ever. No real harm ever happens to them he loves."

"I don't see as you've any right to tell me that, lying here with a broken arm, and lots of bruises besides, and all just when you were doing your duty, I suppose," exclaimed Ben, out of all patience.

Then William lost his patience too, and forgot "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," while warmly defending the right of his Lord to do what he pleased with him; and his raised voice and quick words brought his mother down stairs to see what was the matter.

"He's angry because I want him not to go working in the pits any more," said Ben, readily; so gently advising William not to excite himself, she went back again.

"Oh, Ben," said William, "indeed that's not the truth, but I am very sorry I spoke so hard and fast to you; I know Jesus wouldn't have done it. It hurts me to hear you talk that way about him, Ben. I hope you'll love him yourself some time, and then you'll know how it is. But, cousin, here—" and William dropped his voice to a whisper—"it isn't so much that I like the pits, but it's the best way for me to help mother; and I want that she shan't have to leave this cottage where she's lived so many, many years, if I can do anything to help it."

Ben insisted upon it he should try some other way if he were his own master, and rose to go. William took his cousin's hand. "Ben," he said, "you'll forgive me for what I'm going to say, won't you? Oh,

if you will but believe me, ever since dear father's death I've remembered such lots of faults and things I did that must often have made him sorry, and it almost drove me mad, till Mr. Taylor read how 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,' and how God can forgive even such as I, though I haven't forgiven myself for all that. So I want to remind you, Ben, to be good to your father and mother; you've got them both yet, Ben. Oh, if it was any use, I'd give half my life this minute to have father here once more, that I might be a good son to him for the other half. But I've got mother yet, and please God I'll do it to her."

The tears filled William's eyes, and Ben, with a hoarse attempt at "Good bye," snatched away his hand and left the cottage. His cousin's words grated against his selfish inclinations, and he tried to forget them.

William thought that, when able to work again, he might venture to ask for man's wages now, and turned over in his mind every possible and impossible way by which to keep the cottage for his mother; but he knew very well that she would go anywhere, or do anything, rather than risk getting into debt, or shrink from the good pleasure of her heavenly Father, be his will what it might. So at last the anxious boy decided to give it up altogether into His hands, and felt calm and peaceful when, after a tearful struggle, he was able sincerely to say, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

In the mean time it proved that one person's loss was another's gain; and while Mrs. Brooks gave up the cottage to Freeman and his family, another not

less desirable, and vacated in consequence of a death by the late accident, became available for Barnes; and it was with feelings of delight that William Taylor executed the command of their employer, to provide the new homes with everything actually needful for decency and comfort.

The good work was but just completed when Mr. and Mrs. D— and little Archy paid an unexpected visit to the scene of action. The latter being a sort of privileged person, ventured a peep in at many a cottage in search of those he wanted. In some a group of children, obliged at times to realize something of their recent loss, stood about the widowed mother, who had already begun to wonder how she should find bread to supply so many mouths. Then a glance at the old Bible on the corner table reminded her of promises to the fatherless and the widow; and the little bird as it twittered its good night from the nest in the cottage eaves, seemed to rebuke the "little faith" of the tempted Christian.

Mr. Barnes had just seated himself with one child on each knee, and another before him with head erect and hands behind, just as she was taught at school to say her evening hymn before her mother called them all to bed. An older girl with a coarse apron tied round her little plump figure was washing up the supper things, stopping every minute, or very slowly twirling the plate round with the towel, to hear how Polly was getting on. Mrs. Barnes, in a clean afternoon dress and tidy cap, sat by seeming to be fitting an elbow patch into a small jacket, but in reality thinking of her mended ways, her sober husband, and once wild children thus fashioning into civilization and

knowledge, and last, not least, the marvel that she should have time and inclination to put in that very patch. Why, she might almost find time for a quiet talk with Mrs. D— herself now-a-days. Her heart was full of love and thankfulness, for that was mended too, and was in fact the greatest improvement of all; for how could things go well with a sour temper and a grumbling tongue?

Into this pleasant state of things suddenly popped the bright face of young Archy, and while he asked the children all about the new country life, the grateful parents were displaying to their benefactors the substantial comforts of their orderly house. "We've never been so happy in all our lives, ma'am, never before," warmly expatiated Mrs. Barnes: "everything seems only too good for us."

"I don't think so, Mrs. Barnes," said Mr. D—, kindly. "I mean to see that every man who works for me has a comfortable home to begin with; if he and his can't keep it so, you know, that won't be my fault."

"Sir," said Barnes, "I've been such a bad fellow, it's no use to let my tongue run about meaning to do better. I only hope you will see whether I'm thankful or no for the lift you and my lady there have given us."

At Freeman's a no less gratifying change was visible; but William Taylor had other friends to introduce and other tales to tell, of sad and touching interest; and Archy, as he listened to that of the accident in his father's coal-pit, imbibed new interest in his working countrymen, and a new estimate of those comforts which their lives were daily perilled to obtain.

On the next Sunday morning two members of the pastor's little flock returned thanks to God who had in judgment remembered mercy, and the stifled voice of William Palmer whispered a sincere Amen. The widow remembered that her husband, though dead to things temporal, was alive with Jesus for evermore, and the mother knew that her son was "born again" an heir of the same blessed hope, and whether "living or dying" was now the Lord's.

On Monday, though not yet able for work, he could go out and see the overlooker, and ascertain his future prospect concerning it; and when he came in again his beaming face spoke eloquently of hope and pleasure. But Mrs. Palmer was not in the kitchen, and he sat down in his father's chair, which had stood vacant in its usual place ever since that sad day. William looked round him with mingled feelings of sorrow and joy, and regret and thankfulness, and then lost himself in a sweet vision of ministering love. How he would work for, and watch over his remaining parent; how he would deny himself to please and help her; how he would follow his father's ways, that she might fancy he was here again in the person of his son; and how he would ask God to make her happy, and let her feel that she had still an earthly as well as a heavenly home. Thus occupied, he did not see her entrance until she stood gazing upon him with tears of gratitude for his recovery gathering in her eyes. Then he started from his seat, shocked that she should have found him in that chair.

"Stop there, my boy," said she, understanding it all: "thy mother will like to see thee there; and oh, William, if thou follow him as he followed Christ, I have a dear treasure left me yet."

"Mother, it's all settled," Willy eagerly began. "My wages are to be raised. I've more particular work to do. And now we can keep our nice cottage. Oh, mother, aren't you glad?"

"Very glad, very thankful, my dear son," said the mother.

"And, mother, it's all through Mr. D—'s kindness, and Mr. Taylor's telling him all about father and you. It was a good day that you took William Taylor in to lodge, wasn't it? But now, mother," and the young man's voice softened and faltered, "I want one thing, if you can do it; mother, dear mother, will you try to be happy again, something like you used to, and will it be like home to you now? I know father would like that it should be." And William's bent head drooped until it rested on her shoulder, and there he burst into tears.

It was a trying question, but the true-hearted mother would not for a thousand worlds have damped that filial wish. She struggled back the choking thought of widowhood that seemed to whisper, "No," to the idea of being happy at all as she "used to be;" and drying her tears, which fell plentifully over Willy's head, she lifted up his face, and smiled upon him one of the smiles he loved to see. "Yes, William," she said, "my dutiful, loving child can make happiness and home to me."

How sweet was William's rest that night! A thankful mother's blessing on his head, and within his heart the approving voice of Him whose last act of earthly life was to provide a home and a son for the desolate mother who wept at the foot of the cross.

CHAPTER XXII.

ITS HOPES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS.

"WHAT ho! hey, Master Ben, are you in too much hurry to speak to a friend?" exclaimed Barnes, as he was coming home from work, and Benjamin Bates sprang over a hedge close to him and was hastening along the lane.

"Oh, Mr. Barnes, beg pardon. I'm just going to —— with this bundle of clothes for the tailor there to mend. Good evening."

Barnes looked after him, his mind half inclining to an idea that Ben was about "no good." Why had he never mended that fence of which he had been ten times told? Why did he look so red and pale by turns even for the moment he paused? Barnes could not understand it. Alas! poor Ben was much more ready to break down fences than to mend them.

That evening farmer Bates had looked after the cattle and seen all safe before coming in to supper, and he came alone. "Where's Ben?" suddenly asked his wife.

"I don't know, I thought he was in. Oh, I remember I told him that the fence in the far field must be mended at once, and he'd better do it before nightfall, else I must. Belike he'll come presently."

"Presently" passed away, and no Ben appeared. Mrs. Bates became fidgetty, and rose to look out and listen every five minutes. Night settled down, and

the little household looked anxiously in each other's faces to discern what thoughts might be seen there. Phœbe, the only daughter, having said everything she could think of to account for Ben, suddenly took a new idea and went to her brother's room. She returned pale with agitation, and sitting down, burst into tears.

"Don't fret, my girl," said her father, "or you'll grieve mother. May be he's gone home with some of the lads after a game at skittles."

"Oh no, father; his clothes, his best clothes, all his things are gone."

"The ungrateful ——" The father checked himself and looked at his pale wife. She was not in good health; this boy was her idol; how would she bear this cruel blow? Unable to keep quiet he reached his hat and thick stick, and trudged away to the village to try if he could gather any tidings of Ben.

One farmer Watts was just finishing his pipe at the door in the moonlight as the anxious father came by. Hearing the news he turned in, and called up the stairs to his sons who had just gone to their beds. "Jim, Will—here's a pretty kettle of fish! Ben Bates is gone off nobody knows where: hast seen anything of him?"

"No, father," answered Jim; "but I can guess what's up with him. I dare say he's gone off to sea at last; he's often said he should some day."

"Whew! never mind then, neighbour Bates: a good sea-storm will bring him to; and he'll come back all the better for it one of these days. If I was you I'd let him alone."

"He's never been settled since Joe Willis went

away in his blue jacket and straw hat, to be bound on board the 'Water Witch' for New Zealand," called out Jim again.

"Ho! and mayhap some more of our foolish chaps aren't going to be settled now that Ben's gone after the blue jacket and straw hat to nobody knows where."

"Well, that ain't me, father. I'd sooner live a top of our rick than be tossed about in the biggest ship as ever sailed, only"—for Jim thought this was a capital opportunity to say what he did wish—"I want to see London, that's all."

"Thou shalt see London some day, if thee's a good lad; there be cheap ways of doing things now, that made one's hair stand on end to think on when I was young." And very well satisfied with the extent of his son's ambition, Mr. Watts, notwithstanding his advice to farmer Bates to let the boy alone, kindly followed him to offer the use of a horse, if he meant to try and overtake him.

Bad news flies fast; and, though it was getting very late, Barnes, who could give a little information, and Dame Palmer, who could at least give sympathy, were soon on their way to the farm, where they found Phœbe and her mother, the picture of heart sorrow, cowering over the embers of a fire.

The loving heart of the happier mother was touched to the core; but she knew where patience and comfort, even in such a case as this, might be sought and found. Mr. and Mrs. Bates, too, knew something of the refuge—

> "From every stormy wind that blows,
> From every swelling tide of woes;"—

but they seemed to have lost sight of it just now; and it was blessed to hear of it in the reminding voice of one so lately tried herself with deep affliction. So they knelt down together, and commended the boy to the pity, protection, and forgiveness of Him whose "eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good;" and they found, as all do who try and trust, that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Meantime the young truant, who, in reckless pursuit of his own way, had thus quitted his comfortable home, and left his best earthly friends to consume the hours in sickening suspense, was flying along by rail to a large seaport town, where he arrived with all his worldly goods in a bundle, and his money savings in his pocket, a stranger from the country, ignorant of the ways of the classes around him as he stared about from pier to pier, wondering which of the grand ships that lay in stately calm upon the river was destined to realize his boy dreams of the wonderful sea.

Two sailors lounging along to their ship saw his eager and excited looks, and soon accosted him. The acquaintance resulted in an engagement with their captain to take him to sea; and they in the meantime volunteered their help in showing him something of the world on shore, the low world about the docks and shipping of a great commercial port. More than once Ben thought of his country home, and what his parents would think could they see him now; but he seemed to forget all they might suffer because they could not see him, nor knew whither he was gone.

The captain liked his appearance. He asked no questions, for he knew that many a bad youth has his

own bad reasons for quitting home; and he had such confidence in his own talents as a disciplinarian that disobedient sons, or dishonest apprentices, or whatever else they might have been, disobedient sailors none under him should dare to be.

It was on the third evening after Ben's disappearance that his depressed and anxious mother, after a half day's journey, found herself in the neat and humble home of William Taylor, tenderly commended by him to the care and sympathy of his good Susan. She had followed her husband in the hope that she might see her boy once more before he went to sea, if indeed he were yet on shore at all. This was the second day of the father's search, for the clue had been supplied in the questions put by Ben to Barnes from time to time concerning the neighbourhood of the docks in his native town; and it was resolved that every public house and every sailor's store should be examined before the case was given up.

How and where he laid his hand upon the shoulder of his startled son farmer Bates did not think proper to tell, as he brought the youth that evening into his mother's presence; but as she held him once more, and looked lovingly in his face, she felt there was yet a lower depth of sorrow in store if he had taken to drink, for the fumes of liquor were burning in his breath.

"We are not come to hinder thee from the sea, Ben," she whispered; "but oh! my son, thou hast broken thy mother's heart."

The captain and Ben being both resolved to stand to their engagement, it was legally made and witnessed, and the boy was suitably fitted out for sea from his

father's savings. The father gave up his cherished wish to have a son at home to assist him in his work, and cheer his declining years; the mother surrendered her idol to the life he preferred to her and duty, and nothing remained but to see him sail.

The ship was delayed a week longer, and day by day they walked the piers, or sat on some temporary resting place watching her from morning till night. On the last two days they were accompanied by a young woman with an infant in her arms, and this was Ben's eldest sister, who had travelled all the way from London to see once more the cherished pet of her early years.

Ben must have been made of stone to resist the softening influence of all this family affection. At last he did seem to feel it, and to think that he did not quite deserve it. His mother seized the moment to ask a promise that he would read the little Bible she had put among his things. "There will be nothing else to remind thee of home," she said; "and if thou forget God, who shall speak a word for him?"

They were just about to part. The ship had moved out of dock into the river, and a boat was waiting to convey back those who had been allowed as a special favour to take a last leave on shore. A sailor stood near as the words were uttered; and coming closer to the little group he took off his cap and quietly said, "Mistress, I fear God; and your lad shan't want a reminder of him while I'm spared to speak it."

Oh how quickly that sailor's rough hands were clasped in theirs! What a load of anxiety seemed lifted from their hearts in the assurance that at least one God-fearing seaman was among the crew.

Before night-fall the watchings were over; the ship passed down the river, became a speck in the horizon, and soon danced on the waves of the western main.

Thus Benjamin Bates secured his heart's desire in his own hard-hearted ungrateful way. He regarded not the love that had watched over him for fifteen or sixteen years; he heeded not God's command, "Honour thy father and mother;" he fancied he came into the world to do as he pleased, and in so doing scrupled not to trample on the first claims of human duty. It was not his place to chasten a father's pride, or a fond mother's over-indulgent affection; and though this might follow, as good out of evil often does, yet that was not within his province, and the responsibility of his sin must be on his own head.

If the statistics of human sorrow could be gathered and examined, it would probably be found that bitterer tears have been wrung from aching hearts through the selfishness and disobedience of children, than by the desolations of death, the cares of poverty, or the pangs of sickness: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" The solemn displeasure of Almighty God rests upon "despisers of fathers and mothers;" and the "disobedient and unthankful," and "without natural affection," occupy a fearful prominence in the predictions of future judgment. Home, in whatever rank of life, should be to every inmate a spot sacred to love and duty; and woe to him who dares to mar its peace with headstrong will and selfish passions! Much is said and thought about parental responsibility; but let not children forget their share in the great account.

"Mother," whispered little Robert in his mother's ear, "why do they cry so sadly? Is it because Ben has gone to sea?"

"Not entirely, Robert; more because of the way he took to go. Tears may often come from an absent son, and they will be wiped away; but the tears that come for a disobedient ungrateful son, oh, Robert, I'm afraid they flow on without stopping on this side of the grave."

"Oh, mother!" and Robert put his arms round his mother's neck. "I'll remember this, and pray to God that you may never shed such tears for me."

As Susan held her son to her thankful heart, she could not help following in imagination the farmer and his wife to their altered home; and her feelings did not exaggerate the reality. A hoped-for prop was gone. Everything seemed changed; and it was hard for a daughter's thoughtful love to fill her own and her absent brother's place. The father strove manfully, as fathers do, to conceal his disappointment, and make the best of what couldn't now be helped; and the mother drooped and suffered meekly, as mothers do when the wound is at the heart, and sweet hopes are dashed to pieces by the hand least expected to inflict the blow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TIME TO SOW AND A TIME TO REAP.

HAVING seen his reformed fellow-workmen comfortably settled according to the wishes of their employer, William Taylor returned home to the quiet, steady fulfilment of his own immediate duties. Business prospered, the rate of wages was satisfactory, and all things went on happily for some time.

One day Mr. D— came from his office looking somewhat perplexed, and calling his son, who had just come in from school; "Archy," said he, "try and help me to find out what is to be done in a difficult matter."

"What is it, papa?" exclaimed Archy, now a strong fine boy, as he hastened to his father's side.

"Are you willing to part with your friend William Taylor?"

"No indeed, papa, that I'm not, nor with Robert either. I want Mr. Taylor to be with you when I come to learn the business."

"So do I, Archy. But I have received a letter to-day from his old masters, inquiring all about him. They want him back again, for he was faithful and resolute to stand by them when their men struck for wages; and, now that they are prospering again, they wish to reward him with a better situation, and prove

that they appreciate his worth. I honour them for this: it is as it should be."

"Yes, papa; but surely you will not let him go: you can't spare him, for we know his worth as well as they do."

"True; but we must not be selfish, nor stand in the way of his real interest. Perhaps it is his duty for his children's sake to accept so honourable an offer."

"Oh! I hope not: what shall we do, papa? I wish I were a man."

"How would that help us out of our difficulty, I wonder?" said Mr. D—, smiling on the earnest boy. "What would you do, Archy? Perhaps I, being a man, can do it for you."

"Why, I would tell him how I love and trust him; I would say I have known you ever since I was a little boy, and I want you to stay and take care of my business, and your son shall learn it too; and I'll build you a house, and you shall be my friend always; and if I can I'll give you more money than those people will; and when you are old I will take care of you if I live too."

"Well done, Archy. I am very much inclined to leave this affair in your hands. With regard to Robert you may promise for me: the rest you know is all your own. But you may add this in my name: 'William Taylor, you have made many friends among us. Drunkards have become sober under your influence, and miserable homes have been made happy. Your character and example have been useful to all, from the master to the humblest workman in the yard. Your wife is a blessing among our women;

your well-trained children are a credit to your care; and though you may do and be all this elsewhere, we wish to keep you among us to do greater things still.' "

"May I, shall I, papa? Oh how glad I shall be to say it all!"

"Then you shall take the letter to Taylor's house this evening; and I will come for you, and hear how my young ambassador has prospered in my cause."

Archy's bright face was always welcome at William Taylor's cottage; and the occasion of his present visit brought him bounding in with more than usual speed. He was at the age which hopes everything, and when the idea of disappointment seldom comes to blight the pleasures of anticipation.

William came forward to receive his young visitor, as he never could help doing, with almost paternal interest; and Robert kept his hand with something of admiration and love, blended with a respectful remembrance of their relative positions in life. The two sons of employer and employed had long felt an interest in each other which was growing with their growth; and while on one side there was no ground for fear of "evil communications," on the other there was the self-respect that shunned intrusion, and frankly accepted the token of present good will, without a calculation upon anything beyond it.

"Papa sent this letter for you to read, Mr. Taylor," said Archy; "and I want to tell you that I hope, and papa hopes you won't go, but stop here and do more good. We love you so much: indeed, indeed you must not go away."

William took the letter in surprise; Susan ceased

plying her needle; Robert looked from one to the other in great amazement; and Archy, with his elbows on the table and his chin on his hands, watched William's countenance as he read, and then handed the gratifying letter to Susan.

"Now, Robert, ask your father not to leave us, and we'll all be so happy; you and I shall grow up together to learn papa's business, and we shall always be friends, you know; and, Mr. Taylor, I was to tell you this from papa:" and then he repeated with commendable accuracy what his father had said, until tears gathered in William's eyes, and his head drooped over the wondering boys, who had drawn closer to him.

Mr. D— soon arrived; and while Archy drew Robert to the window to look over a new book he had brought to show him, the two parents sat down to talk over their views together.

"Sir, dear master," said William, "I am not able to thank you enough for your great kindness."

"There's no need to thank me, Taylor, for wishing to keep a good servant when I find one; but I know it is your duty to consider what is best for your family, and I must not venture to persuade. Think over both sides of the subject for a day or two, and then let me know your decision."

"Thank you, sir. It is written, 'In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct thy paths.' I trust he will do so now, and teach me to do his will."

"You'll stay," cried Archy, as his father called him to walk home; "you'll stay with us, won't you?"

"If it pleases God," whispered William, as he bade his young friend good night.

Archy turned back again to look at Robert, who stood leaning against the window frame, unusually quiet: "He's not well, Mrs. Taylor," said Archy; "see how pale he looks; I wonder what's the matter with him."

"I'll go to bed, please mother; it's only a headache," said Robert. "Good night, dear kind master Archy. I hope we shall stay with you."

Robert went to bed, and then the husband and wife talked long together, and laid the letter with all their feelings about it before the throne of grace. Many had been their privileges and their pleasures in that former home, and Susan's dear parents and other relatives were not forgotten among the inducements to return. But it seemed to them that a sweet and powerful bond united their hearts to William's present employer and his family, and that God's blessing had assuredly rested upon their humble efforts to spread a holy influence around them. It was true that Mr. D— could not make the wages equal to those offered in the advanced situation; but his kind intentions towards Robert were not to be disregarded, and should they for a few pounds more a year quit the service of one by whom they were thoroughly valued, and to whom they were justly attached in return? Once the thought crossed the father's mind that those few pounds would enable him to send Robert to a higher school, and give him a chance of advancement in life by superior education. But he banished it with the better remembrance that the son of a working man, who was to be in his turn a working man too, should

be educated in and for the position in which God had placed him; and any future elevation should be the result of an overruling providence, and not the coveted aim of parental pride. Still, gratitude for the kindness of his former masters, and a thorough satisfaction with their conduct in the matter of "the strike," made him hesitate whether it was right to reject their generous offer. William laid his head on his pillow still undecided, and Susan feared to influence, lest her own will should in any respect be tempting her to misinterpret the wiser will of God.

The next morning brought with it new and unexpected subjects of anxiety. Poor Robert's headache became alarming illness, and when Archy looked in at midday on his way from school, he was shocked at the change in his young friend. He hurried home to beg his kind mother to go and see if she could do him any good. Mrs. D— was not long in fulfilling this request; and when medical opinion declared the case a dangerous one, she took the two little girls to her own house, and feared not to see them among the precious occupants of her nursery, where truth and love and obedience were more highly prized than all temporal distinctions. Nothing was neglected that human skill and thoughtful love could do for the young sufferer's benefit, and in the affectionate concern and attentions of Mr. and Mrs. D— was found a return of all that had been felt for them under somewhat similar circumstances. So true it is that "with whatsoever measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;" and truly here was "good measure, pressed down and running over."

Three times a day did young Archy visit the cottage,

forbidden to see, but earnestly inquiring for his favourite, and catching from Susan's countenance the hopes and fears of a trying season of suspense. Often the parents knelt by the little bed seeking for grace to resign their darling willingly to his heavenly rest, meekly acknowledging the right of Him who gave to take away, and struggling to realize love in both the gift and the privation. And they were not the only parents who have attained their triumph, and then received back from the very gate of death the loved one by whose pillow the battle has been fought.

At last the crisis passed, and the doctors gave hope of recovery with continued care and good nursing; and Archy was permitted to look again on the pale thin face of the once robust, blooming boy. That look seemed to rivet the two young hearts more firmly together.

"Dear Robert," whispered Archy, "God has not taken you away, and your father must not."

"No, he has promised," said Robert, pressing Archy's hand against his thin cheek: "thank you for loving me, dear, dear master Archy."

"I have been wondering whether you would see it right to accept the opportunity of taking Robert back to his native air," said Susan to her husband.

"Oh no, dear wife, he must have change, but not that way. I am bound to Mr. D— by ties that cannot be broken. No wages, no situation, could ever be to me what he has been in this time of sorrow." So with explanations and apologies for the delay, William's respectful letter of thanks, expressive of his satisfaction in his present service, was placed in

Mr. D—'s hands, and duly forwarded to its destination.

At the same time Susan wrote to her former kind friend and district visitor, Mrs. Ashton, asking her to use her influence in behalf of Richard Moore, who was, she trusted, thoroughly steady and trustworthy now, and of whose improved home and family she had heard cheering accounts from her mother. The application was successful, and Richard Moore, to his own and Betsey's great thankfulness and delight, obtained the situation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TRUE FRIENDS AND SAFE FOUNDATIONS.

THE day on which William Taylor's decision was made to remain in the service of his present master, Mr. D— took a drive with his family to look at a house he had recently taken a few miles out of town, and whither he proposed removing as soon as certain improvements were made. It was near to a railway station, and a few minutes would effect communication between home and his place of business, whenever Mr. D— chose to avail himself of the trains. "It needs now a sort of lodge at these gates," said he, as he drove into the grounds, "and I intend to build one. I requested the foundation to be got ready that Archy may lay the first stone to-day."

Archy was highly delighted at this honour, and performed his part amidst the eager interest of his little brothers and sisters. "Will it be like the lodge at Beach House, papa—two tiny rooms, with roses round the porch?"

"No, there will be a comfortable parlour, and kitchen, and wash-house; with three airy bed-rooms over them, according to my plan. It will face the road, and the little garden will be behind those trees. As for the roses round a porch at the door, I have no objection to your training as many as you please."

Archy supposed a gardener would live there, so his taste in roses might be easily gratified.

Some time afterwards Mrs. Hayes paid a visit to William and Susan, to assist the latter after a fourth child had been added to the youthful group; and very acceptable was her kind and active help. "Never mind, my dear," said she, one day, after procuring some comfort which Susan had refused herself as beyond her husband's means. "When God sends more mouths it's a sign he's got some way ready to fill them, and the mother is not to be forgotten in the self-denying wife." So Susan had to submit to her kind aunt's thoughtful indulgences.

Mrs. Hayes' idea of "signs" was not to be despised; and when after she had carried off Robert to recruit his strength and restore his faded bloom at the farm—a thing impossible she said in that huge smoky town—she would not consent to be surprised at some very good news which followed her.

One morning there was a little stir and excitement among the men in Mr. D—'s premises. They were grouped together as they had been once before when making their request concerning the place and time of paying wages, but it might have been observed that on this occasion Taylor was not among them. It had become known that the foreman of the yard was about to resign his situation in consequence of other prospects elsewhere, and, though the men liked him, they were just now thinking more about the choice of a successor.

"I wish master would take a word from us about it," said one.

"Well, it ain't likely, you see; we might just as well each elect himself," said another, laughing at the conceit, "and there isn't one of us fit for the place, after all; it needs a deal of judgment and impartiality to be foreman over a lot of fellows like us."

"There's one man among us I'd like to see in the place, howsomever," replied the first speaker; and as Mr. D— came in, he was respectfully asked if a new foreman were engaged.

"Not yet, my good friends," said Mr. D— kindly; "I am a little more particular than I once was, and I want to find a man whom you will all respect."

"We could soon find him, sir, if we might."

"Then, come, any of you, and give me your opinions privately," said Mr. D—, both surprised and pleased; and in less than ten minutes the name of William Taylor had been uttered in the office by three-fourths of his fellow-workmen.

"And why William Taylor?" asked Mr. D—.

"Well, sir, he's so steady and straightforward, you see; and though we've never caught him tripping in anything, there's no pride nor self-righteousness about him; and he's a real help when one gets cast down a bit, or feels idle and discontented like."

"That's true enough," said another; "he's been the saving of me and mine from drunkenness and starvation; and many's the bother I've given him, trying to make me do my duty."

"And see how Freeman and Barnes owe pretty nigh everthing to him, saving your presence, sir," exclaimed a zealous friend to both. "Why, Freeman was over last holiday to see his old mother, and she

scarce knew him with his fine healthy face and pleasant ways; and he says Barnes is getting on just as well; and I asked him how it came about, and he put it in the right place when he said, "It's just God's goodness, and Will Taylor."

Very pleasant it was to Mr. D— to witness this right feeling towards one in every way superior, and he had no hesitation in confirming the honourable choice. William was, or very soon could be, quite equal to his new duties, and, with three cheers for the master, and a right hearty one for the foreman elect, the men went off like a set of overgrown boys, to find and congratulate him on the subject.

"Before honour is humility." The humble-minded, contented working man, quietly struggling through difficulties, meekly bending to the providence of God, resisting temptation to consider earthly advantage before the claims of gratitude and love, had been under discipline preparatory to a right reception of honour when it came; and, whatever the second causes, He "from whom cometh every good and perfect gift," had the first thankful acknowledgments of his right-hearted children.

The foreman had given Mr. D— ample notice, and, ere he resigned his duties, the family had removed to the house in the country, the lodge was completed, and Mr. D— found an errand for William Taylor into the coal district, where he contrived to have him detained for two or three weeks. The good report of Freeman and Barnes was pleasantly confirmed. Mrs. Palmer and her excellent son were still in their comfortable cottage, and, so far as could be judged by the placid face and thankful expressions of the widowed

mother, the loving desire of her child was as fully granted as it could be on this side the grave.

Taylor returned home one afternoon towards Christmas time, and was greatly astonished to find his house shut up, and no smiling faces as of old peeping out to greet him. In much perplexity he stepped back to survey the upper window, but no sign of life was there, and with rising fear and anxiety he was about to apply at the next door for information, when Mr. D— came up in the light carriage which often brought him into town.

"I went to meet the train, but it was in, so I drove after you, Taylor," he said, as he checked the horse.

"Sir, what has happened? where are they?" gasped William.

"All safe and well, only gone for a little change of air. I hoped to have saved you this needless anxiety; but come, jump in, bundle and all, and we'll be with them directly."

"Thank you, sir," said William, gladly obeying: "the house looks so desolate, I thought my family could scarce be in it."

Away they went, through the suburbs, out of town, along a pleasant road, stopping at last before a building which was neither quite a cottage, nor quite a house, with white blinds and muslin curtains. A little court in front was laid with turf, out of which were cut flower beds planted with evergreens.

"Are they lodging here, sir?" asked William, in much surprise, as several heads were seen watching between the curtains, and whence an evident rush took place to the door.

"This is my new lodge, Taylor," said Mr. D—: "I want it kept in good order, inside as well as out; so that, as I come in at my gate, I may have the pleasure of seeing here a reflection from my own fireside, and pass on to enjoy my home blessings the more for knowing they are shared in by you."

There was no time for any more staring with wide-opened eyes on Mr. D—, for a welcoming group of happy faces pressed round the dumb foreman. There was Susan with tears in her eyes and a smile on her lip: there was Robert with roses again in his cheeks, and health in his sparkling eyes; there was Milly, and the ex-baby, all frantic with joy; and there was Mrs. D— in the background holding the young reigning tyrant while the mother went to receive her husband; and there was the hearty grasp of Jonathan Hayes and his prophetic dame, unable to find any words, because, as he said, it was quite too much for him altogether.

And Archy, the honest workman's first friend in the family, he was there too, his heart bursting with a strange mingling of many happy thoughts, and ready to whisper his own welcome in William's ear.

"This is your home, and Robert's home; and we are all so glad to see you here. You'll be happy here, won't you now?"

"Welcome home, my friend, and may God bless you all," said Mr. D—. "Come, Archy, don't forget that the traveller wants some dinner;" and Mr. and Mrs. D— hastily escaped from the acknowledgments that were trembling on William's lips.

"Only a word more," whispered Archy, pulling him towards a table, on which stood a family Bible:

"this is my present, William; we thought you would like it better than anything else. You'll read in it to-night, won't you?" And slipping from the answering clasp of William's arms, the happy boy flew after his parents, leaving the reunited family to enjoy the present reward of faith and duty.

On the whole, the experiences of life, the records of history, and even "the annals of the poor," prove that piety, industry, and sobriety are the best capital on which any man can start on the business by which he is to earn his daily bread. There is no path of usefulness, respectability, and honour closed against such in our free and favoured land; and, while there is scarcely an office beneath the British crown that has not been held by working men, the history of commercial and manufacturing life affords still more ample evidence of the scope and opportunity open to all. Often may be seen the trustworthy servant, a master and employer in his turn; often the sons of master and servant stand side by side on the "exchange," and in society, equal in talent and enterprise, and friends for life.

But this belongs to the external scene. Where is the working man's rest from toil, and the best earthly sympathy in all his cares and trials? Where the child's most watchful guardian, and influential friend? Where but at "home," in the industrious loving wife, the prayerful tender mother, quietly, meekly, in the strength of God, filling her appointed place where love and duty constitute her praise. Show me such wives and mothers, and I will show where lies the guarantee of a nation's prosperity and strength.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

If in our country rambles we have happened to become familiar with the operations of some humble husbandman on his little patch of land; if we have passed by when he was sowing seed, and watering, and weeding, and pruning, and propping, we shall scarcely be uninterested in the success of his work, the product of the seed, or the fruit of the tree. So it may happen that some reader who has rambled with us among these humble scenes in humble life, may like to know whether the parental care of William and Susan Taylor derived its happy reward in the after conduct and characters of their children. A few years over, and a glance or two may show whether the seed of the kingdom sown in prayer, or native tares of the original soil, had the upper hand.

Let it not be supposed that Robert and Milly, and the little flock that followed them, grew up to be ladies and gentlemen, because of the improved circumstances that resulted from their father's advancement. The chief foreman over working men was still a working man, and there was neither prospect nor intention that any of his children should be independent of the labour of their own hands. They were educated to fill with respectability and honour the station in which they were born, and not to aim at an

elevation beyond it, as a position of greater happiness or usefulness.

It happened one Monday morning that a "new hand" appeared among the workmen of a superior and extensive establishment, whence issued some of the finest specimens of British manufacture to all parts of the world.

"Well, who are you, and where do you come from?" asked a bold, reckless looking young man, on behalf of himself and others, who liked to know, but did not at once like to ask.

"My name is Robert Taylor, and I come from the D— works to learn what you can teach me here," frankly replied the tall, strong, cheerful looking stranger.

"Oh!" and "oh!" and "oh!" passed round in varied tones of voice. "Served your time then, and want to be polished up a bit. All right; we can teach you a thing or two, never fear."

"Thank you," said Robert, with such hearty simplicity that several laughed; but one older man remarked, "He'll be like to learn more than he needs if he let's you take him in tow, Joe Staples. You're quite too 'complished for a young fellow like him."

"Don't be ill-natured, Sam," retorted Staples. "See if we aren't firstrate mates in no time."

Sam looked kindly at Robert, and Robert felt that a warning was conveyed at once which claimed his gratitude, and reminded him of his father's words, that good and evil would offer him a choice everywhere; and tests of principle well met at first would clear many a snare from his future path.

At six o'clock, as the men were leaving work, Staples and two or three more joined Robert, and inquired where he was living.

"Why, that's quite an uppish sort of a street; what made you go there? Who fixed your lodging for you?"

"My mother," said Robert, firmly. "She knows something of the person who keeps the house; and though she has superior lodgers in the best rooms, I am very comfortably provided for."

"Hum! Well, you're your own master, I suppose. Now look here. You go home, get your tea, and dress yourself pretty well, and I'll give you a treat this evening. I'll introduce you to a friend of mine, where you can go when you like and enjoy yourself. Capital entertainment. Such music as I dare say you never heard, and all sorts of pleasing things to pass away the time. See, here's the place, and I'll meet you in an hour."

Robert looked up at the handsome building, already lighted brilliantly, and that look was enough. "The big spider," the horror of his early days, was instantly before his mind.

"Stop," said he, as Staples was turning along another street; "I shall not go into this place."

"Pooh! you will, man—at any rate to see what it's like. It's no harm; and now you've got no home, you'll want some amusement, you know. You'd like to do as we do, of course."

"We'll just understand one another at once," said Robert, quietly. "I thank you for intending me kindly; but I shall never go into this place, nor keep company with any one who does."

"Oh, oh! is that it? Well, thank you for a piece of your mind. Good night. We shan't be mates then, I suppose."

Robert looked at the young man. He seemed but a few years older than himself, but there was a dissipated, reckless look about his good-humoured face, and Robert pitied him. Had he parents? had he ever been taught any good? Oh! mother, father, perhaps but for you your son had been like him.

"Stop one minute," said Robert, quickly. "Can't you come with me as well as take me with you? I have plenty of nice books, and you could help me, I'm sure, to get on in many things."

"What, after work hours? No thank you. I've done enough for to-day. You'd best change your mind and come along. But, ah!" he added, mockingly, "perhaps you daren't; perhaps mother wouldn't like it."

"No, she would not, nor father either," replied Robert, looking steadily in his tempter's face; "and you are right, I *dare* not, for the blessing of Almighty God is not there, and I do not wish to go where I know it is not."

"Why, what queer notions you've got in your head; but they'll soon blow off, you'll see, and then you'll act independent, like me. I get my own living, and neither father nor mother shan't interfere with me."

"Good night; then we shall *not* be mates," said Robert, decisively; and the two young men turned each on his separate way.

There is nothing like decision. Hesitation, half-measures, lie at the threshold of mischief, and happy

the youth who has been taught to say, "No," resolutely, when assailed by temptation.

It was by Mr. D—'s arrangement that Robert was to enjoy the benefit of additional instruction and experience in this superior establishment for a year; and his parents, knowing that he must some time be brought to the test, and having done their part, committed him in faith and prayer to God's holy keeping, taking care to provide for him the safeguard of a Christian home during his temporary absence.

It did the widow's heart good, she said, to see the little well-worn Bible on his table; and when, at night, she asked him to read for her, it did her good, too, to see the look of pleasure light up his honest face as he remarked that to do so would make it seem more like *home*. Blessed testimony to the habit of that home life! Yes, it is in God's presence, and in efforts to please and honour him, that the Christian's child should feel most *at home*. We may, nay we must, learn to do without parental care. We may, probably must, go among strangers and strange things in our path of duty through a fallen world; but we cannot, we must not, we dare not, but at our peril, live "without God" anywhere.

Robert Taylor had been trained as it were in God's very presence, and it was as much his element as the air he breathed. His blessing had been made the daily necessity, and safeguard, and happiness of his home; and to lie down or rise up without asking for it was a thing unknown. There was no constraint, no hardship, no reluctance in the case; it was just the way in which he had been happy and

safe, and Robert wished to try no experiment in any other.

It would have been well for one whom he tenderly loved if Divine grace had wrought with an equally resolute choice. Coming from public worship one Sunday morning, Robert's attention was arrested by a party of young men on horseback, who seemed much inclined to slight the decorum of the public street, as they had already done the sanctity of the Lord's day. One of the horses became unmanageable under their idle frolics, and in the person of the rider Robert was surprised and disturbed to see his former friend and often playmate, Archy D—. Was it possible that Archy could be in that city and he not know it? But far worse, could Archy be the friend and companion of those thoughtless sabbath-breakers? Robert paused and looked after them anxiously. He knew that Mr. D— had fears about his generous, warm-hearted, impressible boy; and moreover he thought that the family were ignorant of his return from abroad, his last letters having been dated from some point in the tourist's route through central Europe.

Almost involuntarily Robert followed the gay group of riders, and turned the corner of a street in time to see Archy's horse take fright and dash past him with terrific speed. A moment more and the rider was thrown with his head to the ground and his foot in the stirrup. The check caused by the fall gave Robert time to spring forward and catch the bridle, to hold the unruly animal with a powerful grasp until other hands lent needful help; and then lifting the insensible form of Archy D—, he carried him to the nearest druggist's shop.

Archy's young companions were in hasty consultation about conveying him to their hotel; but Robert, giving a brief account of his claim to the charge, so earnestly entreated that Archy might be left to his care, that the young men gladly relieved themselves of the responsibility, asking leave to come and inquire for him when they pleased.

In half an hour Archy was laid on the widow's best bed, with medical skill, and two careful nurses in Robert and his worthy hostess. No bones were broken, but the blow on the head was serious, and it was many hours before they had the joy of seeing their patient restored to consciousness.

"Robert, my dear old friend," he some days afterwards said, "it's all right. It was a merciful fall. I was doing wrong; I was tempted to do more wrong. Oh! Robert, I wish I could always do right, as—"

"As nobody does quite, dear Mr. Archy," interrupted Robert.

"Yes, you do."

"I? oh! for shame, sir; don't speak of me. If I ever do right I owe it to God's mercy and the best of parents."

"Ah! Robert, I too have good parents; and it will break their hearts to know that I was nearly killed in the act of breaking God's command, and associating with those who care for none of his ways."

"But won't it cheer their hearts to know that God would not let you go on doing it, and lets you live to do better?"

"Ah! yes; and I do sometimes want to be good and do right, but I always think of that text, you

know, about 'the morning cloud and the early dew:' that's just like me."

"Don't you love the Lord Jesus Christ, Master Archy?" asked Robert, after a few moments' thought.

Archy was silent.

"Because," continued Robert, "father always said that really to love our Saviour, because he first loved us, gives us a right principle and makes it impossible to like to do wrong."

"When did you begin to love God, Robert?" asked his friend, abruptly.

"I don't remember. He has always seemed a friend to me; and father and mother always taught us how good and kind he is, and only wants us to obey him that we may be happy. I'm sure I never was so unhappy as when I was displeasing God."

"You displeasing God? When was that?"

"Many a time, Master Archy; but one special time. It was when you would not stop at the works, and wanted to go to college. I couldn't bear to be there without you, and I wanted to go where you went. Father and mother had great patience with me, and showed me the difference between the places God has put each of us in. They said perhaps you, sir, were to have a fortune to spend, and must be educated for any high calling in store for you; and they prayed God to give you grace to do just his will and not your own; and I was to earn my living in God's way myself, for two reasons—to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men,' and that I might 'have to give to him that needeth,' and wanted just the same grace to do God's will and not my own. They said, 'God is love, Robert, and could not plan

anything for you that is not wisest, and happiest, and best. If you love him you will try to be thankful and content.'"

"Robert," cried Archy, with energy, "if ever I should be a rich man you shall share my wealth."

"No, sir," and Robert's bright eyes beamed with mingled affection and self-respect; "no, dear Mr. Archy, my father is right. I will earn my bread in the sweat of my brow, so long as God enables me; and if he wills me to be helpless and poor I shall not despise your charity."

"Noble fellow!" murmured Archy; "he is the true man—I am nothing."

"You may be anything you like, sir, with God's blessing," said Robert, earnestly.

"Dear Robert, pray for it. I want that blessing;" and Archy's tears fell on the honest hand he clasped with respect and love such as he never felt before, even for his favourite Robert.

The year over, Archy in his father's office and Robert in the best position in his department of the works, were helping each other to serve God and adorn the station in which he had placed them.

To have Robert once more at home was not only comfort and pleasure to his parents, but the very delight of all his sisters and brothers, who looked up to him as example and friend and playfellow all in one. He lightened the task of bringing them up in the way in which he had preceded them, and proved the truth of the prediction, that the first child, well trained, will prove a blessing to all the rest.

On his return home, however, there was a blank to

his heart. Milly, his first and dearest friend and companion, was not there. The little half-drowned heroine of the wrecked goloshes was away, trying to repay in love and care an early debt of gratitude.

When Milly had grown up a useful girl, able to manage the duties of their neat household almost as well as her dear mother herself, it became a serious point of consideration that she should take service in some Christian family. All at home would miss her, but William remarked, with a kind look on his second daughter, "that Susy could now do a great deal to help mother, and would try to fill dear Milly's place." Gratifying as was the father's approbation, Susy had her own private convictions that nobody ever was so good as Milly, nor ever would be, and it would be next to impossible to do without her.

The daughters of the British working classes are of quite as much real consequence as some of them seem to think, though in a very different way. From them comes the needful fulfilment of certain labour, responsibility, and trust, for which they expect to receive an adequate return in money and kindness. Their power to make or mar the comfort of a household cannot be exaggerated; and those who discharge their duties in the fear of God, not as "eye-servants," cannot be too highly valued. Why is the number of these so small? Why should the working mother, in her oversight of home, forget that one portion of her maternal duty is to make the future servant worthy to be received and valued in the position she is to undertake? Why should her contributions to the well-being of society occupy so light a place in her idea of a mother's care? May not one reason be that there is

so little sympathy with the wants and feelings of those whom God has placed above them? So much selfish reluctance to take present trouble for future benefit, so little thought of God's superintending providence over station and duty in every class; in fact, so little true religion shedding contentment over the spirit, and sanctifying the conduct in daily life? May God help our working mothers to detect the cause, and amend it.

But, whether rightly considered by employers and servants or not, it is a fact that we are dependent on each other, and that God has ordered it so. Let none marvel at discord and dissatisfaction where that fact is not willingly and thankfully recognised; and let not servants quarrel with employers because they wish to be served with fidelity. How many a child of anxious parents is just her nursery-maid reproduced in the drawing-room in silk and muslin! How many a fair girl, as she moves in her place in society, is bearing there the opinions and advices of her waiting-maid! Influence! Oh, mothers in lowly life, think of your high responsibility before God when you meditate sending your daughters into what you call "good families," where their influence may carry a blessing or a bane to the children and children's children of those they profess to serve. Verily you will be called to give account of your stewardship in this matter.

While considering what kind of service was best suited for Milly, and if she were fit for it, William and Susan received a letter from Farmer Hayes, respecting his own declining health; and hinting also that, though she did not herself admit it, while care-

fully as ever attending to him, his good wife was not quite so strong as she used to be. Would they mind sparing Milly for a while to take care of their old uncle and aunt?

There was no need to question the matter. Affection and gratitude made it clear; and so Milly's first service from home was as much like home as could be, saving the presence of the children.

"Bless the lass," said the farmer, as he welcomed his former pet in the modest neatly dressed maiden: "she's just her mother over again. Why, Milly, you make me feel I must be getting old; but that doesn't matter, does it, when one knows that every day brings us nearer the home above."

Grateful love to Mr. and Mrs. Hayes was among the cherished feelings of Milly's youth; and to be useful to them in their old age was a real satisfaction. There were few things she could not do nicely, whether ironing her aunt's caps, making some little delicacy to tempt her uncle's failing appetite, or keeping his account book neat and straight; whether polishing tables and tins, or mending the old linen that Mrs. Hayes persisted was to last her time. There was some sense, they said, in bringing up a girl in that way; and if she didn't know how far it was to the moon, nor what the world was like before Adam, what did it matter? Astronomy, and geology, and drawing, and figures on a slate set up like a regiment, didn't make an economical manager, nor ply the housewife's needle; and yet Milly's education would make her what she ought to be—a sensible, useful woman.

But there was the charm of simplicity and unselfish-

ness which bade fair also to make Milly a lovable woman. She was not intent upon herself: her young life had been a quiet unostentatious habit of doing and thinking for others. The several babies she had assisted her mother to tend at home, while due time was also found for every suitable acquirement at school, had made her thoughtful and self-denying, light of step, and kind in manner; and if Milly Taylor could have reproduced herself in any child she petted and nursed, no harm would have been done to any station in society.

However, Mrs. Hayes had one serious anxiety about Milly, and looked jealously on every one of the male sex who called, or chatted, or did anything polite or attentive. The fact was, she said, there was no lad about there good enough to match with Milly; and she would not take the responsibility of anybody presuming to fall in love under her roof.

She need not have been fidgetty on that point; for Milly was not on the look-out for admirers, and she had too happy and admirable models of manhood in her own dear father and brother, to be satisfied with any flatterer who might pretend to her regard; while the maidenly reserve and dignity of her demeanour gave no encouragement to flirtation.

Milly had been for some time at the farm, daily becoming more and more needful to her good old uncle, reading to him, helping him about his farm, and assisting her aunt to keep all his affairs in the usual order, when he took it into his head that he must see Robert again, before he could "depart in peace." Robert was at home then, and leave was soon obtained for the visit.

"I saw the seed-time: I should like to see something of the harvest," said Jonathan Hayes. "You and Robert seemed to love Jesus in your childhood, Milly: I want to hear you both say that you mean to love him and serve him for ever."

"Indeed Robert does it, uncle," warmly replied the sister; "and I—I hope, I try to do it too."

"To be sure she does," said Mrs. Hayes: "what else could make her a good girl? What matter words when the life tells the right tale, I want to know?"

"You are right, quite right," said the farmer. Nevertheless he would have the mouth witness a good confession, and seemed perfectly happy when he heard it.

"The Lord God Almighty bless you, my children," he said. "I shan't live to see what figures you make in the world by-and-by; but I shall be waiting for you in the next. Take an old man's word for it: you have had a good bringing up, and will be condemned with the worst, if you don't stand among the best of your kind. I like to think I shall leave you treading in the good steps of your parents before you. Dear wife," he continued, "you don't mind me telling these children, do you, that they brought God's blessing into our house?"

"Not I, indeed," said Mrs. Hayes: "I've as good cause to say it as you; for I'm sure there was no God here till they came."

"If I could paint a picture," he continued, "it should be two little children on their knees, teaching an old sinner to pray; and I'd give that picture to the mother who taught them. You don't remember

it, children, but we do—that night that old Jonathan Hayes broke down, pride, sin, unbelief and all, over your two little heads. Don't wonder, then, that I wanted to see you both again, and to know for sure that children, trained in the way they should go, when they are old will not depart from it."

He put his hand on their heads that night, and touchingly gave them, as he said, an old saved sinner's blessing; and the morning after he was not, for God had taken him. And a part of his song in the eternal world would doubtless be a testimony to what parents may do, and children may be, unaided by any special favour, except that which is sought and found at the hand of God, and blesses alike the hearts and homes of high or low degree.

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