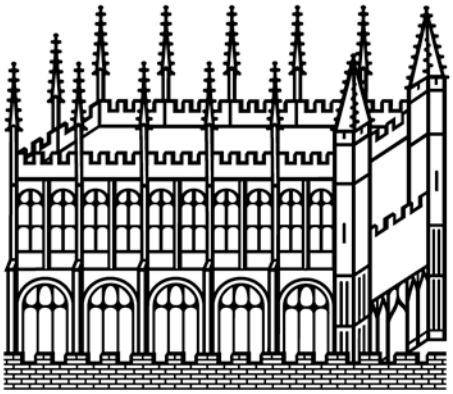


Bodleian Libraries

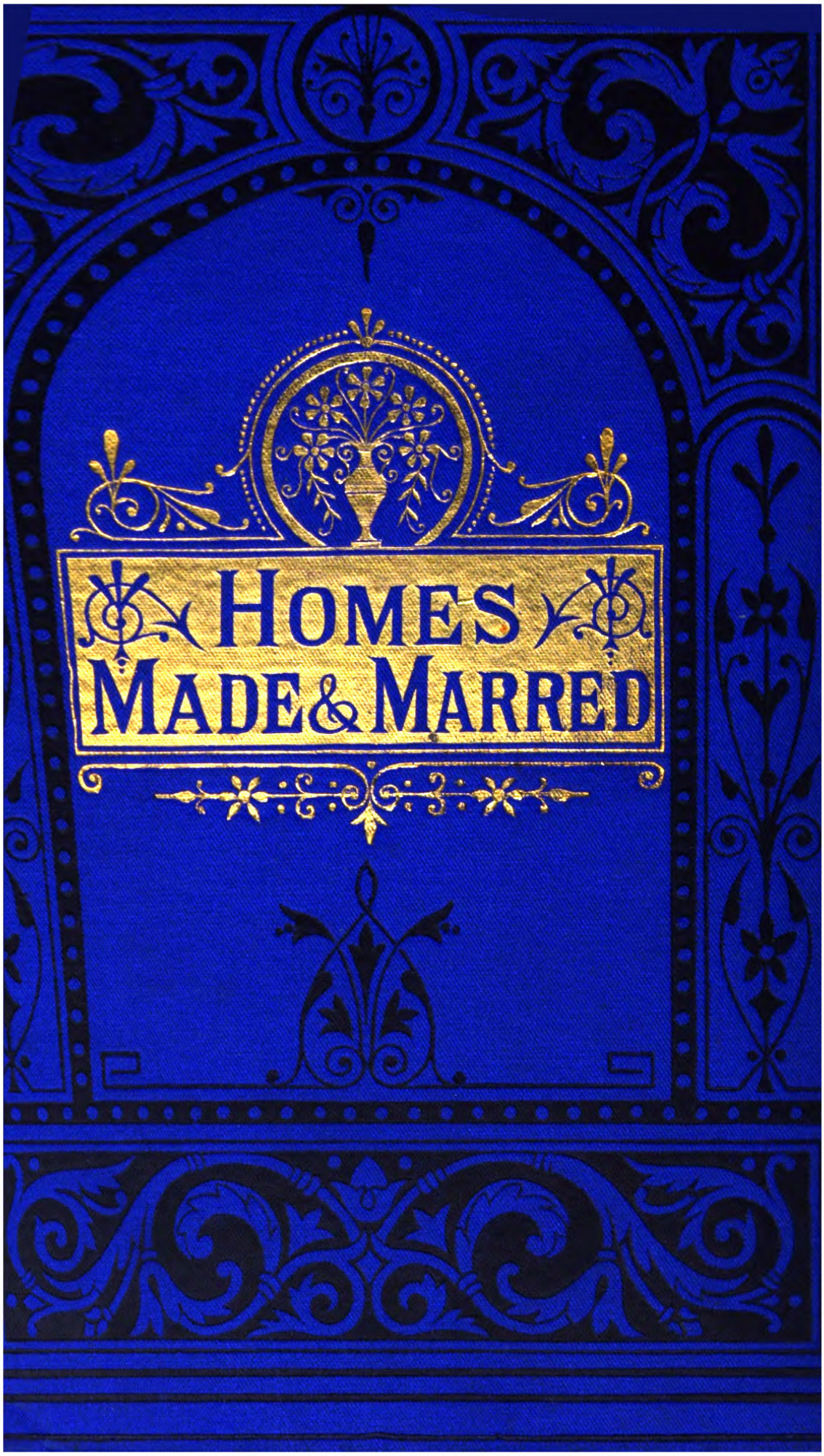
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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

For more information see:

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

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


HOMES
MADE & MARRED

600065277X

HOMES MADE AND MARRED.

A FAREWELL VISIT.

HOMES MADE AND MARRED.

A BOOK FOR

WORKING MEN AND THEIR WIVES.

BODLEIANA BIBLIOTHECA

LONDON:
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND 164, PICCADILLY.

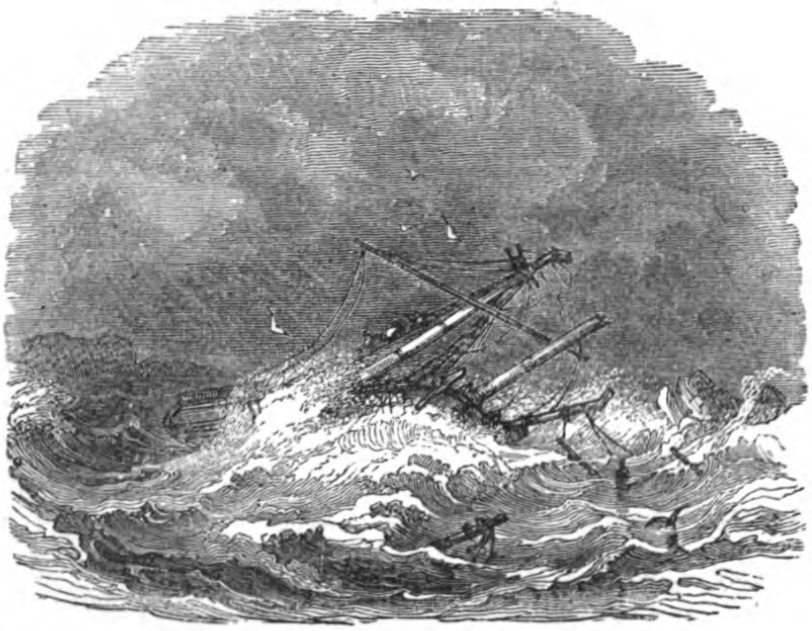
251. c. 209.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	HOPES AND PROSPECTS	1
II.	OUR OWN FIRESIDE	8
III.	MORE THINGS "PUT OUT" THAN THE BRICK	14
IV.	FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT	20
V.	TURNED INSIDE OUT	27
VI.	IN DISAPPOINTMENT	31
VII.	EVIL COMMUNICATIONS	37
VIII.	CAUGHT AND CAPTURED	44
IX.	WOES AND WARNINGS	50
X.	NEW SCENES AMONG OLD FRIENDS	57
XI.	IMPORTANT POINTS	64
XII.	WITH THE "DOORS SHUT"	70
XIII.	THE LAMP LIGHTED	77
XIV.	STITCHING AND TALKING	85
XV.	SOLEMN FACTS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE	92

Contents.

CHAP.		PAGE
XVI.	THE BOTTOM OF THE INCLINE	96
XVII.	DELUSIONS DISPELLED	103
XVIII.	FRIENDS WORTH KEEPING	111
XIX.	IN "THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK"	117
XX.	A DISCOMFITURE	126
XXI.	A SORROWFUL SURPRISE	133
XXII.	SIN AND PUNISHMENT	144
XXIII.	SHIPWRECKED	150
XXIV.	ADDITION WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT	157
XXV.	TRYING CONSEQUENCES	164
XXVI.	AN ELOPEMENT	175
XXVII.	DOMESTIC REVELATIONS	182
XXVIII.	IN CONCLUSION	191



HOMES MADE AND MARRED.

CHAPTER I.

HOPES AND PROSPECTS.

"MAMMA, do come and see our beautiful new swing!" cried a little boy, rushing into his mother's sitting-room; "Mr. Hill has finished, and he would like to know that you think it is all right."

Mrs. Oakland immediately rose and followed, to inspect the new appliances which had been erected for amusement and exercise, and stood while an intelligent workman described to her the strength and the security of the plans. The lady was quite satisfied, and thanked him warmly for the skill and trouble he had bestowed upon his work.

He was a fine-looking young man, with a well-formed head, a clear, bright eye, and a strong arm, and might have stood as a model of a British workman. His cheek glowed and his heart warmed with the well-earned praise; and if the lady were pleased, so certainly was he.

The young man seemed to hesitate for a moment after receiving thanks for his work, and then, twisting his cap once or twice round on his hand,—

"If you please, ma'am," said he, "if it's not intruding too much, might I beg a few words with you?"

"Certainly, Mr. Hill," she replied. "Come to the house; we will leave the children to their new swing."

"I beg pardon, ma'am; but if you'll just walk a little this way, I would rather not go to the house;" and Matthew Hill glanced involuntarily at his working jacket and tool-basket.

The lady, somewhat perplexed, walked with him towards the garden gate.

"I beg pardon, ma'am; but you know Jane?" said the young workman, abruptly.

"Jane, whom? My housemaid?" said Mrs. Oakland, and a new light broke upon her mind; "oh yes, I have known Jane for several years."

"And you have been very kind to her, ma'am, I know."

"She is an orphan, and, having no other home, I have overlooked many things that might have deprived her of one with me," said Mrs. Oakland. She felt as if she must at least say so much, fearing that Matthew was thinking of placing his happiness in very precarious keeping.

Matthew's bright face clouded for an instant, but, recovering, he proceeded rapidly:

"Well, ma'am, you see Jane and I think of going to housekeeping together, and she seemed against asking you to spare her because she has been so long with you, and feels your house to be her home like. I hope you will not take it amiss that I made bold to speak for her."

"Certainly not, Mr. Hill, I have no right to feel anything but the sincerest wish for your mutual happiness."

"Many thanks to you, ma'am," said Hill, gratefully, "and Jane would not think of going until you are suited."

"Stay, Matthew," said Mrs. Oakland as he was about to leave the garden, "may I ask you a question about yourself?"

"Surely, ma'am, but I can pretty well guess what it is," said he, smiling; "you would ask if I've kept my word since that sad time at the fair. I have indeed, and I'm quite sure, with Jane to keep me at home, and make it happy there, I shall not even need the pledge any more."

"Ah, Matthew, do not depend on any earthly motive, however dear: you cannot tell how soon it might fail you. Avoid temptation on the principle of loving obedience to your forgiving Saviour, and his strength will be your safeguard. Jane is a valuable young woman in many things, but you must not fancy that she is so perfect as never to disappoint you in anything."

"I'm sure she will be only too good a wife for me, ma'am," said the lover, responding to Mrs. Oakland's smiling caution.

"Well, I trust she will not be of your opinion, Matthew, but will feel that she cannot do too much to enable you to maintain it. So Jane shall be at liberty whenever you both desire it."

Matthew again warmly thanked her and went his way, and Mrs. Oakland continued for some time to walk slowly up and down the path, as if counting the gravel stones at her feet.

Had she been quite true with Matthew? she asked herself. Was it her duty to warn him of a rock on which she feared his sunny hopes might be wrecked? She had certainly ventured to speak of himself. But ought she not to have spoken of Jane, and told him her experience of her character in the family—her frequent fits of sullenness, her pride, her bad temper? Probably it was now too late; he would be sure to hope the best, his heart would refuse to doubt or fear, and no good would be done. But she could speak earnestly to Jane, and did so without delay.

A respectable-looking and rather pretty young woman obeyed the summons to the dressing-room.

"Come in, Jane," said her mistress, kindly, "I want to have a little talk with you. Sit down, and try to feel that I really am what I have tried to prove myself, your sincere friend."

Jane had a tolerable notion of what was coming, for she knew that Matthew Hill intended to "break it" to Mrs. Oakland, because she said she could not do it herself, and she knew that her mistress was sufficiently interested in him to think it no liberty that he should do so for her. So Jane only coloured a little, and picked up some tiny ends of thread which she spied on the carpet.

"I will not ask you if you thoroughly know your own mind with respect to Matthew Hill, Jane. He is a young man whose affection any young woman may feel honoured to possess, and I assume that in accepting it you give him a heart full of affection in return, with a determination by God's help to be to him a true, good wife."

"I hope so, indeed, ma'am," said Jane; "I'm sure I mean it."

"But, Jane, let me remind you that you cannot treat Mr. Hill as you have too often treated me when anything vexed you. You cannot give him a month's notice, and bid him 'suit himself' when you get a little out of temper, Jane."

Jane could scarcely help laughing at the idea; yet she knew full well that it was to her mistress's forbearance and patience that she owed the home she had enjoyed so long, and that she had not been tossed from place to place at the mercy of her own temper.

"Now, Jane," continued Mrs. Oakland, kindly, "I do not want to bring up any of our old grievances, or to remind you needlessly of anything that we have agreed to forget; but, as I parted from Matthew just now, and saw his honest joy in the thought of having you to make him a happy home, I did feel a painful misgiving lest he should be disappointed. I am so fearful lest your temper should prove a hindrance to your

comfort and his, and lest anything disagreeable at home should lessen his love for it, and cause him to seek other companionship and relaxation."

"He assures me there is no fear of it, ma'am," said Jane; "it was only once that he got overtaken, as it were, and he was so ashamed he is not likely to do it again."

"But if, unhappily, he did under sudden temptation so far forget himself and all his promises and resolutions, how would you bear it, Jane? Would your temper be roused, and would you reproach and taunt him, and try to make him feel how he had fallen in your eyes? or would you kneel by him, pray for him, bear with him, forgive him, and let him see that he has grieved rather than angered you, and so lead him to hate his sin, and dread to throw away the love and respect of an affectionate, forbearing wife? Would you mourn his fall with him before God, or would you raise a storm about his offence against you? On the conduct of many a wife at such a moment of trial has hung the future of her own and her husband's happiness."

"I dare say I should be dreadfully put out," said Jane, "but I would try to do right, and I don't think there's any fear of Matthew."

"Well, I pray that it may be so," said the lady; "but suppose other more probable provocations—some hasty word that might seem to reflect on your management or doubt your wisdom; some little failure in attention to your wishes,—would you flaunt and toss your head, and declare that you are not going to be 'put upon' by anybody, that you won't be interfered with—you know your duty, and you don't want teaching, and so on? Or would you say, 'Matthew is tired; I won't say anything until he is rested, and then I can show him that I did my best;' or 'Matthew has had something vex him at his work; I know he does not mean to be unkind; he

loves me and I love him, and we did not come together to quarrel over trifles; he shall have a nice peaceful evening, and I'll do all I can to make him forget outside worries in home blessings'? Will you do thus, Jane?"

"I can try," said Jane, softly, feeling how thoroughly her mistress had described her usual habit, while giving in contrast a description of duty.

"I know your house will be a model of neatness and cleanliness, Jane," continued Mrs. Oakland, kindly; "but only a loving, gentle spirit can make it truly home to a husband under all conditions of health, and feeling, and circumstance. Remember it is not a trial, a temporary engagement that either may put an end to at will, but for life, through good and ill, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, youth and middle life and old age; always, ever, needing to be kind, affectionate, attentive, punctual about meals and work, self-denying daily, hourly. Oh, Jane! it requires love, much love, constant love, patient love to sustain happily; it requires high principle to persevere uncomplainingly, acting always from right motives within, whatever be the temptations and provocations without. I don't want to discourage you, but wish you to look at it as it really is, and not only at the fair picture that you are both sketching so brightly as you think of each other in the prime of your days, and all things prospering round you. I am no longer an interested party, you know, except as I desire your happiness, therefore I venture to speak earnestly about those points on which I fear you may make trouble for yourself and others. When you have been out of temper with me, I could leave you to recover, and I fancied I knew how to treat and excuse you. But a husband cannot rightly get far out of your way, and he will not always excuse you. He will be surprised at first, then disappointed, then angry, and will forget his own faults in comparison with yours, or he will justify

them by yours, and then will come a struggle for mastery that will drive peace and love from home and heart. Then—

'Ruder words will soon rush in
To spread the breach that words begin,
And eyes forget the gentle ray
They wore in courtship's smiling day,
And voices lose the tone that shed
A tenderness round all they said,
Till fast declining one by one
The sweetnesses of love are gone,
And hearts, so late united, seem
Like broken clouds, or like the stream
That smiling left the mountain's brow,
As if its waters ne'er could sever,
Yet ere it reach the plain below,
Breaks into floods that part for ever.'

I would not have it thus with you, Jane, and therefore I do entreat you to pray very earnestly for God's help to subdue your temper, and to attain that 'ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' which, beautiful always and everywhere, is never more lovely than when it adorns the brow and heart of a trusted, honoured wife."

"Perhaps, ma'am," said Jane, struggling with a host of feelings that she could not have very well defined, "perhaps you think I ought not to get married at all."

"Oh no, Jane, certainly I do not, if, conscious of your weakness, you seek the only strength that can control and finally conquer in the battle you must fight with yourself. I know that God will be faithful to you, and if you fail the fault will be wholly your own. Keeping close to the meek and lowly One, dear Jane, you may be a good and happy wife; but if you give way to your natural pride and temper, you will too soon have reason to wish you had remained unmarried. I shall hope the best, and shall enjoy witnessing it."

"And perhaps, ma'am, you will remind me if you see—if

you think I am going wrong. Matthew thinks a great deal of your opinion, ma'am."

"Poor Matthew!" thought the lady; "he has not chosen wisely, I fear, but now only time can show."

Some weeks afterwards Jane was married from this her only place of service, and settled in a neat cottage, which it was her delight to keep like a little palace.

CHAPTER II.

OUR OWN FIRESIDE.

FOR a time all went comfortably in the neat home of Matthew Hill and his thrifty wife, who imagined herself profited by the good advice of her mistress, while, in fact, few things occurred to test the reality of improvement in her temper. She had good health and her own way, and it is hard indeed if people cannot be good-tempered under such circumstances. It might happen occasionally that "nasty showers" took liberties with the nice clean clothes that hung to dry in the little garden, or a "stupid iron" made itself too hot at the bars; but the shower did not care for rude remarks upon its untimely interference, and the iron could do nothing but stand its ground quietly until it and its mistress got cool again. So Mrs. Hill under such and similar provocations always had both first and last word, and nobody seemed any the worse.

The first interruption to a species of selfishness in the order of her house and her time came in so pretty a form that Mrs. Hill could not possibly resent it, but no longer could she

have so entirely her own way. With the beautiful bright eyes and the soft little hands came very stout lungs, and there was very soon no doubt who was master of the position.

"But, Matthew, we mustn't spoil him," said Jane one evening, as Matthew delightedly held a piece of sugar to the clamorous mouth, while Jane set the tea-table and broiled the savoury rasher.

"Oh no!" said Matthew, with a young father's smiling sense of his immense power over the tiny thing that sprawls helplessly in his arms, "oh no, I hate spoiled children; but, dear me, he's sucked in the whole lump! Here, Jane, oh! what shall we do?"

And really it was an alarming question, the greedy baby was nearly choked, and got very dark in the face; Jane screamed and rushed to seize him, with a slap on his back and a violent shake, while Matthew, the picture of horror, stammered out an inquiry whether he should run for a doctor.

"Yes, no, stop a bit," said Jane; "oh dear, he's better now;" and she gave a sigh of relief as the sugar scratched its way down to dissolve at leisure, and the child, breathing again, made the most of his grievance.

Poor Matthew felt as if he could knock his own head off for his awkwardness, but a flush rose up to his very brow when Jane repulsed him from caressing the recovered sufferer, calling him "clumsy," and "a fool," and "not fit to touch anything so tender as an infant."

Mr. Hill did not care for his tea then, and sat moodily silent while his wife rocked her baby and herself with noisy vigour by the fireside. But at last, allowing generously for the roused instincts of maternal feeling over a suffering child, he tried to think no more of her insulting language, and to bring things round again to harmony and comfort.

But, nevertheless, mischief was done; Jane had shown what

she could say and be; and her husband, while kindly forgiving, could not wholly forget it. He loved his babe as dearly as she did, and if he did not handle it with the same thoughtful care, it was not through wilful negligence, but simply through ignorance; and there is a wide difference between the two.

During three or four years many such interruptions to domestic concord occurred, and disagreements became more serious on both sides. Then Jane would go in tears to her former mistress, whose kind offices were exerted to reconcile differences, and again there was peace for a time, Matthew protesting that, if Jane would but keep her temper, there would not be a better wife in all the land, nor a kinder, soberer husband than himself.

It was during one of these lulls in the doubtful elements that Matthew came in one evening from work more than usually kind and pleasant. Tea was soon ready, and with face and hands clean through that self-respect which belongs to a true gentleman, even if he be a working man, he sat down to his own table.

Mrs. Hill looked round proud and happy, and thought that the scene before her really was as pretty a picture as any that could adorn a book. There was her good-looking husband, and little Josy with his picture-cards building up a house on his low table, and Bessy with little fat hands trying to help him, and a baby, plump and happy, dozing in the cradle, and a clean hearth and shining irons, and a very well-conducted cat, tolerated not because Mrs. Hill had much regard for cats, but because it amused the children, and never returned their rough caresses with any but velvet paws and approving purrs.

Surely it was a scene to enjoy, and to set forth "home," an Englishman's home, and to endear the country where such

scenes can be, and to make life worth the toil and industry that maintains it in honour and peace.

Who should dare to intrude into this little "castle" to disturb the comfort of its lord, to ruffle the brow of its lady, and frighten its little olive-branches? Who indeed! Certainly nobody, and nothing that could get in at the door. But there

are other ways of access to the fireside of a house, a respectable English house, and one is, down the chimney.

The little family sat enjoying their comfort, all the more, perhaps, that a storm had arisen without, and wind blew and rain pattered, making the contrast more striking. Suddenly there came thump, bump, and clatter down that chimney, and

in an instant a fierce blaze in the fire and a cloud of soot and smoke burst from the grate, covering with a dusky mantle everything within the room.

Matthew Hill started, Mrs. Hill groaned, the elder children shouted, and the baby screamed with fright at the noises they made. All was confusion and dismay.

Mrs. Hill was the first to break forth in another key. "Did ever anybody see such a thing? It's a nasty brick, I do declare, come right down the chimney! Where's baby's porridge? Oh, it's as black as soot! Oh dear, what shall I do? Stand still, Josy, don't you see the mess? Matthew, do lift them out of the room. Get the brush. Bessy, stop that baby's crying, I can't bear the noise. Get out of the way, all of you. Oh dear, you're all as black as tinkers, and my nice clean room too. Do look! oh, I shall go wild. Stand still; don't set your feet in the nasty soot. Matthew, you're doing nothing—men have no sense; don't stand staring at me, man, get out of my way—you'll only make bad worse." And between the red of anger and the black of soot poor Mrs. Hill really was getting rather distressing to look at.

What a change came down that chimney! Was it possible that any one could enjoy such a scene? Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Hill had an enemy, and he enjoyed it immensely. From the very beginning of married life in Paradise there was one who hated its beauty and delighted to ruin its happiness, and he began his scheme with the wife. He saw her great power for good or for evil over the man to whom she was given, with tender consideration, as the best of all his blessings, and he persuaded her to use it for evil. And ever since that fatal day he has been busy in every Eden where love and happiness seek their home.

It must be confessed that soot is a very unmanageable visitor, and if bricks of a restless turn incline to ramble, soot

is too ready to join in the fun, and down they come together, as if resolved to play out the game at a comfortable fireside. Brick, however, has the worst of it, and, having merely stirred up soot, is obliged to lie like a lump of burnt clay where it fell, quite incapable of further demonstration. But not so soot; soot is of a volatile character, and remarkably frisky; no sooner down than up again with the smallest encouragement from any puff that comes in to see what is the matter; and with every fling of poor Mrs. Hill's arms and every flourish of her brush started up with a defiant whirligig to settle down in another spot, and leave its impression in some other form.

Let housewives say what they please, it is better to be gentle with soot. There are two very awkward neighbours in a crowd, a sweep and a miller, and the more politely you make way for them, the better for you.

Howbeit Mrs. Hill was not now in a mood to be polite to anything, and, instead of treating the intruder gently and calmly, she seemed bent on drawing out its most mischievous propensities.

It danced and popped about as if enjoying its escape from the chimney, made black kisses on the children's cheeks, dotted their hair, nestled in the baby's blankets, and all in such light fashion that a shake or two would have prevented any very disastrous effects of the liberty.

But Mrs. Hill had a heavy hand as well as a hasty temper, two things that soot seems to enjoy defying, and so the battle raged between them for two or three hours.

Chased from one place it alighted in another, and when Mrs. Hill pounced upon her tantalising foe, it took revenge in such a trail of blackness as left no doubt what had been there.

There was no comfort now by "our own fireside;" the children went shivering to bed, and blackened the sheet in

their haste to get out of their mother's way. Matthew having made several efforts to help, and been snubbed and abused for meddling, went to look out at his door because there was no seat within which he dared venture to take at present; the baby got very cross, and was scolded and petted by turns, and altogether the lights that twinkled in the distance through the mist gave a sort of hint that warmth and welcome might be found more conveniently just now at "The Crown." So Matthew slipped quietly out, and felt freer and bolder in the air.

Alas for the brick that came down the chimney!

CHAPTER III.

MORE THINGS "PUT OUT" THAN THE BRICK.

FOR a long time Mrs. Hill cleaned, dusted, and straightened without noticing the absence of her husband, but when she had finished her task and there was no one to say, "How nice and clean everything looks again!" and the baby had followed the other children to sleep and she felt alone, a fear came over her, and each tick of the clock seemed to warn her of worse troubles than a brick down the chimney. She guessed too truly where her husband must be.

She knew how he had been tempted before; she knew that he could not take much to drink without speedily losing his self-control; she knew, too, deep down in her secret heart, that she had driven him from home that night, and that if she had controlled her temper, allowed him to help in the sudden confusion, and made the best of a temporary annoyance, he

would have been at his own fireside now, to enjoy the comfort her exertions had in a measure restored. We say in a measure, for, after all, if kindness and forbearance and affection be wanting, the brightest hearth looks cheerless, and the tidiest room feels forlorn and chill.

Many a time did Mrs. Hill stir the fire and slide her hand in and out of the stocking she was mending without knowing exactly why, for she never wasted her coals, nor left a thin place undarned; but she was restless and disquieted, and tried to persuade herself that she was very tired, and very ill-used, and ought to feel very much offended.

Eleven o'clock, and Matthew not returned! Such a thing had not happened for more than a year, during which time he had resisted many a temptation to spend an evening at "The Crown," and had borne with many a rude and hasty speech from lips that should ever be graced with humility and breathe "the law of kindness."

Fear began to mingle with pride and displeasure, and Mrs. Hill went to the door to look out and listen. The rain pattered down and the night was cold and dreary, and, glancing at a peg in the wall of the lobby, she noticed that Matthew must have gone out in his thin house-jacket, for his comfortable coat hung where he usually placed it on coming home.

Suddenly she heard sounds as of laughter and singing, and the tramp of feet approaching.

"He was safe, at any rate," she thought, and should not have the satisfaction of finding that she had watched and waited for him, so she took her candle and went quietly up-stairs. But it was some time before Matthew Hill found his own door, and when he did so at last, he stumbled into darkness, and after a few ineffectual calls and complaints, lay down on the floor as the safest place for a man who did not quite know whether he stood on his head or his feet.

He had a confused notion of something having gone wrong, and that, not feeling sure of being altogether in the right himself, it was as well to keep out of Mrs. Hill's way.

But notwithstanding her pride in concealing the fact, Mrs. Hill *was* watching and listening with anxious interest. Alas! what wife could help it, when she had any regard for her husband, or any apprehension of the consequences of his intemperance? A drunkard! Who would not shudder with horror at the thought of a drunken husband and father?

After listening for some time, disgusted and indignant, Mrs. Hill heard nothing but a low growl occasionally, which subsided into a snore, and bursting into a passionate fit of tears, she threw herself on the bed and sobbed herself to sleep, leaving her wretched husband to his deserts, as she thought, in wet clothes and a tight neckcloth. The neckcloth nearly choked him, and the wet clothes gave him a fever.

How long she slept she knew not, but her candle had burnt almost into its socket, when a strange sound below seemed to arouse her. She rushed down-stairs in time to save her husband's life; he was already black in the face, and a few minutes more would have sent him all unprepared into eternity.

She succeeded, however, in arousing him, and getting him to bed, and it was well she did, for in a few hours he was prostrate with rheumatic fever and unable to move at all.

About half-past eight o'clock came a gentle tap at the house door, and a man engaged on some work with Matthew Hill looked in.

"Hope there's nothing the matter," said he, kindly, "but Hill hasn't been with us this morning."

"No, he isn't likely," said Mrs. Hill, in a disagreeable tone; "getting drunk at night isn't the way to be at work in the morning."

"Well, well, I *am* sorry!" replied the man. "Sure something must have happened to turn him, for it was only yesterday he was saying he had tried keeping sober so long now, that he didn't believe he would ever be in liquor again, and he cared for nothing but to make you and the children comfortable."

Mrs. Hill felt a terrible prick in her conscience, but she made no remark to palliate her husband's fault, and chose rather to excite pity for herself as an injured person.

In less than an hour came another tap at the door. This time it was a messenger from Mrs. Oakland's—where she went occasionally to give a little assistance, and where she still received much kindness.

"Please, if it's quite convenient, and if the children are going to school this morning, missus will be glad to speak to you; and you are to bring the baby with you," said the errand-boy.

'Here, stop, boy! Is it anything particular, do you know?" inquired Mrs. Hill.

"I rather think it is," said the boy, "for the cook looked in a great fuss, and bade me run directly."

"What's the matter, I wonder!" grumbled Mrs. Hill to herself. "*She* hasn't got a brick down *her* chimney, I suppose; such things don't happen to them as can afford it."

But being curious to know all about it, she dressed her baby very nicely, and, leaving the two older children at the infant school on her way, and without giving any explanation to the miserable sufferer in bed, she hastened to Mrs. Oakland's.

One of the young ladies seized the baby, and carried it off to the nursery, bidding Mrs. Hill go for pity's sake to mamma in the drawing-room.

There was Mrs. Oakland, with a little look of trouble in her face, but no ill-temper. Mrs. Hill took in the cause at a glance. All over the hearth, over the rug, over the beautiful

carpet for at least two yards round, over the pretty furniture, the ornaments, the ottomans, over everything, more or less, that stood within range, lay a black cover of soot.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Hill; "has a brick come down the chimney?"

"I don't know," said the lady; "but the soot has, and spoiled all the covers that you did so nicely for me. I thought you could take them off, and see what can be done with them before allowing any one else to touch them." "The carpet's quite spoiled," said Mrs. Hill, inwardly glad that *her* soot had found only a flagged floor. "Those ornaments will never come clean again," said she, pitifully; "and the new ottomans, with the young ladies' work, and the beautiful table-cover. Dear, dear! what a pity it is! what can be done?"

"We must make the best of it," said Mrs. Oakland, cheerfully. "I want to get the most delicate things away and shaken out before the carpet is touched. How thankful we should be that we had comfortable shelter last night. I suppose you felt the storm, Jane. How are your husband and children?"

Jane had then to tell what had happened, and Mrs. Oakland turned towards her with an earnest, anxious look.

"What made him go out last night, Jane?" she asked.

Mrs. Hill said she didn't know; she was cleaning up after the nasty brick had come down the chimney, and did not miss him until it got late.

"And did you ask him not to go out? Did you beg him to help you a little? Did you put your dear baby into his arms, and make it plead with him to keep from temptation?"

Jane's countenance fell before the appeal, and Mrs. Oakland guessed too truly how the miserable climax had been reached.

"Jane, Jane," said she, forgetting even the soot in her fear for the foolish woman before her, "you are deliberately ruining your own happiness, and helping your husband to add the ruin of home and family. Will nothing induce you to control that tongue and temper? Must you be taught your duty by terrible lessons in your own experience, such as I have often described to you from the experience of others? I do not wish to clear your husband of blame at your expense; his fault is very great, but I am sure his sorrow and shame will be great too. Pray go home at once, and attend to him kindly, and I will come and see him as soon as possible. Let us trust that all is not lost, and may God help you to fulfil the duty of a forgiving, loving wife."

Mrs. Hill was angry, and rudely replied that "she was not going to coax her husband to be good; that he knew his duty as well as she did, and was as much bound to do it; and she would not be dictated to by any one who could not see her side of the case; that he deserved to suffer, and she hoped he would;" and more to the same purpose; but Mrs. Oakland took no notice, and following to the nursery whither the mother went for her child, she kissed the little bright face, and breathed over it a prayer that its baby life might be shielded from discords of home, and love and peace still unite the parents.

Jane was silenced but not softened, and went home to be as wilful and disagreeable as she considered the occasion required. Poor creature, she was very miserable too, as most people will be, and deserve to be, who forget "the beams" in their own eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.

"WHAT a cross-grained woman that Mrs. Hill is!" said Benjamin Field to his wife, as he sat down to his supper. "If you had served me so, I don't know where we'd have been by this time." And he looked gratefully round his comfortable room, supplied as it was now with everything needful for use, and something more for good taste and mental cultivation. "But you didn't forget your promises, Nelly, though I—"

"Well, never mind, Ben. You don't forget, neither, now, and we're as happy as need be; only one thing, dear husband, don't let either of us forget that it is all of God's goodness to us, and nothing in ourselves. I do wonder how people get on at all who don't look to Him, and trust, and pray, and try to do His will. It seems as if a house must be terribly wanting for light and comfort where there's no God in it to bless and keep it."

"You got Him to come here and do it all, Nelly," said Ben; "and I feel it more than ever after being at poor Hill's."

"I'm afraid Mrs. Hill forgets who can help her in her trouble," said Mrs. Field; "I never listen to gossip, but it grieved me sadly to hear that her husband has been drinking again after keeping so steady and industrious such a good long while; I was obliged to hear that, but I asked no questions about it."

"Well, it's my belief she'll have more trouble yet, for what do you think? She lets me go up to speak to him if I like; so I did; and there the poor fellow lies in pain, and, I may say, sorrow too, and she hasn't given him a kind word since, and won't let the children go near him. So he told me this evening that he shall get Mrs. Oakland to send him a ticket for the Infirmary, and he'll go there and be nursed, and give her no more trouble."

"Oh, Ben! does she know? Will she bear to let strangers nurse him for charity, while she can do it herself for love?"

"I fancy she will, Nelly; there's no knowing what a proud, cross woman will do. *You* wouldn't, unless you felt sure I'd be really better tended and more comfortable, which you know might happen in an accident or something sudden of that sort, and even then I don't know how I could be better off than with you for my nurse. Why, Nelly, wasn't it your kindness, your prayers, your forgiveness, your patience, that made me see and feel what a brute I was, and how I was breaking your heart and bringing you and the children to starvation?"

"Under God. Oh, Ben! He helped me, He taught me. I couldn't have done it of myself."

"Well, any way, it was you took in what the Lord taught you," persisted Ben, who never could separate the two as his humble, Christian wife did, ever blessing her God for the happy change in her husband, "and while I thank Him, do you think I can help thanking you too, my good, kind Nelly?" and tears—yes, not sentimental drops that meant nothing particular, but manly, honourable, beautiful tears—glistened in the husband's eyes, his heart's true tribute to a good wife's patient love and duty. And Nelly, with sympathetic light in hers, made up of smiles and tears together,

bent her matronly head as she rose to hand his cup of tea, and gave and received the kiss of true affection.

Well might Benjamin bless her, for she had been as a guardian angel to him.

"But, as I was saying, Nelly, it's a very bad thing for them both, this ugly temper of hers; for though I don't mean to excuse any man who sins—nay, I just loathe myself when I think of it—still, if a man doesn't fear God he does make excuses for himself if he can, and a drunkard thinks he can silence anybody about it if he can say he has a cross-patch of a wife and a miserable home, and he can't be expected to abide her ways. It makes people pity him too, and his own real wickedness gets softened down or covered up altogether with a heap of blame on her—more, perhaps, a deal than she may really deserve; for, after all, it *is* a shame, and it *is* provoking to see a man drink away his earnings and make a sot of himself while his poor family want bread. Hill says if his wife had behaved different that night when the soot vexed her he'd have helped her clean up or do anything she bade him, but her vixenish temper drove him out at last when he could bear it no longer. She was in the room when he said this, and, instead of letting it be, she flew out again, the foolish thing, and said 'she wasn't Job, and never pretended to be, to have bricks and soot down the chimney and think nothing about the mess, and that she'd as good a right to her temper as he to his drink.' And then Hill said, wearily, 'Well, only remember the temper came first, that's all;' and then she went on again, determined to have the last word, until I was heart-sick to hear them. But I can't help being sorry for Hill."

And Mrs. Field was sorry for him too, and in her wifely heart tried to think what she could do to help.

"Perhaps the children are in her way," said she; "suppose

I just run and offer to take care of them while Mr. Hill is laid up?"

"Suppose you do—a very good thought, Nelly; she said something about tiresome brats getting under her feet every minute, and the slap she gave the boy he passed on to his little sister, and there was a terrible uproar for a bit."

"And, Nelly," continued Benjamin, "if she snubs you, don't mind it, but speak a kind word for poor Matthew. She might bear it from you if she knows—"

"She knows nothing from me, dear husband; but if I can do any good I will advise her."

"Ay, Nelly, show her your way, and how you did."

"God's way, as the Bible taught it me," softly murmured Mrs. Field, as she put on her bonnet and set out on her neighbourly errand, leaving her husband in charge for a little while at home.

Mr. Field got up and stood looking after her as long as her neat, well-dressed figure was in sight, and when she just turned to nod to him he thought it was the very nicest, handsomest face in all Great Britain, and no man had a wife at all to compare with his.

Then he turned in, shut the door, and sat down again. The younger children were in bed and asleep, the elder were spending the day at their grandmother's, and all was quiet. It was just between daylight and dark, a lawful time for a working man who has been busy all day to sit at ease by his own fireside, and look into the red coal and see all sorts of curious things there if he pleases.

And Benjamin Field sat and looked, and as he gazed a very bright cinder shaped itself into the form of a young girl with a modest face and pleasant smile. And then a larger piece slid down beside her which was as like as it could be to

a sincere admirer, and the two seemed to talk confidentially together.

After a while a gentle fall occurred among the coals, and a large space, most reasonably supposed to represent a church or chapel, appeared, with a little group in the middle, and the youth and the maiden held hands and promised solemn things in solemn earnest before God and His people; and they bowed their heads, and a prayer was breathed over them, and a considerate cinder broke into a beautiful archway to let them pass, looking very happy.

Then somehow the church turned itself into a cottage, and the same young pair made home in it for some time. But a change came over everything; the youth lost his manly step and bold, strong look, and reeled about in a strange manner, and the girl's head drooped, and she was often weeping, weeping bitterly. And she would shrink from the rough voice with terror, and friends wondered at the care on her brow and the meek silence of her lips. Benjamin's brow knitted as memory still stung him, and a sudden collapse of the cottage recalled the moment when his cowardly hand first fell on the drooping head, and laid the light form prostrate at his feet.

The matter could no longer be hidden; angry faces now peered in, and the mother implored her heart-broken child to leave him to his sins and their punishment, to leave the husband to whom she had given her best, holiest affections to the drunken maniac's doom.

But she could not, she did not.

"Oh, mother!" she said, "it was for better, for worse, in sickness, and in health. If I can stay I will; he is sick—oh, how sick, because of sin! Who will have pity if his wife will not?"

So she stayed, alone, yet not alone, for sorrow had brought her to the Friend of the sorrowful, and He had been faithful

and true to her, and henceforth would never leave her nor forsake her.

He had shown her what sin is—something, at least, of what it is—and she saw herself a sinner too. She had set up idols and forgotten God. She saw herself to blame in the early days of her husband's temptation, but now a gentle voice breathed in her soul, a firm hand upheld and guided her steps, and Ellen Field learned to know herself and her God at the cross of Christ. She thought, and justly, in her self-abasement that the blood which was shed for her was shed for any who would believe in it. She thought, and truly, that if she had not been rejected, "none who come unto God by Jesus would be cast out;" and when she had given herself to Him and turned to face the world and life and duty again, the aspect of all was changed. A new life was imparted, a new mission begun, and she would never, never give up until her husband should have "like precious faith," and be partaker of her joy.

Benjamin Field writhed under certain recollections as his thoughts pursued their theme, and though he changed his attitude a little, the fire seemed to fascinate him, and he continued to gaze. A little room appeared next, and a bed, and a once strong man as weak as an infant lay there apparently unconscious. But he saw the faithful watcher as she noiselessly moved about, he felt the tender care, he heard the soft but earnest petitions to the God of mercy for his life, for his pardon, for his renewal by the Holy Spirit. He heard now and then a verse of the Holy Book telling of the only Saviour, the only hope, the only way, and truth, and life; of the blood that cleanseth from all sin, the free invitation to come and be cleansed, accepted, blessed; the condition of the sinner without Christ, consequently without anything but his sins; the condition of the believer in Christ, sin forgiven, and consequently the possessor of "all things" in Him.

He heard comforting words, soothing hymns; and a holy atmosphere seemed floating around him; while the house was kept so still, and everything he could need provided; while the scant portion of the watcher was often nothing all day, and many days, but a crust of bread and a cup of sugarless, milkless tea. Then the deep penitence, the shame, the privation, discovered to its full extent—the despair of reparation; then the gleam of hope, the smile of encouragement, the regaining of opportunity, of work, of confidence, of good opinion; restoration by degrees of home comforts, clothing, sufficient food, strength of body, peace of mind.

"Ellen, I dare swear a solemn oath that I will never, never touch intoxicating drink again," he had said.

"Oh, swear not at all, dear husband," she replied. "Put no trust in your own resolutions, but pray constantly to God. He knows how weak we are; He wants trust, not oaths. Ask for help to do right, and that is better than a thousand resolutions. Asking, praying, brings us into keeping company with God, and when we love His company we can't go and do what He hates."

"But shouldn't I sign the pledge, Nelly?"

"Oh yes, that will be right enough, but it is only a promise before man—a good, right promise, and people will feel that you have taken the right side, and mean to be reckoned on; but it's the heart that's at the bottom of it all, Ben, and only God can manage that."

So Benjamin signed the pledge, and men called him "a total abstainer," and laughed at him or approved of him according to their ideas on the subject; but he also took his poor, broken heart to God through Jesus Christ his Saviour, and there was joy in heaven over the repentant sinner. No, Benjamin Field could not be a drunkard again.

And just as the last sweet thoughts chased the frown which

preceding ones had brought upon his brow, he saw that the fire wanted coal, or would be out before Ellen came in; and so ended the retrospection.

CHAPTER V.

TURNED INSIDE OUT.

"WELL, well, who'd have thought it?" said one of a group of women who stood supporting a street corner while the operation was going forward of getting a poor invalid, wrapped in blankets, out of a neat cottage at a little distance into a carriage that stood at its door.

The speaker was a type of a class needing no introduction. The bit of black cap over the wilful dark hair, that after affording a nestling-place for dust of every quality, receives an occasional plaister of grease to quiet it down; the little shawl pinned together over the shoulders to hide the decay, dirt, and ill-fit of the every-day gown, the torn bottom of which is spread over a crinoline that no longer describes a circle; the boots, with broken elastic sticking out in little brown ends from the sides, one heel loose, and one toe gaping; the bold, sharp stare, the lazy attitude, the unattractive voice, are only too familiar sights in the streets of our towns.

No industrious, managing, true-hearted wife can be a gossip; she has too much that is useful, and good, and interesting to do, too much that is affectionate and anxious to think of; and her only interference in the affairs of her neighbours is

when she can speak a kind word to some one in trouble, or shake up a pillow, and make something nice for one who is sick.

But this was not Mrs. Swinden's way, and the more she talked about other people the worse and worse still became her own particular affairs.

"Well, well, who would have thought it? What do you think?" said she, as the carriage drove off with the sick man from the cottage. "That's Mrs. Oatland's fine doings. She's gone and sent poor Mr. Hill to the infirmary; he that can have all he wants at home, as comfortable as a lord. Isn't it a shame?"

"To be sure it is," said a congenial spirit, with a similar cap and gown, but instead of a similar shawl an old blackey-brown jacket, with broken button-holes, and two buttons hanging despairingly down, while a steel pin from a broken brooch does their duty in a slovenly manner.

"To be sure it is a shame, while deserving people would be the better of a little help. But they say it's all because of that termagant wife of his."

"Well, that's likely enough," responded Mrs. Swinden; "you see it has a very ugly look, and if he had died who knows what might have happened to Mrs. Hill. I know all about it on the best authority."

"She'd have been hung," said another of the group, decidedly.

"Hush, Mrs. Boult; it isn't always wise to say all you think, but among ourselves I may say that I never did think any good would come of her ways. Why, she makes the poor little children sit without shoes for fear of dirtying the floor, and go to bed in daylight to save candle. What can *she* need to save her money for, I wonder? It looks suspicious, *I* think, for all she made Matthew take the pledge

before she would marry him. But they do say that she and he have awful fights over the money-box, and the other night he got hold of it, and went off and spent every penny, spite of her, at the 'Crown;' and when he came in she nearly strangled him with rage, and made him stay in the kitchen all night in his wet clothes, and she wished he might die, the wicked creature. So Mrs. Oatland, instead of making peace between them as she ought—oughtn't she now?—"

"Of course she ought; it's shameful of her!" chimed in two other of these peace-loving ladies.

"Well, she comes and takes him away to the hospital, at least she helps him to go, poor man, instead of letting him be nursed and tended by his own wife. Such meddling and making in families, I've no patience with it. That's the way they want to keep us down, those meddlesome district people with their tracts and their talk. Why, she actually wanted to make me go to her meetings! Who's she, I wonder, to take upon herself, when I can go to any church or chapel and hear any parson I please, and send my children to school too? Me, indeed! as if I wanted dictating where I'd go, and what I should do with my own children. It's coming to something, indeed, if we're not to be mistresses in our own homes."

Leaving the excited neighbours to talk it out, and rehearse the pleasant consequences that might ensue if Matthew Hill should die; with the inquest, and the verdict against the unnatural wife, and her commital, trial, and execution, all which stood out in distinct probability before their fertile imaginations, let us just enter that door, and survey the "home" of which Mrs. Swinden indignantly proclaimed her resolution to be sole mistress.

Three chairs, one without a bottom, and another with a broken back, and a box turned over to represent a fourth; a rickety table which broke its leg in a squabble, and had

been re-set by unskilled hands ; a heap of cups, plates, jugs, and bottles on a shelf, huddled together as if mutually commiserating broken noses, cut lips, and other misfortunes which had befallen them in their domestic experience ; a bed not yet "made," and a bundle of something that was intended for another bed in one corner; dirty floors, an expiring fire with a heap of dust and ashes beneath it ; a kettle that has never sung since its lid was lost, and the bottom of an old tin case substituted, which it took the liberty of unseating as soon as the water got hot—on purpose, as Mrs. Swinden said, that she might scald her fingers in getting it out, such freaks have kettles, specially lidless ones. A poker, a shovel without a handle, a frying-pan with sundry holes burnt through it, a little skeleton of clock with a wry face and fingers that indicated some great internal disorder, with a few more odds and ends of make-shift housekeeping, completed the short list of furniture of Mrs. Swinden's "home."

There had been other possessions ; whither had they decamped ? Is an explanation needed ? Is there any housewife who would hesitate to point instinctively to two well-known receptacles whence character and property seldom revisit the scenes of their better days ? The public-house and the pawnshop could have told solemn tales of both in Mrs. Swinden's family chronicle.

CHAPTER VI.

IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

ITH returning health came little improvement in the feelings of Matthew Hill, and, so far from expressing any penitence for his great fault, he was obstinately bent on maintaining that he was himself the aggrieved party after all.

His wife had carefully attended to the rules of the hospital in supplying him with everything required, but had neither sought to see him, nor permitted his children to do so, nor conveyed any message of kindness. She nursed her own anger, and only expatiated upon the disgrace, misery, and sin of drunkenness with any one who inquired after his condition.

As Matthew Hill was a member of a club, and during the last year of sobriety and industry had saved a little money, no present inconvenience was felt in the family, and Mrs. Hill coldly declined any kind of assistance from the hands of her Christian neighbour, Mrs. Field.

Thus several weeks passed away.

"Well, Mrs. Hill," cried a cheery voice at her door one day, "I've just stopped to congratulate you. Matthew is declared well enough to leave the infirmary to-morrow, and I hope after a few days of your nursing we shall soon have him at work again."

Mrs. Hill was "much obliged" in her dryest manner; "she had heard so."

"And he'll never try that mischief again, Mrs. Hill," pleaded

Benjamin Field, anxiously. "So you'll let bygones be bygones; he's had a sharp lesson, and will be only too glad to get home again."

"We shall see," said Mrs. Hill, icily; "I should think he'll know better than to expect any trust in his words."

"Well, let us help him with kind hearts and hearty welcomes," ventured Mr. Field to say, and then he passed on, with some misgivings as to what she would "see" if she were not cautious of her extremely disagreeable ways—enough, he almost thought, to provoke Job himself, let alone a common person. Then came Mrs. Oakland, with a beautiful bouquet of her sweetest flowers, "to adorn the table," she said, "when Matthew should take his own seat again."

Inwardly, Mrs. Hill was immensely gratified, but her temper would not suffer her to appear so. She had rudely repulsed all the efforts of her kind friend to soften her displeasure towards her husband, and she would not now admit the propriety of treating him as if he had never so grossly offended her.

The next day the children danced about with delight at the news of "father coming home," and helped to keep everything in order against his arrival. In spite of herself, Mrs. Hill caught the infection, and smiled and moved about like a loving wife and happy mother in the midst of her household treasures.

He would leave the hospital in time to get home to tea, she thought. So a clean damask cloth was spread, the best tray and china brought out, tea-cakes that Matthew particularly enjoyed were prepared, the flowers filled a pretty vase, and the room never looked more thoroughly like a comfortable "home," not even on that memorable day when Matthew had complimented his "own fireside," and when its joys were so suddenly interrupted by the brick that came down the chimney.

Not that even a brick, followed by the contents of a dozen chimneys, could have really overthrown the happiness of home had it been based on a solid foundation, but when tempers are so touchy that one must feel "like walking on eggs" when near them, and resolutions are so weak that they must not be risked by a temptation, the security is, indeed, small against the outbreak of the one and the fall of the other. The same remedy alone can avail either; a heart brought under the power of God's grace may conquer any temper and bring resolution safe through any danger. Less will no more bind the strong enemies of peace than the green withes of the Philistines the limbs of Samson.

However, everything now testified that Mrs. Hill was in a most propitious mood, and meant that everything should show it.

Four o'clock. The children stationed themselves at the bright window, so clean that you could scarcely tell there was any glass to look through; the baby's clean bib was tied on; the little heads were smoothed again, and the kettle was placed in a convenient attitude for its song in due time.

Five o'clock. Perhaps Matthew might not be able to walk very fast yet, but presently, of course, he would get home.

Six o'clock. The children were tired of watching after two wonderfully patient hours, and, pitying them, their mother bade them come and have tea, and then they would enjoy seeing father get his by-and-by.

A disagreeable, cross sensation was beginning to rise that, after all, Matthew might choose to call somewhere else before coming home.

"May we have some of the cakes, mother?"

"Oh yes, I thought— But it doesn't matter, we can eat them ourselves." But Mrs. Hill ate not any. In vain, after a

hasty tea, the children resumed their watch; they had to go, bitterly disappointed, to bed.

The last little one was asleep, and Mrs. Hill had leisure to reflect. She had been softening all the day; she had intended to surprise her husband with a real welcome when no one else should see her come down from "the high horse" of her indignant displeasure, and, if he seemed really to regret the past, she would certainly forgive and forget, and they would be happy once more.

But this delay overthrew all her calculations, and she was getting extremely uncomfortable, when a gentle tap announced a visitor. She started and sprang forward, to be met by the kind, pleasant faces of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Field.

"Didn't you say that Matthew would be out of the infirmary to-day?" she asked, with as much composure as she could.

"Yes, is he not come?" replied and asked Benjamin, with a kind of gasp of dismay, adding kindly, "My wife and I couldn't help stepping down just to see if we should all have a bit of thanksgiving together."

"You must have been mistaken," faltered Mrs. Hill; "it couldn't be to-day."

"Well, I am very sorry," said Mr. Field; "but something may have happened to keep him another day or so. I'll go over the first thing in the morning and see, so we must bear our disappointment as well as we can."

But Benjamin was something more than disappointed, and nothing but the distance prevented him from going at once, but the next morning's post explained the mystery. A letter from Matthew Hill ran thus:—

"DEAR FRIEND,—I am out of ward, and am very much obliged to everybody who has shown me kindness. I have

never heard nor seen any sign that I should be welcome at home, and, as change of air will be good for me, I have determined to get it. I shall work somewhere and send my earnings to my family, so no one need think evil of me for going. Please give my love to my dear children, and don't let them forget me, and tell their mother to use any money of mine as she thinks best.

"I am, dear friend,

"Yours truly,

"MATTHEW HILL.

"To Mr. Field,

"Foreman at ——."

Mr. Field would almost as soon have stood in the pillory as convey this miserable intelligence to the waiting wife; but it must be done, and as tenderly as true and delicate feeling could do it, it was done.

"It's all one. If he don't care, no more do I," said Mrs. Hill, with a desperate effort to avoid choking: "so, if you please, Mr. Field, we'll say no more about it."

Never was the washing done so quickly as on that morning, never did clothes get such a wringing, and all in such solemn silence, while the children, awed and quiet, felt that something terrible had happened.

Kind Mrs. Oakland was soon with the stricken woman, but no sign of the disturbance within was allowed to betray the truth.

"Dear Jane," said Mrs. Oakland, "you feel more than you say, and I should not like to suppose you indifferent to this unexpected conduct. But let us hope the best. Our good friend Mr. Field will be sure to find him, and then a few lines from you will set all right."

Jane was "much obliged, but she didn't want any inter-

ference; he could come back when he pleased, and she should never ask him. If he chose to act in such a brutish manner she and the children were better without him, that was all."

And the unhappy woman shut herself up again in her proud temper, desperately parrying any sympathy that penetrated beyond the external facts of the case, but accepting all that could be offered to her as the victim of a husband's selfishness and ingratitude, the hardworking mother of forsaken children, and the most patient and persecuted of modern martyrs.

Mrs. Oakland and the Fields thought they saw deeper into her heart, and believed that real feeling, dreadful mortification, and wounded self-love strove with natural affection in a perpetual tempest there, without anything to comfort or subdue; and they prayed that the only One who can go where He will and act as He sees best, would breathe over the storm of passion, and open the stubborn heart to the influences of love and peace.

In the meantime they left no means untried to trace the misguided truant, and many were the fruitless errands to different places where it was probable he might seek employment. His letter spoke of sending his earnings to his family, and they then hoped for some clue; but the earnings arrived in the form of a note in an envelope addressed to Mr. Field, with the request that it might be given to "Mrs. Hill," and the information that he was not yet in full health, and should go to "foreign parts."

CHAPTER VII.

EVIL COMMUNICATIONS.

"WELL to be sure, Mrs. Hill, you *do* bear your troubles! Mrs. Smith, she says to me, says she, 'If there's a true hero in the world it's Mrs. Hill; she don't ask nobody's pity, nor nobody's help, but she goes and works herself to death before anybody will hear a complaint.' That's true, I says, but then it'll tell inwardly, poor thing, and we do feel it a duty, Mrs. Hill, to warn you, because you don't look the woman you did three months ago, and you'll be in your grave before you know it. You'll excuse me for venturing to speak, because it seems a liberty like; but, as I says, if it's done respectful and in real kindness, Mrs. Hill's too good a woman to take it amiss."

Mrs. Hill's countenance underwent several changes during this unexpected speech. She had never been a gossip, and this woman, and the set to which she was supposed to belong, had been considered altogether beneath her notice. Neither had any of the neighbours presumed to make free with her and her griefs to her face. But she was not insensible to the charm of notoriety among them, if it took a form so flattering to her self-love, and her sense of injury and oppression.

She had opened the door, and assumed the coldest expression of reserve when she perceived her visitor, but the knock had been modest, and the woman stood so respectfully

inquiring after her health and welfare that she could not but thaw a little, and invite her to take a seat, and bear patiently with her company for a few minutes. In those few minutes Mrs. Swinden profited by her opportunity; she got an invitation "to drop in again," which she failed not to do, and to her own great contentment found herself on another visit, seated in Matthew Hill's comfortable chair, with a fair prospect of a share in Mrs. Hill's supper.

"And you don't sleep much, I'll be bound," said she, in a pitiful tone; for supper without something "good" to drink with it was not at all to her mind; "who can wonder, with such troubles to bear, and not knowing what may happen to rob the dear children of their only friend? And you are getting weaker and weaker, and doing nothing to keep what strength you've got left."

As for strength, Mrs. Hill could not really plead any conscious difference at present, but when one feels cross and disagreeable, and disinclined to do one's duty, it is a very welcome suggestion that one is weak and delicate, and ought to be very careful—and Mrs. Hill gave a gentle nod and a sigh, in acknowledgment of the discernment of her visitor.

But with regard to sleep there was some truth in the remark. Mrs. Hill's sleep was broken by sensations that irritated her greatly. In the dark, and in her dreams, conscience made itself heard, and spoke of temper and pride, and self-will, and an unforgiving spirit, which had driven her husband to the desperate step that had almost widowed her, and robbed her home of its head, and her children of their protector.

Then would arise the thought of him—a wanderer, his home affections wounded and his fault exposed, yet the proof of his remembrance in the money sent through his friend,

Benjamin Field, to save her and his children from suffering by his absence.

Thus, sleep was wooed in vain, and Mrs. Hill longed for daylight and occupation to hush the tumult within, and build up again her defences of injured innocence and self-righteousness. She tried to think that God was on her side, or at least she was sure He ought to be, and it was not for her to change places with the offending party; *she* was not going to "give up" in that manner.

"Indeed, you must take something to make you sleep, dear Mrs. Hill, and with your leave I'll just step down street and bring you just a cordial—nothing strong, you know—but only what will soothe you nicely, and get you a night's rest."

"Oh, dear, no; don't take that trouble, I can bear it all; it isn't likely I can sleep, you know, as people do who've no sorrows," murmured Mrs. Hill. It had never struck her that there was anything in the world to make sleep, and she thought she had certainly been very forgetful of herself.

Mrs. Swinden had got outside the door, but putting her head in again, she said, "You know if the health needs it, it's no sin, even if you did take the pledge."

"*I* take the pledge!" exclaimed Mrs. Hill; "you don't suppose there ever was any need for *me* to do such a thing?"

"No, indeed I don't, but I didn't know but what you might when—when—"

"When Matthew did, I suppose. No, *I* don't need to promise to be sober. *I* know when I've had enough, I should think, else I *would* be ashamed of myself."

The tempter had struck the right chord for her purpose, and straightway went off for the "cordial."

"I've got only just enough for two nights," said she,

settling herself again, and looking to the kettle; "now I'll take the liberty to make it right for you myself."

"You must have the rest, Mrs. Swinden, if you please, I couldn't take it else. Yes, indeed, you must, and I must pay for it, too."

This was too obliging to be resisted, and over their glasses of spirit and water, the two women, so very different in character, habits, and position, got very intimate and confidential, and talked over their wrongs and their unappreciated merits until the candle spit and sputtered in its socket and warned Mrs. Swinden to depart. She had spent the proceeds of a portion of wearing apparel given to her by the lady who had employed her, in procuring the dose for the evening, and now repaid by Mrs. Hill, could not resist another glass on her way home, where she found her husband stumbling in, swearing and knocking about because there was no light, no supper, no fire, and no sound but the low wail of the youngest child, who had not been well all day, and lay huddled up with the others in a corner, where they had crept and fallen asleep.

Mrs. Hill went to bed with a confused notion that she had long misjudged this kind woman, and nothing doubting that the misery she had heard of in her family was caused solely by the evil habits of the husband. She did not know that this worthy neighbour had originated the report of the strangling, and excited the appetite of her respectable circle for a trial for murder; but being very restless and unhappy, and tired of herself, she accepted, from one who humoured her in her own conceits, the appearance of sympathy, which, true and warm, but also faithful, she had rejected from safer friends.

However, she did sleep long and heavily, and awoke late, with a headache. Well, so much time had been got over,

and that was something, and a little bustling would soon make up for it.

The children had been long awake, and wanted their breakfast, and for the first time in their lives their clothes were scrambled on without the usual washing and rubbing first. Then the fire was sulky, and the kettle wouldn't boil, and the wood that was stuffed between the bars to hasten it operated just the other way, for Mrs. Hill, having forgotten to bring it in from the yard the evening before, a heavy shower or two during the night had soaked it well.

So nothing went right, and little items in the list of her wrongs were laid to Matthew's account. What a wonderful reckoner is a selfish, ill-tempered woman!

Mrs. Swinden failed not to "drop in" presently to inquire after her neighbour's welfare, and had a ready excuse for the headache, and cross, nervous condition of the poor patient.

"It's because you are so weak, you see. You've let your strength go down too far, but in a week or two you'll be all right, depend upon it. I shall see, as a duty, that you don't neglect yourself any longer."

And "the duty" was so interesting that she could not prevail on herself to leave her new charge alone, settling herself at Mrs. Hill's fireside as often as she could find or invent any excuse for doing so, and often lamenting the impossibility of inviting her to her own home, which was, she admitted confidentially, a very miserable one from a cause she could not bring herself to say much about.

"Ah, my poor husband!" she said, putting her apron to her eyes, and murmuring pathetically, "he'll be the ruin of us all; I'm afraid in my heart he will, in spite of all I can say or do."

Of course Mrs. Hill was at no loss to understand. Had not

she suffered enough from *her* husband's temptation to drink, and did not *she* know too well the misery it made? "Ah, yes," she sighed, "wives had nothing to do but submit and suffer; drunken husbands were the plagues of the world—worse than the ten plagues of Egypt."

It was not long in coming to pass that the "little drop of cordial," mixed so carefully by Mrs. Swinden, seemed not quite sufficient to answer its purpose, and so after she was gone, Mrs. Hill, having a private bottle in reserve, would mix "just a drop more," for she needed both strengthening and sleep, and hadn't she a right to what was necessary for her health and comfort?"

And the lone woman sat by her cheerless hearth, and felt more and more the need of consolation, and the desire to silence altogether the voice of conscience, which was fast subsiding into faint and occasional whispers within her. And the sleep she got was heavy and unrefreshing. Oh, fatal delusion! How many a victim began thus with the idea of strengthening herself against sickness, and soothing the excitement of trouble; instead of waiting on Him who "giveth his beloved sleep," or comforts the wakeful hours with "songs in the night," and takes the weary and heavy laden into His arms of pardoning love in Christ Jesus, and soothes them to rest with "the peace that passeth understanding."

"Ah, poor thing," said Mrs. Swinden, as she stood among the gossips at the street corner, where she was sure to have somebody's business to explain or inquire into, her own house not being a tempting scene for a consultation. "Poor thing, she's no better than her neighbours, after all, nor half as proud as I took her to be. You'll see," she added, with a significant nod.

"Well," said Mrs. Smith, diving in a little closer among the party while the greengrocer was in sight (she was in his debt

for the herrings and stale cabbages on which she fed her husband and children when it was not convenient to get anything else, owing to supplies running short through the beer so needful to her delicate health), "well, she has took to you wonderful."

"Ay, she was losing sleep and getting so thin, and I persuaded her off the nonsense of going to bed on a drop of milk or porridge. She isn't the same woman to me since, 'cause she sees I'm her friend."

"And what about him?" asked one, eagerly.

"Oh, nobody knows; but he can hang himself if he likes so long as he only sends the money. She don't care a rush for him, and all right too; she's sick of doing for him from morning till night and no thanks for her pains."

"I say, Mrs. Swinden," said another woman, coming up and joining the group, with a jug in one hand and some pence in the other, "my James says your husband was going over the crossing last night just as the mail train came dashing by, and he and Kelly, who, you know, minds the rail there, had something to do to hold him back. Goodness me! It makes one shiver to think of it."

"Oh, then, don't think about it. He knows better than that anyway," said the wife.

"Well, you know best, in course, only I thought you ought to hear of it. James saw him home, but you weren't in, he said, and the children—"

"Oh, I'll see to him, never fear; he's as cowed as a beat dog when he's had too much if I come in sight. It's when he's sober that I've no peace of my life, always rating about nothing."

About nothing! Alas, poor man! But whoever began the mischief, they were equal now in all that distracted their home and degraded themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT AND CAPTURED.

"ANY news of your husband, Jane?" asked Mrs. Oakland, stepping in after a gentle tap as usual at the door. "I saw Mrs. Field yesterday, and she said that some more money had come for you. I hope there is more than money to tell me of."

"Nothing that I know of, ma'am," said Jane; "I'm sure I wonder that anybody troubles about him any more, the worthless—"

"Hush, Jane, I will not hear you speak of him in that way. It does no good; it helps to harden your own heart, and is very sad for the poor children. I have not given him up, and don't intend to do so. But I wanted to know also why the little ones have not been at school this week, and only part of last week; I'm sure you know, Jane, that only real interest in them causes me to inquire about it."

Jane's colour rose as she replied,

"It's my duty to save all I can, because I can't tell when the money may stop coming, and I must be ready with rent and things."

"That is very true, but I am nearly sure that one reason for sending it is that the children may be kept at school, and everything go on as usual at home."

But it was too evident that things were not going on quite as formerly.

Jane looked strange, and not so neat and tidy as she used to be; the window-blind was dirty and the hearth was unswept, though it was not particularly early. Could it be that

deep hidden grief and wounded affection made the forsaken wife indifferent to anything? And the thought touched Mrs. Oakland's kind heart.

"Dear Jane," said she, taking the young woman's reluctant hand, and making her sit down beside her, "will you trust me with the real state of your feeling towards Matthew? If your heart is softened about his unhappy fault, I promise you that everything shall be done to find him, and I am sure we should succeed; but unless sure that you would receive him kindly, we dare not insist upon his coming home to coldness and reproaches."

"If you know where he is, then, ma'am, you can say that, if he stops till I ask him back he'll stop a good bit yet," said Jane, bitterly. "I don't want any meddling between us, if you please; let him take his course, I say."

"I have no doubt it is a very miserable one, wherever he may be, and I know no more than you do," replied the lady, with wonderful patience. "But I know that he loved you dearly once, Jane, and was very fond and proud of his children, and while there are such feelings left to work upon, I would never despair of any one. Poor baby!" she added, turning to the cradle where the little one lay rocking near the fire, "you miss dear father's strong arms and game at play."

"Me want daddy—where's daddy?" said the youngest but one, taking courage before the lady to speak her mind, and looking sideways at her mother the while. "Daddy carry Daisy on his shoulder; never tired of me. Daddy sick now; he say, Pray God make poor daddy well again, and be a good man." And then the child hid her blushing face in the baby's coverlet.

Mrs. Oakland glanced from the child to the mother, and with tears in her eyes, turned to go.

"We shall be leaving home next month, Mrs. Hill; and if

anything is heard of Matthew, or any clue to his address, I lay it on your conscience to inform me of it. You will always be kept aware of our movements."

Mrs. Hill curtseyed slightly and said, "Of course, ma'am."

"Poor Jane!" thought her faithful friend, "she is certainly much altered; her ill-temper never used to be so continuous, but only broke out now and then. I fear her pride is killing her."

If the lady had looked a little closer into the cradle she would have seen something wrong there also, but she was too much occupied with the mother to notice the change in the baby.

The little creature looked sickly and strange, the full, round, firm cheek was white and flabby, the fat arms were become soft and thin. What could be the cause? Mrs. Hill said the child was teething, and very restless and troublesome, and so she had favoured it with some very decisive and effectual medicines to soothe it to sleep, and save herself the trouble of watching it. A little while before, Jane would have angrily denounced such practices as cruel and murderous; but it is wonderful how soon people become reconciled to means which favour their own selfish convenience, especially when embarked on a course they once shunned and condemned. Jane had touched the verge of a whirlpool, and in the dizzy attraction was forgetting the dignity of the matron and the tenderness of the mother. And all the while she was boasting of her great self-denials and her powers of self-control.

The Oakland family set out on a long journey, and at one of the midland stations had to wait a little time for the train to proceed. Mrs. Oakland sat on a bench near the door of the waiting-room, and her boys and girls were popping about the platform, peering into everything and observing every-

body while papa was getting the tickets. Presently Willy stopped short in a run, gave a shrill whistle, and dashed off again till he came up to his mother's side gasping for breath.

"Mamma, mamma, I've seen him!—he's there; look, look! it's Mr. Hill!"

Up sprang the lady, forgetful of cloaks, baskets, and umbrellas. "If you are sure, Willy, fly and keep him till I come." Away sped the child like an arrow, and in a few seconds clung fast by the arm of a tall, respectable-looking man, who was standing with his hands in the pockets of his working jacket watching a train that had just come in. He looked down in astonishment on his young captor.

"Why, Mr. Hill, don't you know me? Willy Oakland? Oh, I'm so glad I saw you. Here's mamma coming to speak to you, and you shan't run away any more. I'll hold you as tight as a prison," and, linking his hands round Matthew's arm, he jumped with glee.

The prisoner was evidently perplexed; he looked right and left, before and behind, as if thinking to shake off the boy and run, but after a moment or two he gave up the idea of escape, and walked forward to meet the lady.

"Go, Willy, dear, find papa and tell him where I am," said Mrs. Oakland, advancing with outstretched hand to Matthew.

"Oh, Mr. Hill," said she, kindly, "why have you cast off your old friends? But we have no time to talk much; only say that you will go home. I do entreat you to return to your family, and have done with this foolish conduct."

"You don't know all, ma'am; you didn't see," muttered Matthew.

"Yes, I do know, I did see, and I grieve for the cross you have had to bear, but it cannot excuse you from duty to your family. You and Jane share a responsibility before God, and one has no right to throw the whole upon the other. You

will go home, and set the example of forbearance and loving-kindness. Promise me this, and do it at once, before all is lost that makes home worth having; for we cannot understand Jane, she is much altered, and, oh, Matthew, if your neglect were to drive her to do something terrible, how would you feel? For your dear children's sake I beseech you to go home immediately."

"I don't wish it," said Matthew, doggedly; "I've got work, and I'll send money, but I'll not go until—"

"Do you know one Mrs. Swinden?" interrupted Mrs. Oakland, quickly.

"What, the drunken, dirty gossip that sets the whole street by the ears when— But I beg pardon, ma'am, yes, I know who she is."

"She is the close friend of your wife, of our once neat, pretty, industrious Jane. She takes her dirty, ill-behaved children to your house to play with yours when she likes, and sits there herself for hours together; she exercises some strange power there. Matthew, will you suffer it?"

"I don't see how my going back will help it," said Matthew, though much startled at the news.

"It is your duty to rule your household and your children in the fear of God, and to keep them from evil influences. They have not attended school for some time, and it is said, though I am not accustomed to heed idle rumours, that this Mrs. Swinden boasts of a great victory over Jane about something too dreadful to think of. I hope, I pray, that it is untrue."

"Will she keep her temper, and not goad me to do wrong?" said Matthew. "Is she sorry for her hard, unkind treatment of me when I was ill and grieved at my sin, and needed some word of comfort?"

"I dare not say, for I do not know. But, Matthew, you

must learn to do right for Christ's sake through trial and opposition if need be, without any conditions of having it made smooth for you first. But I must go. Where are you staying?"

"A letter to Mr. Mathews, Post Office, B——, will find me sometime; but I don't live there, and can't be traced by that."

"The train is nearly ready, mamma. Our seats are taken," cried one of the boys, coming to hasten his mother.

"May God help you to a right mind, Mr. Hill. I am deeply sorry for your home trial, but again I warn you that you cannot throw off your duty there, and wife and children will one day be inquired for at your hands. How will you answer if you have deserted and ruined them?"

Mrs. Oakland hurried away and entered the carriage, and as the train rolled past the spot where Matthew stood she looked anxiously at him and trusted she had made some impression. The children shouted to him, but he seemed not to see or hear. The train quickened and passed away, leaving Matthew Hill standing like one in a dream.

That Jane's vixenish temper was enough to provoke any man with a spark of feeling, no one would venture to deny, and he thought he had a right to get out of the way of it, and mark his displeasure in any way that seemed good to him, so long as he maintained his family by his own industry, and did not suffer them to burden the parish; in fact, he rather thought his conduct in that respect quite meritorious and magnanimous. But Mrs. Oakland had thrown a new light over the matter, and he felt smaller, indeed very considerably shrunk in his own opinion, as her rapid but earnest words seemed to repeat themselves in his ear. Then the idea of *his* wife, the respectable and respected Mrs. Hill, who associated only with two or three of the nicest families in her own station in life, consorting with such a person as Mrs. Swinden, was as incomprehensible as it was odious and disgusting.

"Our once neat, pretty, industrious Jane," Mrs. Oakland had said. Was she then no longer deserving of that description? She was his wife still, and he could not endure the thought of giving her company to one whom he had always considered a disgrace to her sex.

"Besides," thought Matthew, with increasing irritation, "that woman drinks. What on earth can bring her and Jane together? Jane, who could not but loathe her own husband when he fell into that temptation."

"Hollo, friend!" cried a porter, walking up to Mr. Hill, "when you've done dreaming, what train may you wish to go by?"

"Train to D——," said Matthew, starting.

"Gone, nearly ten minutes. Another in two hours passes through, and stops if there's any passengers; so till then you can finish your nap."

And the porter turned away laughingly, leaving the indiscreet passenger to amuse himself as he could, and bidding him "look a little sharper about him next time."

CHAPTER IX.

WOES AND WARNINGS.

"Two hours!" It was very annoying, but had to be borne, so Matthew Hill strolled into the town, still undecided about the course he should pursue towards his wife and family, but resolving to take some steps very soon. Perhaps he would write.

He was passing a stationer's shop, and it struck him to go in and ask leave to write a letter.

"Hadn't you better buy the paper and go over there to write it?" said the proprietor of the shop, who was not accustomed to have working men come in to write letters in his shop amongst his stylish customers. He had, too, been greatly disturbed with some occurrences in the day, and was not disposed to volunteer the necessary space and accommodation.

Matthew looked across the street where the stationer pointed with his pen as he spoke. It was a public-house, and several people were lounging about the door and talking together.

"No, thank you," said he, "I can't: one of those places nearly ruined me, and I never go into one again if I know it. But, if I'm in your way here, perhaps I can manage it at the station."

"No, friend, you shall write a dozen letters if you like, and I'm ashamed of myself for proposing it. The fact is, I've had a deal of trouble to-day, and selfishly wanted to be quiet." And before Matthew could pay for his paper, the good man had bustled round his counter, cleared a little table, and set a chair and all the needful things for the letter, excepting the words to compose it.

To find these was no easy matter to Matthew, and he had bitten away all the beauty from the top of the pen before anything appeared at the other end of it.

Jane ought to write first; she ought to say she was sorry for her behaviour, and that she wished he would come back. Of course she ought, but then she wouldn't, and he needn't expect it—she was much too proud for that. Wouldn't he give something to see that proud spirit humbled!

With these thoughts he found it difficult to write, "My dear wife," so he altered it to "My dear Jane;" but Jane was his wife, so there was not much difference, and he scratched it over, making a great blot.

Then he bit hard at the pen again, as the idea of his bright rosy clean children playing with "that woman's filthy little reptiles, and she herself frequenting *his* house," roused all sorts of fierce feelings within him. "What did it all mean? what triumph had she gained over his once neat, pretty, and industrious Jane?"

Then the sheet of paper was deliberately torn to fragments, which were patted together to prevent a litter, until a bright thought occurred; another sheet was taken, and the letter was written in a few minutes, the shopkeeper, beguiled from his sorrow, looking on the while with much interest and some curiosity.

The reader may know its contents:—

"MY DEAR FRIEND,—Send me ALL particulars you can get about my home and family. Tell me everything. I am well in health, and have plenty of work, but shall send no more money until I know how it is spent, schooling paid, and all going straight.

"Address Mr. Matthews, Post-office, B——, to be called for.

"Yours truly,

"MATTHEW HILL.

"P.S.—Excuse trouble; think of me kindly, as you always did.

"To Mr. Benjamin Field,

"Foreman at —— Works."

"I must shake hands with you," said the stationer, when the epistle was enveloped and stamped, "and decline any payment for such small accommodation. It did me good to see a fine tall working fellow like you object to the public-house. I've seen sad havoc of health and happiness through going there, and so I suppose have you."

"That's true enough, sir. I've made havoc of my own, but I hope it's over now, for I've had a hard lesson."

"I hope it is, indeed," said the stationer, kindly. "I never had the temptation myself, thank God, but a relation of mine was grievously addicted to drinking, and the misery of it comes on all belonging to a drunkard. He always meant to reform, poor fellow, and many a pledge he signed and broke, and wouldn't take the only way there was to cure him."

"What was that, sir, may I take leave to ask?" said Matthew, eagerly.

"The help of God," said the stationer: "trust in the strength of One who has promised to uphold all who lean upon Him. If he would but have given himself to the Saviour who pitied and died for sinners, and have sought the gift which the good Father is willing to bestow on all who ask Him, poor Edward might have been here now, a useful, happy man. It's of no use for a man to trust in his own heart; the Bible says he is 'a fool' who does so, for 'the heart is deceitful above all things,' and not fit to be trusted; but 'whoso trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about,' and keep him, too, from 'the ways of the destroyer.' Seek God's gift of the Holy Spirit, my good friend, if you would keep clear of old temptations, and be indeed a new man, peaceful and upright in this life, and safe for the life to come."

"Might I ask, sir, if it's not too great a liberty, whether your friend or relation gave up the drink at last?"

"Well," said the stationer, leaning across the counter, and speaking in a low tone, "we don't know much about him, at last. He ruined all his prospects here, and brought his family down to misery and poverty, and then ran away to avoid seeing the fruit of his own folly. We only know that after some

time he died in some benevolent institution in America, where he had been placed, broken down with disease and want. Poor Edward! a fine young man he was once as you could wish to see."

"Had he a happy home, sir?" asked Matthew, with deep interest.

"Yes, until he made it otherwise, for it is a dreadful thing for a respectable young woman to find herself bound to a drunkard, you know. She bore up pretty well, his poor young wife did, until he went away, and then—" The good man paused, observing the eager attention and distressed look of his listener.

"Go on, please sir," murmured Matthew. "What happened? Did she die of the trouble?"

"Worse than that," said the stationer, brushing his hand across his eyes, "she got reckless. Friends did what they could to help her, and wondered for some time why nothing succeeded. At last they found it out; she had taken to drinking herself, and yesterday, in an awful fit of drunken madness, she killed her little child. The inquest," he added, speaking rapidly, "was held over there this morning, and those people are most likely talking it over. She is committed for trial, and I suppose will be imprisoned for life; she is quite mad still, and doesn't seem to know what she has done. But there, my good friend, I don't know what made me tell you all this, I'm not used to be so ready with my tongue, and it's done you no good, I see."

Mr. Hill had turned deathly pale, and sat down.

"I know why, sir," he said, at last, while the stationer stood by him in pity and some alarm. "I thank you, too. It will do good, and no harm, I believe. I am all right now."

And Matthew stood up, shook himself, drank the glass of

water kindly offered to him, and reached the station in time for the train.

"Poor fellow," thought the shopkeeper. "I've drawn a bow at a venture, and the arrow has hit, I suspect. He's a noble-looking workman as ever I saw, but there's a sign of sorrow in his face. God help him to keep right, and forgive him for Christ's sake if he's gone wrong."

Benjamin Field sat turning his friend's letter over and over in his hands, and considering what to do; his wife, with her darning-needle stopped short in its rapid career up and down a thin place in a stocking, seemed considering too.

"Suppose we go down together, you and me," said Mr. Field, "and tell her I've got a clue to Matthew, and that he is very anxious to hear of her welfare, and all about home?"

It was just what Ellen was thinking, and bonnet and cloak were on in an instant. It was nearly nine o'clock, and the little ones were fast asleep, so she could go with him nicely.

The knock of visitors at that hour was neither expected nor welcome at Mrs. Hill's door, but she rose to open it, a very little way, and just showed part of her face at the crevice.

"We've come to speak to you, Mrs. Hill," said the gentle voice of Mrs. Field. "Benjamin has news, good news."

"It's very late," said Mrs. Hill, coldly; "won't it do in the morning?"

"Oh no, you'll sleep better for it; do let us come in and tell you," said Ellen, earnestly, while Benjamin drew back with an impatient pout of annoyance.

Thus urged, Mrs. Hill reluctantly opened the door, making a great difficulty about it, and affording time for somebody to snatch a bottle from the table and softly retreat into the back kitchen.

There were two chairs, however, before the fire, and two glasses on the table, but not seeming to notice the tell-tales, Benjamin and Ellen began to speak kindly and pleasantly, and Mrs. Hill was composing herself to listen with the air of a martyr, when a tremendous knocking at the door startled the whole party.

The visitor was not inclined to wait, for the door was impatiently opened from without, and the blue coat and shining buttons and hat of a policeman appeared.

"Is one Mrs. Swinden here?" he asked, "or do you know where she is?"

"She isn't here, you see," said Mrs. Hill, quickly; "but what's the matter?"

"Matter enough, and she must be found. Can you tell me anything about her?"

"She has been here, but I dare say she's nearly home by this time," said Mrs. Hill, rather hesitatingly, and bursting with curiosity to know what could be the matter.

"Well, they said she was sure to be here, or at the public, and I called there first. Her drunken husband has met his fate at last; he's been run over on the line, and when they carried his poor cut-up body home, the children stupidly were allowed to see, because nobody was there to order or do anything; and one of them is in a fit, dead off, and another is screaming enough to wake the father, if he could be woke any more in this world. God help them poor things, they ought to have been in bed out of the way of such a sight. I wonder where their mother can be, though she ain't any better than him that's gone."

"Their mother! There she stood in the back kitchen hearing every word, and not easily deciding whether to scream, or faint, or rush forward, until the policeman's concluding sentence worked the finish to her excitement. She

flew at him with loud abuse, declaring that he was telling nothing but lies, and getting up a tale to frighten her.

"Hold off, you fury," said the policeman, calmly; "go home and you'll see for yourself. I'm not going to argue with such as you."

"I'll go with you, if you like," said Mr. Field, as the woman rushed out. "Ellen, you stay with Mrs. Hill till I come back." And he and the policeman left the two horror-stricken women together.

CHAPTER X.

NEW SCENES AMONG OLD FRIENDS.

"NOW, mother, come up and look," said a young girl, popping her head in at the door of the household room, where her mother was putting the finishing touch to the frill of a snow-white little pillow-case, and fitting it to the top of a large easy-chair covered with stuffed damask.

"Oh, how pretty and comfortable that looks, mother! Now she won't be afraid to rest her head upon it. But do come and peep at her bedroom."

The mother smiled and followed, while the girl skipped up-stairs and began to point out all the improvements at once.

"See, here's my new pincushion, isn't it nice? I got these flowers out of our own garden," and she showed the little glass vase full of flowers, a rosebud or two, and some pinks and other favourites. "And see, mother, I've turned down the

bed as you showed me, and doesn't our patch-work quilt look beautiful? How she will like it!"

"I think you have laid it all out very nicely, Bessy," said her mother, looking round the room approvingly. "Now, I hope you will keep it so, as you have begged for the charge of it all the while she stays."

"Yes, I mean to have it like this every day. Susy did it last time, because I was too little. I do hope she'll like my pincushion."

"I'm sure she will, Bessy; but you mustn't be surprised if she asks you whether you mended your stockings first."

"Ah, no, she despises fancy work from girls who can't mend their stockings, I know," cried Bessy, laughing; "but I am a match for her this time, for I've done father's, and Robert's as well. There's Robert; he's going to meet her at the railway, I heard him ask father to let him," and dancing down she met a fine sturdy figure in working clothes, hastening to wash and dress for the expedition.

In the meantime the rest of the family had come in, and without any fuss fell into their usual places and occupations. The father had exchanged his working dress for a house suit, and sat, now looking at a newspaper, now watching his wife and daughters preparing tea, and doing sundry little things to make the welcome of some expected visitor fully apparent. The youngest child, a little boy, was conning his lesson, that he might not have to learn it by-and-by, and all were beginning to listen for an arrival, when a car drove up with box, and baskets, and hampers outside, and Robert and a very pleasant-looking old lady within.

Out flew the younger children, while one older stood more demurely by her mother at the door, and the son gave place to his father to help the old lady out.

And so the centre of all this interest, the object of all this

MRS. HAYES APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

attention, the guest so warmly welcomed, was nothing after all but an old woman.

"Well, they're all grown," said she, after having taken off her travelling things, and been seated in the damask chair, and had time to look about her; "some taller, some broader, and, I dare say, all better. But where is Milly?"

Scarcely was the question asked when a light step was heard, and a blooming young woman bounded in. The old woman rose from her seat, opened her arms, and folded the girl in silence to her heart. There was no need for words, for Aunt Hayes and Milly Taylor knew full well each other's worth, and had long rested sweetly in each other's love.

"The Lord bless thee, my child. I humbly thank Him for giving me sight of thee again," she said at last.

Milly was young ladies' maid at Mr. Drake's, and being spared for the evening, the family party was complete, and a very happy party it was. There was Mr. Taylor, now a middle-aged man, healthy, active, and fresh-looking still, and to whom, after a season of trial and anxiety, "the lines had fallen in pleasant places." He was truly the honoured head of his house, "ruling in the fear of God," and commanding his children to "keep the way of the Lord."

And there was his faithful Susan, the loved wife and honoured mother, not very much the worse for wear; the burden and heat of her working day over, and the guide and instructress of her daughters in the virtues and duties which had made herself a blessing to all who came within her influence.

Susan, her namesake and second daughter, was preparing for service, while Bessy was taking her place in the household after leaving school.

"Susan, my dear," said Mrs. Hayes, "those hampers had better be unpacked soon. There are two hams, and some bacon home-cured, and a few vegetables, and odd things

you'll find useful—my last butter and a cheese or so, and my sister has sent you two dozen fresh eggs and some poultry."

What delicious work to unpack such a present from the country! And after the good things had been displayed to the admiration of all beholders, Susan and Bessy had the coveted honour of bestowing them in their proper places, and one or two sick acquaintances were remembered when the eggs and chickens passed under review.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Hayes had given up the land at the farm, and kept only the dwelling-house and its immediate belongings of poultry and piggery, and paddock for a cow or two. She did not intend to be idle, and a grave question arose about who was to live with her.

Milly had done so, as the pet and comfort of her good uncle, and Mrs. Hayes would fain have kept her and provided for her as her own child. But she was a sensible woman, and she saw that other relatives would feel jealous and annoyed at such a marked preference. Her own sister's children were growing also into womanhood, and were so much improved by her good training and kind interest, that she decided to have each in turn who liked to come, and at the present time Miss Bella was prime minister at the farmhouse, trying to do as nicely as her Cousin Milly had done, and to be as thoughtful and kind to her widowed aunt.

Mrs. Hayes had paid each family a visit since prevailing on herself to move, and it was now the second time she had come alone to those she loved best on earth.

"If they're so kind as to want me," said she, "the least I can do is to go, so long as the Lord keeps me from being a burden; and with them I could perhaps even bear to be that." The highest compliment that Mrs. Hayes could have paid to any human being.

It was also the strongest proof of the mighty power of

divine grace, that a spirit so proud, so sensitive, so independent, could be brought, with the humility of a little child, to endure the thought of such a possible event.

But there seemed no fear of it yet, and Mrs. Hayes walked, and worked, and busied herself in everything that was going forward, with all her usual energy.

A new anxiety, however, dawned upon her at this time, though at present she kept it to herself.

Robert's position at "The Works" was now such, and his prospects of advancement in due time so satisfactory, that there would be no impropriety in the notion, if he took it into his head to make a home of his own and marry. She could not object to that, but the choice of a wife worthy of Robert was a matter of the gravest importance, and her shrewdest humour was on the moment any young woman came within range of her scrutiny.

There was a very pretty and rather showy-looking girl who came to fit Susan with the dresses which were being prepared for her in her first service, and it struck Mrs. Hayes that the time of her visits was peculiarly ill-chosen, inasmuch as Robert was sure somehow to be in the way; and as Miss Brooks laughingly declared she had no objection, it came to pass that he offered to carry her parcel, and walked by her side on his way to work, so far as their road was the same, when she happened to call at mid-day. And two or three times in the evening he had gallantly taken her home.

Now Mrs. Hayes had a strong prejudice against milliners and dressmakers as suitable wives for working men. "She never knew one yet," she said, "who heeded where she threw her pins and needles, or cared what litter she made, or knew how to make home comfortable. It might be more their misfortune than their fault, poor things," she said, "for they were put apprentices to woman's greatest snare, just when they

ought to have been learning woman's rightful duties; and silly heads were made sillier, and time and care were fully devoted to what should occupy the smallest place in female education, namely, 'the putting on of apparel.'"

Well, it was to be hoped Robert would be cautious, and not get caught by a pretty face, unless it might happen to be only the pleasant index of all that is good and womanly within.

But Mrs. Hayes did feel a little uneasy about "that young dressmaker."

CHAPTER XI.

IMPORTANT POINTS.

N Sunday evening, as the family came out of church, Robert affectionately drew his aunt's arm within his own, saying playfully:

"It's my turn now, father; we'll follow you and mother at our ease."

Mr. and Mrs. Taylor nodded and walked on, but the whole party were presently stopped by the appearance of Miss Brooks and some young friends, who inclined to exchange a word or two.

The young woman was a great deal too much dressed for her position in life, but not more so than those about her, and was only noticeable in contrast with the simplicity and neatness of Mrs. Taylor and her daughters.

"We are just going to saunter along the river banks a little way, Mrs. Taylor," said Miss Brooks, "may Susan and Bessy come too?"

"No, thank you, my dear," said Susan; "they will take a little walk with *us*. Good evening."

"Right, Susan," thought Mrs. Hayes, and she saw the eyes of the young dressmaker and her friends glance towards Robert. "They would like you to go with them, Robert," whispered she; "don't make the old woman a bugbear to them. Go, if you like;" and she withdrew from his arm.

But Robert held her tight. "I am going with you, aunt," he said, firmly; and, however he might have been inclined to a walk with Miss Brooks herself, he was not going to be carried off bodily by the gay troop around her.

Mrs. Hayes stole a glance at his face, which was flushed and grave, and while they walked on in silence she thought her own thoughts, and instead of beating about with them, went straight to head-quarters with her conclusions.

"Robert, my dear," said she, abruptly, "does she fear God?" —the old-fashioned expression which, to her mind, included the whole blessings of the Christian life.

Robert Taylor had no affectation: he knew perfectly well whom "she" meant, and quickly guessed the train of thought which had led to the question.

"I don't know, aunt," he promptly replied; "I am trying to find out."

"Hum, then it does matter to him," thought Aunt Hayes, with regret.

"Well, my dear, and how are you going to find out? Take care that meanwhile she does not get to believe that you love her beyond recall."

"I will never trifle about such a matter," said Robert, warmly; "but I don't know how to judge of her real character without making opportunities, and such opportunities may betray my regard without winning hers."

"It's awkward on both sides," said Mrs. Hayes; "for if,

after keeping company awhile, young people find out that they are not suited to each other, an outcry is raised about flirting, and deceiving, and what not. I do think it a grievous pity that young men and women have so little opportunity of really knowing each other's characters before they are what they call 'engaged.' Why, the most important thing in their whole lives has to be fixed all at once, like buying a horse or cow, on the credit of good looks or somebody's recommendation. It never comes out what one really is till you shut doors with her, when it's too late to find fault, and the poor things must make the best of it then."

"You have found out what I didn't wish to speak of to anybody yet," said Robert. "Can you help me a little without exciting attention?"

"Maybe I can, Robert; but, my dear boy, will you be guided by what we may discover as we become better acquainted with her? And, if her pretty face and pleasant manners should not cover heart, and temper, and principles such as you ought to look for in a wife, what then? Will you, like many a simpleton, fancy you can make her what you love and wish her to be, and——"

"No, aunt, I should not presume so far as that; I should like my wife to be of God's making, and His gift to me."

"Good," thought Mrs. Hayes, joyfully; "he'll not marry this girl, unless they were to catch him on the ground of 'honour,' and 'entangled affections,' and so forth, the which I'll do my part to prevent. She may, however, be a good girl after all; we'll see."

"Ask the Lord to guide all about it, Robert," said she; "He loves you, and will not throw away anything so precious to Himself as your happiness, if you'll leave it in His keeping.

Make much of the matter of temper, Robert; next to piety and virtue, a woman's temper is the most important thing." And Aunt Hayes sighed softly, as memory retraced her own career.

"Your Uncle Jonathan," she continued, "wanted a thrifty, industrious wife; and, though I say it that shouldn't, perhaps, he got one."

"I'm sure he did, aunt," said Robert, smiling.

"Ah, but what did he get besides? A cross-grained temper, that never made allowances for anybody, and worried him with fidgets, and fuss, and particularity, so that he couldn't say home was his own, and that never thought anybody knew anything but herself. Ah, I've shed many a sorrowful tear over it since he went where I can do nothing for him more."

"Dear aunt," said Robert, tenderly, "I do assure you he always told Milly and me that you were the comfort of his heart, and had been a blessing to him all his life."

"Ah, my dear, he was content to let bygones be bygones; and after that time that you and Milly and your mother came to stay with us, things got to be different, I know. But then, we'd lost years of happiness, and I'd got a sharp disagreeable way with me that has never been quite done with, do what I will."

"Well, I'm sure I don't want you different from what you are," said Robert; "nor does any one else that I know of."

"Well, dear, I only spoke of myself as a warning to you, to see that you choose for a wife one who is gentle-tempered and humble-minded."

"Or that she has the good secret for curing a bad temper; won't that do as well, aunt?"

Mrs. Hayes shook her head.

"I think not entirely, Robert; though wherever there's

much character there's often something of a stubborn temper to control. Get both if you can. But don't mistake me. I've no patience with flimsy, wishy-washy things that can't stand the storms of life, and who droop under a cloud like a stricken flower. Such are not wives for working men, nor any men, for that matter. No, I should like your wife to be one who marries you not merely because you ask her, but because she wishes to help you, and believes you will help her to serve God, and do your duty in the station of life in which it has pleased Him to place you ; one who will stand by you through life, come weal come woe, with a backbone as straight and strong as your own. That's the woman I respect and love."

"That's just my mother," said Robert.

"So it is, and just Milly too, when her time comes. By-the-by, Robert, who is that young man that came in the other evening ? And what does he want at your father's house ?"

"He is lately come to be head gardener at Lord Crewe's, and I suspect, though I don't really know, that he wants to get acquainted with our Milly."

"I suspect so too. Well, I didn't take to him at all. 'Wise in his own conceits' was the text he made me think of. However, Milly is not to be caught with a clattering tongue. Mind you take her up to the house yourself if she comes when he's there, and don't on any account let him do it."

"No, that I shan't," said Robert, laughing ; "I'm not going to help any beaux to make up to Milly. I've always hoped that she'll live with me when I get a home of my own."

"What, if you marry ?" asked Mrs. Hayes.

"Yes ; why not ?"

"Then you and she will make a terrible mistake, my lad : a mistake that many a brother has made innocently enough, but none the less mischievous for that. No, no ; let your wife

have her home to herself, or she'll never settle in it as she ought. I've seen a few things in my time; and I see this among them, both for high and low, rich and poor, that married people should have no relations in the house to put in a word between them. It's a temptation that scarcely anybody has strength to resist. There must always be things in a family to consider, and talk over and judge about, and husband and wife should do it for themselves. If they don't agree, they should think and pray about it till one sees it right to give up; but woe to the meddler that puts in for a casting vote, or pretends to know better than either one or the other! Mothers and mothers-in-law, sisters and sisters-in-law, are all well enough in their own places, and long life to them there; but they're out of their place in the families of sons and brothers; and having 'an interest' in everything (as they say), they seldom or never have sense to hold their tongues. But just see, now, here's even the old great-aunt meddling and giving opinions without waiting to be asked."

"Go on and welcome," said Robert; "I see the wisdom of your opinions, aunt."

"About this affair, my dear lad; I've thought of a little plan to help you both to know something more of each other without seeming particular. I do wish young people's heads weren't so full of themselves as to fancy every little attention or kindness means more than it ought to mean until there's a good foundation for it, and that simpering misses wouldn't suppose themselves so desirable as wives and companions to sensible men. But, dear me, what a change comes over some of them in a year or two! You wouldn't know the pretty trim-looking things again, in the slatterns and idlers that dare to face their husbands with uncombed hair and ragged gowns. If they dressed to catch, they should dress to keep, and not treat a man as if he had lost all taste, and feeling, and sense, because

he's married. God save you from such as that, my boy; and he will if you'll mind his word, and let it be 'only in the Lord.'"

CHAPTER XII.

WITH THE "DOORS SHUT."

"DEARY me, I'm sure I don't know what to do," said a little fat woman, with a pleasant, round face, coming leisurely down the stairs, and pushing open the door of a small "front parlour," where she stood for a moment, looking very much puzzled, her hands spread upon her sides, and her eyes fixed on the ground.

"It's very tryin', that it is," she murmured; "I don't know *what* to do."

"What about, mother?" asked her pretty daughter, who was propping up a fashion book in the window behind a card, in token to passers-by that a very superior dress and mantle maker and milliner, from a first-rate establishment, was to be found within.

"What about? Why, about our lodger; but, deary me, Lydia, what a dreadful litter! When *are* you going to let me brush this room? What would any lady say to such an untidy place?"

And Mrs. Brooks, looking round, tried to imagine the impression that the sight of it would make. Every chair was covered with work in some form, either cut out and begun, or awaiting that process; patterns, rolls of calico or trimmings: the floor was strewn with pieces, cuttings, thread-

ends and tackings, among which shone pins, buttons, beads, tossed and scattered, not with the intention of wasting any of them, but just lying until it might happen to be convenient to pick them up; and it seldom was convenient to Miss Lydia Brooks.

"Oh, it looks as if I was busy; and really so I am. I've had no time to pick up and straighten," said she, carelessly.

"Well, I'd have done it, only you made such a fuss about your pieces; I wasn't to meddle with them," said the mother, still looking about. "Ah, there now," she continued, "it's just as I said about Sally's spencer; I knew it wouldn't be done, and here I'm going about in this old rag of a gown, waiting till you put in those sleeves that you made me unpick. But 'the shoemaker's wife goes the worst shod,' as the saying is. I did think when I put you to the dressmaking, Liddy, that you'd take a pride in seeing your own family nice always, but it isn't so."

"I'm sure I like you all to be nice," said Lydia, rummaging in a heap of pieces for one she wanted; "only I didn't know that I was to make and mend for everybody, when I've to get my own living by my work."

"Your own living, child! Why, is your living just putting clothes on your back? What about lodgings and victuals on days that you stay at home to work? Living, indeed!" and the good woman looked as indignant as her good-humoured face would allow. Then suddenly recollecting something, she added, in a doleful tone, "But, as I was saying, I'm sure I don't know what to do. I got all the things the doctor ordered, and he won't touch nor look at them. I wish you'd seen him when he smelt it was brandy I was giving him. I never saw anybody so obstinate in all my life; how in the world he's to get well I don't know!"

Lydia was too much absorbed in the effect of a bow she

was making up to feel any sympathy in her mother's difficulty; but happening to look out at the window she uttered an exclamation of pleasure and darted to the door, as a neat, bright-looking girl came up the steps. "Oh, do come in," she cried. "Mother, it's Miss Susan Taylor."

"Susan Taylor, ma'am," said the girl, smiling. "Mother sent me, Miss Brooks, to ask if you can come and do some work for Aunt Hayes; she wants her black silk gown turned, I believe, and she likes to help with it herself."

"Oh, I shall be very happy indeed; but do sit down, I'll soon make a chair," and bundling up a lot of things and slipping them all down in a corner, Miss Brooks handed a chair. "You'll excuse litters, I know; dressmakers can't be—that is, they can't always have their things out of sight, you see."

"I can't stay, thank you," said Susan. "May I say that you'll come to-morrow, or next day?"

"Yes, to-morrow, if you wish it; but, Susan, she looks very particular. Do you think I can manage to please her?"

"I'm sure you will if you try," said Susan; "she is always pleased when we do our best."

"Well, then, I'll do my best."

"But, Lydia," began Mrs. Brooks, "you promised—"

"Oh, yes, I know," interrupted the daughter. "I'll do that at home; it won't interfere at all. And, Susan, I'll bring home the pieces of your prints, and your best dress. What a pretty thing it is! Did you try it on again?"

"No," said Susan.

"Well, then, you'll see that I have made it nice and long, as I was sure you'd like it. You won't wear it at home, you know; so your mother won't see it or know anything about it, and servants like their things long as well as other people."

Susan stared so hard at the dressmaker that the colour rose to both their faces at once.

"Why did you?" at last said Susan, recovering from her surprise. "You will have to alter it; for I'm not going to sweep streets or carpets to please anybody. Besides, I wish to have it exactly as mother told you."

"Oh, nonsense, you'll like it well enough when you get among them that have the same."

"Milly's dresses never sweep," said Susan; "she says trains are for drawing-rooms and carriages, and look pretty enough; but for people who bustle about a house, and walk in streets or roads, they're a nuisance outright. So I'll put it on before you to-morrow, and I'll have it just as mother thinks right," concluded Susan, positively.

"Dear me, I thought to please you," said Miss Lydia; "but I shall know better another time."

Susan hoped so, and was going; but Mrs. Brooks stopped her.

"My dear," said she, kindly, "I like to hear you speak that way, though of course poor Liddy thought you were like other young people she works for; so no offence, I hope. But could you tell me of any teetotal people? Perhaps your good mother may know some of them."

"My father and brother are both total abstainers," said Susan.

"Oh, dear me, how glad I am! Would you ask one of them just to call in here, for I've got a lodger very ill, and he won't touch anything the doctor orders, except just the medicine; but the brandy, and wine, and things he won't even look at, and begged me not to bring anything of the sort into his room. I've always heard tell that when doctors order things it's lawful for those temperance people to take them, and this poor man says he has taken the pledge."

"I will tell my father what you say, and I am sure he will come if he can do any good," said Susan, as she tripped away.

In a few minutes Mrs. Brooks returned hastily to the parlour, leading a little boy of four or five years old by the hand.

"Here, Lydia," said she, hurriedly, "just let Dicky stop here a bit; Sally's gone an errand, and the doctor's come."

"Oh dear, mother; I really can't have him here, he does knock everything about so."

But Mrs. Brooks was gone, prudently shutting the door upon the objection.

"Dick, don't touch that, sir! sit down, and be quiet, do," cried Lydia, in great disgust, at hands none of the cleanest being laid upon one of her pink paper patterns; and she seized Master Dick, and bumped him roughly upon a chair, away from the possibility of touching anything.

Dick sat for a few moments looking defiance, and then slid down, crept under the table among the pins, and buttons, and beads, and presently gleaned a fine handful of the same, with a skein of silk and a reel or two of cotton, all of which went into his small pockets.

The silence was ominous; and, instead of encouraging the child to be useful in collecting and classifying her stray goods, Miss Brooks was certain he was in mischief, and hauled him out by the legs, with a slap for moving from the seat whereon she had placed him.

This was, of course, the signal for a violent yelling, and screaming, and kicking, and a hand-to-hand fight; poor Miss Lydia very red and angry, and talking as many exasperated sisters do talk on such occasions.

"You nasty little plague, I'll master you now, so I will. I hate children, I do; I can't think what you're good for, always in everybody's way. There, you wicked boy; how dare you, sir!" and so on, while Dick, between his kicks and struggles, was paying the same compliment in return, wonder-

ing in a great rage whatever sisters were made for, and hating the whole race, and Lydia in particular, with a most vigorous and active hatred.

In the midst of the strife Mrs. Brooks rushed in.

"Lydia! Dick! What a noise! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves? Couldn't you keep quiet for a minute?"

"You shouldn't have brought him," pertly exclaimed Lydia, "you know I can't do my work where *he* is."

"Bother the work," said the mother, smoothing Dicky's ruffled curls; "everything has to give way to it, till I'm sick of the sight of it: it's no good to anybody that I can see;" and she led away the young urchin, who turned with a parting salutation to his sister in as ugly a grimace as he could manage to form out of bright blue eyes, a rosy mouth, and cheeks like fresh peaches.

So, where love, and patience, and gentleness might have won obedience and affection, the opportunity passed away in a declaration of war between the rival factions, and the indignant grief of an unwise mother.

Lydia's defence of herself and her work was provoked into a very high key before banging the door, to shut out all her enemies together, which expressive sound had just rung through the house, startling the sick lodger, when the street-door opened, no one in the confusion having heard two or three modest knocks, and Robert Taylor stood before the ruffled mistress and her pouting pet.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brooks," said he, taking off his cap respectfully, "I am sent by Mr. Dixon to inquire after a person who has been working a little for him from Carter and Davis's shop, and who he heard is lodging here."

"Yes, I dare say it's all right; you mean Mr. Matthew. He's been too poorly to go to work these three days, and he won't do anything to get up his strength. Why, sir, he has

actually walked to B—— and back, ten miles in all, after his day's work, inquiring, he said, for a letter he expected: so he's just knocked himself up, and the doctor says he wants strengthening. I shall be so glad if you'll speak to him and get him to take proper things to do it, Mr. Robert."

"I shall be glad to do my best, Mrs. Brooks," said Robert: "he has interested our master very much, and is one of the cleverest workmen he ever had sent to the office. The man they have sent in his place is nothing to him for intelligence and skill."

While Robert followed the mother, the daughter stood listening inside the door she had so rudely shut, fluttering with curiosity and red with vexation lest Robert should have witnessed anything of the unseemly strife in which she had been engaged. She had gained sufficient knowledge of his family to be aware that some principle unknown to her ruled in their house, and influenced their conduct, and that if she chose to value the admiration with which she saw the young man regarded her, she must take care what kind of character she exhibited in his presence.

She therefore decided to be quite sure of her power before venturing to presume upon it, and to complete her conquest before she should make up her mind whether or not to return his regard. She should not object to be attended, for a time at least, by so good-looking and respectable a suitor, and she had no doubt of the envy of half the "young ladies" of her acquaintance.

But Robert left the house that day without even inquiring for her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAMP LIGHTED.

"IT'S very kind of him to think about me," said Matthew Hill, as Robert Taylor sat by his bedside, and told him how Mr. Dixon, to whose office he had been sent to execute some delicate piece of work for them there, had felt interested in him, admired his skill, missed him, inquired about him, and hearing that he was ill, had commissioned Robert to find out his residence and attend to his condition.

"It is like himself and everything he does," said Robert, warmly; it is a pleasure to work for such a master."

"Well, there isn't much the matter with me. I shall soon be right again; but I suppose I did a bit too much, not being over strong since I had rheumatic fever. And these good people, with the doctor at the head of them, want to poison me."

"Now, my friend," began Mrs. Brooks, "you just tell me this. Does your oath bind you never to taste anything that the doctor orders to strengthen and nourish you when you are sick? Because, if it does, it's little short of murder, I say, that's all." And the kind woman looked extremely indignant.

"We take no oath," said Robert, gently.

"No oath! Why, what is it, then? I thought you vowed before God to touch no strong drink."

"Then you are misinformed," answered Robert. "It is a promise to each other and our fellow-men, and a precaution for ourselves under temptation, and it is a disgrace to a man of feeling and honour to break his word: he proves

himself unworthy to be trusted: but as there is no oath, failure is no perjury."

"Well to be sure; why, I thought every one that broke his pledge was an awful sinner, and must be punished in the next world as well as this."

"Did you ever break a resolution, Mrs. Brooks, a real solemn resolution to be better, and shake off some great fault, or do some great good?"

"Deary me yes, lots of times; I'm sure I don't pretend to be better than other people."

"Then you stand on the same footing as the poor fellow who breaks his pledge," said Robert.

"Goodness heart alive! then what's to become of us all, I wonder?" cried Mrs. Brooks, in alarm.

"That's soon told," said Robert, in a modest but firm tone. "We must all go to the same Saviour, and beg for the same mercy, through the same blood shed on the cross, and free to all alike who come."

"Well to be sure," said Mrs. Brooks, looking earnestly in Robert's face; "to hear one as young as you talk like that. It quite does me good, I declare; for though I don't know very much about it myself—I've got so much to do, you see—yet I know religion when I see it in others. But about the wine and things, mayn't you take them on occasions like this?"

"I do not not know of any pledge that sets aside the apostle's directions to Timothy after his illness," said Robert, turning to the sick man, 'Take a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities;' inferring, I should think, that Timothy usually abstained, and needed the advice from Paul the aged, who could not mislead his young friend."

"If Paul stood there," said Matthew Hill, raising himself on his elbow, and speaking earnestly, "I believe he would

say to me, Drink nothing of the sort, but be content to die first. What may be medicine to one, is poison and ruin to another. Might I ask you why *you* took the pledge?"

"My father is foreman of Mr. Dixon's works," said Robert, and he has had a great deal of trouble with drunkenness among the men; so, for the sake of example, and to show that it is possible to do without strong drink, he took the pledge, and so did I when old enough to understand about it; and we have our reward. Nearly all the men are total abstainers, and a better set of workmen do not stand on British ground, nor men with happier homes and more comfortable families."

"Well now," said Matthew, "just suppose one of those men, once given to drinking, but now sober and steady, yet mistrusting himself if strong temptation beset him; if he took ill, would you put strong drink to his lips, and bid him take it to get well?"

"No," said Robert, promptly.

"But what if a doctor order it, and the patient feels that if he taste it he is lost?"

"In such a case I would disobey the doctor, and trust in Christ the Saviour for life or death."

"Well, but suppose he dies?" questioned Mrs. Brooks.

"Then let him die sober," said Robert. "Better so than to fall back into sin, living the life and dying the death of a drunkard, a curse to himself and all belonging to him."

"Now that's the right sort," exclaimed the patient, with animation. So now, young man, we understand each other. You can make it all out for yourself, and won't advise me again to touch the poison."

"But I am not the less hopeful of your recovery," said Robert, smiling. "The doctors have other tonics, and Mrs. Brooks can second them with her kitchen physic."

"I'll do my best, and he shall have some capital beef-tea at once," said the kind woman, trotting away to see if it were as good as she meant it to be.

"I don't know you," said Matthew, in a low voice, to Robert, as soon as they were alone, "but you come on a kind errand, and you are on my side in a matter that concerns me more than you think. You spoke of Christ the Saviour—you know him?"

"I trust so," said Robert.

"Then," said Matthew, eagerly, "can you, will you, ask Him to help me, to heal me?"

"Your soul, or your body?" asked Robert.

"Both," replied the sick man; "but my soul first, because it must last for ever; my body too, that I may use it as long as it lasts to try and make up for the evil I have done in it."

"But you cannot make up for it to the Almighty and Holy God," said Robert. "The Bible says, 'Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap,'—two things that signify the very best means of cleansing that man can invent,—'yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord.' We need to have the old stains washed out before we can be fit to appear before Him; and then our fresh doings are so clumsy and weak and defiled after all, that we haven't the heart to think He can accept us for them."

"What do you mean? Will not our repentance be accepted?" asked Matthew, anxiously.

"Not as an atonement for past sin: tears cannot wash it away. If they could, the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ need never have been shed, and we could then take credit to ourselves for repenting; but the Bible says salvation is 'by faith, not of works, lest any man boast,' and 'faith' is 'the gift of God.' It is all God's own work from beginning to end: what

He does He does completely, unmixed with any poor imperfect doings of ours."

"Well, I must do something. I want a religion, or a something that will keep me from a terrible sin," said Matthew, wearily. "I've resolved, and tried, and pledged, and done everything I can think of, and still I fall."

"We need a religion that will keep us from all sin," said Robert. "Did you ever try what love can do?"

"I loved my wife and children, but that did not restrain me when strongly tempted," said Matthew. He seemed to have forgotten all the provocations which he had been fond of pleading in excuse for himself.

"I mean the love of the Lord Jesus," said Robert, simply.

"No, I don't know Him well enough."

"I thought so," said Robert; "and now we have just got to the root of the matter. 'If thou knewest the gift of God'— But you can know it; and then you will join those who can say with his apostle, 'We love Him because He first loved us.' 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

"'Washed us from our sins.' Yes, that's what we want," said Matthew, "and help to sin no more."

"And you can have both by giving yourself up to the Lord Jesus. Do as the hymn says:—

'Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.'

I dare bid you welcome to my Lord," continued Robert, earnestly. "There is no hindrance on His side; are *you* willing?

'Just as thou art, without one trace
Of love, or joy, or inward grace,
Or meetness for the heavenly place,
O guilty sinner, come!

'Come hither, bring thy boding fears,
Thine aching heart, thy bursting tears;
'Tis mercy's voice salutes thine ears:
O trembling sinner, come!' "

Matthew Hill gazed earnestly on the young speaker. "Oh that I had begun as you have!" he said; "you have taken God for the guide of your youth."

"You have not got very far beyond youth," said Robert. "There is time for you to take Him for everything you want. But let me read you a few lines about Him." And from his little pocket Testament Robert read the story of the visit of Jesus to the house of Simon the Pharisee.* "You see, neither of the debtors had anything to pay, so 'He frankly forgave them both.' But the poor woman who felt that 'her sins which were many were forgiven,' 'loved much;' and never did she hate sin so truly as when her tears of love and penitence flowed over the feet of Jesus. He did not say 'thy love,' or 'thy tears,' or 'thy penitence hath saved thee,' but 'thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.' She believed in His love to sinners, that He had come to seek and to save the lost. Do you think, as she knelt before Him and felt that He understood her gratitude and believed her love, and heard the beautiful permission to 'go in peace,' that she could go back to her sins, and forget her Saviour?"

"No, no, surely not," said Matthew.

"She had been too near to Jesus for that; she had found a principle that was stronger than sin, stronger than nature, stronger than temptation; faith and love would bear her above and through them all. If ever that heart mourned

* Luke vii. 36.

again, it would be when the hour had come in which that precious Saviour must be given up to his death of shame and anguish, to seal before God and man the covenant of mercy by which He had saved her soul and given her peace. To pierce the heart of Jesus, and put Him to shame, by our sins and inconsistencies, is the bitterest, darkest sorrow that can befall one who believes in Him. Oh, if there is a safeguard on earth, it is thus to be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'"

"But to get it!" said Matthew. "Is it for me?"

"Dear fellow-sinner, that beautiful story was for you and me; 'written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort' of it 'might have hope.' And the Lord Jesus has never changed from what he was that day, but is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.'"

"Lead me to Him, ask Him for me," faltered Matthew. And Robert simply and earnestly, as a loved child speaks to a revered and beloved father, did as he was desired.

"Now," said Matthew, as his young visitor rose to go, "I do not think I am to die yet. If I cannot make up for the past to the holy God who so freely forgives, I may be spared to do my duty by my family; but I must get out as soon as possible, that I may hear of them. I expect a letter to be waiting for me at B——."

"Can I write to the postmaster to forward it?" asked Robert.

"No, thank you," replied Matthew, hesitating a little. "I don't want to give my address, so I call for my letters. I've had one or two, but not from the right person; and I believe walking so far, and anxiety, and (I'll not deny it) a glass I got to strengthen me, as I thought, all together knocked me up at last."

"May I come to see you again?" asked Robert.

"The sooner the better; and if you wouldn't mind just lending me that little book, I'll take good care of it until you come again. Please mark it at that place, 'Her sins which are many are forgiven;' 'Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.'"

"You have every kindness and attention that you need here, I suppose?" said Robert.

"Oh yes, they are kind, but I'm afraid they don't know much about this," replied Matthew, clasping the little Testament. "There's a deal to do, and all sorts of merry-making, on a Sunday; and that kind little woman spoils the children, and their pretty sister, the dressmaker, isn't the best of tempers, and they get to fighting and screeching like wild things. There was a fearful row just before you came in."

"But if the younger ones are not well managed, you know, they are often very troublesome to the elder ones," said Robert, anxious to hope that Lydia might not be the chief cause of the mischief.

"That's true; but there's a way to speak, and do, that shows whether the elders are selfish and unfeeling or not; and I know too well that a pretty face doesn't make a woman all she ought to be. I've longed to tell Miss Lydia so, before she spoils her fortune by it. But I've enough to do to mind my own faults, and I shall long for the time that you come again."

Robert had a dull sort of feeling on his mind as he returned to give an account of his mission to his kind employers, but his sterling principles, learned from his Bible and his Christian parents, were firm; and by them he must stand, and would, at any cost.

CHAPTER XIV.

STITCHING AND TALKING.

"IT'S no make-believe of a home that Robert can take up with after this," thought Mrs. Hayes, as she sat in the easy-chair, leaning her head upon the little pillow at the top of it, with her eyes closed as if for a nap, but her thoughts extremely busy. "I wonder if there are any more Susans and Millys in the world."

It was a comfortable home, certainly, with "a place for everything, and everything in its place," and yet no show, no fuss, as if things were not to be touched and used, but hung or stood to be looked at.

The general sitting-room had the oven and the ironing-board, while all unsightly operations in washing or cooking were carried on in the back-kitchen, where no one was disturbed by them, and where unavoidable greasy doings, and sundries, such as knife-board, blacking bottles, black pans and kettles, had it all to themselves.

Then there was also "a room to be quiet in," where solitude, or a confidential chat, or a company tea-party could be had if required; a neatly-furnished parlour, with a little fire nearly every day in winter, keeping away the mouldy smell which inhabits most "best rooms" everywhere. And what a luxury is such a room to one who is obliged to be in noise and confusion all day, among machinery or mankind, the strife of tongues, or the bustle of busy streets! There are times when a man would be quite alone, away even from the easy chat and playful humours of his own children, to rest, or

think, or to hold communion with the gracious "God from whom all blessings flow," and it is happy to have, if possible, such a retreat.

Mrs. Hayes did not know where Robert was to look for a home to be compared with that of his childhood and youth; but she thought it would be well to prove that he had better not delude himself into the hope of it where his eyes, if not his heart, were attracted to seek it. So she insisted to Susan that her black silk dress must needs be turned at once, and that Miss Lydia Brooks was the person she wished to do it.

Susan looked in the old lady's face, but could read no particular explanation there, and kindly agreed; though some thoughts of her own would have made her prefer some one else.

So Miss Brooks came in a fashionable bonnet, and her hair dressed like that of the most stylish young lady in B——, so far as she could master it to her will, with a bright ribbon interwoven with it, all very well for that young lady in evening toilette, but somewhat out of character for the young dressmaker at nine o'clock in the morning, sitting down to work in a simple cottage home.

"Have you forgotten an apron, my dear?" said Mrs Hayes. "I'm sure somebody will lend you one."

"Oh, I don't wear them, thank you," said Miss Brooks; "my dress won't take any harm."

"Nay, it was the other way I was thinking of," said Mrs. Hayes. "When I used to do my own work I had a large white apron to keep it all fresh and clean. However, it doesn't matter for this, which is black to begin with."

Things went on pretty smoothly for some time until Lydia, who had put much restraint on her tongue during the morning, said, "I do wonder why Mrs. Taylor didn't bring up Milly

to the dressmaking; she is such a nice-looking girl, a great deal too nice for a servant."

"My dear, what is a servant?" asked Mrs. Hayes, gently.

"A servant! Why, one who goes out for hire to—"

"For a year or more, instead of a day," interrupted Mrs. Hayes. "Yes, what else?"

MISS LYDIA BROOKS VISITS THE OLD LADY.

"Well, one who is obliged to give up all her time to other people, and can never do as she likes, nor go out, nor take any pleasure. She can never hope to do like—like—one who has not been a servant," hesitated poor Lydia, feeling it rather awkward to explain.

"Like a lady, you mean, don't you, my dear?"

"Not exactly," murmured Lydia, afraid of being drawn too far.

"Not exactly a lady, but a person as much like one as possible. Imitations are not good for much, my dear; and as it didn't please the Almighty to make you, and Milly, and me ladies, we are more respectable as our own natural selves than trying to imitate and seem what we are not. But may I tell you what a servant really is? A good one, of course, I mean."

"Oh, if you choose," said Lydia, feeling much injured by being classed with an old woman, who perhaps had been a servant for anything she knew, and still more offended at the implied suggestion of not being a lady herself.

"Well, a good servant is a favoured, honoured person, who has it in her power to be one of the greatest blessings on earth; to be useful as no other has opportunity to be useful, and whose position and name are adopted by our Lord himself during his life on earth, and used besides to set forth the highest praise He could bestow on one He wished to honour, 'Well done, thou good and faithful *servant!* enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"But He meant any one who did well; even a lord or a lady might be *His* servant," said Lydia.

"True, but the approval is not bestowed on the lord or the lady, it is bestowed on the 'faithful servant,' which you and I can be if we will. I expect by-and-by to find that many a lowly Christian servant will take her place in heaven by the side of her master and mistress, or perhaps above them. But assuredly none who set themselves up above service here in the station in which God has placed them, will be likely to see it, or have any part in that place of honour; for it is written, you know, 'He that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;'

and it must come true either in this world or the next, and perhaps in both."

Mrs. Hayes said no more for some time, leaving her words to work, as she hoped, and Lydia stitched away in silent displeasure. She began to dislike the old lady with a decided ill-will, and determined to hold her own opinions in spite of her.

So, after a while, she began again,—

"You seem to think nobody should try to get on in the world, Mrs. Hayes."

"What is 'getting on,' my dear?" said Mrs. Hayes, gently; "let us understand each other's words."

"Why, I mean, of course, rising in the world, getting higher and richer, and more respectable, of course."

"Tell me first, my dear, what part of you is to rise—where would you rise to—why seek riches—and in whose eyes would you be respected?"

"Dear me, how particular you are about words!" said Lydia, half inclined to laugh off the pressure she had provoked.

"I always like to make sure that I understand what I'm talking about," said the old lady, quietly; "it saves 'idle words,' and we shall have to 'give account' of our words some day, you know. Come, let me hear how you explain yours. I am an old woman, and not very loveable, I know, but I would gladly help you to a right judgment if you'll let me."

"Oh, I don't see that I've taken up with a wrong one yet," said Lydia, pertly; "but I mean this: improving one's position, taking a place above that one is born in, and associating with higher people; rich enough to do anything you please without considering expense, and be looked up to as of some consequence in the world. That's what I mean. And I could

be generous, too, and give away a great deal to charities, and people in distress."

"You have explained yourself very well indeed," said Aunt Hayes; "and now I am quite able to answer your first question. I do *not* think it desirable to 'try to get on in the world' in that sense, and for those objects."

"And why, pray? It is your turn to explain now."

"I will not answer you as a matter of mere opinion," replied Mrs. Hayes, "because some people don't care for an old woman's opinions; but I will give you the words of those who spoke and wrote for all times, and all persons, and who were safe from errors of judgment in the statements made. 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.' 'Having food and raiment let us be therewith content; but they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' 'Before honour is humility.' 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble,' and 'they that walk in pride He is able to abase.' 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' I could go on, but these are sufficient reasons, I think, against the course you describe. They express the judgment of the Lord God, who knows the true value of things; and as our deceitful hearts propose to us as a good reason for wishing to be rich and important the power of relieving distress and giving liberally, He has settled that for us too: 'Though I bestow all my goods to feed the

poor . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' 'If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'"

"Then what's the good of working, if we ar'n't to wish to get on?" said Lydia.

"Because it is also written, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' We are born in the position and under the circumstances which God wills, and in which He will bless and prosper us; and if He chooses to raise us to anything higher, He will provide it, and fit us for it; but, to be planning and struggling after wealth and honour to please ourselves is both ignorant and presumptuous, very irritating to the temper and unsatisfactory to the heart after all. It is just quarrelling with God, and fighting against His providence; and when the end comes, supposing we have succeeded, the most we shall have gained will be wisdom to answer the solemn question once asked by the Lord Jesus, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' Think of all this, and live for something better than covetousness of things above you. You can serve God where He has placed you, and a queen can do no more."

CHAPTER XV.

SOLEMN FACTS FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE.

"ACCIDENTAL death," said the jury impanneled to inquire into the death of Swinden.

"But it ought to be added, 'while in a state of intoxication,'" said a listener to the evidence given on the inquest.

"Oh, yes, it may be put so, but where's the use? Will it hinder another drunkard from the same fate when he cannot direct his own movements?"

"I am afraid not," said the medical gentleman in attendance; "if warnings were of any use, we have them in abundance. This is the third violent death through drink that I have had to examine into this week, and it makes life seem one perpetual horror. In a case like this, the world hears the fact, and shudders; but draw the curtain, look behind the scenes, and one's disgust and indignation may expend themselves on another object, while a shade of pity for the wretch cut off in an instant through his mad folly may possibly arise."

"Look, there she is," said one of the jurymen who knew the neighbourhood pretty well; and, as he spoke, a woman passed quickly along, dragging by the hand a small, squalid, neglected-looking child. Every one shrank back to make way for her, and she stalked on, looking half fiend, half idiot, through a group of men whose sympathies would have naturally gathered round a bereaved widow and her children, but who drew back from the drunken wife who was partly responsible for her husband's fate.

"She knew his snare, and has been warned of the consequences, but she drank as shamefully as he did, and never had a fireside fit for him to sit down by. She left him to his own devices, well aware of narrow escapes before from the death he has met now; and, while neglecting all her duty to him, and home, and children, who is to acquit her of being the indirect cause of the accident?"

"But, you see, all this *might* have happened to the drunken husband of a sober wife, and we are not legally able to recognise her in the matter."

"Very true; but, strictly speaking, such deaths are not accidental; they are something between murder and suicide. If he had been sober, he would not have been on the rails, and if he had possessed a good wife, and a peaceful home, he might have been sober. It is well to aim at the beer-shops, but they are not the only sources of the mischief."

The event, which had furnished sad subject of thought to the wise and good, and food for exciting gossip among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, was of immense use to the widow herself. Lost as she was, by her own deliberate conduct, to all sense of womanly feeling and delicacy of mind, her husband's awful death was to her the seed of a great harvest. She was "the poor widow, whose drunken husband was killed on the railway." She was "left with a family wholly unprovided for, and had only her own exertions to look to for their support."

"Poor thing! as if it were not enough to have led her a life of misery, but he must shock her nearly to death by such an end!" commented one kind-hearted lady, as she tied up a bundle of clothing and sent it, with a present of money besides, to the widow's house; while others, equally pitiful and

generous, gave as their means allowed to this "case of destitution," without coming to see and inquire into it for themselves. It is singular that it seldom enters these gentle hearts to think that the sin and provocation in such "a case" may not have been all on one side.

So Mrs. Swinden towered above all her neighbours on the stilts of her misfortune and bereavement, put on her gifts of faded mourning, and sometimes with one child, sometimes two or three, presented herself at the houses of the gentry, and told her grievous story in her own lying fashion to servants, and mistresses and masters, wherever she could get a hearing, and often young ladies would come down and give from their little store, and servants would find an old garment in their box, and gather round to see the poor woman whose "case" was in all the newspapers.

"Lightly come, lightly go" is a true proverb. Money's worth is only known to those who work for it, and though there is fear of the snare on the other side, yet under any circumstances those who work and save are infinitely more respectable than those who beg and spend. "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat," is a rule of the Holy Book, dictated by Him who knows what is in us.

Mrs. Swinden did no work, and she ate, or rather drank, as long as her gifts lasted. Then the bundles of clothing melted rapidly away, and articles that the givers only spared because they thought it a duty to help to clothe the naked and consider the poor, were soon piled on the shelves of the pawnshop, and the half-drunken mother would stagger home to throw her children a few pence to get bread for their craving hunger, while she lay down to sleep off the effects of her own indulgence.

The poor child whose brain had given way under the shock caused by the sudden view of its father's mutilated remains,

had never been healthy, and for reasons best known to herself Mrs. Swinden had made it a member of a burial society, and managed to maintain the usual deposit.

Her thoughts took a dreadful turn as she looked on the little pining creature, and felt the maddening power of the drunkard's thirst. And then the child pined more and shrank more; the coarse food she offered it would not digest, however greedily devoured at first, and there were easy ways of accounting for its illness. So its strength all went, and a little shadow of skin and bone quietly yielded up the breath of life, that a mother's loving care might have cherished into health and bloom, and made a strength and staff to her own old age.

She had watched, not to detain the lingering spark of its earthly existence, as watching mothers yearn to do as long as God permits, but in anxious hope of its quicker departure; and when at last the flicker ceased, and the chill of death had settled on the skeleton frame, she laid it out, and set up a great lamentation at the new "stroke" that had fallen upon her.

An unsuspecting doctor gave the necessary certificate, and the burial society paid the money demanded by a member's death; and again Mrs. Swinden was her own heroine.

The club money and the proceeds of begging expeditions were soon exhausted in such hands as Mrs. Swinden's, and again she cast about for means of replenishing her purse. What could she do? Work? Not if she could help it, certainly. Beg? The givers were tired just now, having been well taxed by the two deaths on which she had traded so successfully. Sell something? She looked round; there was nothing left to sell; the room contained little now but the children, and if any one would buy children she would certainly have sold them. Steal? Ah, but how? From whom? Why, had she

not a victim? Was there not somebody who dared not resist a demand if she chose to make it? The bright thought was worthy of her cause, and forthwith she set about it. "Money I want, and money I must have," she said to herself. "They will trust me no longer, and I can't live without drink." So she put her widow's bonnet over her straggling hair and unwashed face (she had preserved the bonnet because of the woeful tale it silently told), and drawing the old shawl, on which no pawnbroker would advance a penny, round her shoulders, she went out to pay a visit.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOTTOM OF THE INCLINE.

BENJAMIN FIELD had to answer Mr. Hill's letter, and recent circumstances made him more than ever anxious for his return; but no word or message was to be got from Mrs. Hill, and he was quite undecided how far it would be right to convey his own fears and opinions to the absent husband.

"It may not be so bad as we fear, you know, dear husband," said Ellen, "and if there is real cause for our idea about it, it will be time enough for him to know, when he is here to find a remedy."

Benjamin shook his head. If there were a ray of light, his own gentle wife would be sure to see it; but he was not sanguine.

"I feel a kind of presentiment about her," said he, "she seems so changed. And when once a woman takes to—

Well, well, I'll try not to think of it, and write as earnestly as I dare. It's bad enough in a man, and my own experience prevents me from despairing of one—but in a woman. Oh, Ellen! it does seem as if she could never be reclaimed."

Ellen softly repeated the sweet words which had often encouraged her in days and nights of trial about this very sin, and did not limit them to sex or circumstance: "With God all things are possible," "Able to save to the uttermost," "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

So Mr. Field wrote a few kind lines, saying that things were not looking bright or happy at home; that Mrs. Hill was evidently out of health, but refused her confidence to real friends; that the baby was far from well, and the other children often cried for him to come home; that work was waiting for him, and that all might yet be well if he would return to home and duty.

Though Mrs. Field felt that she was not a welcome visitor, she called as often as she could spare time to inquire after Mrs. Hill and her children; and she could not but observe the discomfort that now seemed common in that once neat and orderly dwelling, nor fail to note the changed manner of the once kind though hasty mother.

The children seemed always in disgrace about something, were often put to bed long before their usual hour, and were frightened at the sound of their mother's voice; while any allusion to their father was followed by a slap or a push, or the denial of something they wished for.

Mrs. Field felt all this keenly, and took refuge over the cradle, where she ventured now and then to make a remark on the baby.

"Wouldn't you just call with this little one at the doctor's, Mrs. Hill?" she asked, persuasively; "she seems to me not to be getting on at all.'

"I don't see any need, thank you," said Mrs. Hill; "she is teething, and you know they always have to suffer from that."

"But she is not growing," persisted Ellen, taking the little soft hand, and laying it on her own; "and she does not crow and kick like a child in health, as she used to do."

"It is nothing but her teeth I tell you," said Jane, impatiently. "Surely I ought to know; she is well enough, except cutting teeth so hard."

"Well," said Ellen, with a suppressed sigh, "if she should be worse I shall be very glad to come and mind her while you get a good night's rest."

The baby was more fractious than usual that evening, and Mrs. Hill scrupled not to administer a large dose of the opiate, after which she put all the children to bed, went out for a while, and returning, fastened her door, and made herself comfortable by the fire.

Some time in the night the elder children were awakened by the piteous crying of the baby, which was laid in its mother's bed, near that in which they slept.

"What shall we do, Daisy?" said the little boy, calling his sister by the pet name her father had bestowed upon her; "shall we try to wake mother?"

Daisy agreed, and they scrambled to the side of the bed to shake and rouse her, but no mother was there.

"Oh, she isn't come to bed yet, and it's quite dark. Let's go and call her." Baby cried on, in spite of their pattings and hushings, and the two children made their way to the top of the stairs.

"Mother, oh, mother! please do come; baby 's crying so badly." But no mother came.

"If we could but get the bottle, and give her some medicine," said the boy; "it always makes her quiet. Shall we go down and get it? there's a light down there."

"I wish daddy was here; he'd carry us down," said Daisy, shivering.

"Hush! mother will hear," whispered her brother. The little bare feet pattered cautiously down the stairs, and what they saw caused them to scream with fright.

Their mother was sound asleep, leaning over the table, the candle had burned down, with a tall wick which was just on a level with her cap, already singeing in the flame.

"Oh, she'll be burnt!" screamed the boy, springing forward, and snatching the candle away; and the little girl, forgetting all caution, shrieked to her to awake.

The mother started up at last, looking wild and frightened, sank down again, rubbed her eyes; and, perceiving the children standing terrified before her, tried to comprehend what was the matter.

"What in the world are you doing here?" she called out; "get to bed this moment, or else—" and she rose with a threatening gesture.

"Mother," said the boy, as he retreated, "baby's crying so badly; we only wanted to ask you to come to her."

"I'll teach you to dictate to me, sir," she exclaimed, rushing towards him, and in terror they both flew to the stairs, tumbling up at the risk of coming headlong down again. But the excited woman was behind them, and, giving each a violent shake and toss as they leaped into bed, poor little Daisy was twisted in the sudden fling, and fell against the bed with a shriek of pain. Her brother smothered her up to stifle her cries, and soothed her as well as he could, but every movement was followed by moans and sobs, until at last she fell either into sleep or insensibility.

The poor baby was dosed again with the abominable opiate as it lay in the bed, for its mother was not sufficiently sure of her footing to lift it up and measure the potion; and when

it was quiet again she felt the need of something soothing for herself from a larger bottle, and then, half undressing, she laid herself down, took the babe close in her arms, and knew nothing more till the morning.

Then the sun beamed in at the window, and on to the form of a pale baby, lying on its sleeping mother's arm, and on to the little bed, where the moans of a suffering child were being soothed by the caresses of her troubled brother. She said something was the matter with her shoulder, and she could not move her arm.

For some time they bore up, until Daisy cried outright with the boldness of a feeling that something ought to be done for her, and that, angry or not, kind or not, mother must awake.

So they called loudly, and Daisy at last insisted that her brother should shake the pillow, or wake the baby, or do something that should not fail to rouse her, and he went to the side of the bed.

"Oh, dear," said he, "baby does look so white and still," and then he ventured to touch the little cheek, which was cold as marble.

Frightened out of all caution, he shook his mother, crying wildly, "Oh, mother, see what's the matter with baby; she's dead! she's dead!"

Jane sprang up and gazed upon her child with a horrible fear and dread; but He who said "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" had borne away the young spirit to a better home and safer keeping, and only the small shrunken body lay white and still in her trembling arms.

The brother and sister burst into passionate cries, and the mother sat silent and awed. No tears came to her relief. How had it happened? Had she in her stupor overlaid it? or was it the drug she had given it last night?

She laid it down, and bidding her son get up and run for a doctor, she seemed to resume at once the energy of her character. She kissed and soothed the little girl, bade her be patient, and she would soon see what ailed her arm, prepared a warm bath for the baby, and did everything that former experience and good sense suggested in such circumstances to do.

She set the house in order with activity long strange to her movements; and, by the time the doctor arrived, there was not much to cause a suspicion that things had ever fallen out of their proper train.

Of course, the baby was past human skill. "She died in a fit," Jane said; "it must have been a fit brought on by teething, from which she had been suffering for many weeks."

The doctor agreed, saying that it often happened so; and, knowing Mrs. Hill as a most respectable person forsaken by a worthless husband, he would not pain her with many questions, but certified to that effect, and so this, among hundreds of cases of poisoned babies, escaped further investigation.

"But what have we here?" he asked, as Jane brought him to the little bed where poor Daisy lay moaning with pain and sorrow for her baby sister.

"Dislocated," said the doctor, touching the arm; "some rough pranks, I suppose; swollen badly, but we'll soon make it all right. You have had enough to bear at present," said he, kindly, to the mother. "Can't you send for some woman to give me a little help?"

Jane hesitated, and then feeling that she might not keep up much longer, being conscious of a sick, faint sensation creeping over her, whispered hastily to her little son to run as fast as he could, and bring Mrs. Swinden.

The doctor's quick ear caught the name.

"What!" said he, "the woman whose wretched husband was killed on the railway the other day? She shall touch no patient of mine if I know it. I'm surprised that you should think of her."

There was, however, no need for further consideration, for the little, frightened boy, instinctively aware that help and sympathy were to be found at Mr. Field's, had run on from the doctor's house to tell the sad story, and Ellen was not long in following him home. In her arms the operation, rendered longer and more painful by hours of neglect, was quickly performed, and little Daisy afterwards fell asleep.

Mrs. Field then went into the next room, where the baby lay in another kind of sleep, dressed in clean white night-clothes, ready for the little coffin. Jane stood perfectly still, looking down upon the cold, placid face, that now made no appeal for help, or care, or pity. Ellen drew back instantly, feeling that a mother's grief was not to be intruded upon at such a moment.

But Jane heard her step, and raised her tearless eyes, "Come and look," said she, in a strange, dreamy tone of voice. "She died in a fit."

Ellen looked, not at the babe, but at its mother. There was something inexpressibly painful about the unnatural expression of her face, which, as she looked, became whiter and more rigid than before; she moved nearer, and only just in time, for the unhappy woman, clenching her hands, and muttering from between closed teeth, "If he had done his duty, none of these things would have happened," sank down and fainted, by the side of the babe she had sent to its early rest.

CHAPTER XVII.

DELUSIONS DISPELLED.

MRS. HILL had buried her baby, and the close and kind attentions of Mr. and Mrs. Field had kept less faithful friends away, so that the influences for good had for a time another opportunity. But there were days when even they could not be always at hand, and Jane had learned to find resources against thought and conscience.

Matthew did not come, neither had Benjamin Field heard from him again, and the suspense was trying. The sufferings of the little girl, "father's pet," were a perpetual reproach to her unhappy mother, and often she pretended that occupation about her household duties kept her from the child's bedside.

For Daisy was very weak and pale, and did not care to get up, though the doctor had said she might run about again, provided she was careful not to play too roughly.

"And you must mind and not knock her about," said he to her brother, who heard joyfully that his little playmate might come down-stairs.

"I don't knock her about," said the boy, his eager smiles turning to indignant frowns; "it was—" He paused suddenly, his face crimsoned, and he hid it in Daisy's pillow.

"Well, my child," said the doctor, "I'm glad to see that you cannot tell a falsehood without feeling ashamed of it. How could your sister get such a hurt except in some rough gambols that you got up to together? Well, well, you'll both be careful in future, I dare say. Mrs. Hill, if you could borrow somebody's perambulator, a ride would do the little

maid good." And so the doctor felt it safe now to give up the case into the mother's hands. Who could bring a sick child round so well as a kind and watchful mother?

Mrs. Hill said nothing. She could not comfortably look her own children in the face, and a sort of fear, almost dislike, sprang up against her own boy, who had so nearly defended himself at her expense.

And had she not allowed a false imputation to rest upon him? How would *he* feel towards *her?* She felt despicable in his eyes, and in her own; and, unsoftened by true penitence, made herself harder and colder than ever.

Daisy begged to lie still; no perambulator was sought for—Mrs. Hill did not like "borrowing;" and there was no improvement. Often the little feverish lips would utter the dear name of "father," and Jane knew that a kind word from her would bring him to that bedside, but she would not speak or write it, and the little one longed in vain. It was affecting to see how the children, in the habit of former days, tried to keep themselves and their room tidy even now.

"Brother, what are you doing?" Daisy asked one day, when he had been very quiet for some time.

"Only cutting out some letters," said he; "I'll show you soon." So Daisy tried to be patient. At last he jumped up from the floor, bringing his slate and showing her some letters cut out of any odd papers or advertisements, such as are constantly left at people's doors. "You can't read it, Daisy, but I can. I've written it on my slate first to be sure. I've got all the letters, and now I'll read them to you." So, feeling very proud and happy, he read:—

"'DEAR FATHER, COME HOME; DAISY WANTS YOU.'"

"Oh, how nice!" cried Daisy, her bright eyes dilating. "Will he come?"

"I hope so. I'm going to make Mr. Field send it in a

JOSY'S LETTER TO FATHER.

letter he knows where. I shall stick them on a paper if I can find a bit."

"Will mother let you ?" asked his sister, apprehensively.

"I haven't told her; I don't want to," he replied, with a cloudy face. "You mustn't tell her either." After a long search in every place he could think of, a half sheet of white paper was found; he begged a morsel of gum, and the letters, in tolerable order, were stuck upon it. He was always ready to run on errands when anything was wanted, and impatiently waited his opportunity.

At last it came, and, running into Mr. Field's, he hastily confided the paper to Mrs. Field, begging her to get it sent as soon as possible, for poor Daisy sadly wanted her father, and so did he.

Mrs. Field, deeply touched, clasped the little fellow in her arms, and the tears came into the eyes of both.

"Oh, if mother would do so," said he; "but I must run back," and rubbing away the drops, he set off amidst assurances that the letter should go that day. And it did so.

"Well!" said Daisy, eagerly, as, out of breath, he rushed up to her side.

"It's all right; it will go," said he.

"And father will come and see Daisy again. Oh, brother, but what if I was to go away like baby—would you mind ?" said she, softly.

"Oh, Daisy, don't say that; I can't bear it," said the boy, quickly.

"I won't if you don't like, but it was only Jesus taking her away in her sleep, because perhaps He thought mother wasn't —couldn't mind her well enough," she added, hesitatingly.

"But I'm minding you, He needn't come for you," said the brother, anxiously.

"Where's your mother, children?" asked a loud, sharp voice of some one who stood looking on them from the end

of the room. Josy had not latched the door below, Mrs. Hill was not in sight, and the visitor walked up to where she had heard the sound of voices.

"Are you not well yet?" said she, advancing as the children shuffled close together. "Oh, I'm not going to do any harm to you. Where's your mother, I say?"

"I'm here," said Mrs. Hill from below. "Please to come down. Why did you go up-stairs?"

"Because I'd a mind to," said Mrs. Swinden, rudely, and turning to go down again.

"We'll shut her out," said the boy, running to close the door. "I can't bear her—the ugly woman! She makes me feel angry and wretched."

But Mrs. Swinden heard the words, rushed instantly back again, and gave the boy a sharp box on the ears, whereupon Daisy screamed with rage and terror, and her brother struck out arms and legs with heedless fury.

Jane was on the point of springing to the rescue, when she checked herself, suppressed her passion, and called from below, "I'm here; come down if you want me. Please don't meddle with the children."

"I'll kill you if you dare to kick at me again, sir," shouted the woman. "A pretty way to bring children up to be sure! I wonder you arn't ashamed of him;" and red with anger and exertion with the scuffle, she stood before Mrs. Hill, wondering much that the mother had not come up to take the part of her child.

"I'm sorry if he was naughty to you," said Mrs. Hill, with a strange mixture of pride and fear in her tone. "What is it you want me for?"

"Well, I suppose I can sit down; and though it's daytime I dare say you can find me something to drink—I'm thirsty—and then I'll tell you."

"I've only my beer that's left for supper," said Mrs. Hill; "you shall have that and welcome," and she produced a bottle and emptied the contents into a glass, which the woman drank off at one breath."

"I should like some more," said she, impudently.

"I'm sorry; I've no more in the house," said Jane, in a great fright at her behaviour. "But if you would get some for yourself, here's the money for it."

"A paltry sixpence," said Mrs. Swinden, taking it, nevertheless. "Now, we had better have a settling. You must pay me for the gin, and the cordials, and all I've got for you at odd times."

"I don't owe you anything," said Jane; "I paid you every penny you ever spent for me, and more too."

"Oh, no, you didn't; you've lost count, Mrs. Hill. You get plenty of money from your husband, you know; and I am a lone widow, and it's a shame for you to be in my debt. So pay me at once, or something on account."

Mrs. Hill again protested against the claim.

"Very well, take your choice. If you don't pay me, I'll summons you, and expose everything. I'll tell how you went to the Lion for drink, because you were afraid to go again to the Crown. I'll tell how you behaved that night you got drunk the first time, and the trouble I had with you. Ha, ha! do you think I've forgotten what the pretty, tidy Mrs. Hill looked like? Who'd ever have believed it? Will you pay me now, I say?"

"How much do you say it is?" gasped Jane, white with shame and passion.

"Ten shillings now, for those things I said, and the rest when I can look up the account," said the triumphant woman, maliciously.

"This is the last I will ever give you," said Jane, hastily

counting out the sum, almost the last in her possession. "Now go, and never darken my door again."

"That's as I please," said her late friend, saucily, and slowly moving towards the door; "I'll come when I choose. Good-by for the present, and teach your boy better manners than to call ladies ugly, specially when they're such friends as me."

As soon as she was over the threshold, Jane dashed the door close, bolted and locked it, against the jeers and laughter of the "lady" outside, sat down and covered her face, pressing her hands upon her forehead, and groaned, and almost foamed with a frenzy of passion.

Poor Matthew's wish that the proud spirit might be humbled began to be fulfilled now. Oh, what a sense of horrible degradation was crushing her! what frightful shame to lie at the mercy of such a person as this! Bolts and bars could not keep out the bitterness of such a condition as the tempter's insulting mockery had set before her. What could she do?

Oh, had she but cast herself, all helpless and sinful as she was, at the feet of the compassionate Jesus, she might have found peace; peace by the blood that cleanseth from all sin, and the Spirit that renews to holiness; but there is "a sorrow that worketh death," a taste of "the worm that dieth not," and this was gnawing at the heart of the unhappy Jane.

Long she sat swelling with rage and shame. Bitterly she cursed the tempter who had triumphed over her, and there was nothing but despair in the end. She had yielded herself to the soothing influences of a fatal charm, and found herself entangled in the strong meshes of a demon in disguise.

All at once she started up, and rushed to her cupboard. There stood a bottle, nearly full of the strong spirit to which she had begun to resort in secret, and instead of dashing it to fragments, and bursting her bonds, she swallowed glass after

glass of it with mad haste, and any action, however wild or shocking, was not too bad for the raving maniac she became.

With incoherent fury she denounced Mrs. Swinden, and threatened revenge; she kicked and broke her furniture, and threw several things into the fire, tossed the cradle, lately occupied by her lost baby, out into the yard, threw Matthew's chair after it, smashed a whole row of plates on the shelf, and made so fearful a noise that passers-by, failing to open the door, managed to take a look in at the window, and passed on, saying, "It's only a drunken woman!"—the most hateful thing on the face of the fallen earth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FRIENDS WORTH KEEPING.

"ROBERT," said a gentlemanly young man about Robert Taylor's own height and age, laying his hand familiarly upon his shoulder, "my father says it is a pity poor Matthew should be pining for his letter, though he is so foolish as not to give his address to the postmaster; it may be some time before he is able to go for it."

"He shall not pine long if it is there, sir," said Robert; "I am going to inquire for it this evening after work; I told my mother this morning not to expect me home until late."

"I thought so," returned the other; "and I mean to go with you, unless you have better company, so expect to see me somewhere about the first turnpike."

Robert was very well pleased, and having brought a change

of dress with him to the works, he knew that his companion need not be ashamed of his appearance.

Soon after six o'clock, a light vehicle, capable of holding two people, overtook him at the appointed spot.

Young Mr. Dixon drove briskly on for some time in silence, during which we may take opportunity to say that he was now in partnership with his father, a steady, active man of business, and greatly beloved by all in his employ. The early affection he had felt for the son of the respected foreman had ripened into a strong friendship, which nothing on either side had ever interrupted, and which the excellent sense and self-respect of the workman preserved from intrusion or presumption.

"Robert," said Mr. Archibald, after a while, "you have never asked me anything about certain reports which you must have heard. Don't you care what I do for myself?"

"Yes, indeed, I do care," exclaimed Robert, with a rush of bright colour to his honest face; "and, if I hadn't felt good hope that all is right for you, I should have risked even displeasing you by speaking; but otherwise it was not for me to mention such a subject until you gave me opportunity."

"That's like my honest friend," said the other; "but what is your hope about it, on which you have settled down so satisfactorily?"

"That the young lady is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and, by all I can hear, worthy the love of a Christian gentleman," replied Robert, promptly.

"Then you can congratulate me when I tell you that all is settled, and that our God—yours and mine, Robert—is going to bestow on me His best earthly gift, 'a prudent wife'?"

"Yes, I can and do, with all my heart, sir," said Robert;

"I saw you several times attending on that lady, and I could feel no rest until I found out all I could about her."

"And what did you hear, may I ask?"

"Nothing but what is good and right?" said Robert, warmly. "That she is a true Christian, with a sweet and gentle temper; is a self-denying daughter, and an accomplished lady; kind to the poor, and thoughtful for every one about her—such a person as your dear mother will be happy to call daughter-in-law."

"Well done, Robert, I could not have made a better sketch myself," said his gratified friend; "and had it been otherwise you would have told me your thoughts on a matter so important to my happiness."

"I would, sir: I could not have done otherwise."

"Then, Robert, you will understand the feeling which constrains me to speak candidly to you. I am anxious about you, Robert, and some dear to me are anxious too. Miss Eaton knows our regard for you and your family, and is kindly interested in all I love. She employed a young dressmaker lately, of whom in many respects she did not feel able to approve, and was greatly grieved to hear your name mentioned as the admirer of this pretty but indiscreet young woman. It had been, I was going to say, boasted of before the servants, who told their mistress. I know you too well to suppose you would trifle on such a matter, and I want to know the truth from yourself."

"You shall hear it," said Robert, with a blush of annoyance and indignation at the construction that had already been put upon his conduct; "I do acknowledge that I was attracted by the beauty of Lydia Brooks, and that I have tried to ascertain what sort of disposition and principles belonged to it. I have no notion of falling in love with what merely

pleases the eye, but I can't tell what I might do if further knowledge of character satisfied my heart."

"You would then yield the devoted attachment of that heart, I know, Robert, and I want to have it worthily bestowed."

"I do not expect to have it called forth, Mr. Archy," said Robert. "My good Aunt Hayes has taken up the cause, and circumstances are eliciting sufficient to guide me safely, under God's kind providence."

"Then you are not hurt at what I have said? You know, Robert, I would not speak or think disrespectfully of any one dear to you."

"I do know it, and thank you heartily for such real friendship, Mr. Archy; and the only thing that causes me regret is to see a woman so gifted with powers to please, and make somebody's life happy, set upon throwing them away for a little idle vanity."

"She is a selfish, giddy, vain creature, so far as Miss Eaton can ascertain," said Mr. Archibald, warmly; "and to see you choose such a woman would distress me. But we can trust your good Aunt Hayes, and of course I ought to have trusted you also, never to attach yourself to a woman who does not fear God. Only one sees such strange miserable things in this queer world sometimes. I have not selected my wife for her beauty, Robert, though she is lovely enough in my eyes."

"And in every one's else," said Robert, smiling, as he sprang out at the post-office to inquire for the expected letter.

By the open window of the bedroom over Miss Lydia's special apartment, and in spite of the advice of his landlady, sat the invalid lodger, looking very pale and weak yet; his usually curly hair hung lank about his brow, and an ex-

pression of anxiety was on his countenance; his tall figure drooped wearily, and altogether Matthew Hill was very much changed for the worse in appearance.

It was a sweet, calm evening, the soft air refreshed him, and many an effort he made to give attention to the little book that lay open on the table at his side.

"It's of no use," he thought at last, closing the book, "I can't pretend to care as I ought for the news from a better world, while I'm longing so hard for some in this;" and again he gazed along the road wishing for restored strength to try another journey to the post-office at B——. His young friend had not been to see him either that day, and Mr. Hill felt alone in the world.

Presently, however, a little carriage drove up, and in a few seconds, up three steps at a time came Robert Taylor, and laid two letters before him.

"How kind! how thoughtful!" murmured the grateful man, as he clasped Robert's hand; "don't go until I have opened them."

"They have been lying for some days," said Robert. "I will wait and see whether you want to answer them to-night."

But Mr. Hill did not hear. He was gazing in mute surprise upon the seven words in printed letters which me his eager eyes on tearing open the first letter.

"DEAR FATHER, COME HOME, DAISY WANTS YOU."

It was some minutes before the other letter, written by Mr. Field, was opened, and its contents, though cautiously and hopefully worded, impressed the unhappy wanderer with the conviction that some untold evil had befallen.

"Will you have pen and ink? shall I post a letter for you?" gently asked Robert, thinking the fit of musing had lasted long enough for an invalid.

"To-morrow, if I cannot travel, but I must try," said

Matthew, "I cannot say anything now. Will you pray for me? for I am very very miserable, and I deserve it all."

"I don't like to leave you miserable," said Robert, kindly; "but though I can't help you, I know who can. He says, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me;' 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee;' 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;'" and with the last words Robert softly closed the door, leaving the sick man still gazing on the printed sentence before him.

Left alone, Matthew Hill tried to think, and found the effort only further exhibited the confusion of his mind. Yet over the chaos seemed to float in tender tone the last words of his young friend, "Come unto Me . . . I will give you rest." "Come unto Me."

"Oh, I must. I cannot bear this. My God, teach me, hear me, help me!" he cried, in an agony of distress, and sinking on his knees by the chair in which he had been sitting. Tears, bitter, miserable tears, forced themselves into his eyes, his hand pressed hard on his burning forehead, and he was conscious of nothing for some time but an intolerable load of remorse and wretchedness.

Was it strange that he thought not now of others' faults or tempers or unkindnesses? He saw something of himself, his cruel desertion of duty, his stubborn pride, his former odious self-indulgence.

"Oh, what a sinful wretch I have been!" he murmured. "Can the good God ever pity or forgive me? Oh! may I but see them again—my poor wife, my darling children! Shame, shame on me, for an unnatural father, an unfeeling husband. Can they ever love me any more?"

Now was poor Matthew indeed humbled. He saw himself

now in the light of God's holy word, and lay with all his pride, and self-will, and crushing sense of utter worthlessness before the Cross of Christ. And that was the right place to find help; there hung the only arm that could raise up the fallen. And now was felt the "repentance" that the Prince and Saviour was "exalted" to give. "Remission of sins was in twin-relationship with "godly sorrow."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN "THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK."

"I CAN see how it is very well," thought Miss Lydia Brooks. "I know that old woman thinks her nephew admires me, as I know he does too; and so she wants to make a Methodist of me for his sake, that when he makes me the offer I may be ready to say, 'Yes, if you please,' without any conditions of my own. But I've got a spirit, and a will, and I'll do as I like in spite of her. Dear me, how comfortable it will be to get out of the way of that tiresome Dick, and mother always dinning at me about being tidy, and keeping hours, and so on, and to have nothing to do but amuse myself all the day long. I don't think I shall even make my own things when I'm married. I know what wages he gets, for I got it out of his little brother, and he can afford to keep me like a lady, and he shall; and if he minds me I'll have him to hold his head as high as any of the best of them."

And the vision went on until Miss Lydia saw herself riding in her own carriage, and her husband, at the very least, master of the Dixons' works; unless, indeed, the young gardener, who

was going to be another Sir Joseph Paxton, should make her an offer first. But somehow he was always looking at that Emily Taylor when he had the chance, though what he could see in her was a mystery. She would be just like her old aunt, Mrs. Hayes, and never likely to raise herself in the world.

With these and similar preparations for the charge and management of a working man's home, Miss Lydia tossed her pretty head a good many times in contempt of Milly Taylor and Aunt Hayes; but therewith came the recollection that she was engaged to finish the silk dress that day, and so it came to pass that she was one of the party who met around Mrs. Taylor's tea-table in the parlour that afternoon.

Susan was busy with some cakes of a favourite kind, and Mrs. Hayes was directing some operation of the oven, which the younger Susan had taken in hand, when three young ladies tapped at the door, and were instantly admitted.

"Oh, Mrs. Hayes!" exclaimed one, flying up to the old lady and giving her a hearty kiss. "You're busy, and we must not stay. We only brought Mrs. Taylor some flowers, and mamma says if you like Milly is to come and have tea with you to-day. Papa told us that Robert is giving Mr. Matthew a drive out for the first time, and that they are coming to take tea here, so we knew you would like to have them all round you: don't you now?"

"Indeed I do like it, and more than like it; I thank my God for it, dear young lady," said Mrs. Hayes. "You know the old woman cannot expect to be here again, at least it isn't very likely."

"Now, don't say that," cried another of the bright girls, saucily patting the firm, rosy old cheek; "I don't want to cry, and I shall if I'm never to see you any more."

"Ah, let us make sure, dear child, that we shall and must

meet again, by being friends in the Lord Jesus. You know He is my dear Saviour and Lord: is He yours?"

"Well, I hope so; I don't know. I'm so giddy, they say."

"The more need of such a Friend to lean on and be ruled by," said Mrs. Hayes. "Be sure the Lord is looking for you; for they who told you that you are giddy, maybe told Him too."

"There, Mrs. Hayes, I've set out those flowers prettily, haven't I?" said a third. "And now for mamma's message to you. She says she must have you for a day or two all to herself, and she won't let us in to plague you until after tea; and you are to fix your own day, and we will come for you;" and then, with a kiss from each, and a kind message to Mrs. Taylor, the gay girls departed.

"Bless them, Lord bless them!" said Mrs. Hayes, reverently, as if she meant it; "and let us tell the dear young things who love to show kindness and sympathy to those who are a step or two below them in the ranks of society, that the fervent blessing of an old Christian is no light matter. It may be the prayer that availeth much, and on some future in the stream of time may hover over them with a bounteous answer from Him who never forgets."

"Bless me!" thought Miss Lydia, who had been a listening observer, and used the same word as a senseless expression of wonder; "how much they make of her! and she nothing but an old farm woman!"

"May I see your home, Robert?" Mr. Hill had said to his new friend: "I fancy it is a happy one."

"It is a happy home. God has been very gracious to us all," said the young man, "and I am only waiting the doctor's leave to take you there."

A pleasant little plan was arranged between them, and so

it came also to pass that Mr. Hill was a welcome guest that day.

Now it is curious how young people possess themselves of intelligence that does not concern them, but so it is; and Mr. Lewis, the young gardener at Lord Crewe's, found out that Emily Taylor was spending the evening at home. He could not very gracefully invite himself to tea, but as soon as possible afterwards he made his appearance—dressed, as Miss Lydia remarked to her intimate friend, "for all the world like a real gentleman"—with a new plan he had concocted for warming his greenhouses, and on which he wished to consult Mr. Taylor.

The conversation was easy and pleasant to those who had met for friendly intercourse, and religion did not sit up with a starched frill, like a stranger of olden times invited for duty's sake, and formal enough to scare anybody from wishing its acquaintance, but with its sweet ever-present influence shed peace and cheerfulness over heart and lip.

At last, however, it struck Miss Lydia Brooks that she was playing too insignificant a part in the conversation, and having a combination of clever purposes to answer by a display of her sentiments—a proof of her power over the young engineer, a silencer for presumptuous Mrs. Hayes, and an eclipse of the modest Emily—she took the first opportunity to start a new subject.

"Oh, Mrs. Taylor," she began, in an insinuating tone, "I want to mention to you a little scheme of ours, and which my father and mother hope you will join. There's a cheap excursion train to the old castle at Holme next Sunday afternoon, and it would be so nice to make up a large party to go. We should have tea at the inn, ramble about and see the ruins, and get home by the late train, which is to bring back the excursionists."

"On Sunday, did you say, my dear?" said Susan, thinking it possible she might have been mistaken.

"Yes, on Sunday; *we* don't think it any harm to take a little country air and a little pleasure on a Sunday; after morning service, of course, I mean. Our duty to God I know should come first;" and the young speaker looked round with complacency. What could anybody say after that pious conclusion?

"It is the Lord's day, my dear, and we never require more pleasure than its observance gives us," said Mrs. Taylor, quietly.

"I suppose you like fair play, Miss Brooks," said Mr. Taylor; "but if you grant it, what would become of your excursion and your tea? The clerks at the stations, the engine-driver, the stoker, the guard, the innkeeper, and sundry others employed, may like a little change of air and a little pleasure as much as you do; and if they were to insist upon having it, Sunday excursionists must forego their selfish enjoyments."

"Oh, but father says they would rather have the money than the rest; and if so we may as well take the benefit of their choice," said Lydia, quite a match, she thought, for such narrow-minded arguments.

"Well, then, let us take the right ground at once," said Mr. Taylor, "and admire the wisdom and kindness of Almighty God, who fixed a portion of man's time for resting from the business and things of this world both to recruit his bodily powers and to consider the future state to which all of us are bound, and to worship Him who alone can fit us for the enjoyment of it. If you were to be called to the throne of England, Miss Lydia, and didn't know the hour when the summons would come, would you not like a little time to keep yourself ready for it?"

"Very likely I should," said Lydia, laughing.

"The children of God," continued Mr. Taylor, "have an inheritance laid up for them, 'a crown of life' that nothing can deprive them of; they don't know the minute when they may be called to take possession, and they feel the need, the joy, and the wisdom of having a portion of time separated from the business or pleasures, if you think them such, of this present world, and calmly give up their hearts and minds to things which shall last for ever. In this view of the Lord's day it is wrong for me to help to deprive others of the same opportunity. If they do not think of their immortal souls, I ought at least to do my part towards reminding them."

"But what if some don't take your view of the day, Mr. Taylor?" said Mr. Lewis; "what if some think that there is now no such command?"

"I might ask you in return," said Mr. Taylor, "how you prove that a law made before man sinned, renewed when God entered into a covenant with a chosen people, and still thankfully regarded by all who are now put into the place of that people, was ever annulled by divine authority."

"Your great example Jesus Christ did not observe it so rigidly," said Lewis; "He was continually in trouble for disregarding it."

"For disregarding the formal observance which Pharisees had substituted for heart-service to the Lord of the Sabbath," said Mr. Taylor; "but because He distinctly taught that 'it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day,' would you presume to imply that he meant it was unnecessary 'to do good' on other days?"

"Can anybody lend me a Bible?" asked Mr. Lewis; "I know there's a passage that says just what I mean."

Mr. Taylor and Robert each quietly drew a small, well-

thumbed Bible from their pockets, while the younger children who were sitting by sprang up and quickly rushed round Mr. Lewis with three more, giving him a choice of size.

After a good deal of turning over leaves, while everybody waited, Robert generously came to the rescue, "Is this it?" said he, handing his Bible opened at the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

Mr. Lewis took it, and read to himself.

"Ah, yes, thank you, this is exactly what I wanted, and is quite conclusive to my mind;" and he read in a clear, satisfied tone at the fourth verse, picking out the sentences that seemed to suit him. "'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' Now, what can be more satisfactory than that? I beg to ask. So you see, Miss Brooks, you have the same authority for your way of enjoying your Sunday as our friends here have for theirs."

Miss Lydia smiled graciously, and thought Mr. Lewis an exceedingly nice, polite young man.

"There is such a thing as handling the Word of God deceitfully, but allow me to say another word before you consider the argument ended," said William Taylor. "You must not treat that book like a dictionary, which gives you the meaning of a word, without any connection with what stands before or after it. The Word of God interprets itself. Let me ask you to observe to whom that chapter is written. It treats of the mutual forbearance of brethren, strong and weak. What brethren? 'To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints,' whose 'faith was spoken of throughout the whole world;' who were 'justified by faith,'

and had 'peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;' who were to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' Now, of such it might safely be said, 'He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it;' 'for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' Such are safely free from the judgment of the formalist, who would make religion to consist in 'meat and drink, and observance of holy days, or keeping of Sabbaths,' making everything of the shadow, and losing the substance it pointed to. But none others are addressed here, and to none others does this apostolic argument apply."

"I should say, sir," said Mr. Lewis, coldly, "that the Bible is as much for me as for you."

"A part of it, certainly," said Mr. Taylor, gently. "It only recognises two classes, believers and unbelievers; it has different words for each, and your share of it is according to your place with one or the other. If you ask me, I can truly say before God and my own conscience, that I do keep and highly regard the Lord's day, that I thank Him for it as one of the best blessings of my country and one of the workman's dearest boons. On it by lawful right I claim rest from my daily toil, and opportunity to worship Him among the people 'gathered together in His name;' on it I can instruct my children, arm myself afresh for the duties of life, and enjoy my earthly, while looking forward to my heavenly, home."

"It's all very well for you, sir, I dare say," said Mr. Lewis, somewhat chafed at having no answer ready.

"Well, then, suffer me to ask, Is it equally well with you? Can you say before God and your own conscience, 'I do not

care to keep the Lord's day, I disregard it "*unto the Lord;*" I neither avail myself, and for my pleasure I hinder others from availing themselves, of opportunities for worship and hearing His Word; I like to do my "pleasure on His holy day," not considering it "a delight," or "the holy of the Lord," or "honourable," and all this "*unto the Lord;*" I speak my own words, and visit my own companions, "*unto the Lord;*" I disagree with all the Bible says about faith, and love, and service, about glorifying Him, and doing good to the souls of my fellow-creatures, "*unto the Lord;*" and this negative way of being a Christian man is my offering "unto the Lord," and my way of being ready for the eternal Sabbath in glory with Him?' Say, dear young friend, is this a safe, wise way?"

"You think you have the best of it, I see, Mr. Taylor," said Lewis; "and I don't profess to have the Bible so glib on my tongue; but I have books at home that I could quote to you if I had time, which put matters in a very different light."

"You mean 'darkness,' young man," said Mrs. Hayes, firmly. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

"Now that old woman is down upon him too," thought Miss Lydia; "it's quite too bad. Perhaps, Mr. Taylor," she immediately interposed, "you will let the young people judge for themselves."

"Those who are old enough to have judgment," said William; "the others will submit without question to mine."

"Then, Mr. Robert and Miss Milly," she cried, "will you think about my father's plan, and join us?"

"We have been too happy in the way my father has

explained to you to wish for any change," said Robert; "and if you fairly represent it at home, Miss Brooks, I think your influence would induce your parents to consider and try it for themselves."

"I am not converted to it yet," said Lydia, flippantly.

The presence of the young gardener and Miss Lydia had marred some of the pleasure of this visit to Mr. Hill, but he was not sorry to have heard such a view of religion from the words and experience of his host; and he resolved with God's blessing to rule his own house in future after such a pattern. This was the happiest home he had ever seen, and the reason he justly ascribed to the fact that it was a Christian home.

CHAPTER XX.

A DISCOMFITURE.

THE young gardener felt he had made an awkward beginning to the suit he had determined to press, and endeavoured to assure Milly that respect for her excellent father had alone prevented him from using arguments which would have convinced her of the superiority of the new lights that were beginning to shine, and of the unnecessary strictness of the old-fashioned theories of religion. But he "hoped for many opportunities of discussing the subject with her."

"Not with my consent," thought Milly, and she hoped the young man would leave them as soon as Robert had driven off with Mr. Hill.

But Lewis had no such intention. Milly had to go up to

the house by a long winding path, and he meant to escort her.

"It is our custom to have family prayer before parting from my daughter," said Mr. Taylor, with simplicity. "Will you choose to stay or not?"

"Oh, I shall be most happy to join you," said Mr. Lewis, pleasantly.

Mr. Taylor read a chapter and prayed, and though Mr. Lewis might have heard the second chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians many a time in his life, it never seemed to have so much point before. "But then," thought he, "it is only the quaint, old-fashioned way of putting things." And he would not have heard the prayer at all if he could have helped it; but he could not help it, and vainly strove to shake off the solemnising consciousness that he knelt with one who was speaking, the child to his Father, the Christian to his God, through the atoning mercy and forgiving love that had made them one in Christ Jesus.

The object of his stay was, however, defeated by Mr. Taylor taking Milly home himself, as he felt it was a parent's duty to guard the fair character of his child, and, as far as possible, to choose her associates. Never until he should yield up his authority to her husband could he hold himself absolved from responsibility concerning her way of life and her good name among those with whom she dwelt.

The young gardener was piqued at the rejection of his politeness, but he walked by their side, saw the father press a loving kiss on the lips of his child, and as Milly disappeared into the house he again joined Mr. Taylor, and without further hesitation asked his leave to address her, with the view of making her his wife. He stated his means, which, he said, were ample, though shared by his mother and sister, and seemed himself much impressed with the favour he was

conferring on his chosen one, or rather, perhaps, on her family.

Great was his mortification and displeasure when Mr. Taylor, with the straightforward simplicity which marked all his ways, informed him, as kindly as he could, that he decidedly declined his proposal, and would never bestow his Christian daughter on one whose principles were opposed to the Word of God.

"Is that your only objection?" asked the young man, thinking it was a very light matter and easily dealt with.

"It includes everything," said Mr. Taylor.

"Then," returned Lewis, eagerly, "I can safely assure you that it shall never cause an instant's disagreement between us. In fact, so far from interfering with your daughter's principles, I may perhaps feel more perfect confidence in her character because of them, though I may not actually share them."

"You say well," said the father, "for you evidently know that 'a woman that feareth the Lord' is the true wife to be trusted as well as 'praised.' She only takes God's blessing with her as her best portion. But it can only be by obedience to the command not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever, and I trust and pray that child of mine shall never so dishonour God and wrong her own soul. Emily is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, Mr. Lewis; and whatever her lot in life, it must agree with that first and holiest bond."

"Well, sir, I cannot pretend to understand such extreme views, but if any one could instruct and win me to them it would be your daughter."

"Nay, you overrate even her power, were she dear to you as longer acquaintance and closer communion might make her. Only the Holy Spirit of God, by the Word which you disown, can win you to approve and love the truth. It is

not 'of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.'"

Mr. Lewis carefully controlled the vexation and contempt he felt, but he resolved that only from the fair girl herself would he submit to the rejection of his suit. "She will manage them all if I can manage her," he thought, "and to baffle the old father as well as to win his sweet daughter will be a racy sort of enterprise, and enliven the dulness of this stupid place for a while. Then I will get a situation elsewhere, and carry her off to see the world, that yet she knows nothing about, poor girl."

On his return home Mr. Taylor told Susan and Mrs. Hayes all that had occurred, and the latter began to think there was no plan so effectual as to take her young favourite away to the country at once. But the parents thought they might trust Milly, and that it would be well for her to remain at present where duty had placed her, and to let her principles stand the test, if the suitor should choose to press matters any further.

A morning or two after, as Mrs. Hayes sat knitting, a very pleasing, neatly-dressed young woman made her appearance at the lodge, and presenting a little basket of beautiful fruit, said that her brother respectfully begged Mrs. Taylor's acceptance of some which he had liberty to dispose of as he pleased.

"Who is your brother, my dear?" asked Mrs. Taylor, giving her a seat.

"I beg your pardon, I thought you knew him," she replied, colouring. "Edward Lewis, the gardener at Lord Crewe's."

"We are much obliged to him," said Susan, "and I would not pain him by refusing to accept what you have been at the trouble to bring, but I must beg that he never sends

anything again; he is aware that we cannot welcome him here, and of course cannot receive his gifts."

"I am very sorry, ma'am," said the young woman, again blushing deeply. "May I ask how my brother has been so unfortunate as to displease you? he cannot have done so intentionally."

Mrs. Hayes looked very kindly on the girl; she liked the sisterly question, and Susan felt that it must be answered. She would not expose the brother's secret, but turning over the leaves of the large Bible that lay open on the table at Aunt Hayes's elbow, she pointed to some words, saying, "Did you ever notice this verse, my dear? I need not say anything more if you understand me."

It was the second epistle of John, tenth verse, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

The maiden looked at the verses long enough to have read them many times over, and then raising her eyes with tears gathering in them to Susan's face, she said, meekly, "Then it is true; you are of those who love the Lord Jesus. I am so glad, so very glad. But, oh, Mrs. Taylor, don't refuse to let my brother come here; it may be the very way in which our prayers are to be answered, my mother's and mine."

"Your prayers for what, dear child?" asked Mrs. Hayes, beaming one of her tenderest looks on the damsel.

"For my brother, ma'am, that he may give up the bad books and notions he has got hold of, and learn God's own truth in His own Holy Word, that he may come to Jesus and be saved."

"That's what I call sound Christian English," said Mrs.

Hayes; "and now we understand each other, and I am sure you will not really wish my dear niece here to 'do evil that good may come;' to risk her own children's principles in hope to amend your brother's. He has Moses and the prophets, and even Jesus risen from the dead."

"Yes, I am wrong and selfish," said the sister; "but when I heard that you were Christians in real earnest, and that your daughter is an attraction to my brother, I felt glad for his sake. I thought you would do him good."

"Yes, you were selfish in that, my dear; but you see that it cannot be. You would not wish our child to do what you dare not, I hope, do yourself. How many a weak simpleton has fancied she was to be as a good angel to her husband's soul, and has lost herself in his worldliness and unbelief instead."

"Oh, you are right. I dare not blame you. So I can but ask you to forgive my selfishness, and to pray for Edward sometimes, as one in great danger and great sin."

"And what of your mother, my dear?"

"Oh, you would love my mother," she cried, with animation. "I wish you could see her, but she is not able to go out, and has no one except me to speak to about the things she loves best."

"I dare say she daily thanks God for giving her a daughter to whom she can speak of what she loves best. It is a high honour for you that He has made you understand her; and, my dear, don't let craving for more make you unmindful of what is already given."

"My mother says that: oh, would you come and see her? It is not a long walk, and it would cheer her so much."

"You may expect us very soon," said Aunt Hayes; "and remember that you are welcome whenever you can come," said Susan, kindly.

"I do not often leave my mother," she said; "but when I can I shall be thankful to come here. Will you call me Rhoda?" she added, simply, "that is my name."

"Then tell me, Rhoda," said Mrs. Hayes, "have you always lived with this dear mother?"

"Oh no, I was being taught under Lady Crewe's maid, and was to have gone with her ladyship to Italy last winter as her only waiting-maid; but my mother was taken ill, and though Lady Crewe would have paid a nurse to take care of her, I could not think of letting a stranger take the place of her own child. She had nursed and tended me for years of childish helplessness and trouble, and I could not go and see beautiful places and enjoy myself while there was her sick-bed to cheer and her suffering to soothe at home. She wished me to go—dear, kind mother, she would deny herself anything; but when I told her I had given my final answer to her ladyship, I can never forget her look as she put her feeble arms round me, and said, 'The Lord will bless my darling: she has done right in His sight.' Oh, I forgot all about Italy and Switzerland then! Edward is very kind to me, and so long as our mother is so delicate he would rather have me for housekeeper than any servant or stranger. I do all the work, and keep the house as nice as I can. But, indeed, I am not used to chatter in this way," she said, blushing: "your kind interest must be my excuse;" and, responding to an affectionate farewell, she took up her little basket and tripped away.

Susan returned to her occupation, and Mrs. Hayes took up her knitting, but not a row did she make; in fact, she was unconscious of letting down a stitch or two, and found herself roused out of a long gaze at the fire, where she had seen nothing, by the horrible fuss of a meeting of fire and water through the boiling over of a kettle which Susan had

asked her to mind. The unsavoury consequence greatly annoyed her: she was not given to such neglectful things, and, after making the best she could of it, and apologising to Susan very humbly, to Susan's great amusement, she settled herself to recover the fallen loops, saying to herself, with a jerk of her head,—

"There, there, you're an unbelieving old woman, Mrs. Hayes. What business have you to be building castles that won't hold anybody? Let the Lord do as He pleases, and then it will all come right. Aren't they His, and must not all things—yes, all things—work together for good to them that love Him?"

CHAPTER XXI.

A SORROWFUL SURPRISE.

ROBERT TAYLOR shook hands with Matthew Hill at the door of a railway carriage as soon as the doctor would hear of the journey. Messrs. Carver and Davis sent a special message to say that if he would return after settling his affairs at home, they would gladly give him regular work. Everybody had been kind; and poor Matthew, with a heart now aching for home, found himself speeding on the way thither.

Humbled and chastened in spirit, he was going to prove how true was his penitence—how sincere his desire to be ruled henceforth by the precepts of that gospel which had brought light and salvation to his soul.

Twilight was already shading the landscape ere he reached

the station nearest to his home, and with his bundle on a stick over his shoulder he took the shortest cut, with a beating heart, across the fields. He hesitated for a little whether to call on his faithful friend Benjamin Field before going home, and so learn from him all that happened; but no, the first face he would see must be Jane's: she was the proper person to tell him anything he needed to know.

He drew his hat over his eyes to screen himself from notice, but no one recognised him; and with rapid step he approached his own door.

No lights were visible. Could he wonder? was it not almost a widowed home? Would he wish to see things going on as usual, in total indifference to his absence or presence? Certainly not.

He knocked gently, and finding no notice taken, opened the door, and stood once more on his own threshold. There was no fire. The fading light was not sufficient to show all the desolation at once, but things looked strange. Was this really home? Excited and anxious, he sought a seat. His own chair was missing; but still there was evidence that the house was inhabited. He feared to call lest he might disturb the children; and after standing irresolute for a while, he began to mount the stairs.

"Who is it?" murmured a timid little voice from the room above.

"Hush! it's not mother; it's perhaps Mr. Field," was the answer of the braver boy, who was playing by Daisy's side.

The figure advanced towards the bed, and the little girl's true instinct, combined with her simple faith in the good God whom she had prayed to bring back her father, told her instantly who it was.

"Oh, Josy! I know who it is; dear daddy 's come back,

"DEAR DADDY'S COME BACK."

he's come back. I knew he would." And the truant father, sitting down by the bed, clasped his two children in his arms, with a burst of agitation that almost frightened them. But he was *father:* he loved them, he had not forgotten them; and they kissed his face, and dried his tears, and felt very safe and happy in his arms.

"Baby is asleep?" he said, inquiringly, when more composed.

The little girl nestled closer to his bosom, and Josy looked up in his face.

"Oh, father! don't you know? Poor baby went to sleep one night, and she never woke any more. They put her in the churchyard to sleep, Mrs. Field said, till Jesus comes to call up everybody, and then we'll see her again."

Poor Matthew groaned heavily. How proud he had been of that beautiful baby! how she had sprung and crowed at the sight of him, when she would get the tossing and the fun that his strong arms could give her! And she was taken away, and he not there to soothe her with a father's love, or to share the poor mother's grief with a husband's tenderness. Oh! it was a bitter drop of remorse and shame, but the cup was not emptied yet.

"Daisy did so want you," said the little one, caressingly; "p'raps I go to sleep soon too, but daddy's a good man now. Daisy prayed to God; oh, so much!"

"My darling, my precious ones," sobbed Matthew; "God has forgiven father's wickedness, and will make him good now."

"And he'll take care of us now. Oh, I'm so glad! oh, if mother will be good too!"

Matthew started. "Where is your mother, dear children?" he asked.

"We don't know," said the boy; "she didn't come in.

Daisy hasn't been downstairs this long while, she is too sick; but I take care of her, and Mrs. Field brings her nice things."

"When will your mother come in?" again asked Matthew, with a horrible dread upon him.

"We don't know, we never know; but that woman came again this afternoon, and we're so afraid of her. Mother was angry, and they both went out; and I think she hurt mother, for there was a great noise in the street."

"I must go and find her," said Matthew, hoarsely, and he disengaged himself from his children's arms. "You won't mind being left for a little while?"

"Oh, no; we often are; and we shan't be afraid of anything now," they said.

Matthew kissed them again and again, smoothed the pillow and the coverlet tenderly, and for a moment knelt and asked God's help and guidance in his terrible extremity, and then went downstairs.

"Daisy, Daisy, did you hear?" whispered Josy; "it will be all right now, for father was speaking to God; and nobody dares do that, you know, Mr. Field says, when they want to be naughty."

Daisy's restlessness for the time passed away, and she slept a sweeter sleep than she had known for many a night.

Meanwhile Matthew went out into the street; sick, exhausted, and anxious, he knew not which way to turn until it again occurred to him to go and hear all from Mr. Field. And the kind-hearted Ellen, he knew, would give him a cup of tea.

"Can it be," thought he, "that Jane has forsaken the house, and the children, as I did, and has taken service somewhere? If she has I have no right to complain."

To reach Mr. Field's house he must pass up a back street, which was dimly lighted from a few door-lamps and shop-

windows, and then turn off by a smaller street towards the road in which Benjamin Field resided in a pretty, neat house of his own.

As Matthew passed quickly along, his painful meditations were disturbed by an angry noise at the door of a small beer-shop; and he crossed over to the other side to avoid it, but he heard the master of the house exclaim,—

"I tell you she's not here; and I won't have a row at my door, so get along, else I'll give you in charge."

Then some one seemed to stagger for a little, until another person half-running, half-rolling along, rushed up against her, striking a smart blow on the face. This was returned with fury; shrieks followed; wandering children, dirty women, men from the public-house gathered quickly round the spot, and the two women fell together in the kennel.

Disgusted, yet in spite of his errand drawn to the shocking scene, Matthew helped to raise one of the struggling women. Blood was streaming from her face, her bonnet had fallen off, and her long dark hair hung about her shoulders.

Matthew looked upon her as a light streamed from a house-door, which people had opened to ask what was the matter; and aghast with surprise and horror, found himself supporting the tottering form of his own wife. The shock was too great; he shrank from her involuntarily, and again she fell to the ground.

"What's all this?" said a policeman, coming hastily up, and looking into the group. "Oh, get her home, can't some of you? else I must take her to Bridewell; and she was a respectable woman once, till she took to this accursed drink. Why on earth doesn't her husband come and look after her?"

"He did not know," said poor Matthew, in a low hollow voice; "but he will do it now, please God."

The policeman turned and guessed the miserable truth; the husband of the wretched woman stood before him.

"I'll help you in a minute," he said, kindly; "but I must see to this abominable vixen, who they say struck her first; she has no home that I know of, and to Bridewell she must go. I hope the magistrate will give her three months at least."

A comrade having by this time made his appearance, Mrs. Swinden was dragged away and deposited in the strong room at the police-station, notwithstanding her violent protestations that she never was soberer in all her life.

Then, with her husband on one side and the policeman on the other, the disgraced Jane was half-carried, half-dragged home. Unable to get her upstairs at once, they laid her down on the floor in the very spot where, many months before, she had left her husband to sleep off the effect of his visit to "The Crown."

"Thank you heartily for this kindness," said Matthew. "Has not that woman got children? Can we do anything for them to-night?"

"Two of them are dead, and the other is in the union," replied the man. "She has only herself to look after, and you have seen how she does it; she is almost done for, though, and will most likely finish out in a prison."

The policeman looked round the desolate room by the light of his lantern. "It's miserable enough," he said. "Can I send any friend to you?"

"If you would do that," said Hill, eagerly.

"For sure I will, who is it?"

"I've been ill, and have had a long journey, and scarce know where to find anything," said Matthew.

"Seems as if there ain't much to find," said the police-

man, bluntly; "anyways, we might get up a bit of fire before I go."

And lighting his way along through the back kitchen, he stumbled over Matthew's broken chair, then righted a baby's cradle which lay upside down, and disclosed a quantity of broken china.

"Hey, what a smash there's been," he exclaimed; "and no firewood, that I can see. Poor chap! I'm sorry for him; and he don't look any great shakes himself, by what I can see of his pale face. Well, I'll send somebody to him, at any rate."

And with a message for Benjamin Field, and Matthew's grateful thanks for his kind feeling and help, he left the unhappy husband alone in the dark, with the stupefied form of his "once neat, pretty, industrious Jane," lying like a log at his feet.

He wished for a few minutes alone: the last hour had tried him mightily, and he wanted to steady his bewildered brain, and reassure his almost broken heart, and find that the gracious loving God who had pardoned his sins had also a refuge for him in this tempest of trouble. Would He in pity through this dark cloud bid the sun of righteousness arise and shine with healing in his wings?

The true Teacher from on high does not say that pardoned sinners shall escape all temporal consequences of guilt, and pass over a smooth and tranquil scene to "the rest that remaineth for the people of God." It is not likely that a long seed-time of rebellion, selfishness, and pride, should have had no harvest of sorrow, and that weeds, and thorns, and thistles should not have sprung up to worry and distract. If we sow to the wind, we must expect to "reap the whirlwind" in some way; though, by God's mercy, it is a way that shall discipline us for duty, and keep us humble in heart for the rest of

our lives, as well as pitiful and tender to others who have similarly transgressed. The heart and conscience of Matthew Hill were now actively awake to a sense of his sin. He felt that, let Jane's temper be what it might, his own conduct was inexcusable, and though God had forgiven him, he had not forgiven himself. So he meekly knelt by the side of the woman, forgetting that he had ever wished to see her proud spirit humbled; not loathing her, as she well deserved; but in earnest prayer for help for himself and for her, he waited until a ray of hope and comfort stole into his bosom and he felt strengthened for present endurance and duty.

As soon as possible the friendly hand of Benjamin Field silently grasped his cold one, and a light revealed the gentle face of Ellen, and the provisions they had brought to meet immediate need, of which the kind-hearted officer had told them. So there was soon a fire, and sundry other arrangements, and then they bent over the prostrate form of the drunken woman.

We paused awhile ago over the degradation of *a man* in such a condition—man created in the image of God, reducing himself by vile appetite to a lower stage than the beasts that perish; but what words can adequately describe the infinite disgust, the utter loathing, with which one contemplates the abominable sight of a drunken woman, a wife, a mother?

Mrs. Hill was scarcely recognisable until Ellen had washed the blood from her face, and smoothed the silken hair of which her husband had once been proud, and straightened the convulsed limbs; and then Matthew carried her, still unconscious, up to her own room, and laid her on the bed, and there gazing for a moment, burst into tears and sank on his knees by her side.

Ellen set down the candle, and left him while she made

some tea and toast and set out the little things she had brought, and Benjamin straightened the untidy room; and then she returned and gently roused him from his grief, and made him come down and take the refreshment of which he stood in so much need.

Then came the tale he had to tell of his own career during those months of absence; and his way of telling it proved to his friends that he had learned the lesson which was to be his joy throughout eternity.

Mrs. Field promised to come as early as possible in the morning, and the kind pair took their leave about midnight.

Benjamin turned back for a moment.

"Matthew," he whispered, "she will need all your patience when she comes to herself. I know what it is. I may well ask you to bear pitifully with her yet awhile, for it was that, under God's mercy, that saved me."

"May God help me to do right," said Matthew, wringing his friend's hand gratefully. "Only, both of you pray for us."

Then he saw that the children slept, and a painful feeling oppressed him as he gazed at his little girl by the light shaded with his hand. Her face was so very thin and white, and her little fingers looked so bony, and her lips so hot and parched. But she slept sweetly, and that was some comfort. His boy looked much older, as if care had touched the young brow with a heavy hand, and his curly hair was long and unkept, and neglect seemed written too plainly on everything around them, notwithstanding the effort the dear little ones had made.

Soon, however, his thoughts were called in another direction. Mrs. Hill was trying to rouse herself, and sank back again with a groan. Then she tore away the soft lint which Ellen had laid upon her wounded face, and called out for a doctor, for drink, for anything that would take the burning out of her brain.

Matthew, after endeavouring to soothe her, and judging that she did not know who it was that bent tenderly over her, decided to go at once and find a doctor, for she might now be suffering from bodily injury as well as from the effects of what she had drunk.

The doctor he went to was not at home; he had stayed at the house of a patient who was supposed to be dying, and thither Matthew followed him.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIN AND PUNISHMENT.

WHEN Matthew returned with the doctor, they found Mrs. Hill talking wildly, sometimes screaming, sometimes fighting off some imaginary assailant, the frightened children awake, little Daisy sobbing on her pillow.

The doctor looked steadily at the wife by the light of the candle that Matthew brought to him, while she went on with her mutterings, trying to get up, and falling back in a rage at her helplessness.

"Father, father!" called the boy from his bed, where he was sitting up shivering with fear, "don't you think poor baby's medicine would make her quiet? It always stopped baby screaming and let her go to sleep, oh, for so long."

"Ha! my little man, where is it?" said the doctor.

"In the cupboard downstairs, please; at least, it used to be."

Matthew went to look for it.

"My boy, had baby any of it the night she died?" asked the doctor, quietly, coming to Josy's bedside.

"Oh yes, sir, lots," said the boy.

Matthew brought two or three small bottles from amongst a good many large ones, and the doctor was soon satisfied.

"No, we shan't give her any of that. But now, Mr. Hill, you must remove the children to another room as soon as it can be done; this may be a long business, and you must get some one as nurse, for you cannot watch night and day."

"What is it, do you think, sir?" asked Matthew, anxiously.

"I shall judge better to-morrow," said the doctor.

"Is it from the fall that she rambles so?" he asked again.

"I'm afraid not, but I shall tell better in a few hours more. Who did you say knocked her down?"

"That woman Swinden," replied Hill.

"Ah, she was not likely to fare better in such company, but I hope you'll be able to right things a little now you've come home. I will be here, please God, in good time in the morning."

"Sir," said Matthew, following him to the door, "you attended my little babe?"

"No, no, I did not see it till too late," said he, hastily. "But," thought he, as he walked along, "if I had had any idea of this. It's murder, murder and nothing short of it. Died in a fit, indeed! If it had been Mrs. Swinden's child I should have known better, and detected the lie; but this woman's children used to be so well cared for, I never thought of questioning what she said at the time. But she seems to have taken to drinking, and what won't a drunken woman do!"

Matthew obeyed the directions he had received, and sat bathing the hot brow, until the excited patient became a little calmer, and as, fortunately for him, she was unable to rise, he set about such little preparations as he could make for removing the children into another room. He felt no inclination to sleep, and it was a very worn and haggard face that Benjamin and his Ellen found ready to receive them the next morning. How kind, how undeservedly kind of his forbearing Lord to provide such friends in this great need, poor Matthew deeply felt.

Mrs. Hill's temporary calmness broke into fresh exhibitions of frenzy with the daylight, and it required actual force to keep her from rolling off the bed. Whether she knew whose firm hand restrained her from injuring herself, or into whose ear she poured her anger and fury, no one could tell. But her mind seemed to rove from one subject to another with startling rapidity. One moment she vowed revenge on "that woman;" the next, she loudly declared that her baby died in a fit, and the next that Matthew was an unnatural brute, and she hoped he would never come back, and so on.

Next morning, when the doctor had prescribed for Jane, he went to look at the little girl in the bed, whither her father had carried her. Josy, nicely washed, hair combed, and a clean pinafore from her own children's store, put on by Mrs. Field to hide his dirty frock and trousers, trotted about, doing as he was told, and watching his father's countenance with great contentment.

Matthew gazed approvingly upon him now and then, and the child was happy. But his pet flower, his sweet Daisy, troubled him.

"She's so light, sir," he said; "when I lifted her I could scarcely think I was holding a child of her age."

"She is very thin and weak, certainly. I wish I had seen her again after the arm got well, but I understood she was going on comfortably."

"She never eats anything but what Mrs. Field brings and coaxes her to," said the little boy.

"Hum; well, perhaps father will manage her now," said the doctor, observing the smile of perfect delight which played over the wan little face as Daisy clasped her small fingers round her father's large ones, and looked up in his anxious face.

Before many more hours were over, Mrs. Hill was so violent that the doctor ventured to suggest to Mrs. Field the propriety of removing her to the lunatic's wing of the neighbouring hospital, where he thought she could be managed with less risk to herself and others.

But Ellen could not hint it to Matthew, and when the doctor at last did so himself, he started with alarm. "Is it come to that?" said he, greatly distressed. "Is she really mad?"

"For the present," replied the sympathising doctor; "and, as she does not know anything about it, she will not suffer anything until she comes to herself, and then you can bring her home immediately."

Matthew pondered drearily for a little.

"No, sir," at last he said, firmly. "Order anything or any person here that you think right for her to have, but I can't send her there, indeed I cannot."

"It will cost you a good deal to have such attention as she needs," suggested the doctor.

"Never mind, sir, I can get work; I will pay it all, but I can't send my wife there. Please not to name it again."

At last, excitement was followed by prostration: sense

and intelligence returned, and weak as an infant she opened wondering eyes on her bedside watchers.

"Matthew," she whispered, faintly, and Matthew's hand clasped hers, and his manly head sank down on her pillow in a flood of thankful tears.

"Dear Jane; you forgive me, say you forgive me all."

"I forgive! Oh, Matthew! Let me get up, I want to get to work. Where are the children?"

"Josy, come here, your mother will know you now."

Josy timidly drew near, and Jane stroked his head, and bade him kiss her. He obeyed, but there was no heartiness in the kiss; and then she asked for Daisy.

"Daisy is not strong enough yet," said Matthew; and there was something in the tone that made Jane try to see his face.

"And baby—I suppose they told you," said she, with a great effort, "that baby was teething, and—and—"

"And you thought she had a fit," said Matthew.

"Yes, I heard it; poor baby! But she is better off; it's no use to grieve for her."

And Matthew rose rather hastily, and went to look again at his little girl.

"Daddy, will you walk me about now?" asked the little one; and, wrapping a small blanket round her, the father took her tenderly in his arms, and resting her head on his shoulder, walked up and down the little room for some time, thinking, and then asking for willingness to surrender this other treasure, that was fading away so gently before his eyes.

Yes, little Daisy was marked for a better world; a rude hand, and that hand her mother's, had struck the blow that began to crush the young life from its slender stem. Daisy had wanted love, and kindness, and care, and nourishment,

just when she did not have them, and now she was going where no need is unsupplied.

Josy came and stood looking at them, and listening to words that at once appalled and fascinated him. "Daisy going to heaven, Daddy come too," softly said the little child, stroking her father's face; "don't cry, kind Mrs. Field told all about it. Jesus is there; and He wanted baby, and now He wants Daisy. Daisy so tired." And the little head drooped wearily, and the poor father's heart felt bursting, and Josy sobbed outright.

"Kiss me, brother," said the little one, suddenly, "and you come to heaven too."

She did not ask for her mother, and Matthew feared the excitement for both if he took her into the room.

The good widow who had been found able and willing, for small payment, to come and "do" for the family, with Ellen Field's frequent loving attention, kept all straight, and provided everything that could tempt appetite and strengthen the little flower; but all in vain. In a few days more she passed away in her father's arms to the place where, safe from rough winds and stormy skies,

> "Beyond the smiling and the weeping,
> Beyond the waking and the sleeping,
> Beyond the sowing and the reaping,"

she found the blessed atmosphere of,

> "Love, rest, and home."

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHIPWRECKED.

HAD he been aware how suddenly at last his darling was to be removed to "the better land," Mr. Hill would have risked even Jane's precarious state, that she might see her child again; but the fear of a relapse before she was able to bear the sight of the wasted little form made him conceal the truth, only replying, when she inquired, that Daisy was still very ill, and must be kept quiet as possible until Jane should be able to nurse and tend her herself.

But Jane had not deserved a mother's privilege, she had no right to complain now that other hands ministered to the little sick one, that another bosom supported the drooping head, and other voices whispered the baby's hymns, and taught of the loving Saviour who was calling His lamb to the eternal fold. But she became impatient and jealous beyond endurance, and resolved on the first opportunity to assert her right and take her place.

There was a bright, pleasant morning on which Mrs. Field came and sat by her bedside earlier than usual, and persevered in keeping the room-door shut. Jane had slept late, and declared that she felt greatly better, and would no longer be waited on and kept useless in her own house.

Suddenly Mrs. Field was called downstairs; something was wanted that she only could find or do, and she left the room, carefully shutting the door behind her.

She had not been gone many minutes when it struck Mrs.

Hill that she would fasten her out, dress herself, and astonish them all.

So she crept from her bed, astonishing herself first with the giddy sensation in her head and the consciousness of extreme weakness; but she managed to reach the window, and looked out once more into the street.

Startled and amazed, she stared wildly down upon what was to be seen at that moment. Matthew Hill and Benjamin Field were passing from the house, both dressed in black hatbands tied with white, and bearing between them a small coffin covered with a black pall bordered with white. Some flowers lay on the top, and little Josy, also in a suit of black, followed them, beside himself with a strange mixture of surprise, sorrow, and excitement.

Jane comprehended it all in a moment. Conscience and right feeling would have soon justified the concealment that had been, as her kind friend thought, unavoidable. She did not faint or cry out, resentment was the strongest feeling in her heart, and seemed to strengthen her for anything. She fastened the door, took no notice of Mrs. Field's gentle knock, and hurried on some clothes, shivering and tottering as she did so, and in spite of herself compelled to see a large card which hung over the looking-glass, exhibiting one of Matthew's favourite texts, and which she guessed truly was intended for her, when she should so sadly need it. "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

Yes, Jane knew that text as well as any of them, but she was not going to do anything of the kind. Neither would she bear it herself, she would get rid of it somehow.

She wanted a shawl and bonnet, and remembered that her large comfortable shawl was—where it ought not to be; and she mechanically opened the drawer where it used to lie. But to her astonishment there lay the shawl neatly folded.

"How did they get hold of the ticket?" thought she; and notwithstanding her anger, she felt for a moment with what tender forbearance and persevering kindness she had been treated; but pride and jealousy returned with the thought of her child nursed by someone else, and carried out of her house without her knowledge. No, she could never forgive that. And as for Matthew, if he had not gone away such things never would have happened, and all the troubles ought to lie at his door at last.

Thus fortified she stole cautiously downstairs and slipped out unobserved, while Mrs. Field was busy with some household work at the back of the house.

She was not long away, and returning to her room lay down upon the bed again, maintaining obstinate silence when poor Ellen, greatly troubled and blaming herself for carelessness, found that she had at least attempted to go out.

But Jane had accomplished her purpose, and very soon a mysterious change for the worse was plainly visible in her. She listened with stupid indifference to her husband when he endeavoured affectionately to relate to her all that had occurred to himself during his long absence, which he scrupled not to call most wicked and cruel; described Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and their happy home, and asked her to help him to make one like it; and when he ventured to ask if he might read a chapter in the Bible to her, she only said,—

"I know all that's in the Bible, and I know there's no heaven for drunkards."

Matthew could not tell whether it was with reference to herself or to him that she said this, but decided to take it to himself.

"I have wanted to show you by actions and not by words, dear Jane, that I am, by God's great mercy, a drunkard no more," said he, gently.

"Ah, well, then we've changed characters, I suppose," said she, fiercely. "Look here!" and snatching a bottle from behind the head of her bed, she put it to her lips, and gulped down a terrible draught. How had she procured it? She went out in the nice shawl, she had returned without it. A most fearful relapse very soon took place. All the nursing, and restraint, and care had to be gone through again, and many a time poor Matthew thought his trouble was greater than he could bear. His Bible, and little Josy, and Mr. and Mrs. Field were, however, blessings spared to him still, and he tried to take comfort.

There soon came to be serious cause for alarm in the turn the illness was taking, and at last the doctor gave his opinion that Mrs. Hill would not recover.

This was a great shock. Matthew had so fondly hoped that some day—he would not mind waiting a long time for it—but that some day he might once more have a happy home, where the love and service of God should be the ruling principle.

Now all hope was dashed down, and there was to be no home for the widower and his motherless boy.

Mrs. Hill had been favoured with a fair beginning in domestic life, and she had herself put out its tender light. She had been trusted with opportunity to be as a ministering angel to a penitent heart, and she had scorned the holy mission. She had adopted a vice that once she loathed, and had become herself an exhibition of her weakness and its power. Through all she had neglected and insulted God, and now—what of it?

Why *now*, even *now*, by the lips of the husband she had despised, came messages of pity and promises of help from the God she had so dishonoured. Nigh or far off, obstinate and vicious, or yielding and chastened, the call floats over the

wide waste of sin and ruin, and does its merciful work. "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? Oh! Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help." "Look unto Me and be ye saved." Oh, look. Terrible is the bite of the fiery serpent you have cherished in your bosom, potent is the poison that has corrupted your blood; but more potent than the poison is the purifier—"Where sin abounds grace does *much more* abound." Oh, lover of drink, as well of any other sin, before it is too late, "Look!" and "Live!"

But poor unhappy Jane fretted, and chafed, and tormented herself and everybody else in the house. She knew all the texts that shut out hope, and gave herself up for lost. It was not penitence, but a yielding to some incomprehensible tyrant which she called "fate," and sometimes it seemed as if the spirit of temper and love of her own way were behind the scene, prompting the opposition she made to the gospel of peace.

Mrs. Oakland came and talked and read and prayed. A minister came and did the same. Prayer was offered by Matthew and his Christian friends, and still the hard woman seemed unmoved. At times, when conscious, she would say that God had forsaken her; but she forgot that she had not sought Him, nor cared for the knowledge of His ways. There are awful hints of the consequence of refusing to hear Him when He speaks in love, and He must be heard and heeded sometimes.

Matthew was sitting alone by her bed one night when, after a long time of apparent unconsciousness, she began to talk to herself. "Yes," said she, "I know it; I did drive him away, but I'll never acknowledge it. My poor baby. Yes, of course I gave her that horrid drug, and it sent her to heaven. But I didn't mean that; and the arm—I didn't know I put it out when I threw the child into bed; but that did it,

and she's gone too. And do they talk to me of heaven? What have I to do with heaven? I don't want to go to heaven! Everything there is against me. Oh, that I could disbelieve in such things."

Thus she muttered long and bitterly, and memory seemed to be casting up before her the things that but for her own fault would never have been. Was not *a bad temper* at the beginning of them all? A little season of softening there did seem just before the last, but it was expressed in anguish so terrible, fear so distracting, cries so piercing, that when, after a paroxysm that seemed to rend her frame, she implored them to save her from everlasting burnings and to pray to Jesus for her, she sank back in their arms a corpse, the sudden cessation of noise and distraction, after being wrought up to such a state of excitement, overpowered poor Matthew so far that he nearly fainted on the floor. Mr. Field had taken his weeping Ellen downstairs, and kneeling down by her, with drops of perspiration standing on his brow, deeply and fervently blessed God, who had saved him from dying a drunkard's death.

All the requisite attention was paid to the poor remains in solemn silence. No one spoke of Jane for many a day; even Mrs. Swinden heard of her without a remark as she took her appointed place at the prison work to which her misdeeds had at last brought her.

Matthew was sadly unsettled; the care of a house was too much for him, and indeed it was not required for himself and his one only treasure left to provide for. So he determined at last to accept the kind offer that had been made to him by Messrs. Carver and Davis, and he would go and reside somewhere near to his friend Robert Taylor, for whom he had conceived a warm respect and affection. Benjamin Field would

gladly have kept him nearer, but his judgment went with the plan, and preparations were made for early departure.

"Before you go to bed, my boy, I want you to have a walk with me," said Matthew to his little son on the last evening before the journey.

"Yes, father," said the boy, "I know. I want to see it once more too; and I've got some roots of violets and forget-me-nots that Mr. Field gave me, and I'm going to plant them there."

Matthew looked earnestly at the child, and drew him to his bosom. He felt that he had done wrong to bury all his feelings in his own heart and to leave his boy to do the same. Josy had needed comfort, for his darling sister had been the companion and friend of his short life, and the parting must have been very grievous to him: he had sat quiet and said nothing, but he never wanted to play now. To be with his father and watch him seemed all he cared for. He looked pale and thin still, and Matthew hoped that the total change would do him good.

Hand in hand they went together to the churchyard, where lay the mother and her two little girls. A head-stone had been placed by the graves with nothing but the names and dates inscribed upon it. They stood in silence some time, until the little boy's sobs startled Matthew, and he saw the child throw himself passionately on his sister's grave, and try to clasp it in his arms.

"Oh, Daisy!" he sobbed, "where are you? Do you ever love me now?"

"He wants love," thought Matthew. "Yes, I have something to live for still."

"Listen to me, Josy," he said, lifting the boy in his arms and sitting on a gravestone close by. "I wanted you here, in this spot, to promise before God and me that you will never

drink anything that can make you tipsy! But for drink those dear ones would have been with us now. It was drink that made me go away from home, and brought all our troubles."

"Oh! father," said Josy, clasping him round the neck, "you are good now, Daisy said so."

"God has been very gracious to me, Josy," said the poor father, with tears flowing fast. "Will you promise?"

"Yes, father, I will. I shall never drink such things, I know I shan't, for Daisy hated them."

What Daisy knew about them Matthew dared not ask.

Then they planted the violets and forget-me-nots on the little grave, Josy patted the turf lovingly round them, and hand in hand the tearful pair left the graveyard.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADDITION WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT.

MR. LEWIS was determined to take no refusal from any one but Emily Taylor herself, not believing that any girl could resist his attractions, of which he himself entertained the highest possible opinion. But Emily happily was by education and principle proof against those ornamental gildings which are always rubbed off after a short show, and exhibit the kind and quality of the metal beneath. The fact of her parents' disapproval would have been sufficient, even had she felt any inclination towards her suitor; but as she had none whatever, it was painful and displeasing to her to be urged on a

point which admitted neither of doubt nor change of mind.

Edward Lewis was extremely mortified that when he condescended to plead no better success should favour him—no, not even if he offered to serve like Jacob for his Rachel. Emily was firm. The suitor was first mortified, then angry, and finally disgusted.

The way Edward Lewis took to be revenged on Emily for her want of discernment was a way that many have tried before him, and with their names to the marriage register have signed the death warrant of their earthly happiness. He would pique and mortify her by showing how little he really cared for her, and would bestow the favour of his heart and hand upon one who would be but too happy to accept them.

As Mr. Lewis wished to have a wife distinguished by beauty, he began to wonder how it came to pass that he had overlooked the showy stylish young dressmaker who worked for the upper servants at Crewe Hall, and moreover whose father was a master in his trade, and said to be "making money."

Certainly he had committed a great blunder, and Miss Milly must be made aware of it as soon as possible. The other considerations of mother and sister and home were forgotten, and the next Sunday saw Mr. Edward Lewis favoured with the smiles of Miss Lydia Brooks.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Brooks, when informed by her daughter of the delightful afternoon she had spent, "I don't know what to make of you, not I; there's Mr. Robert Taylor, that I did believe liked you, and you liked him."

"Oh dear no, mother; you know nothing about it. I like him indeed!" exclaimed the daughter, disdainfully.

"Well, I don't know about that, to be sure: for my part,

I don't see that you've heart enough to care for anybody; but I do say this, that it's my belief if you'd behaved as a girl ought to, and not been so spiteful to Dicky, and not put on so many airs, Mr. Robert Taylor would have asked you to have him, and I'd have been proud of such a son-in-law."

"Dear me, mother," said Miss Lydia, laughing, "you shall have better reason to be proud than that, I'll promise you."

"I don't know; when a young man is a good son, and a kind brother, and a true friend—and Robert Taylor is all of them together—then there's promise he'll be a good husband too. This new beau of yours, Lyddy, has nothing of the quiet steady look of a—a Christian man, I was going to say; for though I'm not too good myself, I vally them that fears God, and I can trust them; and when a man doesn't seem to believe in nothing, he gets a scampish sort of a look with him, that no fine clothes and no fine talk can cover."

"Mother, for shame of yourself," cried Miss Lydia, highly incensed, "you know nothing about him; and I'll have you to know that when I marry I'm the first person to be pleased in the case, and I shan't take up with other people's opinions."

"Well, take care there isn't six of one and half a dozen of the other, and too well matched together," said Mrs. Brooks, marching out of the room.

Matters went on cheerfully until, whether he really intended them seriously and so soon to reach that point or not, Mr. Lewis and Miss Brooks got "talked about" sufficiently, and Emily Taylor knew, and her brother knew, and all the little world around them knew, that they were "engaged."

"I'm delighted at it!" cried Susan Taylor, "it's an escape for two better people."

"I hope those better people had more sense, my dear," said Aunt Hayes.

"Why, indeed, aunty, you did surprise me when you would have Miss Brooks here to do your dress," said Susan; "it seemed as if you wished to bring them together."

"So I did, my dear," said Mrs. Hayes, "just to let the dear boy get at some true idea of her mind and character. I knew perfectly that her own light head and silly tongue would settle it. Give a foolish woman the opportunity, and she'll soon cool the admiration of a sensible man. His own ears are better than a thousand wise people's opinions."

"But what of poor Mrs. Lewis and Rhoda?" said Mrs. Taylor, anxiously. "It's a sad business for them, I'm afraid, mother. Rhoda says her brother insists upon their staying in the house, and she is to attend on her mother as usual; and certainly the house is big enough."

"No house would be big enough for me with a daughter-in-law like that," said Mrs. Hayes; "I hope they'll part before they find it out."

Mrs. Hayes and her niece had fulfilled their promise to pay a visit to the gardener's cottage and introduce themselves to the invalid; and so highly was the kindness appreciated that it became one of Mrs. Lewis's chief pleasures to welcome them there.

Knowing that there must be anxiety, to say the least of it, in the hearts of both mother and daughter at this time, Mrs. Hayes went quietly by herself, to say a kind word, and a strong word too, not to aggravate any discontent, but, if possible, to dissipate it. A sunbeam was her bright loving face to poor Rhoda that day.

Mrs. Lewis was lying down, and so the old lady and the young girl had a little time alone together.

"Oh, Mrs. Hayes," said Rhoda, "you know what is going to happen, and I can't be reconciled to it. If it had been

your Milly, I would have done anything in the world for such a sister. Oh, how I would have loved her! but this—"

"Hush, my child," said Mrs. Hayes, "say nothing that you ought not to say of one whom you are to receive as your brother's wife. Don't think me unkind, dear Rhoda, but I did not come to listen to complaints. It is of no use to spend time and breath in murmuring over what we can't help; we want both for something better."

"I know it," said Rhoda, "but I am very weak and wicked. She has been here to-day, and it has made dear mother ill to talk with her. Such conceit, such—"

"I told you I would not hear it," said Mrs. Hayes. "Rhoda, you are God's child. For reasons that you and I cannot yet see, it pleases your Father to allow something to happen that you don't like. Your brother uses his right to marry whom he chooses, and your duty is to throw all your influence, all your efforts, into the scale for his happiness. It is an opportunity for you to deny yourself, to be a peace-maker, to do your best to meet and turn aside those things which you think likely to show him by-and-by that he has not chosen wisely. Never let him think so, if you can do anything to help it."

Rhoda looked up in the fine old face that bent over her. She saw it was in thorough earnest, wise and righteous earnest.

"Oh, don't be angry with me," she whispered, "it is hard, oh, so hard, to have to live with her."

"Granted," said Mrs. Hayes; "is it fixed?"

"Yes, Edward has prevailed on my mother, and we are to stay."

"It is not wise, so far as my poor judgment can see," said Mrs. Hayes; "but, being decided, there is nothing but to make the best of it. So put away every other plan that

you would have preferred. You know, I dare say, that the feeling between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is not always affectionate or pleasant, but it may be made better or worse by one situated as you are. A selfish, mischievous sister-in-law may widen the breach, and hinder love and respect on both sides; but a self-denying, wise, Christian sister-in-law may smooth over differences, hide faults, put kind constructions on mistakes, and humbly, meekly store up only honey in the hive. Will you do this to the honour of the dear Saviour you profess to love? You may never again have such an opportunity to fight out self and bring a blessing on this house."

Rhoda knew that her venerable friend was right, and that a clear duty lay before her, and the evil dispositions which had been getting the mastery received a very timely check.

"You know, dear child," continued Mrs. Hayes, "that it is written, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me,' and you have the promise that with the trouble 'a way of escape shall be made that you may be able to bear it.' Will you try? Think what you owe to Jesus, and what you still expect from Him; and when He allows a trial of your sincerity and obedience to come, do you mean to say, 'No, Lord, I don't like it, and I'm not going to bear it for your sake; give me a trial I shall not feel to be a trial'?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hayes, I am ashamed of myself, indeed I am," whispered Rhoda, bursting into tears; "I will trust, I will try."

"Then you will triumph, my dear, never doubt it," said Mrs. Hayes, raising the tearful face and kissing the hot brow.

'There are briars besetting every path,
That call for patient care;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer;
But a lowly heart that leans on Him
Is happy anywhere.'"

Mrs. Hayes made no attempt to remonstrate with Mrs. Lewis on the decision to which she had consented. The thing was done; there was no use in controversy about it now, and she could readily understand how the mother's heart would cling to her only son.

"It will not be long," she said, "that I shall need an earthly home at all; and, while I live, earnest loving prayer will still in a way consecrate the dwelling of my boy. He seems a little nearer to God through a Christian mother's heart than when left to himself: then no prayer, no Bible, no blessing will be here."

"Well, Rhoda, you are a good girl, and you shall have the prettiest gown that money can buy," exclaimed Edward, as he surveyed all the little arrangements she had made for the reception of his bride. "I never thought my little Methodist of a sister half so good and kind. Everything is famous indeed, mother."

The furniture of the house was the property of Mrs. Lewis, who had also a very small income of her own; and now instead of Edward living with her and paying his share of the expenses, she and Rhoda were to live with him, paying their share both for board and lodging, and to no other terms would she consent.

Edward had purchased a few pieces of more modern furniture, and his sister cheerfully bore with the displacing of the old ones, setting off everything to the best advantage, and assisting in the choice of presents from her mother, from among little valuables to which she might have made some claim for herself."

But Rhoda was indeed "making the best of it;" and when Mrs. Hayes came again, she was able to say in her own

peculiar way, and as nobody else could say it, as she laid her hand on Rhoda's head:

"The Lord bless thee, child. He has done it, He is doing it, and He will do it."

So the young Mrs. Lewis came home; home to smiles, and flowers, and kindness.

CHAPTER XXV.

TRYING CONSEQUENCES.

MRS. TAYLOR and her son kindly interested themselves in choosing suitable lodgings for Matthew Hill and his little boy, when, all arrangements being made, the house given up, the furniture sold, his services permanently engaged by his new employers, Mr. Hill wished to settle in their neighbourhood.

A respectable widow with one little grand-daughter formed the household, and cheerfully undertook the charge of the boy in his father's absence. Then a school was fixed upon, and between school duties, visits to Mrs. Taylor, and games of play with the little pet grandchild, poor Josy found plenty to do and to enjoy. The sadness soon left his bright little face, good cheer and exercise soon strengthened his body, and Josy became as much admired and courted as any father's heart could wish.

But it was by very slow degrees that Matthew himself was recovering either in body or mind from the effects of the deep sorrows he had passed through. His happiest times were

spent with Robert and his family at their peaceful fireside, where sympathy, and kindness, and cheerful conversation were sure to be had, and he and Josy as regularly shared it on a Sunday as the happy day came round.

Matthew felt the sweetness and healthfulness of the atmosphere, and his child profited by the teachings of the young members of the family as they read and talked with him over their books and pictures.

Mrs. Hayes had returned to her country home, but this time she seemed to have left a larger piece of her heart than usual behind her, and if spared she promised to visit William and Susan again after a shorter interval.

She did not leave, however, before an event occurred which interested all the party very warmly, and she was prevailed on to wait for it.

There was a crowded church, and pathways strewed with flowers and hedged with garlanded school children, bands of workmen with white favours, dinners and teas and wedding-cakes, and other significant doings. It was the marriage of Mr. Archibald Dixon and Miss Eaton.

When the young couple came out from the church Mr. Archy looked round for Robert Taylor. He stood by his father, at the head of the whole body of the men engaged in their extensive and flourishing works. A tremendous cheer burst forth as the young couple appeared, every hat was raised, and the white favours flourished in the air, while the foreman and his son stepped forward, the one bearing a beautiful little address, and the other an elegant Bible, in their hands.

"From your workmen, sir," said William Taylor, briefly.

The young pair were deeply touched, and could not speak their thanks. Mr. Dixon, senior, advanced to the rescue,

though scarcely less overcome. "We will all come and thank you in the tent," said he. "Pardon us now; you have overpowered us with this beautiful surprise. God bless you all, my men."

The bride recovered her voice by a great effort, sufficiently to say to Robert as she put out her hand, "We must be friends, Mr. Taylor, for my own sake as well as Archy's."

And then bride and bridegroom, Bible and address, drove away together to the hall, where all sorts of hospitalities and rejoicings were prepared for guests of all ranks and ages.

After this, people and things seemed to subside quietly into their places, and nearly two years passed peacefully away. Even two years will leave marks, and some left by these were noteworthy.

Mr. and Mrs. Dixon, senior, feeling that working days should be over for them, so far as the cares and exertions of business were concerned, left home with their daughter for a long foreign tour, and the services of Emily Taylor not being required for the young people, she was to spend a long holiday among her friends, doing only some needlework at her own convenience and pleasure.

It was joy to them all to have her at home, and when her young brother and sister clung fondly to her, little Josy would stand before them, and wish dear Milly had three arms instead of only two, that he might get a place like theirs.

"Come, Josy, put your arms round my neck and hold fast till these saucy rogues choose to give way," cried Milly, laughing and shaking the big ones off.

Josy did as he was bid, and held on pretty firmly, while all made a romp of it, and amidst shouts of laughter and fun Milly was near being carried round the room as their queen.

"There, that's enough," said she, merrily; "mother will

MR. ARCHIBALD'S MARRIAGE.

think we are all run wild. We'll have another game some other day."

"She's the very nicest playfellow in the world," shouted Josy; "and I love her more than anybody, except my father."

Robert Taylor and Matthew stood behind; they had just come in and heard the speech. Milly coloured very much, sprang up, and hurried away to smoothe her ruffled hair.

On no one more visibly than on Matthew Hill had those two years left their mark. He was now beginning to look like his former self, ere sin and sickness had robbed his cheek of its bloom and his form of its strength. The traces of both had vanished, the sadness was now departing also, and a peaceful heart and conscience, quiet living, kind friends, intelligent study, and regular industry, had combined to do wonders for the homeless man—for homeless he still was, according to his own notions of home. But he forgot even that in Robert's home.

On this special evening every one remarked the immense improvement, and everybody enjoyed his society almost as much as his affectionate little son seemed to do.

This lasted for two or three weeks after Milly's return, and Matthew had certainly become quite a different person from the dejected, crushed being who came among them in mourning and woe.

But he was restless and anxious too, and to his own surprise an opportunity hurried him on to risk a whole life's happiness on a little passing moment.

Robert, Matthew, and Emily were coming out of church, and as Milly usually walked home with her brother, the rest of her family were some distance off.

Mr. Archibald called Robert back to speak to him about the Sunday school. Robert disappeared, merely saying he

should soon overtake them, so Matthew and Emily walked side by side.

It was vain to try and talk about indifferent things, and so with a beating heart Matthew ventured to remind his companion of little Josy's expression of his love for her, which he had overheard, and asked permission to offer her an affection which could have no exception in all the world.

Emily was startled and distressed.

"Do not answer me now," said Matthew; "say only you will think of it."

"No, no, Mr. Hill," said Milly, much agitated; "I must answer you now. It is impossible; please think no more of it, of me. Oh, why did you ever do it? Indeed, I am so sorry, so grieved to—to—distress you."

"Oh, it is right. I know it is right. I was very foolish to think of it, but I could not help it. Say you excuse and forgive me; and oh, do not cast off my child, who loves you so dearly."

"No, never," said Milly, firmly.

"God bless you," said Matthew, and he left her as soon as they reached her father's door. And so ended his dream, so crumbled his castle, which he had been lighting up with the love and blessedness of home. And the sadness again crept over his face, and he felt that he had been undeserving of the blessing he sought.

Poor Emily, in a state of troubled agitation, went to her room, knelt down at her bedside, and shed abundance of tears.

When it was found that Matthew came no more to the house, Robert took alarm, and found him sitting with his Bible alone in his lodging. Matthew was too transparent

and honest to keep back the truth, and he told Robert what he had done, and the result.

"I know it was weak and presumptuous," said he; "I have no right to expect ever to be trusted again; and now I shall never ask it of another. You won't ask me to come at present, but by-and-by God will help me, and I shall be myself again —a better self, I hope, for the great humbling and bitter disappointment."

Robert was strongly moved. But for one thing, he had never known any man he would so gladly see united to his sister; and that one thing had doubtless influenced Milly also.

"Well, Susan," said Mr. Taylor, merrily, one evening, "Mr. Archibald has taken it into his head that I must have a holiday. We are a little slack just now for a while, and so, as it would be no holiday to me without you, what do you say to a trip to see Aunt Hayes? Suppose we surprise her?"

"With all my heart," said his wife; "and I propose that we double our welcome by taking Milly." The mother had watched her child, and she saw that something had touched the brightness and beauty of life to her; she thought it must be more than the rejection of even a good man's regard.

"Would you like to go, Milly?"

"Oh yes, mother," she eagerly replied, "so very much; of all things it is just what I wished." And she thought how Mr. Hill could come and spend his evenings with Robert again, and it would be so pleasant for them both.

So leaving the younger ones to manage Robert and the house, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor and Milly set off on their journey.

Aunt Hayes's sharp eyes soon detected a change in her darling, and she could not rest until she got to the cause of it.

Susan told her what had occurred, and at the end of her visit agreed to leave Milly on condition that she would bring her home and stay a long time with them.

"Come here, darling," said Aunt Hayes, "and tell me something I want to know;" and putting her arm round her niece, and resting her head on her shoulder, she went on, "We two love each other, and if something is wrong with one the other feels it too, even though she doesn't know what it is. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, dear aunt; but indeed there's nothing wrong with me?"

"Are you quite sure you have done right before God, dear Milly?"

"I think—I hope so," said Milly, in surprise.

"Tell me what you expect and wish for in a husband, Milly?"

"Nothing at all," said Milly, quickly. "I shall stay in service, aunty, and some day, years hence, you know, there will be a little notice in the paper, 'Died, after thirty or forty years of faithful service, Emily Taylor, the valued friend and servant of the family of A. Dixon, Esq.' Won't that be nice? One likes to see such things now and then."

"Very nice, if nothing better can be had," said Aunt Hayes, dryly.

"What can be better?" said Milly. "I honour such servants."

"So do I, always granting that wise, good reasons have made them decline higher responsibilities and more important duties."

A dead silence. Then Mrs. Hayes began again, "Milly, my darling, when an honourable man, a true Christian man,

offers the treasure of an honest, loving heart, should not the woman who rejects it be able to give a reason for so doing?"

"Yes, of course, aunt."

"Suppose, added to the Christian character, there are sufficient means to justify the offer, very pleasant manners, a manly, handsome person, an intelligent mind; in short, just such a person as— Who, Milly?"

"As Mr. Hill," said Emily. "I grant it all, aunt."

"And you cannot love such an one, Milly?"

"I did not say that," murmured Emily, in her aunt's ear. "I could love him, but I dare not, and I will not," and she pressed the kind arm that held her in token of a strong resolve.

"We are getting at it," thought the old lady; "I suspected how it was."

"You dare not, you will not, my child; and why?"

"Because—oh, aunt, must I say it?" and Emily raised her head from her aunt's bosom, her eyes bright, her cheek flushed, her lips quivering with strong feeling—"because I must thoroughly and entirely respect my husband, and no one must have reason to do otherwise. I cannot feel this of Mr. Hill. There are those who have seen him disgraced by —by—oh, how dreadful to think of such a thing about *him*— by drink! He told Robert all about it, and Robert told us, because when he first came and was ill he desired that no one should think better of him than he deserved. And he said he had forsaken his wife and children, and had been very ill in some hospital through drunkenness. Aunt, if he were as good as an angel now, I could not marry a man who has so debased himself."

Aunt Hayes clasped the dear speaker closer, with a fonder

love than ever. But she said nothing. What could she say?

When Mrs. Hayes had nothing to say to any human ear on a point of interest and importance, she always spoke to God. So there was another long silence, and poor Milly gathered strength and confidence in those kind arms.

"One question, Milly, and we will speak no more of this. Does your father, does Robert, know anything of the circumstances of Mr. Hill's past life from any one but himself?"

"No, I believe not, aunt, though he gave Robert the names of some people who knew him, in case Robert chose to inquire about him. Some lady named Oakland, and a Mr. Benjamin Field—a reformed drunkard too. What an associate!" and Milly felt a little shudder pass over her.

"Child, learn charity," said Mrs. Hayes. "The grace of God can change a drunkard into a prince with God, a 'joint heir with Christ.' Nothing else can, and what are we that dare to speak unforgivingly of those He has taken to His bosom and throne?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ELOPEMENT.

"Now, Milly, my dear," said Mrs. Hayes, when the train stopped at a certain junction, on the return, "I'm getting out here, and you will go on home alone. Take care of my luggage; I've got all I want in my little bag, which stays with me. Tell them I'm coming after you soon, and don't be uneasy. If I don't appear, my will is made, and all straight and right."

"No, indeed, aunt," exclaimed Milly, attempting to jump from the carriage, "it's all crooked and wrong to leave you here. If you stay, so will I."

"Silly child, sit still," cried Mrs. Hayes; "do you think I don't know what I'm doing? It is to be as I say; good-by for a little bit."

"Sit still, please, miss; train's off!" cried the guard, seeing Emily about to step down, notwithstanding her aunt's words.

The whistle sounded, the train started, while Emily sat looking in alarm and astonishment from the carriage window, and the self-reliant old lady stood nodding and smiling on the platform.

"What wilful imprudence!" exclaimed William Taylor, when, amidst the consternation of the family, his daughter told her extraordinary story of dear Aunt Hayes's elopement.

"To think of her rambling about the country alone, and at her age!" said Robert, anxiously. "What can we do?"

"Nothing but wait patiently," said Susan. "Strange as it is, I am bound to say that I never knew Aunt Hayes do a thing that could grieve or trouble anybody without some reason that was to do good, and make all right in the end; we must trust God to take care of her, and wait until she comes or writes to us."

And there seemed nothing else to be done, for no one had the slightest idea of where she could be going, or what she meant to do.

Perhaps the landlord of the "The Crown," at ——, felt a little curious and interested when a hearty, brisk old woman, well dressed, with a great bag on her arm and an umbrella in her hand, stepped in, and asked if she could be accommodated for a night or two.

The landlady came forward, showed a little sitting-room and a bed-room over it, ready in half an hour.

"It will do very well. Now some tea to refresh and rest me, and then your company, if you please, for a little while."

All being complied with, the landlord and his wife were relieved from their stretch of curiosity by the blunt, straightforward old lady, whose plan was laid with the wisdom of the serpent, to get at two sides of her subject, knowing that men and women take somewhat opposite views of the same thing sometimes.

"Do you happen to know a man named Matthew Hill?" said the old lady.

"Matthew Hill? to be sure we do, ma'am."

"Has he any score here against his name?"

"Oh no, ma'am, nor ever had; he always paid for what he got," said the landlord.

"One can't say that much for his wife, though, you know,"

said the landlady. "There's something down against her to this day."

"Why didn't you send the bill to her husband?" asked the visitor.

"Well, you see, ma'am, it was a sad business, all that about Mr. and Mrs. Hill; a nicer, better-hearted young fellow never walked than he was, but somehow his wife—"

"He didn't ought to have run away from them, though," put in the landlady, strongly.

"Well, no, in course not, but let me tell the lady. Poor fellow, many's the time he's come in here and sat down with a great sigh fit to burst his heart, and though he said nothing I knew what it was; for his missis, though she were a smart girl enough, had a horrid temper of her own, and used to say ugly things and try to sneer him down like; and who'll stand that, I'd like to know, when there's a comfortable seat in the bar-parlour, without any crabbed tempers to bother a man's mind when he's tired? So poor Hill came and sat here now and then, and he did take a glass or so, and once or twice it was too much for him."

"What sent him to the hospital?" asked the visitor.

"Just nothing but her tempers. He got a drop too much, as the saying is, one wet night. I remember it very well; he came in with a miserable face, and said the missis was all upset with a brick that came down the chimney, and there wasn't a place to stand or sit in, nor no way to please or help her. And two or three fellows were here talking and drinking and singing, and Matthew, he stayed late, and she let him lie soaked in wet clothes on the floor all night, and then she wouldn't tend him nor nothing. But there's a good lady near by who can tell you more about that than we can."

"It was rheumatic fever," said the landlady, "and Mrs. Oakland, she meddled, they did say, and sent him to the infirmary, and he never came home any more, though he did send money to keep them all comfortable. Then, poor thing, she went wrong, and got drink, and at last killed herself with it."

"Ay, and killed two of her children with neglect first, though," interrupted the landlord. "And, wife, don't forget how he came back and nursed her through a long illness, and wouldn't let her go to the asylum, poor fellow. I was right sorry for him, so I was, and I never had the heart to send him any bill of what his wife had run up here. She was a vixen if ever there was such a thing, begging the lady's pardon," concluded the landlord.

Here was general report, but something more of the inner life was needful; and at breakfast-time the next morning Mr. and Mrs. Field were surprised by a visit from the same old lady, escorted by the landlady of "The Crown" to their door.

Similar questions were put, but Benjamin and Ellen were not so communicative as the innkeeper had been.

"I am not authorised, madam," said Benjamin, respectfully, "to speak of my friend's private and family affairs to strangers."

"To whose disadvantage would they tell?" asked the visitor.

"Not to Matthew's, according to my thinking," said Mr. Field; "and I believe my wife agrees with me."

Ellen cordially assented.

The old lady placed her hand on the head of their eldest girl. "Listen," said she; "if you had a daughter whom Matthew desired for his wife, would you, Christian parents as

I have heard you are, give her to him without fear for her happiness?"

"Yes, we would," said both. "God has dealt with him heart and soul, and we could trust His work; but nothing else—no pledges, no resolutions, no promises—will bind so as to put away all fear of a relapse. God only can cure that leprosy."

Then good Mrs. Hayes and Mr. Field understood one another, and mutual confidences followed, and the whole sad story from beginning to end was told with feeling by husband and wife.

Still, something of the earlier habits and characters might be learned; and behold Mrs. Hayes and Mrs. Oakland in close confidential talk.

Here the real temper of the wife was but too well known, and the first fall of the husband was traced out. Mrs. Oakland, too, had visited the family throughout their troubles, and witnessed his true penitence and anguish during Jane's last illness.

"Yes," concluded she, "I would trust Matthew now; his was genuine conversion by the Spirit of God, I do believe. But, Mrs. Hayes, if I might see the young woman to whom he has become attached, perhaps I could meet all her objections, and show her that one so hardly and so deeply tried is worthy of her love now."

"Did you ever see him intoxicated?" asked Mrs. Hayes.

"No, never. But the first time it ever happened was when he went to buy a horse for some friend at a fair. He was young, thoughtless, and perhaps a little self-sufficient, and over the bargain the dealers made him drink. He came home ill, and being in my district, and known to my family from a boy, I felt great interest in him, and he always listened to

my advice. He afterwards went on steadily and well, and was highly valued as a most skilful workman, and I own I was grieved and vexed that he fixed his affections on my servant. I feared she would not make him happy, but I did my best to help her, and warn her of her dangers. The state of things became worse than I had feared, and—you know all that followed."

"Lady," said Mrs. Hayes, "if it should ever be wished, do you still feel sufficient interest in Matthew Hill to take a journey in his behalf, and say to a young woman whose affection would be a greater blessing to him than I have power to tell, what you have said to me?"

"Indeed I would do it if you ask me, or even unasked. Few things could give me greater pleasure than to see him once more blessed with a happy home. He is quite a young man still, not more than thirty, and the prospect is dreary for him and his boy without home interests and affections."

"So it is, dear lady; but then he allowed the faults of another to become causes of his own; and though man takes up with such excuses, our Lord does not. It's the old story from the beginning, and right principle and manly feeling are against it. Yes, Matthew should suffer, only if we can shorten his trial we will."

At the end of the third day from her disappearance Mrs. Hayes, hale and hearty, walked into her nephew's house to tea.

But not for the younger inquisitors was the history of her adventures, and they had to be content with their curiosity.

But to Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, and Robert and Emily, she told by the fireside that evening how she had been interested

in the character and history of a person she had heard of, and had been to visit his friends. Then she began with the horse-dealers at the fair, and traced Matthew Hill through all his troubles and sufferings down to the present time, naming no names, but soon understood by her hearers.

Then Milly stole out of the room, and was seen no more until Mrs. Hayes went to bed, when, her fair face laid upon the old lady's shoulder, she whispered her thanks for all she had done, and entreated very earnestly that the subject might now rest, and be no more mentioned in the family.

"You are not satisfied yet, darling?"

"No, not yet," said Emily.

So the subject was not named again, and Emily became bright and cheerful as usual, and Matthew Hill having fully satisfied himself that he should never again enjoy a home of his own, and might as well bask in the sunshine of his friend's happiness while he could, gradually resumed his visits, seeing no reason to debar himself the society of the only woman who could make home for him anywhere while she was entirely free from preferences for any other. When that time came he thought would be soon enough to retreat into solitude.

He had too true a sense of his own dignity to become a hanger-on, or a persecutor of the gentle girl, and his attention to her was merely that of a respectful friend. Josy, however, made no scruple of constant demonstration of the most loving devotion, and Emily became his instructress in many useful pleasant ways during her residence at home.

Mrs. Hayes looked on quietly. Her darling Milly was quite herself again in health and spirits, and if really and truly she had cast her lot for that gratifying obituary at the hand of some member of Mr. Dixon's family, why, who should

hinder her? Doubtless all would be well; and Milly must be useful and beloved wherever and with whomsoever she walked the pilgrimage of life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DOMESTIC REVELATIONS.

O none of her attached friends was Mrs. Hayes's visit more welcome than to Rhoda Lewis, and the sight of the kind old face at the cottage door caused the maiden to bound forward with a cry of delight, and then to burst into tears.

"Well, my lassie," said Aunt Hayes, taking her affectionately in her arms, "what makes you give me such an April welcome?"

"I don't know, I'm so glad to see you," said Rhoda, looking up like a child that has needed and found a sympathising friend; "I was afraid you were never coming again."

"That horrid old thing, I do declare," murmured young Mrs. Lewis to herself behind a large screen which stood between the door and the fireplace; "but I'll spoil their pleasure."

"Rhoda! Rhoda! you arn't going to leave this grate in such a mess, I hope. Edward will be in soon, and I've no time to see to it."

"Yes, I'll do it directly, Lydia," said Rhoda; "and you will go up and see mother meanwhile, Mrs. Hayes."

"I'll sit here awhile first, if you please," said Mrs. Hayes. "How are you, Mrs. Lewis, and your baby? May I offer it an old woman's blessing?"

"Baby's upstairs on grandmother's bed asleep," peevishly answered Lydia, offering the tips of her fingers to the old lady's hand; "I can't have her wakened with talking."

"We'll try not to do that," said Mrs. Hayes, pleasantly. "I will rest a little and give her time to open her bright eyes upon me. I love babies, Mrs. Lewis. I dare say you find she teaches you many sweet lessons that only mother's love can learn."

"I'm fond enough of her when she's quiet," said the young mother, lazily; "and when she squalls I give her to Rhoda."

Rhoda was busily "doing up" the hearth and washing the stone, and then whispered to Lydia that some little addition should be made to the dinner.

"Nonsense; you didn't ask her to stay, I hope, and without consulting me," whispered Lydia back again, inconsiderately loud. "Pray do you forget whose house this is?"

"Never mind," said Rhoda, gently; "I only thought—"

"You only thought of yourself, I dare say. Just get those potatoes peeled, if you please; and I shall go up and dress ready for my friends, who are going to call some time to-day." And young Mrs. Lewis sailed upstairs without deigning further notice of Mrs. Hayes.

"Come here and let me look at you, child," said Mrs. Hayes, as Rhoda was going into the back kitchen. Rhoda turned and stood before her, the colour mounting to her face, and a smile playing round her mouth. But while she stood the colour faded and the smile vanished, and perhaps a tear might spring up instead.

"There, now, go and get your potatoes, and I'll help you to peel them."

"This won't do," thought Aunt Hayes, "she's gone to a skeleton, poor child."

But though Rhoda would not permit her to touch the potatoes, she very gladly brought them in a bowl, and sat down on a wooden stool at Mrs. Hayes's feet to prepare them.

Presently the baby was heard screaming loudly, then young Mrs. Lewis called from the stairs, "Rhoda, Rhoda! don't you hear? The child will kill herself with fright. You know your mother can't do any good with her."

Rhoda put down her bowl and flew upstairs even before the speech was ended, and returned in a few minutes with a pretty little babe, which she put into Mrs. Hayes's arms, and then resumed the potatoes.

"Mother will be so glad to see you, Mrs. Hayes," said she, "and we'll all go up together."

"Indeed we shan't," said a peevish voice coming down the stairs. "I'm not going to have my child stifled in a sick-room to please anybody."

Rhoda coloured, but replied calmly:

"Then I'll give her a little walk while Mrs. Hayes sits with mother. There, Lydia, are the potatoes." Quickly washing her hands, which were much less delicate than they had been two years before, she tied on the baby's hood and prepared to walk out in the park. "Now you'll sit with mother, dear Mrs. Hayes, and I shall see you again when you come down."

In the distance Mrs. Lewis, junior, perceived that her husband had met his sister and child, and was walking slowly by their side.

Up rose evil suspicions that she was being talked about, and that poor Rhoda was "making mischief," for Edward had several times shown something of his temper, which she did not intend to "put up" with.

This opinion was almost immediately confirmed by Edward himself on entering the house.

"Lydia," said he, "what's the matter with Rhoda? she looks thin and sickly; and I thought when I met her just now that she had been crying."

"Really I cannot be called to account for your sister's tempers, Edward," said his wife, indignantly; "if she has been complaining of me I'll—"

"I'm afraid your conscience complains for her," interrupted Edward; "Rhoda never complains, but I can see that you are working the poor girl too hard; and I didn't have my sister here to be your servant, please to remember that, Lydia."

"She does nothing but what she chooses," replied Lydia, angrily; "and if she's to be waited on and live in idleness, you must get somebody else to be her servant, for I shan't."

"Lydia, for shame," said Edward, loudly.

"I won't 'for shame;' you 'for shame,' for speaking so to me, said the wife of nearly two years; and, as just then Rhoda came in with the baby, she rudely snatched the child from her arms, went to another room with it, and burst into a passionate fit of tears, by way of venting her deep sense of injury.

Tears are curious things, and terrible deceivers often, to everybody but those who shed them. Poor Edward was very fond and proud of his little daughter, and not yet indifferent to the beauty of his showy-looking wife, so he kindly followed.

"There, Lydia, I didn't mean to make you unhappy, so kiss and be friends," said he.

There was something good in the husband who would do thus, and worth the trouble and love that might improve upon it. But Lydia, in her selfishness and conceit, did not take the right way, and Edward transferred his caresses to

the baby, feeling that Lydia could be very disagreeable when she liked.

Mrs. Hayes found the invalid much worse than she expected, and Mrs. Lewis seemed fully aware that her days were numbered.

"Do not hint this to Rhoda, though, on any account," said she; "the dear child would fret herself ill. Indeed, I often fear that nursing me is too much for her."

"It is not attention to you that will harm her," said Mrs. Hayes; "if I were you I would have more of it, and so keep her from being at other people's beck and bidding."

"I did not think of that," said the mother; "she never says a word of what goes on down there; and I can see, though I don't believe Edward knows it, that she keeps all his things mended up, just as she used to do before he married. She certainly has done her best to make up for her poor brother's unfortunate choice, and I think Lydia tries her very much with her foolish ways, but she never speaks of her except there happens to be something that she thinks will please me."

"Good girl," thought Mrs. Hayes; "she's under the Refiner's hands; He'll see to it that the furnace isn't overheated."

The old lady declined to prolong her visit this time, but on inquiring for Lydia, and finding that she still sat alone with her baby, she walked quietly into the room, and shutting the door, sat down opposite to her.

"My dear," said she, gently, "I can't go without a word with you, and for your dear baby's sake you must bear with me and forgive me. Will you try to remember that when you are nursing your child you are imparting to her something of the feeling and temper you are in at the time? If

you are heated with anger and passion and ugly thoughts about others, you are not only disturbing her health now, but laying the foundation of the same faults, to trouble and distress yourself by-and-by. You would like, when old and infirm and weary, that she should be your prop, and help, and blessing; take care, then, that now you nourish her from the calm and peaceful bosom of a loving mother, who strives to keep herself in the fear of God, practising those virtues which she would wish to see unfolding from this precious bud in due time. You are laden with solemn responsibilities; you will have to account for them. God help you to do it with joy, and not with shame and grief. Good-by, my dear, and remember that nursing time is, or should be, a holy time—a mother's best opportunity for prayer—a link with heaven—a time that determines mighty interests concerning the immortal treasure she is everything to, for the beginnings of life in body, soul, and spirit. Oh! be wise, my dear, be wise and safe and happy."

And away went Aunt Hayes, leaving the astonished Lydia in doubt whether to be angry or gratified at this mark of tender interest from one she had endeavoured in her pitiful way to mortify and insult.

"Now, dear," said Mrs. Hayes to Rhoda, at parting, "I wanted to take you back with me to spend an hour or two with Milly and all of us, but I see it isn't just the right time. Come when you can, but don't be long away from your mother, she needs all your care, and must not be fretted with the crying of the child."

Poor Rhoda wondered after she was gone whether these words were intended to convey any particular meaning about her mother's health, and she softly went back to the room where she lay on her sofa, apparently asleep. Her thin

fingers were between the leaves of a hymn-book, and the Bible was on the little table beside her. A beautiful calmness was on her face, and she looked, to Rhoda's alarmed idea, much more of heaven than of earth.

"Do you feel any worse, mother dear?" she asked, as Mrs. Lewis opened her eyes and smiled on her.

"No, darling, I suffer much less now, only I think, perhaps, I am rather weaker. I must not try to leave the bed to-morrow."

Rhoda's heart sank, and from that moment nothing but some peremptory call upon her sense of duty separated her from her mother's side.

A very few days now made a rapid change in the state of the invalid. As long as her strength would bear it she spoke tenderly and faithfully to her son. That Rhoda would follow her to the home above she was quite assured; but her son, with his free-and-easy treatment of God's message to man, his worldliness and self-conceit, she knew was at present very far from the kingdom of God, and she had fears that his marriage had not tended to improve his views and principles.

"Now, Rhoda, dearest," said she one night after settling her pillows and taking some nourishment which her daughter had brought, "lie down and rest peacefully. I shall want nothing more till morning, and then you must go with my love to Mrs. Hayes and bring her to see me. God bless you, my precious child, you have been the comfort of my life since your father left us."

Rhoda knelt down and kissed the dear lips.

"Nothing more till morning." Yes, it was quite true, only it will be a "morning without clouds," the beginning of eternal day.

Mrs. Lewis had passed away in quiet sleep, and Rhoda awoke to the deepest, saddest sorrow she had ever known. She managed to send a message to Mrs. Hayes, and it was in those kind arms that tears at last relieved the agony of her poor crushed heart.

"Poor little dove," said Aunt Hayes, as she sat with the family at the lodge on her return, "she will feel this loss very bitterly. Her mother thought Lady Crewe would take her back again; but Mr. Lewis says his house is her proper home."

"It was only her mother being there that made it home, though, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Taylor. "As long as Mr. Lewis is comfortable when he chooses to be at home, he does not seem to think how his comfort is procured. I have been grieved to see all the work of the house put upon poor Rhoda; and though she is very fond of the baby, and calls it 'Little Peace-maker,' she often looks so weary and dispirited that I've wondered they didn't observe it, and can allow her to be disturbed by night as well as by day with managing it."

"You never need wonder at anything that selfish people do," said Mrs. Hayes, "they are deaf and blind to everything they ought to hear and see. It's quite true, and no use mincing matters, I feel it now myself. I've set my heart on making my old farm-house an ark for this fluttering dove for a little bit, and I shall neither see nor hear reason why I shouldn't have my way. So Mrs. Edward Lewis must manage her own baby and do her own work."

"She can't do either, aunt," said Susan, who was present, and seemed to have known more of Mrs. Lewis than any of the others had.

"Can't! Don't tell me," said Mrs. Hayes. "Women have

nothing to do with such a word, when duty, sense, and principle dictate for them."

"Won't, then, aunt," said Susan, laughing.

"I'm afraid that is nearer the truth, my dear," said Mrs. Hayes; "I hope you will never put either of those words against anything that falls to your lot in the providence of God, or by your own act and choice. If you seek the Lord's direction, be sure nothing will turn up but what He sees right, and will help you to do and bear; and if you make a mistake through not waiting for His guidance, don't blame 'Providence' and feel as if you were injured, but make the best of it, and thank God that you may ask His gracious help to bear and do, even though you forgot Him before in the matter. There's no friend like Him, Susan, 'He doth not upbraid.' Blessed God, who can bear so pitifully with such wilful sinners as we are!"

"It always seems to me," said Susan, "that the worst troubles to bear are those of our own making. Self-reproach is about the greatest aggravator of sorrow, and I always feel that in such a case we should be very patient and kind to those whom, notwithstanding, we are obliged to blame."

"Yes, black is black, and it's no good to say it's only rather grey, or not quite white," said Aunt Hayes, meditatively. "Better look the truth in the face, and deal with what is. I've seen them that are always looking back, and thinking and sighing over what might have been, and what they judge ought to have been, so keeping the poor heart always in a fret and worry, instead of saying in a Christian, reasonable way, 'It's a fact that I've got myself into this peck of troubles, and now I'll do my best to turn them out one by one, and if any of them can't be made to go, why, I'll just make it useful, and stand my friend after all. Maybe I

must have a reminder of my folly to keep me out of more mischief.' Poor Mr. and Mrs. Lewis may yet be happy if only they'd go the right way about it. Don't let us give up. When Rhoda goes they must feel their own feet, and perhaps they'll agree better to walk together."

"I saw a cockroach on its back the other day," said Mr. Taylor; "how it did kick, but no other cockroaches came to its help, and at last it made one desperate bound and got on its legs again; then off it went like a shot."

"Ay," said Aunt Hayes, "don't any of you children ever get thrown on your backs through depending on other people. You'll kick long enough when you're down, and nothing but your own energy will set you on legs worth trusting."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN CONCLUSION.

"THEY did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they builded, they planted, they married and were given in marriage;" so said the Lord Jesus, and He disapproved of none of those things. But He would have His people do and possess and enjoy as travellers passing through a foreign land, thankfully availing themselves of its accommodations, its comforts, and even its luxuries, but never dreaming of settling there for ever. It is not home, and the traveller has a home and a "native land" elsewhere.

So the Christian journeys on towards his heavenly home. If he can find a fellow-traveller bound for the same, well; and

if on the way he can pitch his tent in sweet resting-places, and make a little picture or type of the heavenly hope, very well. He may do it, and delight in it too, while the light of the Divine substance illumines the earthly shadow, and keeps the holy model in constant view.

Something like this were the thoughts of Robert Taylor as he sauntered along Lord Crewe's park towards the pretty little church which peeped up from among the trees, and around which "the rude forefathers of the hamlet" slept in peace.

It was the Sunday evening after Mrs. Lewis's "remains" (yes, it is a suitable word for the empty worn-out cage, when the bird of paradise has flown) had been laid among them, and it was suggested by some very determined feeling, of which he had for many months been getting more and more conscious, that the bereaved daughter must feel very forlorn and alone in the world that evening, for her brother never went to any place of worship, and his wife seldom, except she had some new fashion to show to the village "ladies."

So after the service was over, he joined the mourning figure that drooped along the walk, after turning one yearning glance towards her mother's grave; and as she shivered and struggled against the choking grief, she felt grateful for the kind support, as Robert silently and gently drew her arm within his own. It was such a strong thing, a good brave man's arm to lean on; and the strong man thought it would be happy to bear that little burden always. And it came to pass that he presently made her comprehend the fact, so that Rhoda was no longer forlorn or alone in the great wide world, but had found the traveller whose journey she was to share; and knowing his principles and his character as son, brother, friend, she had no more hesitation about trusting

her happiness in his hands, and no more doubt of the reality of every word he spoke, than if a voice from the sky above them had said, "They two shall be one flesh."

"Oh, mother, dear mother!" thought she, "do you know how God is caring for your Rhoda? Is not this what you would bless Him for? Is He not answering your prayers?"

And Robert felt that the vacant place in his heart was filled now; the "help meet" was found, and his tent should be as much like heaven below as love and sympathy and the blessed presence of the Lord God of the families of the earth who trust in Him could make it. Thus building no airy castle to fade away in descriptive vision, but a tower on a rock, whose top should reach to heaven—a task that no Babel-builders ever yet accomplished, but which the Spirit of God is doing by His people in spiritual reality every day—they walked and talked until they found themselves at Mr. Taylor's door.

"It is due to my father and mother and dear Aunt Hayes that we tell them at once, dear Rhoda," said Robert. "They all love us both, and we must have their blessing." There was no hesitation in the welcome. Even Mrs. Taylor felt that she could give up her son to such a wife, and his father saw himself and his own dear Susan over again. There was not one in the family who had not secretly wished that this very circumstance might happen, and as old Mrs. Hayes took the maiden to her loving heart, she confessed to "a piece of romantic folly," she said, "of which such an old goose should have been ashamed, but she did think, the first time the sweet face of the girl, with her sisterly love, and her Christian grace, and her modest dress and manner, came before her, that just such should be worthy to be Robert's wife."

"She has been tried and found true, dear Robert," she said. "Never did dutiful, attentive daughter, and self-denying, self-conquering sister, make aught but blessedness in her husband's heart and home. But she must go with me to get back the roses. I'm not to be moved on that point, and when you are ready you may come and fetch her."

So Mr. and Mrs. Lewis, who had calculated comfortably on the continuance of Rhoda's services, because, forsooth, "her brother was her lawful protector," had the argument clean swept from their grasp, seeing that a new claimant for the protectorate had presumed to come forward, and they had no right to dispute her decision; they must therefore fight the battle of life for themselves. Mr. Lewis insisted upon it that he had never intended to marry a fine lady instead of a working woman, and would not submit to the expense of even a small servant at present; while poor Lydia, having the disposition of the man who dreaded being "compelled to do a deed his soul abhorred," namely, "to work," was so "put out," that she sulked and scolded and bemoaned herself. They had been deceived in each other, and sometimes it was hard to say which had the worse lot of the two.

After regaining her roses at the farm, Rhoda begged for a little time to visit her brother, and try what she could do towards mending the state of things; and a very uncomfortable time it was, but Rhoda scarcely felt it in the beautiful sunshine of her own prospects, and patiently bore with all she found.

Edward's associates were not low, drunken persons, who bring outward disgrace and temporal loss on themselves or their associates, they were men who read and talked over all the loose, infidel, immoral books and opinions that Satan has got up to cheat sinners of heaven, and insult the truth of the

Most High God. They wanted no law but their own will, admitted of no rights but their own gains, and worshipped nothing higher than their own wisdom.

Ah, let woman beware of the influence of such views, and of those who hold them; for while destroying souls, they are also undermining the social position which Christianity has given her, and are preparing the way for the downfall of all that makes her lovely and beloved, and for the ruin of home blessings and family peace.

It was nearly a year from the time of Rhoda's first visit to the farm when she entered the pleasant home which the affection and good taste of Mr. Archibald Dixon had delighted to assist in adorning for his friend Robert. There was everything that suited their position in life, without assumption or pride; the substantial, and the ornamental that none need affect to despise, and tokens of refinement that cultivated minds could enjoy.

Well-educated young working men ought to eschew everything vulgar and coarse, and the nearer they live to God, the creator of all beauty, and the source of all purity and light, the more jealously they will guard against everything in language, manners, and habits which pollutes and degrades. The true gentleman and gentlewoman may dine at a little deal table, and sit by the cosy hearth where the kettle boils and the loaf is baked, and the cat purrs inside the shining fender, and you may see that there is no affectation of means or style above them; but the table will be covered with a clean white cloth, the dinner or tea service will be pretty and sound, the spare hour will be enlivened by useful books and pleasant talk, and peace and love might fly many a splendid hall to brood sweetly over the Christian home of the working man.

Robert Taylor now realised the ideal of his heart's dearest wishes, and the affectionate and gentle Rhoda was the fair centre whence all other ideas diverged. Mrs. Hayes so heartily delighted in their happiness that she decided to quit her farm-house and take a cottage in the midst of those she loved best on earth. To select and prepare it for her reception was the pleasant task of her rejoicing nephews and nieces, old and young, and a glad day it was when the dear old lady assembled them all around her, and praise and prayer consecrated the dwelling of the righteous.

Milly had long since returned to her duties at Mr. Dixon's, and none more truly than her young mistresses and their parents sympathised with her in the pleasure of having her aged relative among them.

Matthew Hill was a welcome guest in each of the happy homes, and there were times when he yearned with all his heart's longings for a similar scene to call his own. But the possibility of such a thing had passed from his mind with the hope of winning the love of Emily Taylor, and he devoted himself to his daily work, his bright little boy, and his kind landlady, to whom he became almost as dear as the son she had lost long ago.

One day a visitor arrived at Mr. Dixon's, and singularly enough two other visitors arrived soon after at Mrs. Hayes's. The guest at the hall was Mrs. Oakland, the guests at the cottage were none other than Mr. and Mrs. Field. It was a very pleasant holiday for everybody, and if some good were not coming of it everybody was making a great mistake.

The Misses Dixon found opportunities to leave their maid to long confidential talks with their respected guest, and Mrs. Field had her for a whole afternoon all to herself.

What they all talked about was no matter to put in print, but as Aunt Hayes sat down in her bedroom while Milly put on her bonnet to return to the hall, she gently drew the yielding face to her arms, and, kissing her fondly, said:

"Do you think, my darling, that you dare trust him now? or must he go a solitary man to his journey's end?"

"Has he got you all to do this?" asked Emily, timidly.

"No, dearest, he knows nothing about it, but we are all sorry for him, and these friends of his wished to tell you his story themselves."

"But most likely he has given up wishing anything about it," said Emily.

"Fie, Milly, you know better than that; but he has behaved nobly, and I think, and your dear father and mother, and Robert and Rhoda, all think, that he might be allowed once more to plead his cause with you. I think it, my precious child, because I believe if your own heart might speak it would plead for him too, otherwise I would never have named the subject again."

Milly kissed her aunt, but said nothing, and went to bid good-night to the party below. Mr. Hill was there, and his little boy, and when she stooped over the child with her usual caress, but not her usual smile, his affection took alarm, and clasping his arms round her neck, he whispered, rather loudly, "What's the matter? Are you angry with me? Father's sure to ask."

"No, no," said Emily; "good-night."

Robert was about to accompany her, but Matthew, seized with a sudden impulse, stepped forward, "May I?" said he. "Robert has to go the other way afterwards."

"I'll go too; oh, please let me," cried Josy, rushing to the door, but Robert caught him in his arms.

"You'll stay with us till father comes back, if you please, my man."

And, in the meantime, Milly had passed out, followed by Mr. Hill, who, agitated and astonished at himself, felt only that she had not forbidden him.

Doubtless it was a long and difficult walk that evening, for Matthew was a great while away, and when he at last came back, there was such a radiant joy in his face that Mrs. Hayes and Rhoda nearly broke down with a rush of delighted sympathy.

"Robert, dear Robert," faltered his friend, as they parted company after a long talk that night, "help me to thank God. Oh, shall I indeed have a home of my own once more?"

Yes, nearly four years of a calm, consistent life had passed over Matthew since he came among them; and though he had never attempted to excuse or justify his sinful conduct at the expense of another, his friends had no scruple about telling the truth from their point of view, and Emily consented to trust him, while together they would both trust Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

The happiness of little Josy was perfect. To him the first syllable of that uncomfortable word, which often carries such a painful impression to affectionate hearts, meant nothing but joy and love. His own mother she could not be, yet the child gained in every way by the transfer of his dutiful affection to one who would take his mother's vacant place.

And though Emily had heard how trying often is a step-mother's life, and she might not always be sure that even the advocate in her own heart of true affection for both father and child would save her from every possible risk or mistake,

she knew that by following closely the precepts of her Lord, by "watching unto prayer," by yielding to the instincts of Christian love, and subduing those of unworthy self, she might be all and do all with the motherless one that even the God whose name is Love would desire.

Oh, what a mercy or misery may a step-mother be! It seems hard to find so little sympathy accorded to such a position, but, unhappily, it is because so many step-mothers have dishonoured it. Yet there is scarcely any condition in life so needing sympathy, kind counsel, forbearance, and above all, high Christian principle.

Let one so chosen to fill a grievous blank to a widowed heart, and a fearful need to a young family, count well the cost before she ventures; but, once satisfied that God, and friends, and affection, and good judgment are on her side, let her not be afraid, but daily, ay, hourly depending on Him who does ever stand by them that ask His mighty help, enter upon her touching charge, and so walk before her adopted ones that they may never need to know that it is not their lost one back again, endued with even stronger devotedness and wiser love.

William and Susan willingly bestowed their daughter, and another happy home was added to the family ties, wherein their younger children might see the example of their parents reproduced.

If anybody had thought proper to put Emily Taylor's name in a conspicuous column of a newspaper, it would have been for the last time, though not in the obituary, and certainly no member of the Dixon family is likely to have the pleasure of recording her services as she once predicted.

And dear Aunt Hayes, in her beautiful and revered old

age, was quite satisfied to live amongst them all; but when the last wedding party of which we venture to certify in these humble chronicles had surrounded her table, she retired for a little into the deepest depth of her widowed heart, where one dear memory was fondly enshrined, and murmured softly, "It's all come out right; and now, dear Jonathan, it doesn't matter how soon I come to sing praises with thee in the Paradise of God!"

LONDON: R. K. BURT AND CO., PRINTERS, WINE OFFICE COURT.

PUBLICATIONS

OF THE

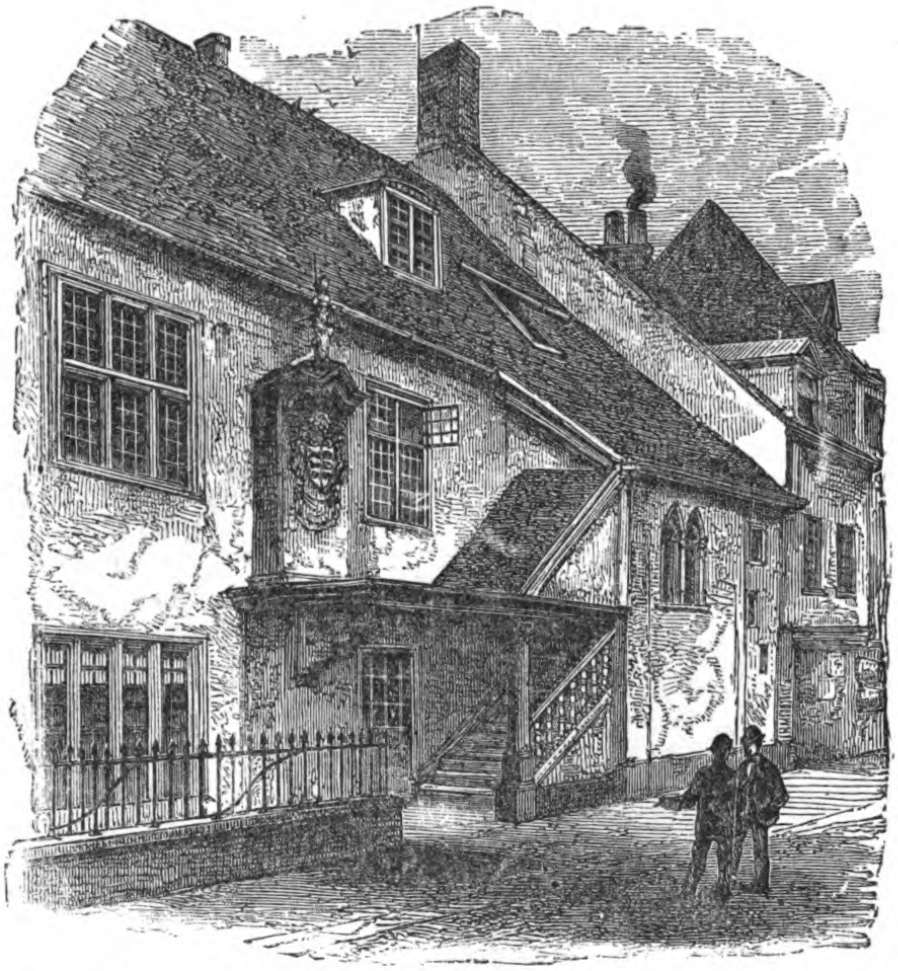
RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

Crown 8vo, 2s. 6d. cloth ; 3s. extra cloth.

SARAH MARTIN, THE PRISON VISITOR OF GREAT YARMOUTH.

THE STORY OF A USEFUL LIFE.

With Engravings.



"An extremely remarkable narrative of a very remarkable woman."—*Literary Churchman.*

"Sarah Martin is entitled to rank with the philanthropists of England, and her biography should be well read, especially by women seeking hints for noble philanthropic work."—*Nonconformist.*

"A life which every Christian woman should first read and then imitate. It has been a means of grace to us to peruse it."—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon in the *Sword and Trowel.*

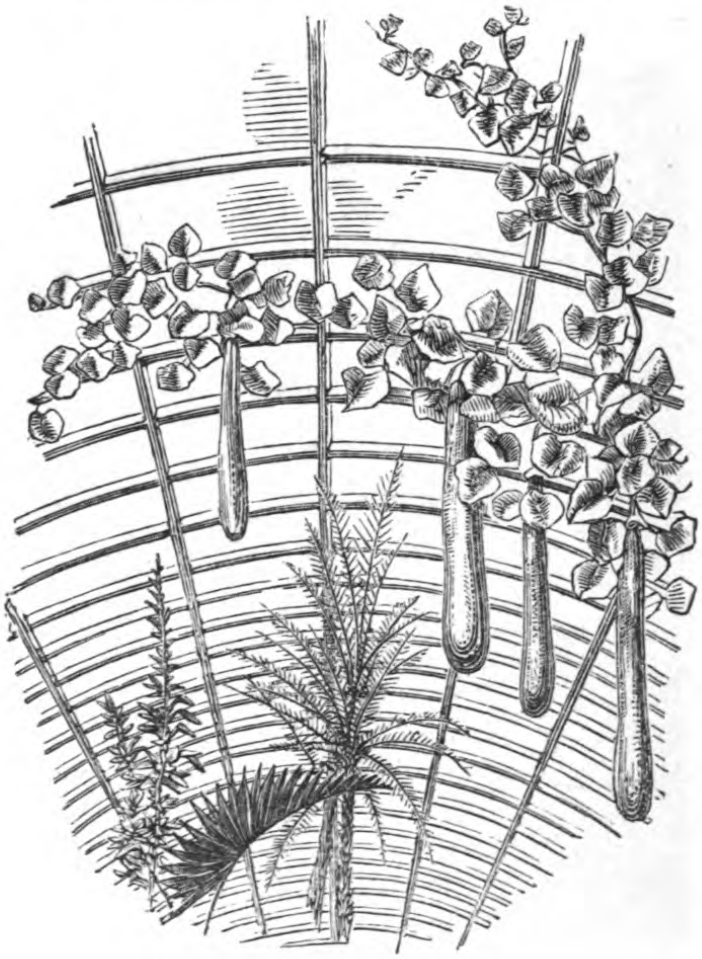
"A biography of simple but surprising interest. The life is a wonderful one."—*Record.*

In Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d. cloth.

BEAUTIES AND WONDERS
OF
VEGETABLE LIFE,

Or, Rambles in Parks, Forests, Orchards, Gardens, Heaths, etc.

With over One Hundred and Twenty-five Engravings.



THE CLUB GOURD.

"It abounds with popular information, anecdote, and allusion. To young people it will be as attractive by its style, method, and illustrations, as it is instructive by its varied knowledge and elevating by its its devout feeling."—*British Quarterly Review.*

"A pleasing, well-arranged collection of facts respecting the vegetable kingdom, which will be welcomed by young botanists for their attractive novelty, and by old students for the gathering up of the seemingly disconnected phenomena, and the appropriation of each to its proper place in systematized botany. It is a healthy and interesting volume."—*The Churchman.*

Religious Tract Society.

THE MIRAGE OF LIFE.

WITH TWENTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY TENNIEL.

4s. 6d., handsomely bound in cloth, bevelled boards.

"These pictures are drawn with Mr. Tenniel's characteristic skill, and are carefully engraved."—*Art Journal.*

"There are two preachers in this volume, the author and the artist; and the latter is quite as impressive as the former. This is really a beautiful and valuable little book."—*Court Circular.*

"Printed on prepared paper, and illustrated with most masterly engravings, some of which, in their quiet humour or poetic imagery, are little gems of art."—*Sword and Trowel.*

"The illustrations are exceedingly good. We would warmly commend the book."—*Weekly Review.*

Publications of the

For the Young.

STORIES OF OLD ENGLAND.

By G. E. SARGENT, *Author of "The Chronicles of an Old Manor House," etc.*

Engravings. Crown 8vo, 3s. cloth; 4s. extra cloth, gilt.

THE STORY OF A POCKET BIBLE.

By the Author of "Frank Layton," etc.

With Engravings. Foolscap 8vo, 3s. boards; 3s. 6d. extra gilt.

STORY OF A CITY ARAB.

By G. E. SARGENT.

With Engravings printed on Toned Paper. Fcap. 8vo, 3s. cloth boards.

PALESTINE FOR THE YOUNG;

OR, A TOUR THROUGH THE HOLY LAND.

By the Rev. ANDREW A. BONAR.

With numerous Engravings. Crown 8vo, 5s. cloth boards, extra gilt.

RIVERS OF WATER IN A DRY PLACE.

An Account of the Introduction of Christianity into South Africa.

Engravings printed on Toned Paper.

Foolscap 8vo, 3s. cloth boards; 3s. 6d. extra boards, gilt edges.

THE WHITE FOREIGNERS FROM OVER THE WATER.

The Story of the American Mission to the Burmese and the Karens.

By the Author of "Rivers of Water in a Dry Place."

Engravings. Fcap. 8vo, 3s. cloth; 3s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

By the Author of "Christie Redfern's Troubles."

SHENAC'S WORK AT HOME.

A STORY OF CANADIAN LIFE.

Engravings. Fcap. 8vo, 2s. 6d. cloth; 3s. 6d. extra, gilt edges.

"This is a very pleasantly-written book, and may well be admitted into the school or parish library."—*Literary Churchman.*

"Presenting scenes of homely experience, in which the most prominent actor is a simple and right-minded girl, whose merit is ultimately rewarded by her elevation to be the wife of a Christian minister in a thinly populated part of Canada."—*The Athenæum.*

CHRISTIE REDFERN'S TROUBLES.

A STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

Crown 8vo, 3s. 6d., handsomely bound in bevelled boards, gilt edges.

"Many valuable lessons are incidentally taught in the well-sustained narrative.—*Record.*

"A narrative of the troubles of a young Scottish girl belonging to a family which had emigrated to Canada. We have scarcely ever met with a work we should so gladly put into the hands of a young girl as we should this."—*Nonconformist.*

"This book will be made useful in very many families, and wherever it goes it must do good.—*Dr. H. A. Boardman.*

THE ORPHANS OF GLEN ELDER.

A TALE OF SCOTTISH LIFE.

Engravings. Fcap. 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

By MRS. PROSSER, *Author of "The Awdries and their Friends."*

ORIGINAL FABLES AND SKETCHES.

With Engravings. Imp. 16mo, 2s. cloth; 1s. neat cover.

Including—

No. 1, Paradise Row.
The Old Man of the Cross Keys.
The Odd Fifteen.
But about the Sheepskins.
The Trusty Staff.
Taken by Surprise.
Gideon Strong.
"But if not."
The Bunch of Violets, etc.

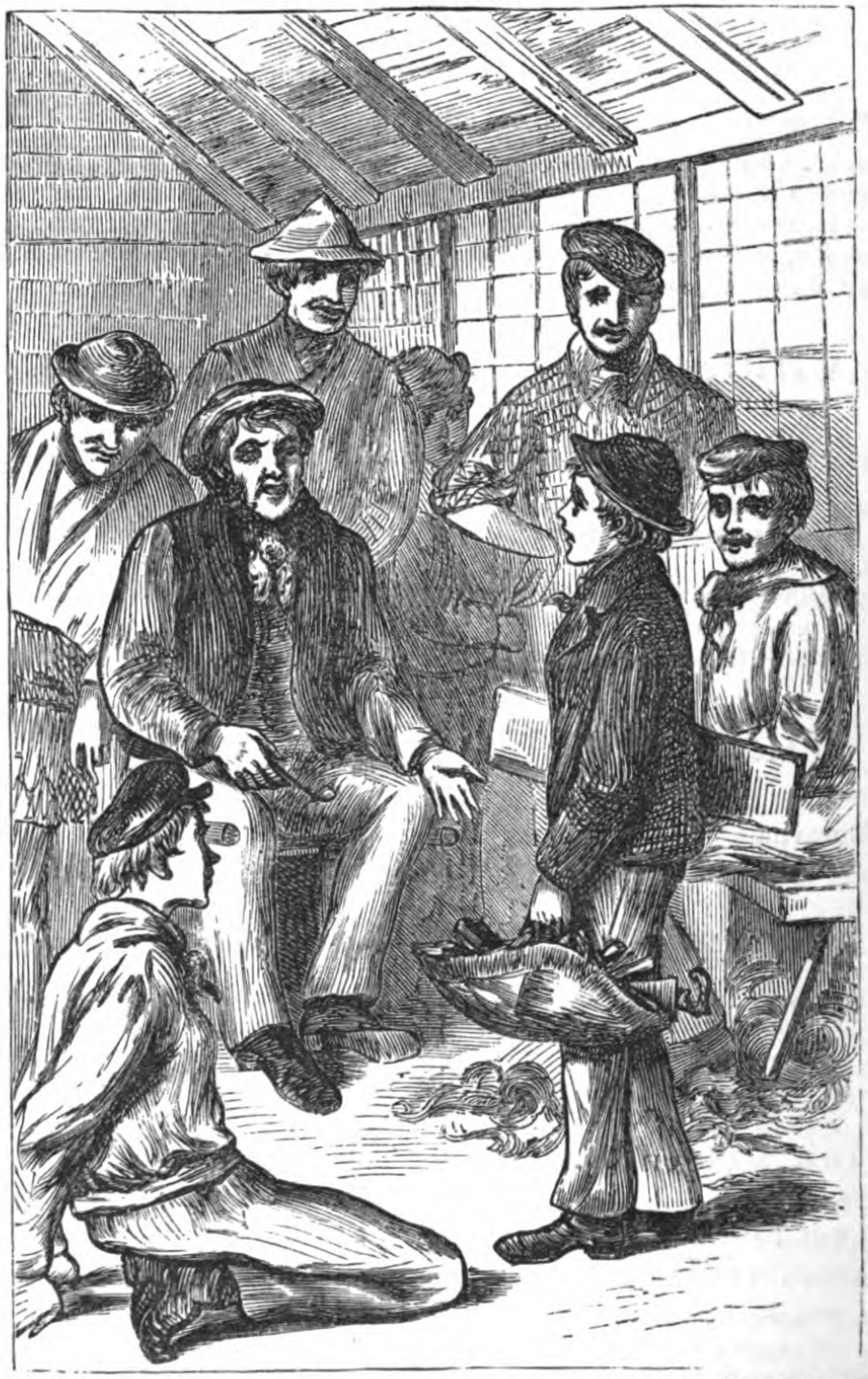
"Mrs. Prosser is a peeress among parable-makers. We have commended her volume wherever we have had opportunity."—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

"The fables are told with great force and vigour; all being sharp, clever, racy, and original. The book is amongst the best of the kind we have ever seen."—*Morning Post.*

"A capital book full of racy fables, cleverly conceived and pleasantly written."—*Morning Star.*

MY MATES AND I.

By the Author of "My Little Corner," etc. With Engravings.
Fcap. 8vo, 1s. 6d. cloth.



From "My Mates and I."

MY LITTLE CORNER.

A Book for Working People. Engravings. Fcap. 8vo, 1s. 6d. cloth.

CAPTAIN COOK:

HIS LIFE, VOYAGES, AND DISCOVERIES.

By W. H. G. KINGSTON, *Author of "Roger Kyffin's Ward," etc.*

Numerous Engravings. Imperial 16mo, 5s. bevelled boards, gilt edges.

"This is a beautiful illustrated edition of one of the most interesting books in our language for children. It is well printed, in a clear and beautiful type, and all that is objectionable in the older editions is here wisely expunged."—*Standard.*

From "Captain Cook."

VIVIAN AND HIS FRIENDS;

OR, TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

By G. E. SARGENT, *Author of "Sunday Evenings at Northcourt," etc.*

With Engravings. Imperial 16mo, 3s. 6d. cloth, gilt edges.

WITH LARGE ENGRAVINGS.

On Toned Paper, imp. 16mo, handsome bevelled cloth boards, gilt edges.

By MRS. PROSSER.

THE AWDRIES AND THEIR FRIENDS,

AND OTHER TALES.

Illustrated by Fifteen Engravings, 4*s.*

"Mrs. Prosser writes with great vigour and breadth."—*British Quarterly Review.*

"We can recommend 'The Awdries and their Friends.' It is really a clever story. It has abundance of incident, and its characters stand out in real, strong individuality."—*Literary Churchman.*

By MRS. WEBB, *Author of "Naomi," etc.*

POMPONIA; OR, THE GOSPEL IN CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD.

Illustrated by Eighteen Engravings, 4*s.*

"The work, as a tale, is excellent, and calculated to throw much light upon the history and events of the period to which it relates. Even in these days of elegant typography it is a specially pretty book."—*Court Circular.*

ALYPIUS OF TAGASTE.

A TALE OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

Illustrated by Fifteen Engravings, 3*s.* 6*d.*

By MISS M. L. WHATELY, *Author of "Ragged Life in Egypt."*

THE STORY OF A DIAMOND.

With Fourteen Engravings, 3*s.* 6*d.*

"It is an ingenious delineation of Egyptian life and manners. The thread of the work is the history of a diamond, which passes from one owner to another, in almost every condition of social life—from the merchant to the harem, from the traveller to the Bedouin's tent.—*British Quarterly Review.*

By G. E. SARGENT, *Author of "A Story of a Pocket Bible," etc.*

CHRONICLES OF AN OLD MANOR HOUSE.

With Fifteen Engravings, 4*s.*

GEORGE BURLEY:

HIS HISTORY, EXPERIENCES, AND OBSERVATIONS.

With Engravings, 4*s.* 6*d.*

ILLUSTRATED BOOKS
BY THE AUTHOR OF "JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER."

LITTLE MEG'S CHILDREN.

Royal 16mo, 1s. 6d. cloth; 2s. extra cloth, gilt edges.

"A well-written and beautifully got up little book."—*Athenæum.*

"We have the same fidelity to nature, the same loyalty to true religion, the same pathos and simplicity which threw so lively a charm around 'Jessica's First Prayer.'"—*Record.*

"A story equal to 'Jessica's First Prayer' in simple pathos. What encomium can be higher?"—*Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER.

Royal 16mo, 1*s.* cloth; 1*s.* 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

"*To the Editor of 'The Record.'*

"SIR—As a preliminary to the appeal we are about to make in behalf of a plan to give to many of the most destitute children of the metroplis, in or out of Ragged Schools, one or two dinners in each week, may I direct the attention of your readers to a short tale, 'JESSICA'S FIRST PRAYER?' This beautiful story exhibits a singularly minute and accurate knowledge of that class, its wants, and its capabilities. As a literary effort it will hardly find a rival for nature, simplicity, pathos, and depth of Christian feeling. The writer is doubtless a woman—no man on earth could have composed a page of it.

"Your obedient Servant,

"Nov. 28th, 1867." "SHAFTESBURY.

PILGRIM STREET:
A STORY OF MANCHESTER LIFE.

Fcap. 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

FERN'S HOLLOW.

Foolscap 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, with gilt edges.

ENOCH RODEN'S TRAINING.

Fcap, 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, with gilt edges.

THE FISHERS OF DERBY HAVEN.

Fcap, 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

THE CHILDREN OF CLOVERLEY.

Fcap, 8vo, 2s. cloth; 2s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

A Book for all Seasons.

WITH

NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE.

By the Author of "My Study Chair," "Country Strolls."

6s. 6d., handsomely bound, cloth, gilt edges.

CONTENTS.

The Old Year and the New.—Musings on the Threshold.—Spring Days.—Musings in a Wood. The May-days of the Soul.—Summer Days.—Musings in the Hay.—The Beauty of Rain.—Autumn Days.—Musings on the Sea-shore.—Musings on the Mountains.—Musings in the Twilight.—Winter Days.—The End of the Seasons.—Under Bare Boughs.

"I never saw anything more gracefully or rightly done—more harmoniously pleasant in text and illustration."—*Mr. Ruskin.*

"Altogether it is one of the purest and most beautiful gift-books of the season."—*Art Journal.*

"A more pleasing and attractive set of contemplations we have seldom seen."—*Contemporary Review.*

"How well the author loves nature, it needs but a glance at these pretty pages to tell. He takes the months in their turn, and from every leaf, and flower, and sunbeam, and flake of snow, he brings out a moral, not obtrusively, but as though it naturally sprung from the subject in hand. Many full-page engravings illustrate the text, and many smaller blocks of great beauty are scattered hither and thither. The cover, in purple and gold, renders the volume fitted to lie on any drawing-room table, from which it will be more frequently lifted than many of its gay but too frequently vapid companions."—*The Standard.*

"The writer is a keen observer of the analogies between things admired by the eye and the reflections of the human mind; and the result is a very suggestive book. Some of the engraved illustrations are exquisite."—*Clerical Journal.*

"The style of these musings is chaste and finished, the book is well printed, and the illustrations are marked by elegance and good taste."—*Nonconformist.*

"A quiet Christian contemplation on God's wonders in nature. In the edifying character of its contents, and the beauty of its illustrations, it is in every way worthy of commendation."—*Record.*

Religious Tract Society.

Imperial 16mo, 6*s.* extra boards, gilt edges,

TABLE TALK,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY WILLIAM COWPER.

WITH NOTES, HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED, BY ROBERT SOUTHEY.

HY weeps the Muse for England? What appears
In England's case to move the Muse to tears?
From side to side of her delightful isle
Is she not clothed with a perpetual smile?

Numerous Illustrations by HARRISON WEIR, WIMPERIS, BARNES, GILBERT, NOEL HUMPHREYS, *and other Eminent Artists.*

"A very neat and creditable edition, profusely illustrated. Deserves to be a publishing success."—*Literary Churchman.*

"The Religious Tract Society send us a nicely-illustrated edition of Cowper's 'Table Talk, and other Poems.' The designs are all pleasing."—*Athenæum.*

"The Religious Tract Society has published a beautiful gift-book, in the shape of an edition of Cowper's 'Table Talk, and other Poems,' illustrated by Harrison Weir, Barnes, Gilbert, Noel Humphreys, and other artists. The illustrations on wood are very excellent, and some of them lovely. The portrait of Cowper, from a picture by Jackson in the collection of Earl Cowper, is most characteristic."—*British Quarterly Review.*

Popular Volumes for the Young.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

Each Volume contains 128 pages of letterpress, interspersed with numerous Engravings. 1s. cloth; 1s. 6d. extra cloth, gilt edges.

HOW LITTLE BESSIE KEPT THE WOLF FROM THE DOOR.

NORWEGIAN STORIES.
By MRS. G. GLADSTONE.

LOST CITIES BROUGHT TO LIGHT.

LUCY THE LIGHT-BEARER.
By G. E. SARGENT.

TALES OF THE NORTHERN SEAS.

MILLICENT'S HOME;
OR, CHILD LIFE IN THE WEST OF IRELAND.

SOLDIER FRITZ, AND THE ENEMIES HE FOUGHT.

LIFE ON DESOLATE ISLANDS;
OR, TRUE ROBINSON CRUSOES.

GRACE OGILVIE:
A STORY OF CHILD LIFE IN INDIA DURING THE MUTINY.

LED ASTRAY.

MAGGIE'S MESSAGE.

STURDY JACK.
By MRS. RUTH LAMB.

THE STORY OF THE NILE;
OR, ADVENTURES IN NUBIA AND ABYSSINIA.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS IN KATTERN'S LIFE.

RALPH HARDING'S SUCCESS.

DEEPDALE END:
ITS JOYS AND SORROWS.

FANNY THE FLOWER GIRL.

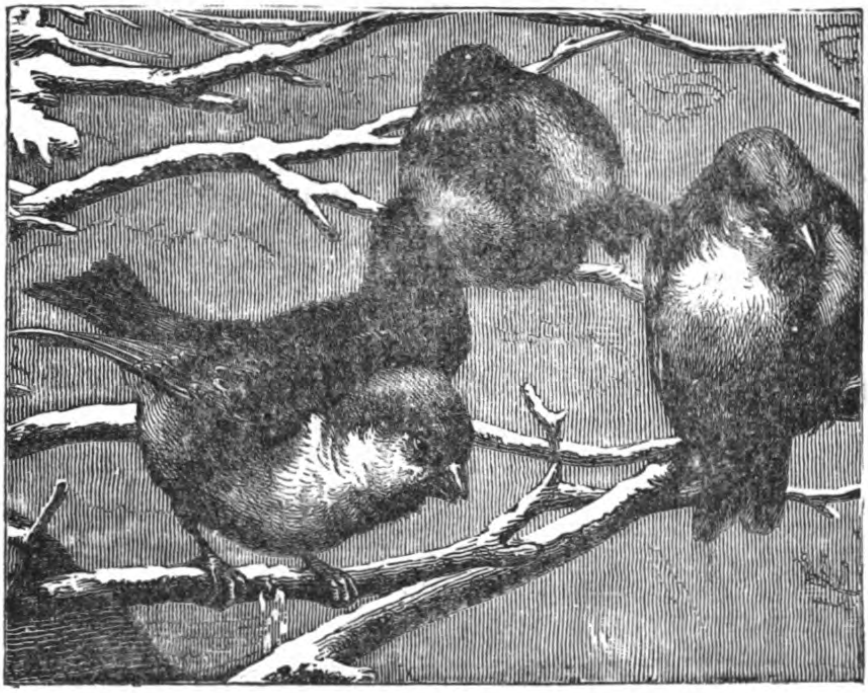
RAMBLES IN THE WILDS OF THE WEST.

BOOKSTALL BOY OF BATHERTON.
By E. HODDER.

FIRESIDE STORIES FOR WINTER EVENINGS.

WAITING FOR SAILING ORDERS.

A CITY WITHOUT WALLS:
STANLEY MORDEN'S CONFLICTS AND VICTORY.



From "Bird Songs."

WONDERS NEAR HOME.
By the Rev. W. HOUGHTON, M.A., F.L.S.

FANNY'S BIBLE TEXT.

UNCLE MAX, THE SOLDIER OF THE CROSS.

WHAT WE SAW IN EGYPT.

BIRD SONGS AND BIRD PICTURES,
WITH NATURAL HISTORY NOTES.
Upwards of 100 Illustrations.

THE TWO FRIENDS OF FORLEY.

Imperial 16mo, 4s. cloth, gilt edges.

SUNDAY EVENINGS AT NORTHCOURT.

By G. E. SARGENT, *Author of "The Story of a Pocket Bible," etc.*

With Engravings.

"Full of interest. Mr. Sargent has furnished a good Sunday book."—*Rock.*

Crown 8vo, 4s. cloth, gilt edges.

MARGARET'S CHOICE.

By the Author of "Lost Cities brought to Light," etc.

With Engravings.

"A good story, full of incident and feeling."—*Freeman.*
"Very well written."—*Standard.*

Imperial 16mo, 2s. 6d. cloth.

THE DAYS OF THE CATTLE PLAGUE:

A Story by Mrs. PROSSER. With Engravings.

"A capitally written story. We hardly know what readers will not enjoy it. For a mothers' meeting it will be simply charming."—*Literary Churchman.*

Royal 16mo, 1s. 6d. cloth.

THE SECRET OF A HAPPY LIFE:

AN EXPOSITION OF THE BEATITUDES.

By the REV. G. W. CONDER.

"A thoughtful, truthful little book, having a distinct practical religious aim. It is suited alike for youth and adult age."—*Literary World.*
"Forcible and popular, this is likely to prove very useful."—*Rock.*

RICHARD BAXTER'S WORKS.

THE SAINT'S EVERLASTING REST. 18mo, 1s. 6d. cloth; 2s. 6d. half-bound; 5s. morocco.

THE PLAIN MAN'S GUIDE TO HEAVEN. 18mo, 1s. 6d. cloth; 2s. half-bound; 4s. 6d. morocco.

CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED TO TURN AND LIVE. 18mo, 1s. cloth; 1s. 6d. half-bound; 4s. 6d. morocco.

NOW OR NEVER: the Holy, Serious, Diligent Believer justified, encouraged, excited, and directed, and the opposers and neglecters convinced by the light of Scripture and reason. 18mo, 1s. cloth.

DYING THOUGHTS. 18mo, 1s. cloth; 1s. 6d. half-bound.

CONVERSE WITH GOD IN SOLITUDE. 32mo, 8d. cloth.

LIFE OF RICHARD BAXTER. Fcap. 8vo. With Steel Portrait. 1s. 6d. cloth.

"We cannot too highly recommend them."—*Art Journal.*

CHEAP COLOURED PICTURES

FOR COTTAGE WALLS AND SCHOOLROOMS.

The attention of managers of clubs and others is specially drawn to the following series.

Beautifully printed in Oil Colours by Kronheim. Size, 15 in. by 20 in. Price 3d. each; in gilt frame and glazed, 2s.

WELCOME HOME AGAIN.
THE QUEEN AND THE HIGHLAND COTTAGER.
THE FLOWER GIRL.
THE GLEANER.
MARKED FOR FALLING.
IN THE HAYFIELD WITH FATHER.
"DON'T CRY, DEAR."
THE LAND OF PLENTY.
A LONG PULL AND A STRONG PULL.
ALONE IN THE WORLD.
NEDDY AND ME.
GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY.
WITH CATTLE ON THE MOUNTAIN.
THE BEST JUG TO FETCH BEER IN.
WATCHFUL CARE.
THE FISHER GIRL.
DEER ON THE MOUNTAINS.
A MERRY CHRISTMAS.
DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.
ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.
THE SCAPEGOAT.
NOAH AND THE DOVE.
HAMAN AND MORDECAI.
MOSES LIFTING UP THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

"It is impossible to speak too highly of them."—*Literary Churchman.*

"Well printed in colours—cheap indeed."—*Standard.*

"As gifts the pictures would be valued by thousands to whom a really good picture is unknown."—*Public Opinion.*

NEW SERIES, IN COLOURED WRAPPER. WITH ENGRAVINGS. MONTHLY, ONE PENNY.

THE TRACT MAGAZINE

AND CHRISTIAN MISCELLANY.

For Family Reading it contains interesting continuous tales, lively sketches, biographies, narratives in prose and poetry, and short essays on faith and practice. For District Visitors there are numerous papers well suited for reading by the sick-bed or in the homes of the poor. For Mothers' Meetings, Cottage Meetings, and Penny Readings, there are brief narratives and tales inculcating the duties of religion and morality in a striking form. For the Homes of Working People there are illustrations of domestic life, showing the misery of drunkenness, slothfulness, and extravagance, and setting forth the advantages of true religion and morality. For Tract Distributors it is especially well fitted, as every number contains earnest appeals to the impenitent, and simple statements of the way of life through Jesus Christ alone.

The Annual Volumes, strongly bound in cloth (price 1s. 6d.), make a valuable addition to congregational, Sunday-school, and other libraries.

Magazine for Working Men's Homes.

With Engravings by Harrison Weir, John Gilbert, Fildes, Barnes, and other eminent Artists.

THE COTTAGER AND ARTISAN.

ALSO SPECIALLY SUITABLE FOR WORKING MEN'S CLUBS, VILLAGE LIBRARIES, SCHOOL PRESENTS, ETC.

The "Cottager" contains :—STORIES; Papers upon ENGLAND'S WORKERS; SHORT SUNDAY READINGS; HINTS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND GARDEN; ADVENTURES ASHORE AND AFLOAT, from Real Life; BIBLE SCENES AND ILLUSTRATIONS; THE WORKING MAN ABROAD; MISSIONARY INCIDENTS; besides many other articles calculated to promote the social and spiritual welfare of the labouring classes. The type is clear and large, and the pages are enlivened by numerous pictures by the best artists.

The Volumes, price 1*s.* 6*d., in cover printed in Oil Colours;* 2*s.* 6*d. in cloth boards, gilt edges. Monthly, One Penny.*

(FIRST ISSUED 1824.)

THE CHILD'S COMPANION

AND JUVENILE INSTRUCTOR.

Published Monthly. Price One Penny. With numerous Fine Engravings.

The Articles, in Prose and Verse, are written by those who are deeply interested in the welfare of the young, and are adapted alike to children in the gentleman's mansion and the cottage home. This little companion was for years regularly admitted into the Palace Nursery.

In its pages entertainment and instruction are blended with lessons of piety. Attention is given to the claims of Sunday, Infant, and Ragged Schools, and Christian Missions.

Although entitled "THE CHILD'S COMPANION," a large portion of its contents adapts it for youth to the age of fourteen.

The new series is printed in small Quarto size, and embellished with superior large Engravings by the best English and Foreign artists. Every effort is made to render it worthy of that extended support which it has obtained for nearly fifty years.

THE CHILD'S COMPANION ANNUAL.

The Twelve Numbers of the year form a handsome Gift-book, and contain many superior Wood Engravings.

Illustrated coloured cover, 1*s.*6*d.*; 2*s. cloth*; 2*s.*6*d. extra cloth, gilt edges.*