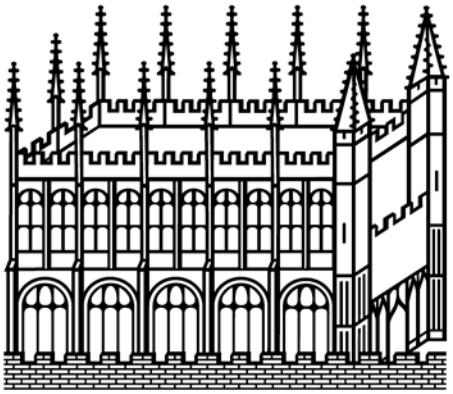

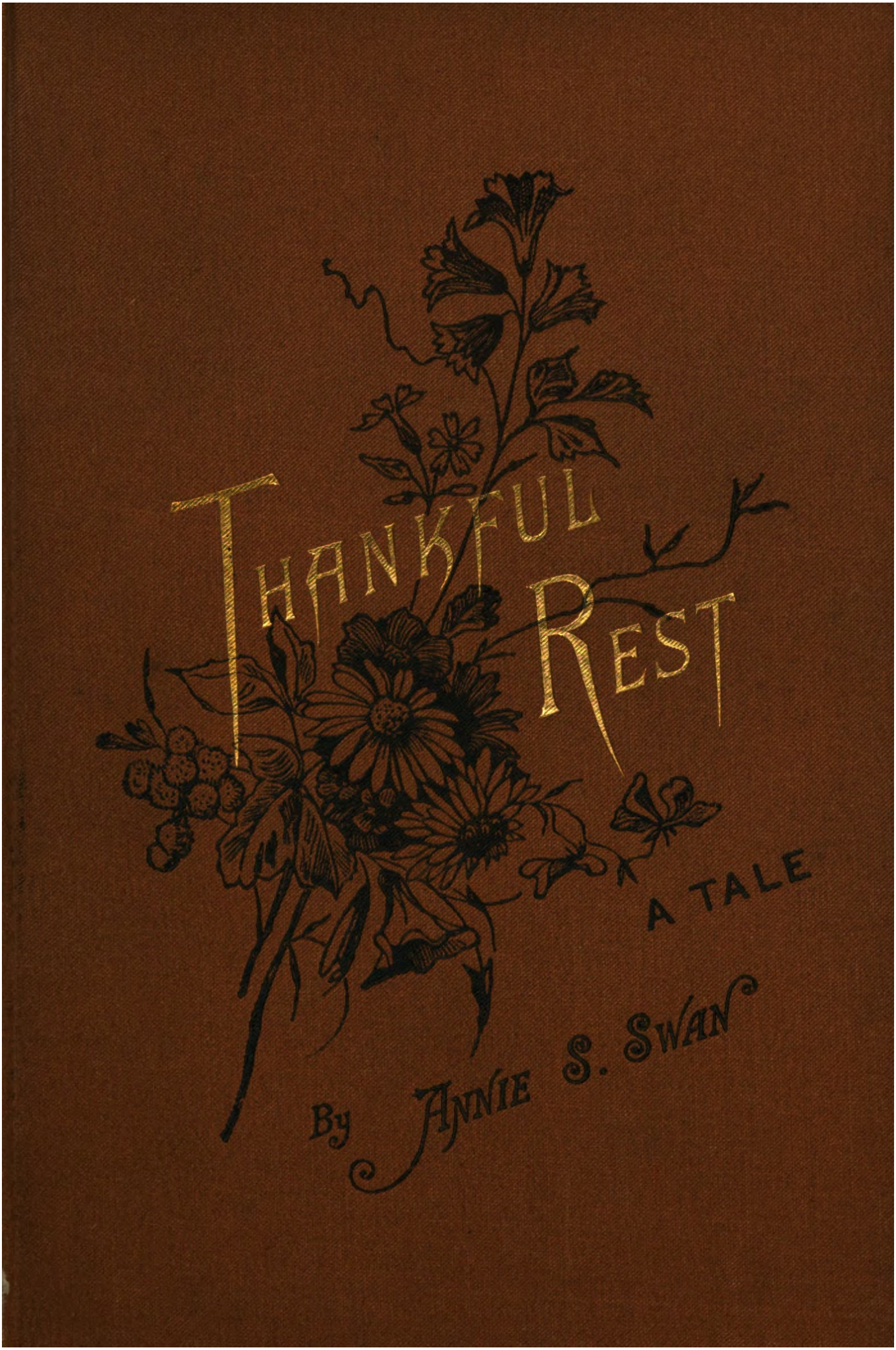
THANKFUL
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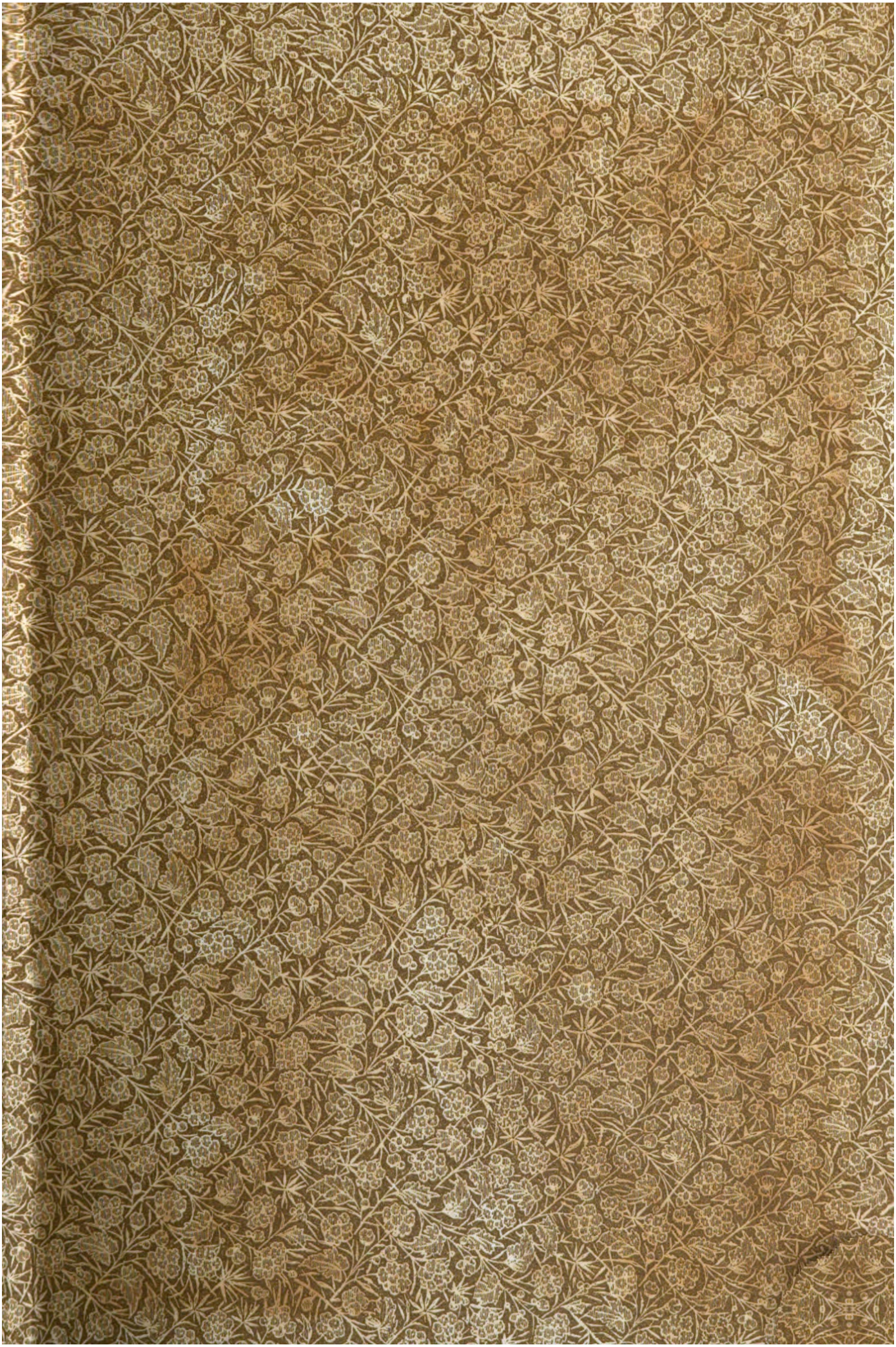

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THOMAS NELSON AND SONS,
London, Edinburgh, and New York.

THANKFUL REST.

A Tale.

By

ANNIE S. SWAN,

Author of "Aldersyde," "Carlowrie," "Shadowed Lives," &c. &c.

There is no road, though rough and steep,
  Without an end at last,
And every rock upon the way
  By patience can be passed.

There are few human hearts too hard
  For gentleness to win;
Somewhere a hidden chink appears
  Where love may enter in.

A. S. S.

London:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW.
EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1885.

Contents.

THANKFUL REST.

I.

UNWELCOME NEWS.

It was the prettiest homestead in all the township, everybody said, and it had the prettiest name. It stood a mile or so beyond Pendlepoint on the farther side of the river, from which it was separated by a broad meadow, where in the summer time the sleek kine stood udder-deep in cowslips and clover.

It was a long, low, comfortable-looking house, hidden by lovely creeping plants, and sheltered at the back by the old elm trees in the paddock, and at the front by the apple trees in the orchard. Perhaps it was because it had such a snug, cosy, restful look about it that it had been queerly christened Thankful Rest. The land adjoining the homestead was rich and fertile, and brought in every year a crop worth a goodly competence to its possessors. The family at Thankful Rest consisted of two people—Joshua Strong and his sister Hepzibah. You are to make their

acquaintance immediately, but a remark made once by old Reuben Waters, their next neighbour, may perhaps give you an idea of their characters better than any long description of mine:—

"For crankiness and nearness, and unneighbourly sourness, give me Josh Strong and his sister Hepsy. They can't be equalled, I bet, in all Connecticut."

You will be able to judge by-and-by of the correctness of Reuben's estimate. On a lovely August afternoon Miss Hepzibah Strong was ironing in the kitchen at Thankful Rest. I wish you could have seen that kitchen; your eyes would have ached with its painful cleanliness. The stone flags were as cool and clean as water and hands could make them; the stove shone like burnished silver; the dresser and the table, at which Miss Hepzibah was at work, were white as snow; and the array of tins on the wall was perfectly dazzling with brightness. The wide diamond-paned casement stood open to admit what little air happened to be abroad that sultry afternoon. How pleasant it was, to be sure, to look out upon the flower-laden garden; upon the sunny orchard, rich and golden with its precious harvest; upon the silver thread of the river winding through the green meadow beyond; and to see and feel all the loveliness with which God had clothed the world. But Miss Hepzibah had no eyes for any of the beauties I have mentioned; she was intent upon her work, and hung on the clothes-horse piece after piece of stiff, spotless linen,

which, as she could boast, could not be equalled in the township. Miss Hepzibah herself was not a pretty picture. She was a woman of thirty-five or thereabouts; with a thin, brown, hard-looking face; sharp, twinkling gray eyes; and a long, grim, resolute mouth. She wore a short skirt of dark material, a lilac calico jacket, and a huge white apron. On ordinary occasions her head was adorned by a cap of fearful workmanship and dimensions, but in the heat of her work she had thrown it off, and her scanty brown hair was fastened tightly back in a cue behind.

Just as the old eight-day clock in the lobby solemnly struck four, there was a loud knock at the back door, and the post-messenger from Pendlepoint strode into the kitchen, holding in his hand a black-edged letter.

"Bad news for ye, Miss Hepsy, I doubt," he said. "It'll be from your sister in Newhaven, I reckon."

Miss Hepzibah took the black-edged letter coolly in her hand, eyed it stolidly for a second, and then laid it on the table. "Sit down a minute, Ebenezer, an' I'll bring ye a glass of cider," she said.

And Ebenezer saw her depart to the larder nothing loath. But if he thought Miss Hepsy meant to open the letter and confide its contents to him he was mistaken, for she pushed it aside and went on with her ironing. So after being briefly rested and refreshed, he went his way, bidding her a surly good-afternoon. Still the letter lay untouched upon the

table till the last collar was hung on the horse, the irons set on the flags to cool, and the blanket folded in the dresser. Then Miss Hepsy broke the seal, and read without change of expression what ought to have been a sorrowful intimation to her, the news of the death of her younger and only sister, who had married and been left a widow in Newhaven. But before Miss Hepsy had read to the end, her expression *did* change, and she exclaimed, "Wal, if this ain't about the humbugginest fix. Hetty's boy and gal got to come here—nowhere else to go. Wonder what Josh'll say?"

Miss Hepsy sat down, and, crossing her long hands on her lap, remained deep in thought till the old clock struck again, five this time. Then she sprang to her feet, whisked the letter into the table drawer, and fetching out baking-board and flour-basin, proceeded to make dough for a supper cake. It was barely ready when her brother came in at six, and he looked slightly surprised to see no signs of the supper on the table.

"I've had a letter from Newhaven, Josh," Miss Hepsy said abruptly. "Hetty's dead; you won't be surprised to hear, I suppose. It's from her minister; and he says you've got to come up right away and see about things, an' fetch back the boy and gal with you. They've got nowhere else to go, he says, an' we're their nearest kinsfolk. I got thinkin' it over, and forgot my work, like a fool."

Joshua Strong's grim face grew grimmer, if possible, as he listened to his sister's words. He reached out his hand for the letter she had taken from the drawer, and slowly spelt it to the end.

"There ain't anything for it but grin and bear it, Hepsy," he said. "Though I don't see what business folks has marryin' an' dyin' an' leavin' their children to poor folks to keep. It'll be a mighty difference to expense havin' other two mouths to feed an' backs to clothe."

"An' what I'm to make of two fine gentry children, as Hetty's are sure to be, round all the time, I don't know," said Miss Hepsy, whisking off a griddle cake with unnecessary vigour. "I declare Hetty might have had more sense than think we could do with 'em. I'm rare upset about it, I can tell ye."

"It doesn't say what she died o'," said Joshua meditatively, twirling the letter in his brown fingers.

"Died o'?" repeated Miss Hepsy tartly. "Why, of pinin' arter that husband o' her'n. What's her fine scholar done for her now, I wonder? Left her a lone widder to die off and leave penniless children to other folks to keep. But I'll warrant they'll work for their meat at Thankful Rest. I'll have no stuck-up idle notions here."

"How am I to get to Newhaven jes' now, I'd like to know," said Joshua, "and all that corn waitin' to be stacked? It's clean beyond me."

Miss Hepsy thought a moment. "I have it. Miss

Goldthwaite was here to-day, an' she said the parson was goin' to Newhaven to-morrow to stay a day or two. We'll get him to see to things an' bring the children down. I'll go to Pendlepoint whenever I've got my supper, an' ask him. Here, ask the grace quick an' let's be hurryin'," she said; and before the few mumbled words had fallen from Joshua's lips, Miss Hepsy was well through with her first cup of tea!

At that moment, in a darkened chamber in a quiet city street, two orphan children clung to each other weeping, wondering fearfully to see so white, and cold, and still, the sweet face which had been wont to smile upon them as only a mother can.

They wept, but the days were at hand when they would realize more bitterly than now what they had lost, and how utterly they were left alone.

II.

THE PARSONAGE.

In the pleasant front parlour of the parsonage at Pendlepoint, the Rev. Frank Goldthwaite and his sister were lingering over their tea-table. He was a young man, tall and broad-shouldered, with an open kindly face, and grave thoughtful eyes, which yet at times could sparkle with merriment as bright as that which so often shone in his sister's blue orbs. A bright, winsome, lovable maiden was Carrie Goldthwaite, the very joy of her brother's heart, and the apple of every eye in the township. The brother and sister were deeply attached to each other, the fact that they were separated from their father's happy home in New York drawing them the more closely together. They had been talking of Mr. Goldthwaite's projected visit on the morrow, and he had at last succeeded in repeating faithfully all the commissions his sister wished him to execute, when the swinging of the garden gate, and a firm tread on the gravel, made Miss Goldthwaite rise and peep behind the curtain.

"It's Miss Hepsy, Frank," she said with a very broad smile; "something very important must it be which brings her here. I don't think she has been to the parsonage since the day we came."

The next moment Miss Goldthwaite's "help" ushered in Miss Hepsy Strong, attired in a shawl of brilliant hues and a marvellous bonnet. She dropped a courtesy to the parson, and sat down on the extreme edge of the chair Miss Goldthwaite offered her, declining, at the same time, her offer of a cup of tea. Evidently, Miss Hepsy was not used to company manners.

"I've made bold to come down to-night, sir," she said, fixing her keen eyes on Mr. Goldthwaite's pleasant face, "knowin' you was goin' to Newhaven to-morrow, to ask if you would do Josh and me a kindness."

"If I can, Miss Strong," returned the minister courteously, "be sure I shall be very glad to do so."

"You've heard tell, I reckon," said Miss Hepsy, "of our sister Hetty as married the schoolmaster in Newhaven?"

Mr. Goldthwaite nodded.

"Well, she's dead," continued Miss Hepsy with a business-like stolidity inexplicable to Carrie Goldthwaite's warm heart, "an' she's left two children, which Josh an' me'll hev to take, I reckon, seein' their parents is both dead now. We'd a letter to-day from the minister there—Mr. Penn he calls hisself, I think."

"Yes, I know him," put in Mr. Goldthwaite.

"He wants Josh to come up right away, which he can't possibly do an' the corn not in the barn yet. A day's worth so many dollars jes' now, an' can't be throwed away. Now, sir, will ye be so kind as to see to things at Hetty's, an' fetch the children with you when ye come back? It'll be a great favour to Josh and me."

The minister concealed what he thought, and answered courteously that he should do his best. Then Miss Hepsy rose and shook out her green skirts.

"The address is Fifteenth Street, sir, an' Hetty's name was Hurst. I reckon ye'll find it easy enough. That's all; I'll be goin' now.—No, thanks, Miss Goldthwaite, I can't sit down; it's 'most milking time, and if Keziah's left to do it herself, there's no saying what might happen.—So, good evenin', and thank ye, sir;" and before the brother and sister recovered from their amazement, Miss Hepsy had whisked out of the room, and the next minute her firm, man-like tread broke upon their ears again. Mr. Goldthwaite looked at his sister with a comical smile, which was answered by a peal of laughter from her sweet lips.

"I can't help it indeed, Frank," she said. "I am so sorry for the poor children, bereft of both parents. Their mother was a refined, gentle creature, too, I have been told; of a different mould from Miss Hepsy. The calmness, though, to ask you to do all this simply because Joshua is too hard to spare a day's labour!

Are you doing altogether right, Frank, I wonder, in taking it off his hands?"

"I could not refuse it, Carrie," returned the minister. "Like you, I am sorry for the poor little orphans. Their life will not be all sunshine, I fear, at Thankful Rest."

Miss Goldthwaite sighed, and from the open window watched in silence Miss Hepsy's brilliant figure crossing the river by the bridge a hundred yards beyond the parsonage gate.

"I think, Frank, that among all your parishioners there is not a more unhappy pair than Joshua Strong and his sister. I wish they could be made to see how differently God meant them to spend their lives. It saddens me to see their hardness and sourness."

"Perhaps these little children may do them good, dear," returned the minister gravely. "It would not be the first time God has used the influence of little children to do what no other power on earth could. We will pray it may be so."

"Yes," returned Carrie Goldthwaite; and the shade deepened on her sweet face as she added again, "Poor little things! it will be a sore change from the tender care of a mother. We must do what we can, Frank, to make their home at Thankful Rest as happy as possible. We had such a happy one ourselves, I feel an intense pity for those who have not. There is Judge Keane on horseback at the gate. He wants either you or me to go out and speak with him."

The minister rose, and both stepped out to the veranda, and down the steps to the garden. The judge had alighted, and fastening his bridle to the gate-post, came up the path to meet them. He was an old man, with white hair and beard; but his fine figure was as erect and stately as it had been a quarter of a century before. He shook hands cordially with the minister, touched Carrie Goldthwaite's brow with his lips, and then said, in a brisk, cheerful voice,—

"My wife heard you were going to Newhaven for a couple of days, and sent me down to say she would expect you, miss," (he nodded to Carrie,) "at the Red House to-morrow, to stay till he comes back. I may say yes, I suppose?"

"Yes, and thank you, Judge Keane," said Miss Goldthwaite with a little grateful smile. "Even with Abbie's company, it is very dull when Frank is away. Won't you come in?"

The judge shook his head, and turned to the gate again. "Not to-night, my dear. Good-night, and good-bye, Frank."

"Have you no commissions, judge?" asked the minister. "I shall have plenty of time at my disposal; my own business is very little."

"No, I think not," returned the judge. "But, let me see."

Miss Goldthwaite moved to the gate, and laid her hand caressingly on Beauty's glossy neck.

"I only envy you one thing, Judge Keane," she said; "and this is it. What a beauty she is!"

The judge laughed, and his eyes lingered on the slim, girlish figure in its dainty muslin garb; and on the sweet, unclouded face, which was a true index to the happy heart within.

"Beauty shall be yours by-and-by," he laughed; and a swift wave of colour swept across her face, and she hid it in the animal's glossy mane.—"Safe journey, Frank. Come to the Red House for your sister when you want her.—Steady, Beauty." He sprang to the saddle, and held out his hand to Carrie.

"I'm glad you've said yes, my dear," he whispered, with a mischievous twinkle in his gray eyes, "or a certain young man would have thought nothing of coming to take you by main force. Shall I tell him of that sweet blush? Or—"

But Miss Goldthwaite had fled, and Beauty flew off like an arrow.

III.

THE ARRIVAL.

On Friday morning, Miss Hepsy received a brief note from Mr. Goldthwaite, stating that he had attended the funeral of Mrs. Hurst, paid the little she had owed in Newhaven, and would be at Pendlepoint by the noon cars that day, when he requested Miss Hepsy to be in waiting at the depôt to meet her nephew and niece.

Now, Friday was Miss Hepsy's cleaning day. Although ordinary eyes would have been puzzled to point out what spot in that shining domain required more than the touch of a duster, the house was upturned from ceiling to basement, and received such sweeping and dusting and polishing, such scouring and scrubbing, that it was a marvel Miss Hepsy was not exhausted at the end of it. She had just turned out the parlour chairs into the lobby, and was busy with broom and dust-pan, sweeping up invisible dust, when Ebenezer brought her Mr. Goldthwaite's letter. So much did it upset her, that he had to depart without his glass of cider, for she took no more notice of

him than if he had been one of the pillars at the door. It was eleven o'clock almost; it would take her every moment to dress and be at the depôt in time; so she had to set the chairs back into the half-swept room, replace her working garb by the green dress and the plaid shawl, take her blue umbrella and trudge off, leaving the management of the dinner to Keziah. Her frame of mind as she did so augured ill for the welcome of her sister's children.

The cars were half an hour late, and Miss Hepsy strode up and down the platform in a ferment of wrath and impatience, thinking of the dinner under awkward Keziah's supervision; of the sweeping and dusting and baking all to be done in the afternoon; of the bother two strange children were sure to be; of a hundred and one things, which brought her temper up to fever heat by the time the train puffed into the depôt. From the window of a first-class compartment two faces looked out eagerly, but failed to recognize in Miss Hepsy the sister of the dear dead mother they had so lately lost. Miss Hepsy saw Mr. Goldthwaite step out first, followed by a tall, handsome-looking boy, well dressed and refined-looking, who in his turn assisted with care and tenderness a slight, delicate-looking girl, who bore such a strong resemblance to her dead mother that her aunt had no difficulty in recognizing her. She stamped forward, nodded to Mr. Goldthwaite, and held out a hand in turn to each of the children.

"I'm tired to death waitin' on these pesky cars," she said, addressing herself to Mr. Goldthwaite. "I hope they've behaved themselves, sir, an' not bothered ye.—Bless me, children, don't stare at me so; I'm your Aunt Hepzibah. You look as if you had never seen a woman afore."

"There is a trunk, Miss Hepsy," said Mr. Goldthwaite, unable to help an amused smile playing about his mouth. "You will need to send a cart for it.—They have been very good children indeed, and instead of bothering, have greatly helped to make my journey enjoyable."

"I'm glad to hear it, I'm sure," said Miss Hepsy, looking very much as if she was not glad at all. "Well, I guess we'd better be movin'.—What's your name, boy?" she said, turning to the lad with an abruptness which made him start.

"My name is Tom, aunt," he answered promptly; "this is Lucy."

"Miss Hetty might have called one of ye after her own kin.—Well, good-day, Mr. Goldthwaite; I guess Josh'll walk down to the parsonage at night an' pay up.—Come along."

"Good-bye, Tom, good-bye, Lucy, in the meantime," said the minister kindly. "We shall see each other often, I fancy."

"Oh, sir, I hope so," said Lucy, speaking for the first time. "You have been so kind to us when we had nobody else." Her dark eyes suddenly over-

flowed, and she turned away to follow her aunt, while Tom, whistling to vent some strong feeling, went on in front.

Miss Hepsy walked as if for a wager, and never opened her mouth once, until they stood upon the threshold of Thankful Rest.

"Now, look here; this is yer home," she said; then, fixing grim eyes alternately on their faces, "an' I hope ye'll behave, an' show yer gratitude for it. That's all.—I bet Keziah's burned the soup;" with which words Miss Hepsy burst into the kitchen, ready to extinguish the unfortunate "help" if everything was not up to the mark. The brother and sister lingered a moment on the threshold, feeling new and strange and sad, their welcome had been so disappointing.

"Lucy," said Tom Hurst suddenly, "do you believe that woman's mamma's sister? I don't."

"Of course she is," returned Lucy. "And you must not call her 'that woman,' Tom; she is our aunt, mamma's sister, you know, and we must behave, she says."

Tom made a wry face. "I don't feel like behaving any," he said. "But I say, Lucy, isn't this a prime place?"

Lucy's eyes beamed as they looked round the pretty, peaceful homestead, with its laden orchard, wealth of flowers, and glorious summer beauty. But she did not answer.

"We'd better go in, I suppose, though we weren't asked," said Tom. "I wonder if it's near dinner-time; I'm famished."

He pushed open the door, and, followed by Lucy, entered the wide-bricked kitchen. A sudden change had taken place in Aunt Hepsy's appearance. In the twinkling of an eye she had donned her working garb again, and was paring potatoes at the table. Fortunately, the dinner had progressed satisfactorily during her absence.

"Come in and sit down," she said, pointing to the settle at the fire. "Ye'll be hungry, I reckon; but it'll soon be dinner-time. I don't approve of eating 'tween meals.—I guess you never did any of this kind o' work, Lucy?"

"No, Aunt Hepsy," returned Lucy timidly. "I've seen Hannah do it; that was our girl."

"Humph; ye won't be long here before ye can pare potatoes as well as Hannah. You'll be willin' to learn, I hope?"

"I shall do my best, Aunt Hepsy," returned the girl meekly.

"Mamma never pared potatoes, Aunt Hepsy," said Tom boldly.

"No; I know she didn't, boy," said Miss Hepsy severely. "Your mother was as useless as a bit o' Sunday china. — I hope you won't be like her, Lucy."

"I hope she will, Aunt Hepsy," spoke up Tom

again. "Mamma was perfectly splendid, everybody said."

"You'd better go outside, boy," said Miss Hepsy wrathfully, "till you learn to speak respectfully to your aunt. I know what your mother was. She was my own sister, I hope."

Tom caught up his cap and fled, nothing loath; his aunt irritated him, and made him forget himself.

"How old are you, child?" said Miss Hepsy, turning to Lucy, after a moment's silence.

"I am fourteen past, Aunt Hepsy; Tom is twelve."

Miss Hepsy dropped her paring-knife and stared.

"Bless me, child, you don't look more'n nine, and that great boy looks years older'n you. What have ye fed on?"

Lucy smiled faintly. "I have not been very strong this summer, Aunt Hepsy; and I was so anxious about mamma being so poorly. I couldn't sleep at nights, nor eat anything hardly. I suppose that's what made me thin." Miss Hepsy sniffed.

"Have any of ye been to school?" was her next question.

"No, Aunt Hepsy. Papa taught us till he died, and then mamma kept up our lessons as well as she could. Tom is a good scholar; and, oh, such a beautiful painter!"

"Painter!" echoed Miss Hepsy. "What, fence rails and gates?"

Lucy looked very much shocked. "Oh no; he

draws landscapes and things, and went to the Art School as long as mamma could afford it. Then he practised at home. He means to be a great painter some day, like the ones he read about."

"Humph!" said Miss Hepsy contemptuously. "I guess his uncle'll find him work in painting the farm an' the gates afresh this fall. It'll save a man. Now then, there's them taters on. Come upstairs an' I'll show you your room."

Lucy rose at once, and obediently followed her aunt along the wide flagged passage and up the polished oak steps to a tiny little chamber in the attic flat. It was poorly furnished, but it was scrupulously clean; and from the window Lucy's delighted eyes caught a glimpse of the broad green meadow, the shining water of the river, and beyond, the houses of the town nestling in the shadow of the giant slopes of Pendle Peak.

"Your brother's room is on t'other side o' the landing," explained Miss Hepsy; "an' I'll 'spect you to keep 'em both as clean's a new pin. I'm mighty partickler, mind, an' can't abide untidiness. An' if yer mother's brought ye up to think yersel' a lady, the sooner ye get rid of that notion the better, 'cos ye'll have to work here; we don't keep no idle hands. Get off your hat an' cape now, an' come down as fast's ye like, an' help set the table for dinner."

Miss Hepsy then whisked out of the room, and clattered down the stairs in haste.

Lucy moved to the window recess, and stood looking upon the peace and beauty without, until her eyes were brimming with tears. Then she knelt down by the side of the bed, sobbing pitifully, "Mamma, mamma! come back, O dear mamma! we have nobody on earth but you!"

IV.

THE NEW HOME.

MEANWHILE Tom had gone on an exploring expedition. He investigated every outhouse and shed, frightened the geese and turkeys into fits by rushing through their paddock shouting at the pitch of his voice, caught the superannuated mule by the tail, and made her fly off like a four-year old, made friends with the savage watch-dog on the chain, coaxed the pigeons to fly to him, and finally went off to the fields in search of his uncle. On the road outside the farmyard gate he met a team, driven by a big uncouth-looking man, dressed in coarse trowsers, a red shirt, and a battered straw hat.

"You'll be one of the men, I guess," said Tom, stopping in front of him. "Can you tell me where my Uncle Joshua is?"

The man grinned. "Air you Hetty's boy, youngster?"

"I'm Mrs. Hurst's son," corrected Tom proudly. "Who are you?"

"If I'm not yer Uncle Josh, I reckon he ain't be

home terday," returned the man.—"Hi! up, Sally; you and me's not fit company, I guess, for a city gent."

"If you *are* Uncle Joshua, I beg your pardon I'm sure," said Tom with his usual frankness. "Won't you shake hands, Uncle Joshua?"

Uncle Joshua took the thin, delicate hand in his own brown palm, and looked at it curiously.

"Jes' as Hepsy said—Hetty's boy's more for ornament than use. Well, youngster, now you're here ye'll work for yer bread, I hope. We're poor folks here, an' can't keep idle hands. Ye'll hev to learn to mind a team like this."

"I wouldn't mind if I'd a better horse, Uncle Josh," said Tom, walking alongside of his uncle, and eying the hungry-looking steed critically. "See his ribs. Don't you feed him ever, Uncle Josh?"

The man's face flushed angrily. "Shut up, younker!" he said savagely. "Don't speak about things ye know nothing about."

Tom walked on a minute or two in silence, but in no way disconcerted.

"This is a very nice place, Uncle Josh," he said. "Mamma often told us about it, but it's prettier than I thought it would be."

"The place'll do, I reckon," admitted Uncle Josh. "But farmin' ain't what it was. It's a hard job gettin' meat an' drink out o'd now-a-days."

"Mamma told us you were rich," said Tom in surprise. "But you can't be, because—because—"

"Wal?" said Uncle Josh, with a slow, stupid smile.

"Because your horses are all thin, and you wear these clothes; and Aunt Hepsy doesn't dress like a lady. Rich people don't live so."

"You're a fool, youngster. Just your mother over again. You don't know, I suppose, that to save money folks must live cheap, an' not be all outside show. Ye'll learn better, maybe, afore ye've been long at Thankful Rest.—Hi, Sally! Whoa, lass."

The thin, wretched-looking horse stood still, thankful to be released from the heavy waggon; and Tom watched all his uncle's movements with much interest. He followed him from the yard to the stable, saw him give the five horses a scanty feed of corn and a pail of water.

"We'll go and hev a bite o' dinner now," he said; then, "Your sister'll be indoors, I guess?"

Tom nodded, and the two proceeded to the house. Lucy was downstairs by this time, awkwardly placing knives, forks, and plates on the table, under Miss Hepsy's directions. A glad smile crept to her eyes at sight of Tom; it seemed ages since he had gone out. She looked timidly at her uncle as he shook hands with her, remarking she was a pale-faced thing, and needed work and exercise to make her spry. Then the company sat down, and Tom, if Lucy did not, did ample justice to Miss Hepsy's cookery. It was an unsociable, uncomfortable meal. Aunt and uncle

ate, as they did everything else, as if for a wager, and were finished before Lucy had touched her meat and potatoes.

"Look spry, child," said her aunt, beginning to clear away almost immediately. "You'll ha' to learn to eat to some purpose. Time don't last for ever."

Lucy pushed back her unfinished plateful and rose.

"Not dainty enough for ye, is it not?" was the next remark. "Ye'll eat it by-and-by maybe."

"I'm not hungry, Aunt Hepsy," she said with quivering lips; and Tom bit his to keep back angry words surging to them.

"May I go out for a little, Aunt Hepsy?" Lucy asked.

"When you've wiped them dishes you may," replied Aunt Hepsy. "I lost two good hours goin' to that plaguy depôt for you, so the least ye can do is to help me through.—Josh, find summat for the boy to do; 'tain't no use hevin' him 'round idle lookin' for mischief."

"Come along to the barn then, What's-yer-name," said Uncle Josh, picking up his hat and sauntering to the door.—"Don't be too hard on that little 'un, Hepsy; she don't look over strong."

"Mind yer own business, will ye, Josh Strong," was Miss Hepsy's smart rejoinder. "I guess I'm able to mind mine."

Under Miss Hepsy's directions, Lucy succeeded in washing up the dishes without disaster, and was then

requested to come to the far parlour and receive a lesson in sweeping and dusting. Then baking came on, and with one thing and another Miss Hepsy managed to keep the child within doors and on her feet till past four o'clock. She was fainting with fatigue, but would not complain, and Miss Hepsy was too busy to observe the pallor on her face.

"May I sit down for a minute, please?" she said at last, after bringing a huge can of flour from the larder. "I am afraid I am going to faint, Aunt Hepsy;" and she looked like enough it, as she sank wearily on the settle, and let her white lids droop over her tired eyes.

Miss Hepsy was more than annoyed. "A delicate child above all humbugs," she muttered, as she sprinkled a few drops of spring water on the girl's face, and held her smelling-salts to her nostrils.

"Ye'd better go out an' get a mouthful of fresh air, I suppose," she said ungraciously when Lucy rose at last, with a faint touch of returning colour in her cheeks.

And Lucy gladly went upstairs for her hat, and crept out into the beautiful sunshine. The garden gate was locked, but she managed to turn the key, and went slowly, in a maze of delight, along the trim paths, past beds of roses, hollyhocks, pansies, and sweet-scented gilly-flowers. The orchard beyond looked tempting indeed, where the sunbeams glistened through the bending boughs of apple, plum, and cherry

trees, on the soft carpet of grass beneath. She managed to unfasten the gate there too, and choosing a wide-spreading apple-tree, from which she could see the meadow and the river, flung herself on the grass beneath it. There she fell asleep, and Tom found her an hour after. His fine face looked worried and discontented, and he flung himself beside her, saying gloomily,—

"How on earth I am to live here, Lucy Hurst, I don't know."

"What is it, Tom?" inquired she, forgetting her own troubles in sympathy for him.

"Oh, Uncle Josh, that's all. He hasn't any patience with me, and makes me speak up impertinently to him. And the things they say about mamma are perfectly shameful. I won't bear it now, I won't."

His sister's gentle hand touched his lips to stem the passionate words.

"You remember, Tom," she said softly, "what mamma said to us. We were to endure all such little trials, remembering that it is God who sends them. Think how grieved she would be if she could hear us grumbling so soon."

"I don't care; I can't help it," said the boy recklessly. "It isn't anything for you to be good, Lucy; you are just like mamma—a kind of saint, I think. For me it is just a long battle all day. If a fellow conquered in the end, it would not matter; but as it is—O Lucy, Lucy! why did mamma die? It was so

easy to be happy and good when we had her to love and help us. I wish I were dead too."

Poor, proud, passionate Tom! His sister could only put her gentle arm about his neck and cry too, her heart so sorely re-echoed the painful longing in his voice.

So the first day at Thankful Rest did not promise very brightly for Tom and Lucy Hurst.

V.

SUNDAY.

SATURDAY was the busiest day in the week at Thankful Rest. There was churning to be done, extra cooking for Sunday, mending and darning, and the weekly polishing of every bit of brass, and copper, and tin in the establishment. Lucy rubbed at them till her arms ached, without bringing them to the required height of brightness, and was at last sent off to pick the few remaining gooseberries for a tart. That was a piece of work much more to her liking, and she lingered so long out in the sunshine that Aunt Hepsy came at last, and scolded her long and shrilly; which took all the enjoyment away. Tom received his lessons from Uncle Josh outside; and, judging from his face when he came in at dinner-time, he had not found them particularly agreeable. Tom Hurst was a dainty youth, in fact, and shrank from soiling his fingers with the tasks allotted to him: and seeing that grim Uncle Josh had not spared him, the forenoon had been one long battle; for, try as he might, Tom could not keep a bridle on his tongue.

"I guess I'll hev a pesky deal o' trouble with that young 'un, Hepsy," his uncle said that night when the children had gone to bed. "He doesn't take to farm work; an' he's that peart I durstn't speak to him. Queer thing if we've got to keep the young upstart in idleness."

"Idleness!" quoth Miss Hepsy wrathfully. "I'd take a rope's end to him if he didn't keep a civil tongue in his head. The gal's bad enough; though she never speaks back she looks at me that proud-like wi' them great eyes o' her'n, I feel as if I'd like to shake her. There'll never be a day's peace now they've come."

"Tell ye what, though, Hepsy," said Josh. "I'm gwine to pay off Brahm, an' make Tom do his work. He ain't that much younger, an' he looks strong enough! Couldn't you do without Keziah, and that would square expenses?"

"I'll see how the child turns out in a week or so. She's a pinin' thing—doesn't eat enough to keep a mouse alive."

"It's a thankless thing, any way ye like to take it, Hepsy, hevin' other folks' youngsters round. I don't see why *we* should be bothered with 'em;" with which remark Josh went to bed.

Lucy awoke next morning, remembering it was Sunday, with a feeling of gladness that they might perhaps chance to see their friend Mr. Goldthwaite at church. The Strongs were regular as clock-work in

their half-day attendance at the meeting-house. The morning was devoted to feeding cattle, pigs, and poultry, and tidying up the house; and after dinner the premises were left in charge of Brahm and Keziah, and the master and mistress turned their footsteps towards Pendlepoint. The meeting-house was almost close to the parsonage, and was a pretty, primitive structure, with no attempt at display or decoration, and yet so pleasant and homelike inside that Lucy felt a sense of rest as her eyes wandered round it. Tom nudged her and whispered, "Nice little chapel, Lucy;" at which Miss Hepsy held up a warning finger and shook her head. Tom blushed and laughed, Aunt Hepsy looked so intensely comical. Then she became very red in the face, and opening her hymn-book, kept her eyes on its pages till Mr. Goldthwaite came in. His eyes travelled straight to the Strongs' pew, and Lucy thought she saw a kindly gleam of recognition in his eyes. Carrie was at the harmonium. She, too, looked once or twice in their direction; and both children found her face so sweet and pleasant that they could not lift their eyes off it. The chapel was full, and the singing of the hymn was so hearty and so sweet, that Lucy felt her eyes dim, she could not tell why. But it seemed to remind her of her mother.

Mr. Goldthwaite preached only half an hour; but his sermon was so beautiful and comforting, and so easily understood, that Lucy thought Sunday would

recompense her for all the troubles of the week. Tom's eyes never left Mr. Goldthwaite's earnest face, and I believe that the memory of his words remained with the boy for weeks after. He had never heard a sermon in his life he had understood and *felt* like this one. Uncle Josh snored rather noisily in the corner, and Aunt Hepsy nodded occasionally over her Bible —the minister's message did not even reach their ears.

When the service was over and they reached the church porch, they found Miss Goldthwaite standing there. She had a nod and a smile for every one, but her particular mission was with Tom and Lucy. She shook hands with the uncle and aunt, and then bent her sweet eyes on the children's faces.

"These be Hetty's children, Miss Goldthwaite," said Miss Hepsy. "Lucy and Tom."

"Yes, I know," nodded Miss Goldthwaite. "I came round to see them. I want them to take tea with me to-day, at my brother's special request."

Miss Hepsy did not look at all delighted. "They'll jes' bother ye, Miss Goldthwaite," said she; "an' besides, 'taint no use visitin' on Sundays—I don't like it."

"It's hardly visiting, Miss Hepsy," said the young lady in the same pleasant voice. "And when they are at Pendlepoint you may as well let them. We will bring them safely home. Come now, Miss Hepsy, you know nobody ever refuses me anything."

"Let them bide, Hepsy," said Uncle Josh, remembering what trouble and expense the minister had spared him, and not wishing to appear so unmindful of it. "I guess they won't come to no harm at the parson's."

So Miss Hepsy was forced to grant a reluctant consent, and Miss Carrie bore off the happy children in triumph. At the parsonage gate Mr. Goldthwaite joined them, and gave them both a hearty welcome. Even shy Lucy was at her ease immediately with Miss Carrie; for who could resist that bright, caressing manner, and those beaming, loving eyes? She carried Lucy off to her own pretty room to take off her hat, and kept her there talking and showing her the beautiful view from the window till Mr. Goldthwaite had to call to them to come to tea. What a pleasant meal it was, and how the little company enjoyed themselves. Then, when it was over, Mr. Goldthwaite took Tom to the garden, and drew him on to talk of himself, of his hopes and ambitions, and sympathized so heartily and cheerfully with him that Tom began to think it was worth while coming to Thankful Rest, if for nothing else than this pleasant hour at the parsonage. Meanwhile Carrie had opened the piano, and sang low and softly one or two hymns; and when she looked round, wondering why Lucy had moved from her side, she saw her on the sofa with her face hidden. She rose, and sitting down beside her, put her arm about her, and whispered gently,—

"My poor child, what is it?"

"Mamma, Miss Goldthwaite," sobbed Lucy. "She used always to sing to us on Sunday evenings just so, and it makes me feel dreadful to think she never will any more."

"Yes, Lucy, I understand," said Carrie; and the very sound of her voice soothed the child's troubled heart. "But you know who has promised to comfort the mourning heart if we will but ask Him? Our God is 'the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.'"

A quick smile broke through Lucy's tears. "If it were not for that, Miss Goldthwaite," she said simply, "I should have died when mamma did."

"And just think, dear," went on the sweet voice, "of the glad time coming when we shall all meet, please God, in a happier world than this. We shall not remember these sad hours then, shall we, Lucy? I know, my dear, how lonely and sad and strange you feel here now; but God can make us happy anywhere."

"Yes, Miss Carrie, I know it," returned the child simply and earnestly; "only I am so troubled sometimes about Tom. Mamma was often troubled about him too. He is so passionate and quick and proud. Oh, I don't know how he is to get on with Uncle Joshua and Aunt Hepsy!"

"We will hope for the best," said Miss Carrie cheerfully; "and by-and-by, perhaps, a way may be

opened up for him to get his heart's desire.—Would you like to see my pets, Lucy? I have chickens, and pigeons, and dogs, and kittens, and all sorts of things. Frank says the yard is a menagerie."

"Yes, I would like it very much. There are some pretty chickens and kittens at Aunt Hepsy's, but she won't let me pet them."

In the delight of examining Miss Goldthwaite's menagerie sadder thoughts flew, and the evening sped on golden wings. The time came at last for the two to bid a regretful good-bye to the parsonage and turn their faces homewards. The minister and his sister accompanied them half across the meadow, and bade them good-night, with many promises of future meetings.

Tom and Lucy walked on in silence till they reached the paddock, and then the lad said abruptly, "It will not be so hard to live here, Lucy, if we can see them sometimes. I don't believe there's another minister like Mr. Goldthwaite in the State; nor another minister's sister either."

Lucy smiled, her heart re-echoing her brother's words.

"I have not felt so happy since mamma died," she said softly. "O Tom, is it not true what she used to say—'That God gives us something to be grateful for everywhere'?"

"Yes," said Tom soberly; and the next moment Aunt Hepsy's tall figure appeared at the kitchen door,

and her shrill voice broke the pleasant Sabbath calm.

"Here, come in, you two. Air you going to stand there all night? It's 'most nine o'clock—time you were in bed. I guess you won't go visitin' on Sunday any more."

VI.

LOSING HOLD OF THE BRIDLE.

It had rained all day, and not all that day only, but the best part of the one before. Not a soft, gentle summer rain, but a fierce, wild storm, which beat the poor flowers to the earth, spoiled the fruit, and overflowed the river till half the meadow lay under water. There was plenty of work in the barn for Uncle Josh and the men, and plenty in the house for Aunt Hepsy and the girls. The scullery was full of wet clothes waiting on a dry day. That of itself, not to speak of the damage to the orchard, was sufficient to make Aunt Hepsy a very disagreeable person to live with while the storm lasted. Her tongue went from early morning till afternoon, scolding alternately at Lucy and Keziah. The latter was a stolid being, on whom her mistress's talking made no impression; but it made Lucy nervous and awkward, and her work was very badly done indeed. At three o'clock Aunt Hepsy sent her to wash her face, and gave her a long side of a sheet to hem. So Lucy was sitting on the settle, with a very grave and sorrowful-looking face, when

Tom came in at four. His uncle had no need of him just then, and had sent him to the house to be out of the way. Keziah was feeding the calves, and Aunt Hepsy upstairs dressing, if that word can be appropriately applied to the slight change her toilet underwent in the afternoon. Tom sat down at the table in the window, and leaning his arms upon it, looked out gloomily on the desolate garden, over which the chill, wet mist hung like a pall. Neither spoke for several minutes.

"How do you get on now, Lucy?" asked Tom at length. "How sober you look. Has she been worrying you?"

"I daresay I am very stupid," said Lucy low and quietly; "but when Aunt Hepsy talks so loud I don't know what I am doing."

Miss Hepsy entered at that moment, fortunately without having heard Lucy's patient speech. "Don't lean your wet, dirty arms on the table, boy," said she with a sharp glance at Tom. "If you must be in, sit on your chair like a Christian."

Tom immediately sat up like a poker.

"What's yer uncle doin'?" was her next question.

"He's oiling waggon wheels," answered Tom, "and sent me in."

Miss Hepsy took out a very ugly piece of knitting from the dresser-drawer, and sat down opposite Lucy. "It's a pity boys ain't learned to sew and knit," she

said grimly. "It would save a deal of women's time doin' it for 'em. I think I'll teach you, Tom."

"No, thank you, Aunt Hepsy."

"You're much too smart with your tongue, young 'un," said Miss Hepsy severely, and then relapsed into stolid silence. The click of her knitting needles, the ticking of the clock, and the rain beating on the panes, were the only sounds to be heard in the house. Tom drew a half-sheet of paper and a pencil from his pocket, laid it on the table, and kept his attention there for a few minutes. Lucy ventured to cast her eyes in his direction, and he held up the paper to her. A smile ran all over her face and finally ended in a laugh. Aunt Hepsy looked round suspiciously to see Tom stuffing something into his pocket.

"What were you laughing at, Lucy?" Lucy looked distressed and answered nothing.

"What's that you're stuffing into your pocket, Tom?" she said, turning her eagle eyes again on Tom.

"A bit paper, aunt, that's all."

"People don't laugh at common bits o' paper, nor go stuffin' 'em into pockets like that. Hand it over."

"I'd rather not, Aunt Hepsy," said the boy.

"I rather you would," was her dry retort. "Out with it."

"It's mine, Aunt Hepsy, and you wouldn't care to see it."

"How many more times am I to say out with it?"

she said angrily. "I'll let you feel the weight of my hand if you don't look sharp."

"It's mine, Aunt Hepsy. I won't let you see it," he said doggedly.

Miss Hepsy's face grew very red, and she flung her knitting on the rug and strode up to him. "Give me that paper."

"Well, there 'tis; I hope you like it. I wish I'd made it uglier," cried he angrily, and flung the paper on the table.

Aunt Hepsy smoothed it out very deliberately, and held it up to the light. It was a picture of herself, cleverly done, but highly exaggerated, and the word *Scold* printed beneath it. Slowly the red faded from her face and was replaced by a kind of purple hue. She lifted her hand and brought it with full force on Tom's cheek. He sprang to his feet quivering with rage, and pain, and humiliation. His fierce temper was up, and Lucy trembled for what was to follow. "Next time you make a fool o' me, boy," said Aunt Hepsy with a slow smile, "perhaps ye'll get summat ye'll like even less than that."

Then the boy's anger found vent in words. "If you weren't a woman I'd knock you down. I hate you, and I wish I'd died before I came to this horrid place. It's worse than being a beggar living with such people. You touch me again, and I'll give it you though you are a woman."

Aunt Hepsy took him by the shoulders and pushed

him before her out to the yard. "Ye'll be cool, I guess, afore I let ye in again," she said briefly, and then came back to Lucy.

She was weeping with her face hidden and her work lying on the settle beside her.

"Nice brother that of your'n," said Aunt Hepsy. "If he ain't growin' up to be hanged, my name ain't Hepsy Strong. Here, go on with your seam, an' don't be foolin' there."

Lucy silently obeyed, but Aunt Hepsy could not control her thoughts, and they went pitifully out into the rain after Tom. He stood a minute or two in a dazed way, and then hurried from the yard, through the garden and the orchard to the meadow. In one little moment the victory over temper he had won and kept for weeks was gone; and in the shame and sorrow which followed, only one person could help him, and that was Mr. Goldthwaite. There had been many quiet talks with him since the first Sunday evening, and his lessons had sunk deep into the boy's heart, and he had indeed been earnestly trying to make the best of the life and work which had no interest nor sweetness for him. As he sped through the long, wet grass, heedless of the rain pelting on his uncovered head, he felt more wretched than he had ever done in his life before. He had to wade ankle-deep to the bridge, but fortunately did not encounter a living soul all the way to the parsonage. Miss Goldthwaite was sewing in the parlour window, and looked

up in amazement to see a drenched, bareheaded boy coming up the garden path.

"Why, Tom, it can't be you, is it?" she exclaimed when she opened the door. "What is it? Nobody ill at Thankful Rest, I hope."

"No," said Tom. "It's only me; I want to see Mr. Goldthwaite."

"He has just gone out, but will not be many minutes," said Miss Goldthwaite, more amazed than ever. "Come in and get dried, and take tea with me; I was just thinking to have it alone."

Looking at Miss Goldthwaite in her dainty gray dress and spotless lace collar and blue ribbons, Tom began to realize that he had done a foolish thing coming to the parsonage to bother her with his soaking garments. He would have run off, but Miss Carrie prevented him by pulling him into the lobby and closing the door. Then she made him come to the kitchen and remove his boots and jacket. "I have not a coat to fit, so you'll need to sit in a shawl," laughed she; and the sound was so infectious that, miserable though he was, Tom laughed too. Miss Carrie knew perfectly there was a reason for his coming; and that it would come out by-and-by without asking. So it did. They had finished tea, and Tom was sitting on a stool at the fire just opposite Miss Goldthwaite. There had been silence for a little while.

"I had a frightful row with Aunt Hepsy this afternoon, Miss Goldthwaite."

"I am very sorry to hear it," answered she very gravely. "What was it about?"

Then the whole story came out; and then Miss Carrie folded up her work, and bent her sweet eyes on the boy's downcast, sorrowful face. "I am not going to lecture you, Tom," she said soberly. "But I am sorry my brave soldier should have been such a coward to-day."

Tom flung up his head a little proudly. "I am not a coward, Miss Goldthwaite."

"Yes, Tom; you remember how Jesus stood all the buffeting and cruelty of his persecutors, when he could so easily have smitten them all to death if he had willed. Compare your petty trials with his, and think how weak you have been."

Tom was silent. "When my temper is up, Miss Goldthwaite," he said at length, "I don't care for anything or anybody, except to get it out somehow. I was keeping so straight, too; I hadn't once answered back to Uncle Josh or Aunt Hepsy for weeks. It's no use trying to be good."

"No use? Why, Tom, if everybody gave up at the first stumble, what would become of the world, do you think? Our life, you know, is nothing but falling and rising again, and will be till we reach the land where all these trials are over. Keep up a brave heart. Begin again, and keep a double watch over self."

"I feel as if it would be easy enough to do it when

I'm talking to you or Mr. Goldthwaite, but at home it is different. I shall never be able to get on with them though I live a hundred years. And O Miss Goldthwaite, you don't know how I want to go on drawing and painting. I feel as if I could die sometimes because I can't."

"When the time comes, dear; and it will come sooner, perhaps, than you think," said Miss Carrie hopefully. "You will prize it all the more because of this sharp discipline. Do your duty like a man, and believe me, God will reward you for it one day."

"I will try, Miss Goldthwaite," said Tom with a new great earnestness of face and voice.

"Now," said Miss Carrie then, with a quick, bright smile, "I'm going to send you home. I don't mean to tell my brother anything about your visit. Our talk is to be a secret. He would be so grieved that you have come to grief again through that tongue of yours. And I hope it will be a long time before its master loses hold of the bridle again." She went with him to the kitchen and helped him to dress, and then opened the door for him. "Now, Tom, you are to go home and tell your aunt you are sorry for what happened this afternoon; because you should not have spoken as you did. And remember, Tom, that a soldier's first duty is obedience." And without giving him a chance to demur, she nodded good-bye and ran into the house.

It was raining heavily still, but that Tom did not

mind; he was wondering how to frame his apology to his aunt, and how she would receive it.

It was dark when he reached Thankful Rest, and the kitchen door was barred. He knocked twice, and was answered at last by Aunt Hepsy, who looked visibly relieved. Feeling that if he waited till he was in the light his courage would flee, he said hurriedly,—

"I've been to the parsonage, Aunt Hepsy, and I want to tell you I'm sorry I drew the picture and spoke to you as I did. If you'll forgive me this time I won't be so rude again."

Aunt Hepsy looked slightly amazed. "Dear me, boy, I am thankful to see ye home again; ye've gev Lucy a fever almost. See an' don't do it again, that's all." And that was all Tom ever heard about the afternoon's explosion.

VII.

THE RED HOUSE.

JUDGE KEANE'S place was a mile out of Pendlepoint. It was in the opposite direction from Thankful Rest, and stood within its own extensive grounds, at the base of the Peak. The house was built a little way up the slope, and commanded a magnificent view of the great plain and the river, whose silver thread was visible long after all other objects receded from view. You have made the acquaintance of the judge already; let us accompany Mr. Goldthwaite and his sister to the Red House on a mild October evening, and make friends with the rest of the family. When the minister and his sister were ushered into Mrs. Keane's drawing-room, its only occupants were that lady and her two daughters, Alice and Minnie. The former was a tall, stately young lady, like her father, stiff and reserved to strangers, but much liked by her friends, among whom Carrie Goldthwaite was the chief. Minnie Keane was a bright-eyed, curly-haired maiden of fifteen, wild as an antelope, and as full of fun and frolic as any one of her pet kittens. Their

mother was an invalid, seldom able to leave her couch; —not a fretful invalid, you must understand, but a sweet, gentle, unselfish woman, who bore her pain and weakness without a murmur, so that those she loved might be spared pain on her account. Mr. Goldthwaite often said that Mrs. Keane's life was the best sermon he had ever come across; and I think he was right. The brother and sister received a warm welcome. Miss Keane and Carrie withdrew to the wide window for a private chat, while Mr. Goldthwaite remained by Mrs. Keane's sofa. He was an especial favourite of hers. Minnie disappeared, and ere long Judge Keane and his second son, George, appeared in the drawing-room. It is not necessary for me to describe Mr. George Keane, except to say that he was his father's right hand, and the greatest comfort of his mother's life; and that is saying a great deal, isn't it? When he came in Alice found something to do at her mother's couch, and her seat in the window did not long remain unoccupied. There was quite a hum of conversation in the room, and then when candles were brought in, and the curtains drawn, Miss Keane said with a smile,—

"We have not had our pilgrimage up the Peak this fall. If we don't have it soon it will be too late."

"Frank and I were talking of it yesterday," said Carrie Goldthwaite. "The days are so pleasant, why not have it this week or beginning of next?"

"Well," said Judge Keane, "settle the day when

you are at it; I was beginning to think our annual excursion was to be forgotten this fall."

"This is Thursday, and to-morrow is my class day at Pendlepoint," said Miss Keane. "Saturday won't suit you, Mr. Goldthwaite?"

"Monday would be better," admitted Frank.

"Then Monday be it," said the judge. "We will start at twelve, and luncheon at the summit at one."

"And, O papa, mayn't the big waggon go?" pleaded Minnie. "I want to take Mopsy and Ted and Silver Tail."

"And all the live stock on the place, little one," laughed her father. "What do you say, Mr. Goldthwaite? Minnie thinks the kittens would enjoy the view immensely."

"The suggestion about the big waggon is opportune," said Mr. George Keane. "Last year some of the ladies would not have objected to a seat in it before we reached the top."

"Some of the gentlemen, too," said Alice Keane with a sly smile. "I propose the big waggon for faint-hearted climbers, and the little one for rugs and provisions."

"I am going to make a petition, Judge Keane," said Carrie Goldthwaite. "I have two little friends who would enjoy the excursion as much as any of us, and they have not much enjoyment in their lives. I mean those orphan children at Thankful Rest. Will you let them come?"

"With all my heart; no need to ask, my dear," said the judge heartily; "and we will do our best to make them enjoy themselves."

"Thank you, Judge Keane," said Carrie, and her face wore the expression the old man liked particularly to see there.

"I see them in church regularly," said Miss Keane. "The girl is a remarkably pretty child. Robert was quite charmed with her face when he was here a fortnight ago. I believe he was thinking what a study she was for a picture instead of listening to you, Mr. Goldthwaite."

"I scarcely think it, Miss Keane," answered Frank smiling. "At least he took me to task severely afterwards about a remark in my sermon which he did not approve."

"Orphans, did you say, Carrie?" asked Mrs. Keane gently. "Was their mother Deacon Strong's youngest daughter Hetty?"

"The same, Mrs. Keane," answered Carrie. "And she must have been very different from her brother and sister, for the children have been evidently trained by a refined and cultured mind. Lucy is a perfect lady, child though she is."

"I feel very much interested," said Mrs. Keane. "I knew their mother slightly, and liked her much. Could you not bring the children to see me some day?"

"I shall try, Mrs. Keane; but it is not an easy task begging a favour from Miss Hepsy, and she seems

determined to keep them at home. I have to take Lucy by main force when I want her at the parsonage."

"I hope they'll come, anyway," put in Minnie, "because I never have anybody to speak to. One grows tired, even of the Peak, when there's nobody but grown-up people to go on to. That's why I want Mopsy and Ted and Silver Tail. It wouldn't be so lonesome. But they can stay at home if Lucy comes."

"Poor Minnie," said her father, laughing with the rest at the child's aggrieved tone. "We must do all we can to persuade them, then, to spare you the necessity of frightening the cats out of their wits."

"I'll go up to Thankful Rest to-morrow and extract permission from Miss Hepsy," said Carrie, "though I am not very hopeful of the result.—Come, Frank, we must be off; it is nearly eight."

"You will let us know on Sunday, then, if they can come," said Miss Keane; and with cordial good-nights the friends parted.

Early next afternoon Miss Goldthwaite walked up to Thankful Rest on her mission to Miss Hepsy. That lady was making preserves, for which Lucy had been kept since early morning paring and coring apples and stoning plums. As Miss Goldthwaite passed the kitchen window, she caught a glimpse of a slight figure almost lost in a huge apron, and a very white, weary-looking face bent over the basket of fruit. Aunt Hepsy was grimly stirring a panful of

plums over the stove, and did not look particularly overjoyed to see Miss Goldthwaite; but Lucy did.

"Always busy, Miss Hepsy," said Carrie briskly, not choosing to mind the snappy greeting she received. "I declare I always feel a lazy, good-for-nothing creature when I come to Thankful Rest.—Here, Lucy child, sit down and let me do your work while I am here; you look tired."

The quiet eyes raised themselves in loving gratitude to the sweet face, and she was not slow to avail herself of the chance of a moment's rest. Miss Hepsy sniffed, but made no audible demur.

"What splendid fruit, Miss Hepsy!" said the visitor after a moment's silence; "I have seen none like it in Pendlepoint this fall."

"It's well enough," said Miss Hepsy, a little mollified. "Your folks all well, Miss Goldthwaite?"

"Thank you, yes; and papa and mamma are coming from New York next week, if the weather keeps fine. I can hardly sleep or eat for joy, Miss Hepsy; and Frank is almost as bad."

"You be like children about your father and mother yet," said Miss Hepsy brusquely. "I reckon you'd better not marry in Pendlepoint, or there'll be an end to your goin' home any more."

Carrie laughed.

"I don't see why it should come to an end then, Miss Hepsy," she said. "Even married people get a holiday sometimes."

"I guess they don't see many o' them," replied Miss Hepsy. "I think you're a fool to marry, anyway, Miss Goldthwaite, when the parson thinks such a heap of you."

Carrie laughed again, more amused than ever.

"Talking of holidays, Miss Hepsy," she said, "I want you to give this patient little maiden one, and Tom too."

"Not if I know it," answered Miss Hepsy promptly.

"Oh yes you will," said Miss Goldthwaite serenely. "We are to have a picnic up the Peak on Monday, in Judge Keane's waggon. I've set my heart on Lucy and Tom, and half a day is nothing."

"It makes 'em idle and restless for days, Miss Goldthwaite," said Aunt Hepsy, with grim decision, "an' I ain't a-goin' to have it, so let it a be."

Miss Goldthwaite held her peace a moment, and then went straight up to Aunt Hepsy, and, to Lucy's amazement, laid her two hands on her shoulders and looked into her face with laughing eyes. "Do you know you are the most disagreeable woman in the township, Miss Hepsy, and that there isn't another would be so cross with me as you are? I'll come up and pare apples for two whole days if you'll let me have Lucy and Tom. Look me in the face and refuse me if you dare."

Miss Hepsy actually smiled. "I never saw sech a cretur," she said. "Ye'd move the very Peak wi' them eyes o' your'n. I'm real sorry for Mr. George

Keane, anyway. Well, have yer own way, and go off home. You're only hinderin' my work, and I hain't a minute to lose."

"Thank you, Miss Hepsy," said Carrie, with a very eloquent glance of her irresistible eyes.—"Now, Lucy," said she then, turning to the child, "come down to the parsonage on Monday morning at eleven, you and Tom, and we will go up to the Red House together. Good-bye, dear; the fresh air up the Peak will brighten that white face, I hope. Don't forget, now."

"Forget! O Miss Carrie," was all she said, but her eyes were very dim as she returned her kiss. Lucy had been feeling peculiarly sad and down-hearted, and Miss Goldthwaite had come and brought with her the sunshine which seemed to follow her everywhere.

Then Carrie bade Miss Hepsy good-bye, and went away. Looking about her as she went through the garden, she espied Tom painting waggon wheels in the yard. A few steps took her to the boy's side, and he looked up with a glad smile of surprise.

"Busy too, Tom," she said pleasantly. "I don't think this place should be called Thankful Rest. Nobody seems to take a rest here. How do you like this work?"

"Don't ask me, Miss Goldthwaite," said the lad. "You remember you told me to make the best of it; but it isn't easy."

"It will grow easy by-and-by," she said, and laid her hand a moment on his arm, and her beautiful

eyes grew grave and earnest. "Does my soldier find his Captain able to help even in dark hours?"

"Yes, Miss Goldthwaite." That was all, but it was said so simply and earnestly that Carrie's heart grew glad.

"We are to have a picnic up the Peak on Monday in Judge Keane's waggon," said she after a moment. "Your aunt has promised to let you and Lucy come. Will you like it?"

"Like it! Up the Peak! O Miss Goldthwaite," said the boy, looking away to the towering hill beyond, "I have wished I could go every day since I came. How good you are to Lucy and me!"

"She will tell you when to be ready. In the meantime I must go," said Miss Goldthwaite with her pleasant smile. "Good-bye, and success to the waggon-painting."

VIII.

UP THE PEAK.

Tom and Lucy Hurst peered anxiously out of their chamber windows at six o'clock on Monday morning to see a clear, calm, beautiful sky, with a faint roseate flush in the east, where, by-and-by, the sun would come up brilliantly. Aunt Hepsy was as cross as two sticks, and Uncle Josh morose and taciturn ; but even these things failed to damp their spirits, and at a quarter to eleven they set off, a very happy pair, across the meadow to the parsonage. Both looked well. Lucy's mourning, though simple and inexpensive, was wonderfully becoming; and some fine delicate lace, which had been her mother's, relieved the sombre black dress nicely. Miss Goldthwaite was very proud of her friends, and told them so when she greeted them. They were just in time, and the four set off, Tom in front with Miss Goldthwaite, and Lucy walking with the minister. She was shy and quiet, but somehow nobody could be long afraid of Mr. Goldthwaite. He possessed his sister's charm of manner,

and drew Lucy on to talk in spite of herself. At the Red House there was a great bustle. The big waggon was at the front door, and the little one at the back, into which the cook was stowing all sorts of eatables. Minnie Keane, in a state of great excitement, was flying about with a tiny kitten in each arm, the mother following at her heels mewing piteously for her children to be left in safety. Minnie dropped the kittens when she saw the party from the parsonage coming round the avenue, and ran to meet them. Miss Goldthwaite made the introductions, and then she and Mr. Goldthwaite passed into the house, leaving the children beside the waggon. There was but a moment's shyness, and then the irrepressible Minnie's tongue began to go freely.

"You look nice, Lucy," she said frankly. "I guess we'll have a good time to-day. There always is a good time when papa takes us anywhere."

"This is a nice horse," said Tom, feeling he must say something. "What's his name?"

"Oh, that's Billy. He's very old, and rather cross. You should see papa's Beauty. Come to the stable and I'll show you her."

She drew Lucy's arm within her own and darted off, Tom following. Minnie was quite at home in the stable, and familiar with every animal in it. Beauty pricked up her ears and whinnied at the touch of Minnie's caressing fingers.

"You ask Miss Goldthwaite about Beauty," she

said. "She thinks there isn't another horse like her in the world.—Don't you love horses, Lucy?"

"Yes; I love all animals," replied Lucy. "I saw some nice little kittens round there."

"Yes; I've three. We'd better go round now, I think; perhaps they'll want to be going.—I'm glad it's a fine day; aren't you, Tom?"

"I think I am. I looked out at six this morning to see if it was. It'll be glorious up the Peak."

As the three came round to the front door again, Miss Keane appeared on the threshold. She looked very tall and stately and awe-inspiring with her trailing dress and eye-glass. Yet her smile as she shook hands with the children was so pleasant that Lucy forgot to be afraid of her.

"My mother would like to see you, Tom and Lucy," she said. "Will you come upstairs? she is not able to leave the room, you know.—Minnie, I wish you would look round for papa. It is just twelve; we should be going."

Minnie scampered off, and Tom and Lucy followed Miss Keane up the broad staircase into the drawing-room, the beauty of which held them spellbound for a few minutes. On a couch near the fire lay a lady, with gray hair and a pale, thin, worn face, which wore such an expression of peace and happiness that Lucy felt her heart go out to her at once. Mr. and Miss Goldthwaite and George Keane were there also. Mrs. Keane held out both her hands, and the two

came shyly forward—Tom blushing a little to be among so many strangers.

"I am glad to see you, my dears," she said very heartily.—"Kiss me, Lucy. I knew your mother, dear. You remind me of her very much."

The ready tears sprang to Lucy's eyes. Kindness always moved her thus, and she took a stool close to the couch, while Tom's eyes wandered round the room, lingering hungrily on the exquisite water-colours on the walls. It was long since he had had such an opportunity. At Thankful Rest the art collection consisted of a few family portraits, ludicrous alike in execution and in colouring. A smile and a glance passed from Mr. Goldthwaite to his sister as they noted how speedily the boy became absorbed.

"These are my brother Robert's drawings," said Miss Keane, touching his arm and beckoning him to come nearer. "You are fond of painting, I think?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered Tom, his face flushing a little. "And these are so beautiful, I could not help looking at them."

"If you will come up to the Red House some other day, I shall show you all my brother's sketch-books and odd drawings," said Miss Keane. "I am very fond of the work myself, and might perhaps be able to help you a little, you know, and I think you would make a clever pupil; what do you say?"

The eyes behind the glasses beamed so kindly at him that Tom forgot that his first impression of her

had been unpleasant, and a warm flush of gratitude answered her better than his words. They were few and sad enough.

"There is nothing I should like so much in the world, ma'am, and I thank you very much; but I can't come—my uncle and aunt would not let me."

"I must see about that," said Miss Keane promptly; and at that moment Judge Keane's stately figure appeared in the doorway.

"Are you going to sit there all day, you young folk?" he called out hastily.—"Oh, here you are, little ones;—glad to see you, my lad;" and he gave Tom's hand a warm grasp, and touched Lucy's white face with his forefinger.

"Want some roses there, doesn't she, wife?" he said. "There'll be a glorious air up the Peak to-day; it will bring them there, if anything will."

"I wish you could have come, dear Mrs. Keane," whispered Carrie as she bent a moment over the couch before they passed out; "you used to be the very sunshine of us all."

"I think of you, dear, and am happy in my own way at home," she replied with her sweet smile; "take care of yourself and of this pale little maiden.—Lucy dear, good-bye. Come and see me again."

"Indeed I will, if I can, ma'am," replied Lucy earnestly; and then they all went away. Minnie was already in the big waggon waiting impatiently for the start.

"You will go inside too, little one, I suppose," said the judge to Lucy; and with one swing of his strong arms he placed her beside Minnie. "The rest of us will walk a piece, I fancy. As this is supposed to be a climbing expedition, we must make some show, at least, to begin with."

There was a general laugh, and Tom and Lucy thought there could not be so pleasant an old gentleman as Judge Keane anywhere.

Miss Keane elected Tom for her cavalier, and made him feel very important indeed, by treating him as if he were quite a man; and they got into a very interesting talk about the great painters and their work. She was astonished to find what a thorough knowledge the boy had of the subject, and how well he could talk on what interested him most.

"Robert must see this young artist," was her mental comment. The judge followed behind with Mr. Goldthwaite; while Mr. George Keane and Miss Goldthwaite brought up the rear, walking very slowly, and talking very earnestly. Nobody took any notice of them whatever, evidently being of opinion that they were quite capable of amusing each other. The waggon-path, winding gradually up the mountain side, was rough and stony, and even Billy's cautious feet stumbled sometimes; and the two girls were jolted so that they laughed till they cried.

"I think we'd better get out; don't you, Lucy?" cried Minnie at last, "else there'll be none of us left

to see the top of the Peak. I never was so sore in my life. Isn't it fun though?"

"Yes; and the sun is so bright, and everybody so kind, and everything so pleasant, I don't know what to do," said Lucy with softening eyes.

Minnie looked at her curiously.

"I say, don't you have any good times at your home, Lucy?" she asked soberly.

"Sometimes—not very often," answered Lucy reluctantly.

"I don't think your aunt is a very nice woman anyway," said Minnie with her usual candour. "She looked at me so one day in church, 'cause I laughed right out at a funny little dog with a stumpy tail running in and right up to Mr. Goldthwaite. Wouldn't you have laughed too?"

"I don't know," said Lucy; "if it was very funny, I daresay I would."

"How pretty you are," said Minnie after a while; "my sister Alice says so—I guess she knows." Lucy blushed, not being accustomed to such plain speaking. "I think Miss Goldthwaite perfectly elegant," went on the young critic. "She is going to marry my brother George, do you know?"

"Is she?" asked Lucy, much interested.

"Yes; and papa and mamma are crazed about her. Everybody is. Isn't she just splendid?"

"There is nobody like her," answered Lucy. Minnie could never know what she had been and was to her.

"Lovers are stupid, don't you think?" asked Minnie again. "They always go away by themselves, and things; you just watch George and Carrie to-day. It is a great trial to me."

"What is?" asked Mr. George Keane, pausing at the side of the waggon. Minnie laughed outright, so did Lucy.

"It's a secret," replied she in a very dignified way. —"O Miss Goldthwaite, are you coming into the waggon?"

"Yes;—will you make room for me, Lucy?"

Lucy moved further up the cushion, and Mr. George Keane assisted Miss Goldthwaite to her place.

"O Carrie, succumbed already!" cried Miss Keane.

"Won't you come in too?" replied Carrie.

"No, thank you; I mean to climb to the top. Somebody must sustain the credit of our sex."

"I know it's safe in your hands, Alice," said Carrie serenely.—"Lucy dear, you look happy. Do you enjoy it?"

The sparkle in Lucy's eyes answered her better than any words.

The road was becoming rougher and steeper, and Billy's progress slower and slower, and the summit of the Peak drawing nearer and nearer. Miss Keane and Tom had got ahead of the waggon, and were the first to reach the top. At last Billy, with a great pull, brought the waggon to the level ground, and then stood still. They all alighted, and, forming a

little circle, stood drinking in the beauty of the scene. Wondering how Tom would be affected, Miss Keane turned to speak to him, but he had gone; and looking round, she saw him standing by a huge boulder, but his face was turned away, and understanding why he felt it best to be alone for a few minutes, she did not venture to disturb him. It was a panorama of wonderful beauty. They seemed to stand up among the clouds, the air was so pure and cool and bracing. Far beneath, the houses of the town looked like a tiny ant-nest, enveloped in a filmy haze. The great plain stretched around for miles and miles, dotted here and there by many a pretty homestead, and intersected by the winding river, glinting and glistening in the sun as it hurried on and on to join the far-off sea. Far across the plain the smoke of distant cities obscured the horizon, but none of the noise or bustle was borne on the breeze to this lonely mountain peak. A great silence fell upon the little company, and some bright eyes grew dim as they looked upon the beauty of the world the great Creator had made.

"Just say a few words of prayer, Frank," said the judge at length, in a soft voice; "it will do us all good, I think." Mr. Goldthwaite took off his hat reverently.

"Our Father, we thank thee for this day. We thank thee for sparing us all to come here again; and for the sunshine, and the beauty, and the gladness of the earth. Help us more and more to feel the power and

majesty of thy hand, and the great love of thy infinite heart. Be with every one of us to-day, blessing us as only thou canst bless, and help us to live to thy glory; for Jesus' sake. Amen."

"Amen," repeated Judge Keane. "Now we can begin the day with a better heart than ever."

IX.

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED.

It was great fun unpacking the baskets, and Tom made himself very useful to the ladies; so much so, that Miss Goldthwaite felt constrained to whisper one word of praise in his ear, which sent a glow to his heart. Surely never was meal so enjoyed as that lunch on the summit of Pendle Peak; and they lingered so long over it, that Judge Keane passed a great many jokes on the gigantic appetites, and professed great concern about the small quantity of provisions left for tea. When plates and forks and knives were stowed in the waggon again, the party broke up in twos and threes, and went off exploring. Lucy was tired, and said she would remain beside the goods and chattels, whereupon the judge declared he would keep her company. Mr. George and Miss Goldthwaite went off together to search for ferns, they said; while Mr. Goldthwaite, Miss Keane, Minnie, and Tom went to the ravine on the other side of the Peak to find some rare specimens of wild flowers Miss Keane was anxious to secure for her collection. The

judge was to whistle at four o'clock, if they had not then returned; and promised to have tea ready, which was considered a great joke. Lucy sat on the smooth green turf, leaning against a boulder, feasting her eyes on the beauty, of which she thought her eyes could never tire. The judge lay on the grass with half-closed eyes, looking at the girl's sweet face, wondering why it looked older and sadder and more womanly than it ought. It was a good while before either spoke.

"Would you mind telling me, Judge Keane, please," said Lucy timidly, "where Newhaven lies from here, and how far it is?"

The judge raised himself on his elbow, put on his gold eye-glass, and looked along the plain. "There, straight as the crow flies, little one," he said, pointing west. "It is about thirty miles in a direct line from where we sit; by rail about fifty, I think."

"It is a long way," she said, and a little sigh followed, as if she wished it nearer.

"You lived in Newhaven, I think, didn't you?" asked the judge.

"Yes, sir, till mamma died. It is not a nice place, but I love it dearly."

Ay, for a quiet grave there held the loved father and mother who had once made for her a happy home.

The judge did not speak, he did not know what to say just then, and Lucy did not seem to expect an answer. He shut his eyes again, and there was a

long silence. Thinking he slept, Lucy rose, and, gently laying a rug over him, slipped away. He opened his eyes directly and watched her. She only moved a few yards from him, and knelt down with her face to the west. He heard a few faltering words, followed by a sob—"O dear papa and mamma, I wonder if you can see Tom and me to-day, and know how happy we are. God bless the dear friends who have made us so, for Christ's sake. Amen."

The judge's lips twitched beneath his mustache, and when Lucy rose again, he drew the rug up over his face, not wishing her to see that he had heard that little prayer. But he never forgot it. Two hours did not take long to slip away, and then the judge sat up and looked at Lucy with a comical smile.

"It is ten minutes to four, little one, and there isn't a sign of the wanderers. Suppose you and I make tea: do you think we could manage it between us?"

"Oh yes, sir; I know how to build a fire, and make tea too, and there are sticks in the waggon. May I try?"

"Of course, and I'll help to the best of my limited ability."

Lucy went to the waggon and got out sticks and the kettle, while the judge made an amateur stove between four stones. Lucy then laid the fire, and in a minute there was quite a cheerful little blaze. Water was the next thing, and the judge remembered

there used to be a tiny spring a few yards down the slope, which was found without any difficulty; and he brought back the kettle filled, and placed it on the fire. He had so many odd remarks to make about his new occupation, that Lucy was kept laughing pretty nearly all the time. It was getting on for five o'clock before four heads appeared at the edge of the slope. Mr. Goldthwaite, Miss Keane, Minnie, and Tom arrived laden with flowers and ferns, and reported themselves exhausted, and thankful to see that tea was ready. George and Carrie had not been seen since they departed at two o'clock."

"You made tea all by yourself, Lucy," said Miss Keane, laying her kind hand on Lucy's sunny head. "Clever little maiden, how are we to thank you?"

"Judge Keane helped me, Miss Alice," replied Lucy blushing and smiling.

"Helped! I should think I did," said the judge tragically: "she sat on the waggon like a queen, and commanded me like a slave. She looks meek and mild enough, but don't trust her."

"Papa, how much nonsense do you talk in a day?" she said. "I wish the other two would turn up; I'm famished."

"Are we to wait on them, papa?" inquired Minnie piteously. "I guess they don't want any tea: lovers never want anything to eat. Mayn't we have it now?"

"Yes," said Miss Keane.—"Lucy dear, may I trouble

you for the teapot.—Papa, hand the sugar, and make yourself useful."

"What a real nice boy your brother Tom is," said Minnie Keane, dropping down by Lucy's side. "We had a splendid time down there, while Alice and Mr. Goldthwaite talked out of books. Aren't you very fond of him?"

"Of Tom? Of course I am," answered Lucy; "you know I have nobody but him, and he has nobody but me."

"Lucy, your tea is delightful," said Mr. Goldthwaite from the other side of the table-cloth. "I don't know when I enjoyed anything so well."

"Hunger is good sauce," said the judge;—"here are the truants." Mr. George Keane and Miss Goldthwaite appeared now, apparently very much astonished to find themselves behind time. The judge made room for Carrie beside himself, and after looking blankly at her for a few minutes, said solemnly, "I thought I heard you say you wanted ferns; but I must have been mistaken, or possibly they haven't come up in the glen this year.—Some tea here, Alice.—Miss Goldthwaite, may I help you to a piece of cake?" The truants joined in the laugh against themselves, and the rest of the meal was passed in a perfect babel of talking.

"What shall we do now, papa?" said Alice when they had finished. "We won't be going home for a little while."

The judge looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes past five: we shall start at six. Well, I propose that each member of the company composes, within the space of ten minutes, four lines of verse descriptive of the scenery. I have brought pencils and paper; and the best writer shall have my gold pencil-case to him or her self."

There was a general exclamation, and each one declared it impossible to perform such a feat.

"Try," said the judge briefly; and he passed round the pencils and the sheets of paper. Then he laid his watch on the cloth, and gave the signal. You would have laughed at the utter stillness then, and at the perplexity on each face. Slowly the hands moved round, till the ten minutes were up, and the judge cried halt.

"You read then, judge," said Mr. Goldthwaite; "begin with your own."

"Well, here I am," said the judge with a very comical smile, and he read slowly and distinctly:—

> "It seems to me that if you go
> Enjoyment for to seek,
> You'll find out all you want and more
> Up here on Pendle Peak."

A shout of laughter greeted this effusion, and the judge pretended to be highly offended.

"I object to the 'for' in the second line," said Mr. Goldthwaite.

"Do you think I don't know it has no business

there?" said the judge. "But I couldn't get it to rhyme, so I was obliged to put in something. It is not bad for an old fellow who never made two lines rhyme before in his life. Come then, Frank, pass up yours."

"To read a page from Nature's book,
In this deep solitude,
Uplifts the heart in purer aims,
And leads us nearer God."

"True, Frank," said the judge solemnly. "You have beaten me hollow anyway.—Now, Carrie."

"Mine is very poor indeed, Judge Keane," said Carrie, as she passed up her slip. "Like yours it is my first attempt."

"The beauty of the hills,
So calm, so free, so bright,
Can dim my eyes with tears,
And fill me with delight."

"Very good" was the verdict; and then Miss Keane reluctantly gave up her paper.

"How still it is! No rude discord
Falls on the ear;
We feel all earthly thoughts and aims
Must vanish here."

That also was pronounced "very good," and Judge Keane feared he should have some difficulty in adjudicating the prize. Mr. George Keane's was the next.

"I never wrote a poem, but since
You will not be refused,
I do declare I don't know how,
And beg to be excused."

"You have no chance anyway, George," said his father, laughing with the rest. "It has not the remotest reference to the subject in hand.—Well, Lucy."

"Mine last, please," pleaded Lucy.

So the judge took the paper from Minnie's hand and read,—

"Papa, you know I can't make verse,
And it was very bad
Of you to make us play at this,—
I tell you I'm real mad."

There was another shout at Minnie's performance, and then Lucy timidly slipped her paper into the judge's hand, and drew back behind Minnie. The judge read very slowly this time, and every beautiful word was distinctly heard.

"The calm, still brightness on the hills,
The beauty on the plain,
Fill all my heart with strange sweet joy,
That is akin to pain.

"We stand upon a stepping-stone
Up to the Better Land;
I seem to see the glory there,
And feel my Father's hand.

"And hovering near me seem to be
The loved ones gone before;
One day we'll mount God's stepping-stones,
And weep earth's tears no more."

There was a moment's surprised silence. All eyes were turned to Lucy, who shrank further back with a very distressed face.

"The prize is yours, Lucy," said Judge Keane at

length.—"Who would have thought this shy little maiden was the poet of the company?"

There were many other remarks made, which seemed to distress Lucy so much that they held their peace at length, and the judge remembered Tom's contribution had not been called for.

"You thought you were to escape, young man," said he, as he received the paper from Tom's reluctant hand. "Perhaps the last may be best yet, who knows? Well, I never—ha! ha!"

He held up the paper, and lo, a sketch of the circle of anxious faces, with paper and pencil before them, and every expression true to the life. It was wonderfully well done, and created much amusement as it was handed round the company.

"The pencil-case is Lucy's," said the judge. "But I think you deserve a special prize, my lad. Will you let me keep this? Robert must see it."

"Yes, sir, of course," answered Tom. "When I felt a pencil in my hand I had to draw. I always feel so."

"True artist; eh, Carrie?" whispered the judge, and she nodded assent. She had not yet recovered from the surprise Lucy had given her.

"The sun is thinking of setting," said the judge then. "We must be preparing to depart."

There was a general move, and Miss Keane and Miss Goldthwaite proceeded to clear the table.

"Let us sit here and see the sun set, and have a

talk, Lucy," said Minnie, drawing Lucy a little apart. "What a perfectly elegant poem that was you wrote. It's 'most as good as Whittier's George reads to mamma sometimes. I guess you'll grow up to be a Mrs. Whittier."

"Oh no," said Lucy, laughing a little; "Miss Keane's was just as good, I think, only I wrote more. How funny yours was."

"I should think so. Mopsy, or Ted, or Silver Tail could do just as well, I believe.—Tom, won't you draw me a picture of my very own to keep? I wish you'd come up and do the kittens; won't you? I ask Robert every time he comes, but he just teases me."

"I'll draw a kitten for you if you like," answered Tom readily, "but I can't promise to come up and do it."

Before very long Billy was harnessed again, and after bidding a reluctant good-bye to the Peak for another year, the descent was begun. Lucy walked part of the way with Mr. George Keane's arm to help her along, and Miss Goldthwaite beckoned Tom to her side.

"I haven't seen much of you to-day, Tom," she said pleasantly. "Have you had a nice day?"

"I shall never forget it, Miss Goldthwaite," answered Tom very gravely.

And though after years brought many happy excursions up the Peak, never was one so exquisitely enjoyed as this had been. The sun had dropped

behind the hill when the tired party reached the Red House, and a big moon was coming up serenely in the opal sky. Mr. and Miss Goldthwaite paused at the avenue gate, saying they would not come any further; so the good-nights were said there and the company separated.

"Good-night, my little poetess," whispered the judge as he lifted Lucy from the waggon. "Go on writing, my dear; we will hear of you yet." And he kissed her as he set her to the ground, and added softly, "You have done an old man good to-day though you did not know it."

It was a very quiet walk home by the river-side to the parsonage, but the thoughts were all pleasant ones. Mr. Goldthwaite had not spoken much to Lucy all day, but he had watched her, how closely she did not know. He held her hand at parting, and looked straight into her beautiful eyes, his own very grave and earnest.

"God bless you, Lucy; good-night."

She wondered a little at the oddness of his manner.

"My soldier has shown to advantage to-day," said Miss Carrie, smiling as she shook hands with Tom. "I have been very proud of him."

"Lucy," said Tom, as they turned into the paddock at Thankful Rest, "do you know what I'm going to do when I'm a man?"

"Be a great painter," answered Lucy promptly.

"What else?"

"Anything else?" inquired she in much surprise.

"I'm going to marry Miss Goldthwaite!"

Lucy laughed outright.

"You can't, Tom; she's going to marry Mr. George Keane, Minnie told me."

"Is she? Well, Mr. George Keane is a very good fellow," said Tom in a tone which would have infinitely amused that gentleman had he heard it; "but he isn't half good enough for her.—O Lucy, hasn't this been a day?"

"Yes," answered Lucy, and she turned full eyes up to the quiet sky. "I think papa and mamma must see us, and be glad we have been happy."

"I feel so too," answered Tom with the sudden beautiful earnestness which had often come to him of late.—"Kiss me, Lucy; there are only you and I."

She put her arm about his neck, and kissed him as he wished; then the two went very soberly into the house.

X.

ON THE LAKE.

On the first morning of November the summit of the Peak was draped in white, and a slight sprinkling of snow sparkled on the plain. Frost was hard enough to freeze the duck-pond and the horse-trough. Winter had begun. It was very cold; Lucy shivered over her dressing every morning in her little attic chamber, and had just to work to get warm, as Aunt Hepsy permitted no sitting over the stove. Tom had to turn out of doors at six every morning, and feed a score of cattle before breakfast, and woe betide him if the work was not done up to Uncle Josh's mark. Uncle Josh had a vocabulary of his own, from which he selected many an epithet to bestow on Tom! Sometimes yet the quick temper would fly up, and there would be a war of words; but the lad's strong striving was beginning to bear its fruit, and he found it daily easier to keep hold of the bridle, as Miss Goldthwaite termed it. Keziah had been dismissed also, and Lucy's burden was sometimes more than she could bear. Miss Hepsy refused to see what others

saw—that the girl was overwrought; and her feelings had been blunted so long, that only a very sharp shock would bring them into use again. And the time had not come yet. For more highly favoured young folks than Tom and Lucy Hurst, these frosty days brought innumerable enjoyments in their train—skating and sleighing by daylight and moonlight, evening parties, and all sorts of frolics. There were gay times at the Red House, especially when in Christmas week Mr. Robert Keane came home, bringing with him two school-boy cousins from Philadelphia. Miss Alice Keane called at Thankful Rest on her pony, one morning, to ask Tom and Lucy to a Christmas-eve gathering. The invitation was curtly declined by Miss Hepsy, and she was dismissed with such scant courtesy that she departed very indignant indeed.

"What a woman that is at Thankful Rest," she said to Miss Goldthwaite when she called at the parsonage. "I almost forgot myself, Carrie, and nearly gave her a few rude words. I am truly sorry for those poor children."

"Well you may be," answered Carrie with a sigh, knowing better than Alice what their life was.

Only one half-holiday was vouchsafed to them at Miss Goldthwaite's earnest entreaty, and they took tea at the parsonage, after which the party went up to the Red House pond to see the skating there. They were very warmly welcomed—Minnie, especially, being quite overjoyed to see Lucy again.

"Do you skate, Tom?" asked Miss Keane, coming up breathless after a long run down the lake.

"Yes, Miss Keane. But I have no skates; they were left at home—in Newhaven, I mean."

"Here, Minnie, my pet, run to the house and bring out a couple of pairs. You will find them in George's room, I think; and tell Robert I want him on the lake."

Minnie ran off obediently. Pretty soon Mr. George Keane and the two cousins appeared round the bend, and Miss Keane introduced the latter to Tom. They did not take long to become acquainted, and were soon talking quite familiarly. They stood waiting till Minnie returned, her brother with her, carrying the skates. He was a tall, slight young man, rather like Miss Keane; and his face looked a trifle stern at first, as hers did, but that wore off when you got to know him.

"This is Tom Hurst I told you of, Robert," said Miss Keane; and Tom shook hands with him reverentially, remembering he was the great painter all America was talking of.

"I'm glad to see you," said Mr. Robert Keane frankly. "Let us get on our skates, and you and I shall take a run together. I haven't been on the ice this season."

Tom sat down and quickly put on his skates, and the pair set off, keeping close together. Miss Keane turned to Mr. Goldthwaite with a smile. "Robert is

interested already. I want him to do something for Tom, and I think he will."

"He will not regret it," answered Mr. Goldthwaite. "They are all off now but we two, Miss Keane; come, we must not be behind."

"My sister tells me you would like to be a painter, Tom," said Mr. Robert Keane, when they had gone a hundred yards in silence.

"Yes, sir," answered Tom, wishing to say a great deal more, but unable to utter more than two words.

"What would you say to go back to Philadelphia, and let me look after your training?"

"O Mr. Keane!" Tom stood still on the ice and lifted incredulous eyes to his companion's face. There was a smile there, but the eyes were sincere enough.

"I see you would like it. Don't stand; we can talk while we go. Well, my boy, there is a great deal of hard work, patient plodding, uninteresting study to be gone through, and as many failures and tumbles as days in the year, before you reach even the first step of the ladder. Do you think you could go through it?"

"I would go through anything, Mr. Keane, and toil for twenty years, if need be, only to be allowed to work at it. Do you know, it is life to me even to think of it."

Robert Keane glanced curiously at the lad. His face was kindling with emotion, and his eyes shone like stars.

"All right, my boy; you're the right stuff, I see. Leave it with me; I'll fix it right enough. And you'll go to Philadelphia as sure as my name's Keane. No need to thank me. Let your future success be my reward, if I need any. Let us try a race back; you're a splendid skater."

They turned, and sped along the ice at lightning speed, and Tom came in a dozen yards in front at the farther side.

"Ahead of me," laughed Mr. Keane. "Is that an omen of the future, Tom?"

Miss Goldthwaite noted the boy's flushed, happy face and bright eyes, and concluded Mr. Robert Keane must have wrought the change. She turned to remark upon it to Alice, when a hand touched her arm, and Tom's voice said eagerly, "Will you skate with me, Miss Goldthwaite? I want to speak to you." She nodded smilingly and gave him her hand.

"O Miss Goldthwaite," said Tom in a great burst of happiness, "Mr. Robert Keane says he will take me to Philadelphia with him, and help me to be a painter."

"I guessed he would," said Carrie. "I am very glad of it, Tom. Do you remember what I said about this joy coming in God's good time?"

"I have not forgotten, Miss Goldthwaite."

She stopped on the ice, and laid her slim hand a moment on his shoulder. "My soldier will remember his Captain still, I hope, in those happier days, and

work for Him with double energy because they are happier."

The moonlight showed trembling drops in the boy's earnest eyes as he answered reverently—"I will never forget how good He has been to me, Miss Goldthwaite, when I so little deserved it."

"That is right, my boy; I am not afraid of you," she said heartily. "Here we are round the bend. How lovely that moonlight shines through these gloomy pines. Let us go right to the end before we turn."

They set off again along the smooth sheet of ice, and as they neared the farther end of the lake Miss Goldthwaite turned aside to explore an opening between the trees. A moment more and Tom heard a crash, followed by a faint scream. He looked round, to see the edge of Miss Goldthwaite's fur cloak disappearing through a huge fissure in the ice! He had presence of mind to utter one wild, despairing cry, which re-echoed far off in the lonely pine wood, and then he plunged after her and caught her dress. Superhuman strength seemed to come to him in that moment of desperate peril, and he managed to keep hold of her with one hand, and with the other cling to the broken edge of ice. It seemed hours before the ring of skates and the sound of voices announced help at hand, and his numbed fingers relaxed their hold of the ice just as Robert Keane and his brother's strong arms bent down to rescue them. He still had

hold of Miss Goldthwaite, and two minutes sufficed to extricate them both. They were unconscious, and Carrie's sweet face was so deathly white that a mighty fear took hold of all present. Alice Keane knelt down and laid her hand to her heart. "Thank God," she uttered tremulously, and it was fervently re-echoed by every lip. They were borne to the Red House with great speed, and restoratives being applied, both rallied in a very short time. Miss Goldthwaite's first question was for Tom, as his had been for her; and she whispered to them faintly that he had saved her life at the risk of his own. When Tom looked round, after a while, it was to find the judge and Mr. George Keane standing by his bed.

"God bless you, my lad," said the old man huskily. "You have saved our pretty flower. All Pendlepoint will thank you for this."

And Mr. George bent over him, his honest gray eyes dim with tears. "I owe my wife's life to you, Tom, my boy. As long as I live I shall never forget this."

A message was despatched to Thankful Rest reporting the accident, and saying the children would remain till next day, at least, at the Red House. Mr. Goldthwaite also remained. His words of thanks to Tom were few: he was too deeply moved to speak, but Tom was quick to understand. Next morning Miss Goldthwaite was able to appear at the breakfast table, looking a little paler than usual, but apparently

not much the worse of her ducking. Dr. Gair forbade Tom to get up till noon, so Carrie herself took up his breakfast-tray. He looked surprised and greatly relieved to see her, and tried to make light of what he had done.

"It is nothing," he said. "I would gladly do fifty times more for you."

"We are bound more closely together now," she said. "I owe my life to you." And bending over him she kissed him, and slipped away, leaving him very happy indeed.

In the evening he came down to the drawing-room, where he was treated as a hero. Everybody made so much of him that he began to feel uncomfortable, and took refuge at last with Mr. Robert Keane, who good-naturedly showed him the sketch-book he had filled in Europe, and explained everything to him, as if he found pleasure in it. And he did find pleasure, for Tom was an enthusiastic listener.

No inquiry had come from Thankful Rest, which had astonished Mrs. Keane very much. She thought they would be sure to feel anxious about Tom's recovery. She did not know Joshua Strong and his sister. The following morning Dr. Gair said Tom might go home as soon as he liked; so Miss Alice drove him and Lucy to Thankful Rest in the course of the forenoon. Miss Hepsy was plucking chickens for the market, and tossed up her head when her nephew and niece appeared before her.

"I wonder you'd come back at all after livin' so long among gentle folk. It'll be a long time, I reckon, afore ye get the chance to jump through the ice after Miss Goldthwaite or any other miss.—Here, Lucy, get off yer hat, and lend a hand wi' them chickens.—You'll find plenty wood in the shed, boy, waitin' to be chopped, if yer uncle hain't anything else for ye to do. Off ye go."

The contrast between the happy circle they had left and their own home was so painful that Lucy's tears fell fast as she went to do her aunt's bidding. And Tom departed to the wood-shed with a very downcast and rebellious heart.

XI.

HOPES FULFILLED.

On the afternoon of the following day Mr. Goldthwaite came to Thankful Rest, accompanied by Mr. Robert Keane. Lucy opened the door to them; and seeing a stranger with the parson, her aunt shouted to her to show them into the sitting-room. It was a chill and gloomy place, though painfully clean and tidy—utterly destitute of comfort. Lucy shut the door upon them, and went back to tell her aunt that the stranger was Mr. Robert Keane.

"What's their business here, I'd like to know?" she said as she whisked off her white apron and smoothed her hair beneath her cap.

Lucy knew, but discreetly held her peace.

Miss Hepsy stalked across the passage and into the sitting-room, her looks asking as plainly as any words what they wanted.

"This is Mr. Robert Keane, Miss Strong," said the minister. "He wants to see you and your brother, I think, on a little business."

Miss Hepsy elevated her eyebrows, and shook hands with Mr. Keane in silence.

"Josh is in the barn. I s'pose I'd better send for him," she said.

And Mr. Keane answered courteously—"If you please."

She opened the door and called to Lucy to run to the barn for her uncle.

"Yes, Aunt Hepsy," answered Lucy, her sweet, clear tones contrasting strongly with her aunt's unpleasant voice.

"Miss Goldthwaite's all right again, eh?" she asked, sitting down near the door.

"I am thankful to say my sister is none the worse of her adventure," answered Mr. Goldthwaite. "But for Tom's bravery the consequences might have been more serious."

"H'm, I told him it would be a precious long time afore he got on the ice again to be laid up, botherin' strange folks, an' I guess I'll keep my word."

"You must not be so hard on him, Miss Strong," said the minister. "He is a very fine lad, and tries very hard to please you, I know."

Aunt Hepsy remained silent.

"What a pretty place you have, Miss Strong," said Mr. Keane's pleasant, well-modulated voice. "The Peak shows splendidly from this window."

"The place aren't no great thing, sir," said Miss Hepsy.—"Here's Josh." She opened the door, and

Uncle Josh appeared on the threshold in his working garb, grimy and dust-stained, as he had come from repairing the mill. He pulled his hair to the minister, and bowed awkwardly to Mr. Keane.

"Sit down, Josh," said Miss Hepsy, but Josh preferred to stand. There was just a moment's constrained silence.

"I have called to see you, Mr. Strong," said Robert Keane, plunging into the subject without further delay, "about your nephew Tom. He is very anxious to become a painter, I find. Would you have any objections to me putting him in the way of life to which his desire and talent point him?"

"Has the ungrateful little brat been carrying his grumbling among you folks?" said Miss Hepsy wrathfully.

"Be quiet, Hepsy," said Joshua Strong very imperatively.

"I don't quite understand you, sir," he said to Mr. Keane. "I can't afford to send the boy anywhere to learn anything, if ye mean that. He'll never do no good on a farm, for sartin; but he kin work for his livin' here, an' that's all I kin do for 'im."

"I am a painter myself," said Mr. Keane, guessing they were unaware of the fact, and now wishing to state his intentions as briefly and plainly as possible; "and from what I have seen of your nephew I believe his talent for art to be very great indeed. What I mean is this: give him up to me; I will take him

back to Philadelphia, and take entire care of his training. It will not cost you a farthing, Mr. Strong. Do you understand?"

"We're poor folks, but we don't take charity even for Hetty's children," said Miss Hepsy pointedly. "We've never been offered it afore."

Mr. Keane might have waxed angry at the impertinent remark. He was only inwardly amused. "It is not charity, Miss Strong," he said good-humouredly. "I expect Tom will be able to repay anything he may cost me. I hope you will not stand in the lad's way. He is a born artist, and will never do good in any other sphere.—Come, Mr. Strong, say yes, and let us shake hands over the bargain."

It was proof of the rare delicacy of Robert Keane's nature that he put the matter in the light of a favour to himself. Mr. Goldthwaite admired and honoured his friend at that moment more than he had ever done before.

Aunt Hepsy preserved a rigid and unbending silence.

Uncle Josh stood twirling his thumbs reflectively. It was to cost him nothing, not a farthing; and he would be rid of the bother the hot-headed youngster was to him. But for his sister he would have granted a ready assent.

"Wal, Hepsy?" he said in an inquiring tone.

"You're the master, Josh, I reckon. Do as ye please. It's all one to me;" and to their amazement

she flounced out of the room and banged the door behind her.

"I'm much obleeged to you, Mr. Keane," said Josh, finding his tongue in a marvellously short time. "I've no objections. As I said afore, he's an idle, peart young 'un; no good at farm work. I hope ye'll be able to make a better job o' him than I've done."

"I am not afraid," said Mr. Robert Keane. "And I am obliged to you for granting my request. Can I see Tom?"

"I reckon you may," said Uncle Josh slowly. "Wal, I'll be off to that plaguy mill. Good-day to you.—My respects to Miss Goldthwaite, parson." Once more Uncle Josh pulled his forelock, and shambled out of the room.

"It doesn't cause them much concern anyway," said Mr. Keane when the door closed. "They are a bright pair; I should be afraid of that woman myself. How that mite of a girl stands it I don't know."

Before Mr. Goldthwaite had time to answer, the door opened, and a very eager, excited-looking boy appeared on the threshold.

"Well, Tom, my boy," said Mr. Keane, holding out his hand, "the bargain's sealed. You belong to me now."

"Has Uncle Josh—has Aunt Hepsy said I might?" he said breathlessly. "Oh, it is too good to be true!"

"True enough," said Mr. Keane, laughing at the

lad's manner.—"Please assure him of it, Mr. Goldthwaite."

Mr. Goldthwaite laid his hand on the lad's shoulder, and bent his grave eyes on his beaming face. "I congratulate you," he said heartily. "And I hope that by-and-by all Pendlepoint will be proud of the name of Tom Hurst."

Tom drew his hand across his eyes. "I can't help it, sir," he said apologetically. "But if you knew how much I've wished for this and dreamed of it.—Oh, I feel I can never be grateful enough to you, Mr. Keane!"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Keane. "Well, we must be going. Show us the way out, will you, Tom? Your aunt has deserted us. I don't leave for a fortnight yet. I shall see you again in a day or two."

Aunt Hepsy, however, had not altogether forgotten the duties of hospitality, and now reappeared and asked them to stay to tea. Her face had cleared a little, and she seemed to regret her previous rudeness. Her invitation, however, was courteously declined.

"You're here, I see, Tom," she said severely. "Well, I hope you're properly grateful to Mr. Keane for doing so much for you. An' I hope ye'll mend yer ways, an' be a better boy than ye've been."

"I am very grateful, Aunt Hepsy," said Tom very quietly. "And I will try to be what you say."

Something in his face and eyes touched even Aunt

Hepsy, and it came upon her very suddenly to wonder if she had not treated him a little unjustly. "He's a biddable cretur, too," she said to Mr. Keane. "An' p'raps he'll take more kindly to your kind o' life than ours. I don't think much o' them useless ways o' livin' myself, but there's differences."

"Some day perhaps, Miss Strong, when Tom comes back a great man," laughed Mr. Keane, as he shook hands with her and Tom, "you'll admit you've changed your mind. If you do I'll come along and have a good laugh at you."

A smile actually appeared on Miss Hepsy's face. "He's a real pleasant-spoken gentleman, Mr. Robert Keane," said Aunt Hepsy, as she shut the door. —"Well, Tom, I hope ye'll get yer fill o' paintin' now."

Tom's eyes beamed, but he made no verbal reply. Lucy followed him to the door as he passed out to the barn again.

"O Tom, I am so glad," she whispered joyfully; and Tom answered by tossing his cap in the air and trying to bound up after it.

"Glad? I don't know whether I'm on my head or my heels, Lucy," he said. "It's the happiest day of my life."

Lucy kept the smile upon her face, not wishing to damp his joy, but her heart was very sore. For what did Tom's departure mean for her? It meant parting from all she had on earth; it meant a life of utter

loneliness and lovelessness, save for the dear outside friends she could see so seldom. It was Lucy's nature ever to unselfishly bury her own troubles and try to join in the happiness of others.

"A fortnight only," she said to herself as she went back to her work. "What will become of me?"

The days sped fleetly for her, but slowly for Tom, who was eager to be gone. Mr. Robert Keane paid frequent visits to Thankful Rest, and all arrangements were satisfactorily made. Lucy went about, saying little, and preserving her sweet serenity to the last. She busied herself with Tom's small wardrobe, adding a touch here and there to make it complete; and wept bitter tears over her work, as many another sister has done before and since. It was not till the last night that a thought of her came to cloud Tom's sky. They were sitting together at the stove in the fading twilight, Lucy's face very grave and sad.

"I say Lucy, though," Tom said, "how awfully lonely it will be for you when I'm gone. Why, whatever will you *do?*"

"Think of you, and look for your letters," she said, her lips quivering. "You will not forget me altogether, Tom?"

A pang of remorse shot through Tom's heart. He came to her side and threw one arm round her, remembering how his mother's last charge had been to take care of Lucy, and how poorly he had done it after all. Lucy had taken care of him instead.

"Lucy, I'm a perfectly horrid boy," he said in a queer, quick way. "Don't you hate me?"

"Hate you? O Tom, I've nobody but you."

Her sunny head drooped a moment against his arm, and her tears fell without restraint. "I didn't mean to, Tom," she said at last, looking up with a faint smile, "but I couldn't help it. I feel dreadful to think of you going away."

"When I'm a man, Lucy," he said manfully, "what a perfectly stunning little home you and I shall have together. It won't be so long—why, I'm thirteen."

"Only about ten or twelve years," said Lucy, able to laugh now. "I shall be gray-haired long before that time."

"You! why, you'll be the same as you are at fifty. You are like mamma; she never grew any older-looking. You must write often, mind, Lucy, and tell me all about everything and everybody."

Lucy promised, and, feeling very sad again, rose to light the lamp in case she should break down. Aunt Hepsy was wonderfully kind that night—she could be kind sometimes if she liked—and, altogether, the evening passed pleasantly. Tom went to bed early, as they were to start by the morning train. Lucy followed almost immediately. About half-an-hour afterwards Aunt Hepsy went upstairs to put a forgotten article into Tom's trunk, and was arrested by sounds in Lucy's room. The door was a little ajar,

and Aunt Hepsy peered in. Lucy was undressed and sitting at the window, her arms on the dressing-table, and her whole frame shaking with sobs. Once or twice Aunt Hepsy heard the word "Mamma." The passion of grief and longing in the girl's voice made something come into Aunt Hepsy's throat, and she slipped noiselessly downstairs.

"I don't feel easy in my mind, Josh," she said when she re-entered the kitchen. "I'm feared we've been raythor hard on Hetty's children. She never did us any harm."

"Did I say she did, Hepsy?" asked Uncle Josh, serenely puffing away at his pipe. "You was allus the worst at her and at the children. Ye put upon that Lucy in a perfectly awful way."

"Shut up," said Miss Hepsy in a tone which admitted of no further remark, and the subject dropped.

There was a great bustle in the morning, and before Lucy had time to think about anything Tom had kissed her for the last time, and the waggon drove away. He waved his handkerchief to her till they were out of sight; and then she went back to the house sad and pale and cheerless.

"I guess you needn't fly round much to-day, Lucy," said Aunt Hepsy with unusual thoughtfulness. "Ye don't look very spry, and feel down a bit. Never mind, he ain't away for ever."

"Thank you, Aunt Hepsy," said Lucy gently.

"I'd rather work, if you please. It takes up my mind better. Let me wash these dishes."

Aunt Hepsy surmised the tears were kept for the loneliness of her own chamber. She was right. Only to her mother's God did Lucy Hurst pour out all her grief, and from Him sought the help and comfort none can give so well as He.

XII.

WEARY DAYS.

THE unusual softening of heart and manner visible in Aunt Hepsy at the time of Tom's departure disappeared before the lapse of many days. You see, she had gone on in the old, sour, cross-grained way so long, she felt most at home in it. She did not *feel* unkindly towards gentle, patient Lucy; but her manner was so ungracious, and her words so sharp, you will not wonder that Lucy could not read beneath the surface. She was very quiet, very sober, and very listless; striving, too, to do her duties as well as aforetime, but lacking physical strength. Tom's letters, frequent and full of hope and happiness, were the chief solace of the girl's lonely life. Mr. and Miss Goldthwaite came sometimes yet to Thankful Rest; but these were family visits, and Lucy had few opportunities of quiet talk with her friends. Many invitations had come from the Red House, but to each and all Aunt Hepsy returned a peremptory refusal.

"I'm not going to have her learn to fly round for

ever at folks' houses. She has plenty to do at home, and she'll do it, you take my word for it. Tell Judge Keane's folks I'm mighty obliged to them, but Lucy can't come. Let that be an end of it." So she said to Miss Goldthwaite one day; and she carried the message, slightly modified, to Mrs. Keane. So the days and weeks slipped away, till Winter had to hide his diminished head before the harbingers of Spring. In the closing days of March the ice broke up on the river, and all nature seemed to spring to life again. Green blades and tiny blossoms began to peep above ground, and the birds sang their songs of gladness on the budding boughs. It was a busy time at Thankful Rest, both indoors and out. In the first week of April began that awful revolution, Miss Hepsy Strong's spring cleaning. It was her boast that she could accomplish in one week what other housewives could accomplish only in three. For every half-idle hour Lucy had enjoyed during the winter she had to atone now; for Aunt Hepsy kept her sweeping, and scouring, and dusting, and trotting upstairs and down, till the girl's strength almost failed her. She did not complain, however, and Aunt Hepsy was too much absorbed to see that her powers were overtaxed. The cleaning was triumphantly concluded on Saturday night, and Lucy crept away early to bed, but was unable to sleep from fatigue. She came downstairs next morning so wan and white that Aunt Hepsy feared she was going to turn sick on her hands. But Lucy said she

was well enough, and would go to church as usual. Thinking she looked really ill, Miss Goldthwaite came round to the porch after the service.

"Lucy, what is it, child? your face is quite white. Do you feel well enough?"

Lucy smiled a little, and slipping her hand through Miss Goldthwaite's arm, walked with her down the path.

"This has been cleaning week," she said in explanation, "and I have had more to do than usual. I daresay I'll be all right now."

But Miss Goldthwaite did not feel satisfied, and said so to her brother at the tea-table that night.

"I'm going up to Thankful Rest, Frank, to tell Miss Hepsy to be careful of Lucy. It is time somebody told her; she grows so thin, and, I notice, eats nothing."

Mr. Goldthwaite's anxiety exceeded his sister's, if that were possible, but he said very little. Accordingly, next afternoon Miss Goldthwaite betook herself to Thankful Rest. Finding the garden gate locked, she went round by the back, and in the yard encountered Lucy bending under the weight of two pails of water. She set them down on beholding Miss Goldthwaite; and Carrie noticed that her hand was pressed to her side, and that her breath came very fast.

"You are not fit to carry these, Lucy," said she very gravely. "Is there nobody but you?"

"I have been washing some curtains and things

to-day, Miss Goldthwaite, and Aunt Hepsy thinks the water from the spring in the low meadow better for rinsing them in."

"Does she?" said Miss Goldthwaite, and her sweet lips closed together more sternly than Lucy had ever seen them do before.

Lucy passed into the wash-house with her pails, and Miss Goldthwaite went into the house without knocking. Miss Hepsy was making buckwheats, and greeted her visitor pleasantly enough. She sat down in the window, turned her eyes on Miss Hepsy's face, and said bluntly,—

"I'm going to say something which will likely vex you, Miss Hepsy, but I can't help it. I've been wanting to say it this long time."

Miss Hepsy did not look surprised, or even curious; she only said calmly,—

"It wouldn't be the first time you've vexed me, Miss Goldthwaite, by a long chalk."

"It's about Lucy, Miss Hepsy," continued Miss Goldthwaite. "Can't you see she's hardly fit to do a hand's turn at work? I met her out there carrying a load she was no more fit to carry than that kitten."

"Ain't she?" inquired Miss Hepsy quite unmoved. "What else?"

"There she is; I see her through the door. Look at her, and *see* if she is well. If she doesn't get rest, and that speedily, she'll go into a decline, as sure as I sit here. I had a sister," said Carrie with a half sob,

"who died of decline, and she looked exactly as Lucy does."

Miss Hepsy walked from the dresser to the stove and back again before she spoke. "When did you find out, Miss Goldthwaite, that Hepsy Strong could not mind her own affairs and her own folks?"

It was said in Miss Hepsy's most disagreeable manner, which was very disagreeable indeed; but Miss Goldthwaite did not intend to be disconcerted so soon.

"You have a kind heart, I know, Miss Hepsy, though you show it so seldom. You must know Lucy's value by this time, and if you haven't learned to love her, I don't know what you are made of. Be gentle with her, Miss Hepsy; she is very young—and she has no mother."

Miss Hepsy's temper was up, and she heard the gentle pleading unmoved.

"Ye've meddled a good deal wi' me, Miss Goldthwaite," she said slowly, "and I've never told ye to mind yer own business before, but I tell ye now. An' though ye are the parson's sister, ye say things I can't stand. Ye'd better be goin'; an' ye needn't come to Thankful Rest again till ye can let me an' my concerns alone."

Miss Goldthwaite rose at once, not angry, only grieved and disappointed.

"Good-bye, then, Miss Hepsy. It was only my love for Lucy made me speak. I'm sorry I've offended

you. She is a dear, good girl. Some day, perhaps, you will be sorry you did not listen to my words," she said, and went away.

Not many words, good or bad, did Aunt Hepsy speak in the house that night. Lucy, busy with her mending, wondered what had passed that afternoon that Miss Goldthwaite's stay had been so brief. Aunt Hepsy's eyes rested keenly on Lucy's pale, sweet face more than once, and she was forced to admit that it was paler and thinner and more worn-looking than it need be. But she hardened her heart, and refused to obey its more kindly promptings. A few more days went by. Lucy grew weaker, and flagged in her work; and Aunt Hepsy watched her, and *would not* be the first to take needful steps. On Sunday morning Lucy did not come downstairs at the usual time, and even the clattering of breakfast dishes failed to bring her. At length Aunt Hepsy went upstairs. Lucy was still in bed.

"Are you sick, child?" said Aunt Hepsy in a strange quick voice.

Lucy answered very feebly,—

"I'm afraid I'm goin' to be, Aunt Hepsy. I tried to get up, but I couldn't; and I haven't slept any all night."

"Where do you feel ill?"

"All over," said the girl wearily. "I've felt so for a long time, but I tried to go about. Are you angry because I'm going to be sick, Aunt Hepsy? It'll be a bother to you; but perhaps I'm going to mamma."

"Do you want to kill me outright, Lucy?" said her aunt; and even in her weakness Lucy opened her eyes wide in surprise. "If you speak about goin' to yer ma again," she said, "ye will kill me. Ye've got to lie there an' get better as fast as you like. I'll send for Dr. Gair, an' nurse ye night and day."

Aunt Hepsy could have said a great deal more, but a something in her throat prevented her. She went downstairs immediately, and despatched the boy for Dr. Gair. During his absence, she endeavoured to induce Lucy to take some breakfast, but in vain.

"I'm real sick, Aunt Hepsy," she said. "Just let me lie still. I don't want anything but just to be quiet."

Within the hour Dr. Gair came to Thankful Rest, for Miss Hepsy's message had been urgent. He was an old man, blunt-mannered, but truly tender-hearted, and a great favourite in the township. He had not been once at Thankful Rest since Deacon Strong's death, for neither the brother nor sister had ever had a day's illness in their lives. He made his examination of Lucy in a few minutes, and Miss Hepsy watched with a sinking heart how very grave his face was when he turned to her. He had few questions to ask, and these Lucy answered as simply as she could.

"Am I going to be very sick, Dr. Gair?" said Lucy.

"Yes, my dear; but please God, we may pull you

through," said the old man softly. "In the meantime I can't do much; I'll look in again in the afternoon."

Miss Hepsy followed him in silence down the stairs, and he drew on his gloves in the lobby without speaking.

"This is a case of gross neglect, Miss Strong," he said at length. "The girl's delicate frame is thoroughly exhausted by over-fatigue and want of attention."

"Tell me something I don't know, Dr. Gair," said she sharply.

"And if she recovers, of which I am more than doubtful," he continued sternly, "it is to be hoped you will turn over a new leaf in your treatment of her. I am a plain man, Miss Strong, not given to gilding a bitter pill. If your niece dies, you may take home the blame to yourself. Good morning."

"I know all that, my good man, better than you can tell me," said Aunt Hepsy grimly. "You do your best to bring her round, an' I won't forget it. I've been a wicked woman, Dr. Gair, an' I s'pose the Lord's goin' to punish me now; an' he couldn't have chosen a surer way than by sending sickness to Lucy. Good morning."

Aunt Hepsy shut the door, and went into the kitchen. There Joshua sat anxiously awaiting the doctor's verdict.

"There ain't much hope, Josh," she said briefly.

"Ain't there, Hepsy? It's a bad job for the little 'un."

"An' for more than her, I reckon," returned his sister shortly. "I've lived one and forty years at Thankful Rest, Josh, an' I never felt as I do this day. I'd a mighty deal rather be sick myself than see the child's white face. If she gets round, I'll be a better woman, with the Lord's help. How He's borne with me so long 's a marvel I can't comprehend. One and forty years, Josh Strong, and Lucy jes' fifteen. She's done a deal more good in one day o' her life than you or me ever did in all ours. The Lord forgive us, Josh, an' help us to make a better use o' what's left. Jes' step down to Pendlepoint, will ye, an' ask the parson an' his sister up. I guess Lucy'd be pleased to see 'em. One an' forty years, dear, dear; an' Lucy jes' fifteen."

Aunt Hepsy went out wiping her eyes, and stole upstairs again to Lucy.

XIII.

LUCY FINDS THE KEY.

For several days a great shadow lay on Thankful Rest while Lucy hovered between life and death. Everything human care and skill could suggest was done, and the issue was in God's hands. Miss Goldthwaite had come up to Thankful Rest on Sunday, and had stayed, because Lucy seemed to be happier when she was by. Callers were innumerable, and a messenger came from the Red House every morning asking a bulletin. What Aunt Hepsy suffered during those days I do not suppose anybody ever guessed. It was her way to hide her feelings always, but she would sit or stand looking at the sick girl with eyes which ought to have brought her back to health. Uncle Josh was in and out fifty times a day, and things outside were allowed to manage themselves; all interest centred in the little attic chamber and its suffering occupant. She lay in a kind of stupor most part of the day, only moaning at times with the pain Dr. Gair was powerless to relieve. She grew perceptibly weaker, and they feared to leave her a moment, lest

she should slip away while they were gone. So the days went by till Sunday came round again. Dr. Gair came early that morning, and looked, if possible, graver than usual.

"If she lives till evening," he said to the anxious watchers, "she will recover, but I cannot give you much hope. Administer this medicine every two hours; it is all I can do. I will be back before night."

In after years Aunt Hepsy was wont to say that Sunday was the longest day she had ever spent in her life. I think others felt so too. Slowly the hours went round. Even into the darkened room the spring sunshine would peep, and the twittering of the birds in the orchard broke the oppressive stillness. At four o'clock the doctor came again. Save for the almost imperceptible breathing, Lucy lay so pale and still that they almost thought her dead. At sunset she moved uneasily, and with a great sigh lifted her heavy lids and looked round the room. A sob burst from Aunt Hepsy's lips, and Carrie Goldthwaite's tears fell fast, for Dr. Gair's face said she was saved. Her lips moved, and he bent down to catch the faintly murmured words,—

"Have I been sick a long time? I am going to get well now."

The doctor nodded and smiled. "God has been very good to you—to us all—my child," he said. "He has heard the prayers of those who love you."

Carrie came to the bedside then, and bending over her, kissed her once with streaming eyes. Aunt Hepsy moved to the window and drew up the blind, and the red glow of the setting sun crept into the room, and lay bright and beautiful on Lucy's face.

"I am glad to see the sun again," said Lucy wearily. "I seem to have been sick so long. May I go to sleep now, Dr. Gair?"

"Yes; and sleep a week if you like," he said cheerily.—"Rest and care now, Miss Strong, is all she needs to bring her round."

Aunt Hepsy made no reply whatever. She stood still in the window, her face softened into a strange, thankful tenderness, and her heart lifting itself up in gratitude to God, and in many an earnest resolution for the future. She followed Dr. Gair downstairs, as she had done that day a week before, and as he passed out caught his hand in a grip of iron. "I'm a woman of few words, Dr. Gair," she said abruptly, "but I won't forget what you've done for me an' mine."

"God first, Miss Strong," said the doctor gravely; and then he added with an odd little smile, "Lucy's lines will be in pleasant places now, I fancy?"

"If they ain't, I'll know the reason why," said she grimly. "Good evening."

Lucy's sleep that night was calm and refreshing, and when Dr. Gair came again in the morning he expressed himself pleased with her condition. Miss

Goldthwaite brought up a breakfast tray with a cup of weak tea and a piece of toast, of which Lucy was able to eat a little bit. She had fifty questions to ask; but remembering Dr. Gair's peremptory orders, Carrie placed a finger on her lips and shook her head. There would be plenty of time to talk by-and-by, for convalescence would be a tedious business; in the meantime there was absolute need of perfect rest. Miss Goldthwaite brought her sewing, and sat down in the window seat, humming a scrap of song, the outcome of the gladness of her heart. Lucy lay still in a state of dreamy happiness, listening to the twittering of the birds mingling with Carrie's song, and watching the gay April sunbeams dancing among her golden curls. By-and-by Aunt Hepsy came up, and Lucy looked at her curiously. She seemed to dimly remember that during the days of the past week a face like Aunt Hepsy's had bent over her in love and tenderness, and a voice like hers, only infinitely softer and gentler, had spoken broken words of grief and prayer at her bedside. Aunt Hepsy, just yet, did not meet Lucy's wondering eyes, nor speak any words to her at all. She moved softly about the room, putting things to rights deftly and silently; but Lucy was sure there was something different about her.

Immediately after the early dinner, seeing Lucy so much better, Miss Goldthwaite bethought herself of her neglected household at Pendlepoint, and said she would go home, promising to come again to-morrow.

Her eyes were full of tears as she bent over to bid Lucy good-bye, and she whispered tenderly,—

"My darling, what a load I shall lift from anxious hearts at Pendlepoint to-night. You don't know how dear you are to us all."

Lucy smiled a little in a happy way; to her heart evidences of love were very precious. She was left alone for nearly a couple of hours, while Aunt Hepsy washed up dishes and set things right downstairs. She fell into a light doze, and when she awoke, it was to find Aunt Hepsy sitting by her side with her knitting.

"Have I been sleeping, Aunt Hepsy?" she said. "You don't know how well I feel. I could almost get up, I think."

Aunt Hepsy laughed a little tremulous laugh.

"In about a month or so, I guess, you'll begin to think about getting up," she said; and again something in Aunt Hepsy's face set Lucy wondering *what* was different about her. There was a short silence, then Aunt Hepsy laid down her knitting, and took both Lucy's thin hands in her firm clasp. "Lucy, do you think ye can ever forgive yer old aunt?" she said suddenly and quickly. "I've been a cross, hard-hearted old fool, an' the Lord's been better to me than I dared to hope for. He's heard my prayers, Lucy, an' he knows how hard I mean to try and make up for the past. If ye'll say ye forgive me, and try to care a little for me, ye'll maybe find Thankful Rest a pleasanter place than ye think it now."

"O Aunt Hepsy, don't say any more," pleaded Lucy, her eyes growing dim. "I'm so glad I've been sick, because you've learned to love me a little."

So the barrier was broken down, and in the ensuing days these two became very dear to each other; and Lucy grew to understand Aunt Hepsy, and to see how much good there lay beneath her grim exterior. The door of Aunt Hepsy's heart had long been locked, and like other unused things, had grown rusty on its hinges. But Lucy had found the key, and entered triumphantly at last.

XIV.

A GREAT CHANGE.

YOU will be wondering what Tom had been about during his sister's illness; but he was still in ignorance of it, his friends thinking it best to wait till the crisis was past. It fell to Aunt Hepsy's lot to send the news, and her letter was such a curiosity in its way that I cannot do better than set it down just as it was.

"THANKFUL REST, *April 18th, 18—*.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I daresay you'll wonder to hear from me, an' will maybe feel skeered; so, to relieve you, I may as well say at once that Lucy's been sick, very sick, but she's getting round nicely now, thank the Lord. She is in bed yet, and I'm writing this beside her. She sends her love, and says she'll write to-morrow. I guess I'll let her do it in about a month. I want to ask you to forgive me for being so hard on you when you lived here. I hope you don't bear your old aunt any grudge. Lucy, God bless her, won't hear me abuse myself, so it's a relief to do it to you, though you are a boy. I keep that

picter you drew of me that I slapped you for, an' I'll look at it when I feel my pesky temper gettin' up. I suppose ye'll be so took up with your paintin' ye couldn't never think of coming back to Thankful Rest. It wouldn't be good for you, if you're getting on any way with Mr. Robert Keane. But you'll come right away in summer, an' see what a different place Lucy has made of Thankful Rest, an' how precious she is to your uncle an' me. I guess she's one of the Lord's messengers, sent to do what all the preachin' in the world couldn't. I reckon I'll finish up. It has took me an hour to write this, I'm so slow with the pen. Give my respects to Mr. Robert Keane; and when he comes to Thankful Rest in summer, maybe he'll get a better welcome than he got before. So no more at present. From your affectionate aunt,

"HEPSY."

That letter reached Boston Avenue in the evening, when Tom was poring over a book of instructions for young artists. He was in his own sanctum, which Mr. Keane had given him when he came—a tiny apartment next the artist's studio, and commanding from its window the finest view in Philadelphia. Tom seized the letter from the servant's hand. He had written twice to Lucy, and was anxiously wondering at her delay in answering, for Lucy had always been a faithful and punctual correspondent.

You would have laughed had you seen the varying expressions on Tom's face as he read Aunt Hepsy's

epistle;—concern at first to hear Lucy was ill; relief to find her recovering; and, last of all, mute, dumfoundered amazement at Aunt Hepsy.

Mr. Keane opened his studio by-and-by and looked out.

"Well, Tom, news from Lucy at last, my boy?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Tom soberly, yet with an odd twinkle in his eye; and then he held out the open letter, saying simply, "Read that, Mr. Keane."

Mr. Keane smiled too as he read. "Lucy has conquered, as I thought she would," he said. "See, Tom, what an influence a meek, gentle, loving spirit like Lucy's has in the world. You and I with our fiery tempers sink into nothingness beside her."

"You, Mr. Keane!" echoed Tom in amazement. "I don't think you have a temper at all."

"Haven't I?" The artist's smile grew sad. "There was a boy once who was expelled from three schools for impertinence and insubordination, and put his parents to the expense of keeping a tutor for him at home. That tutor, Tom, was a man of splendid talents, which his delicate health forbade him to exercise as he desired. His pupil killed him, Tom; the worry and anxiety lest he should not come up to the parents' expectation, combined with what he had to bear from the boy himself, broke his health down, and he died. That boy was *me*."

Tom sat wondering, while Mr. Keane, walking to

and fro, continued slowly—"I went to see him when he was dying, in his poor lodging: he was very poor, you must understand, but nobody durst offer him anything, lest he should feel hurt or insulted. As long as I live, Tom, I shall never forget that night. I saw then clearly how wicked I had been, and how what I thought manly independence befitting my station was only the cowardice of a spirit as far beneath his as earth is beneath heaven. That was a lesson I never forgot; and since that night I have tried, with God's help, to use the legacy he left me."

"What was it?" asked Tom breathlessly.

Mr. Keane lifted Lucy's Bible from the side-table, and turning over the pages held it out to Tom, his finger pointing to the place.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

"Tom," said Mr. Keane one morning a few days later, "I believe you are going to Pendlepoint to-morrow?"

"What?" Tom nearly bounded off his chair. The longing to go home to Lucy for a day or two had well-nigh overcome him since Aunt Hepsy's letter came; but he had tried to stifle it, and had applied himself with double energy to his studies.

"If you don't wish to go, of course I have no more to say," began Mr. Keane; but Tom interrupted him—

"O sir, you don't mean me to go home for good and all, I hope; have I disappointed you? I have tried so hard, sir."

"Stop, stop!" cried Mr. Keane. "Wait till I hint at such a thing. You have surpassed my expectations, my boy. I thought you would like to see your sister, but if I am mistaken—"

"I do want to go, sir; I would give the world almost to see her—but—"

"Well?"

"The expense, sir," Tom ventured to say, encouraged by his kind friend's manner. "It is a long journey, and I have cost you so much already."

"Nonsense; I am a rich man, Tom. But for all that I expect you to pay me back some day. You and I will have a great reckoning by-and-by."

There was a moment's silence.

"How did you know I wanted to go home, Mr. Keane?" said Tom by-and-by.

"I have eyes, my boy," was all Mr. Keane answered, saying nothing of a note he had received from his sister, which ran thus:—

"RED HOUSE, *April 27th.*

"DEAR ROBERT,—Send Tom to Thankful Rest for a few days. Lucy will get well twice as fast after she sees him.—Your affectionate sister, "ALICE."

Next morning saw a very happy boy take his place in the train, which would land him at Pendlepoint in

the evening. It was a long, tiresome journey, especially to an impatient being like Tom. But it came to an end, as all things pleasant or unpleasant must, and he found himself at the little old-fashioned depôt towards seven o'clock at night. There was no one to meet him, of course, because no one, not even Miss Keane, expected him so soon. He ran all the way to the parsonage, and knocked at the door, only to find Abbie in sole possession.

"The parson he be down town, Master Tom," she said, "and Miss Carrie she be at Thankful Rest. I guess she's there most days till night."

Tom thanked her and ran off again across the bridge and through the meadow, not even pausing to look at the cattle, nor to see that Sally was enjoying an unwonted holiday, and a dainty bite at the tender young grass, which the mild weather had brought forward very fast. He paused just a moment outside the orchard fence, and looked at the house, not a little surprised to feel how glad he was to see it again, and how dear it was to him after all. Then he pushed open the gate, went up the path and over the garden fence, and saw Uncle Josh digging the potato patch.

"Halloo, Uncle Josh!" he shouted, feeling quite jovial and free towards him; and Uncle Josh started up and let his spade fall from his hands.

"Marcy, younker, whar did ye come from?" was all he could utter. But, no longer the surly man that

he had been, he held out his hand to him, and looked more than pleased to see him.

"I came from Philadelphia to see Lucy," answered Tom soberly. "How is she?"

"Oh, gettin' along fast; she's in the far parlour these two days, able to sit up till 'most night. I guess she won't be sot up to see ye—oh no, not at all."

There was a twinkle in Uncle Josh's eye, a thing Tom had never seen before. Surely there *was* a change at Thankful Rest.

"I'll go in now," said Tom; and he went away round to the back door. Keziah was making something at the stove, and nearly upset the saucepan in her amazement. Tom nodded to her, and went off to the far parlour. The door was ajar and he peeped in. Was *that* the far parlour? No, it could not be. There were white curtains at the window, flowers everywhere. A sparkling fire in the high brass grate; a low, restful rocking-chair at the hearth; and a couch he did not remember to have seen before, but it looked as if it had been made for ease and comfort. And on the couch lay Lucy, the fire-light dancing on her face: it was pale and thin, but happy-looking, he could see.

She heard a noise at the door, and said, without looking round, "Are you dressed already, Miss Carrie? How fast you have been!"

There was no answer; then Lucy looked round and

gave a great cry. And Tom ran in and knelt down beside her, and gathered her shawl and all in his arms, and they held each other very close; and for a long time there was nothing said.

"How did you come?" asked Lucy at last, her face radiant with joy.

"By train. Mr. Keane sent me. Are you glad, Lucy?"

"Glad?" Lucy had no words wherewith to express her gladness, but it was evident enough.

Just then footsteps sounded on the stair, and Miss Hepsy came into the room followed by Miss Goldthwaite.

She looked scared a moment, but when Tom rose and came to her saying—"I came to see Lucy, Aunt Hepsy, and to thank you for being so good to her,"—she just sat down in the rocking-chair and sobbed like a child. Here was a state of matters! and Tom did not know just then whether to laugh or to cry. But Miss Carrie diverted him by asking questions about his journey, and by-and-by Miss Hepsy rose and said she'd get supper.

"An' ye'll jist bide, Miss Goldthwaite, an' we'll all have it here with Lucy.—Dear, dear, this is a great night. Who'd 'a thought to see you, Tom, all the way from Philadelphia?"

"You look pretty comfortable, Lucy," said Tom jokingly. "I wouldn't mind being sick myself, to be codled up like this."

Lucy smiled, but her eyes grew dim.

"I can't speak about it, Tom," she said. "Aunt Hepsy is too good to me; she reminds me of mamma sometimes.—Isn't she kind, Miss Carrie?"

Miss Carrie nodded, her sweet face full of satisfaction. Evidently the new state of affairs was after her own heart.

By-and-by the table was set, and they all gathered round it, and Tom had a real Thankful Rest supper.

There was not much said; but Tom saw how Aunt Hepsy watched and tended Lucy; and how Uncle Josh, too, had grown gentle even in his roughness; and, above all, he saw how beautiful was Lucy's face in its perfect happiness and content.

"You don't eat, Lucy, my pet," said Aunt Hepsy anxiously.

"I can't, auntie; I am so happy, it's no use;" and Lucy covered her face with her hands and fairly sobbed.

Then Tom rose to his feet, and gave vent to a cheer which would have done honour to an Englishman.

"Bless me, boy, ye'll bring the house down," said Aunt Hepsy, but not looking at all displeased.

"Can't help it, Aunt Hepsy; it's surplus steam; must let it off, or I can't answer for the consequences." And he cheered again and again, till Keziah ran to see what was the matter. She went back to the

kitchen saying to herself, "When I see an' hear that here, I feel like believin', Deacon Frost, that the world's comin' to an end."

Not the world exactly, Keziah, only the old, hard, miserable days have come to an end for ever, and a new era has begun at Thankful Rest.

XV.

THE WEDDING.

TOM stayed a week at home—*home* it truly was to both Lucy and him now, and he left it with regret. But the work he loved and had chosen called him away, and knowing Lucy would be tenderly cared for, he went back to Philadelphia, carrying a much lighter heart than when he first entered it three months before. The summer would be a busy one for him; and as the months sped he proved the truth of Mr. Keane's words, that it was only through much hard, plodding, uninteresting work, that he could ever hope to place his foot on the first step of the ladder. But he had a kind hand and an encouraging word always ready to help him on, and was happy in his apprenticeship.

Thanks to Aunt Hepsy's careful nursing, midsummer saw Lucy fully restored to health again. She had an easy and happy time of it now. There was no more trotting up and down, no more bending under heavy loads—it was only very light work her hands were permitted to do; and she would laugh

and tell Aunt Hepsy she was making a fine lady of her altogether.

"You do what you're bid, an' say nothin', my dear," was always Aunt Hepsy's answer, with oh, what a difference in look and tone.

There was no restriction to her visiting now. She would spend days at the Red House, in company with her friend Minnie; who, in her turn, would come to Thankful Rest, and keep the house alive with her gay nonsense.

So the summer sped, harvest was ingathered again, and one sunny evening in September, Miss Goldthwaite came up to Thankful Rest on special business. Rumours were afloat that the parsonage was soon to lose Miss Carrie, but they had not yet been confirmed.

Miss Hepsy was in the garden, and gave the parson's sister a warm greeting.

"Is Lucy indoors?" Carrie asked, after they had chatted a moment.

"Yes; I heard her singing a minute ago," answered Aunt Hepsy. "Jes' go in and look for her, Miss Goldthwaite; I'll be in by-and-by."

"Perhaps I had better talk to you first, Miss Hepsy, as you have the power to grant or refuse what I want."

"I don't often say no to ye, Miss Carrie," said Aunt Hepsy with a dry smile.

"I know it; but this is a very serious request—in fact, I am afraid to make it."

"Out with it. I can but say no any way."

Miss Goldthwaite leaned on her parasol, and looked at Aunt Hepsy, smiling, and blushing slightly too.

"Perhaps you know I'm going to be married soon, Miss Hepsy?"

"I hear the folks sayin' so; but I paid no heed, guessin' ye'd come an' tell us afore it took place. Is't to be immediately?"

"At Christmas. But I'm going home to New York in three weeks."

"To get ready," nodded Miss Hepsy. "Well?"

"Can't you guess what I want, Miss Hepsy?"

Miss Hepsy stood a moment in wondering silence, and then said very slowly, "I guess it'll be Lucy ye want."

"Yes; I want her to go home with me, and remain till after my marriage. Frank will bring her back when he comes. Now it's out. Order me off the premises now, Miss Hepsy; I know you feel like it."

"This is September," said Aunt Hepsy very slowly; "October, November, December, January—perhaps nigh half a year. Well, Miss Goldthwaite, excuse me sayin' it, but the Lord'll need to help your husband; he'll not be able to help hisself, that's certain. Ye'd move the Peak, as I've said afore."

"Am I to take that as your permission, Miss Hepsy?"

"Hev ye spoke to Lucy?"

"Not yet; you had to be asked first. If you had

said no, I should not have thought of mentioning it to Lucy at all."

"If Lucy wants to go, I'm willin'; but it'll be a queer house without her."

"Thank you, Miss Hepsy," said Carrie, and bent forward and kissed her. "I think you will not regret it. It will soon pass, and will do Lucy a world of good. She is growing up, you know, and wants to see something."

"P'raps you're right," said Aunt Hepsy. "Yes, go in now, Miss Goldthwaite; I want to think a bit."

Carrie went in, and kneeling down on the hearth beside Lucy, said abruptly, "I am going to be married at Christmas, Lucy, and want you for my bridesmaid. I am going home to New York in three weeks, and your aunt says I may take you with me. Will you come?"

Lucy's face flushed with pleasure, but she said quickly,—

"You are very kind, Carrie. I should like it dearly. But would it be right to leave my uncle and aunt?"

"If they say you may, Lucy. I have thought it well over before I mentioned it at all; and I'm sure you would enjoy yourself."

"I know that. May I have a day or two to think of it, Carrie?"

"As many as you like, so that you only come, dear. Now, I'm going off; I haven't a minute to spare.—By-

the-by, Alice and Minnie will likely be at papa's, too, all December, so that is another inducement. Good-bye." She stooped and kissed Lucy, and ran out of the house.

Pretty soon Aunt Hepsy came in, looking very grave and sad. She took up her knitting, and for a bit neither spoke.

"Three months is a long time, Aunt Hepsy," said Lucy at last.

Aunt Hepsy never spoke.

Then Lucy rose and came to her, and laid her arm about her neck. "You don't want me to go, auntie, I know you don't."

"Go away; I didn't say I didn't," said Aunt Hepsy in her gruffest tones.

"Auntie, if you will only tell me you would rather I stayed, I won't go."

"Don't ask questions, child. I guess I'd never live through them three months. As well go away for ever almost."

"Then I won't go," said Lucy stoutly. "I'd dearly like to be at Carrie's wedding; but I can't leave you, auntie, for so long." And from that decision no persuasion could induce Lucy to depart—she was firm as a rock; but Aunt Hepsy made a little private arrangement of her own, which was to be kept a profound secret from the bride-elect.

Judge Keane travelled to New York the day before Christmas with a young lady under his care; and when

the pair were ushered into Dr. Goldthwaite's drawing-room, the bride-elect saw, peeping out from among the rich furs which Aunt Hepsy had provided for her darling, a face she loved very dearly, and which could belong to nobody in the world but Lucy Hurst.

They were all together in the long drawing-room, waiting only the coming of the bride, ere the solemn ceremony could be performed. There was a large company, for the Goldthwaites had a wide circle of acquaintance. Conspicuous among them were the friends we know best—all the Keanes (save the invalid mother, who thought and prayed for them at home), and Tom and Lucy Hurst. It had been a surprise to Lucy to find him at New York. She had not expected to see him again till the summer-time. She looked very fair and sweet in her delicate white dress, but was utterly unconscious of the admiration she was creating; and of the close observation of a pair of dark earnest eyes, which had been the first gleam of comfort to her when her mother died.

By-and-by, old white-haired Dr. Goldthwaite came in with Carrie on his arm, and they took their places silently; and in a very few minutes Frank had uttered the irrevocable words, and the wedding was over. Then Mr. and Mrs. George Keane received abundant congratulations, and they adjourned to partake of breakfast. In the hall stood a quantity of baggage labelled "Mrs. Keane," which seemed very formidable,

but was not much after all, considering the travellers were going to Europe. Yes; the young pair were to have a six months' tour before settling down at Pendlepoint, and some felt as if Carrie were going away for ever. She looked very grave and sad; and when she came down ready to go, broke down utterly bidding her mother good-bye.

"Now then, this will never do," said Judge Keane, with that comical smile of his. "George, get your wife into the carriage, or we shall have her rueing she ever promised to follow you."

Carrie smiled through her tears, and shook her finger at the judge. Then, as she turned to go, a light touch fell upon her arm, and a low voice whispered tremulously,—

"May God bless you all your life, Mrs. Keane."

It was Lucy, her great eyes shining with unspeakable love and tenderness.

"Never Mrs. Keane to you, Lucy, my pet," she whispered back. "Carrie always, and always. Write to me."

Then she was hurried out to the carriage, forgetting in the excitement of the moment that she possessed no address to give. The door closed upon them, the coachman sprang to the box, and the next moment they were gone. They had embarked together on the sea of life, and the voyage bade fair to be a happy and prosperous one.

"I don't like weddings," said Judge Keane dis-

contentedly. "They are miserable, heart-breaking things at the best."

"Time was when you did not think so, judge," said the doctor, with a twinkle in his eye.—"Eh, little one?"

It was Lucy whom the doctor addressed, and she answered timidly, "It is very sad to give away those we love, as you have done to-day, sir."

"Wait till somebody wants to take you away, my lady," laughed the judge. "There'll be an earthquake at Thankful Rest."

"I never heard any one speak as you do, Judge Keane," said Lucy, with a dignity which dumfoundered Tom; and she moved away and sat down by Mrs. Goldthwaite, and began to talk to her about Carrie.

"What makes you look so sober, Tom Hurst?" queried Minnie Keane's voice at his elbow a few minutes later.

"Shall I tell you, Minnie?"

"You must," was the calm reply.

"It seems to me, then," he said very slowly, "that Lucy is growing up, and I don't like it. Do you?"

"I don't mind. Everybody grows up and marries, and goes to Europe, and dies after a bit; that's about what life amounts to—not much, is it?"

Tom laughed, he couldn't help it; but after a bit he answered gravely, "I am afraid to grow up myself, Minnie."

"Why?"

"Because a man has so much responsibility, so much to do for God: I don't think it will be very easy."

"Oh, I do!" answered Minnie. "Just do all you can, with all your might; that's what mamma says, and it's the easiest way."

"So it is," said Tom. "I shan't forget that, Minnie."

And neither he did.

XVI.

FIVE YEARS AFTER.

AGAIN it was sweet spring-time at Thankful Rest. The garden was gay with tender leaves and blossoms, and the orchard white with bloom. There the birds made sweet melody as of yore; and, as of yore, the sunny river brawled and whispered and played as it hurried through the meadow to the sea.

At five o'clock in the afternoon Aunt Hepsy was in the kitchen, busy as usual; her hands knew no idleness. Two teacups and a plate of cake stood on the table, the remnants of the early tea she and Lucy had taken a little while before. Presently a light step sounded in the lobby, and Lucy came in dressed for walking. Five years make a great change; for she had grown from a slight, diminutive girl, to a tall, lithe, graceful young lady, just on the verge of womanhood.

"Ye look like a picter, by all the world," said Aunt Hepsy, pausing to admire her; and Lucy's answer was a silvery laugh, so full of perfect happiness and content, that a silent bird on the window ledge caught the infection and burst into song.

"I'm going to the post-office to see if there's a letter from Tom, Aunt Hepsy," she said; "and then to Dovecot, to see Mrs. George Keane. I'll be back sure before dark."

"Ye'd better," said Aunt Hepsy, with something of her ancient grimness. "The house ain't worth livin' in when ye're out."

Lucy came close to Aunt Hepsy, and laying her gloved hands on her shoulders, bent tender, beaming eyes on her face. "It makes me so thankful, auntie, to think you miss me, and are glad when I come back. I don't suppose there's a happier girl anywhere than I am."

"Nor a happier pair than ye make yer uncle an' me," said Aunt Hepsy softly. "Off ye go, ye waste my time like anything; time was when I'd make ye fly round considerable if ye'd ventured."

Lucy laughed, and went her way, turning aside as she went through the paddock for a pleasant word with Uncle Josh ploughing in the low meadow. He stopped his team to watch the pretty girlish figure out of sight. Crossing the bridge she met Ebenezer going with a letter to Thankful Rest. It was for her, and in Tom's handwriting. There was no need for her to go down to the town, and she turned in the direction of the Dovecot, which was the name of the pretty home occupied by George Keane and his wife. It was midway between the Red House and the parsonage, and fifteen minutes' leisurely walking

brought her to it. Miss Goldthwaite had been married four years past, and had one little son, the joy and torment of her life. He was in bed, however, when Lucy called, so there was a chance of a moment's quiet talk.

"I have had a letter from Tom to-night, Carrie," she said when the first greetings were over. "His picture has sold for five hundred dollars."

"O Lucy, I am so glad. Such a success for a young artist! How proud Robert will be of his pupil."

Lucy's eyes beamed her pride, though she said very little.

"Frank is here," said Mrs. Keane after a moment. "He is out somewhere with George; let us find them, and communicate the good news. What will Aunt Hepsy say?"

They rose and went out into the sweet spring twilight and found Mr. Goldthwaite and Mr. George Keane in the garden at the back. There were warm congratulations from both, and an hour slipped away in discussing the artist, his work and prospects, till Lucy remembered her promise to Aunt Hepsy, and said that she must be going. Mr. Goldthwaite would return too, he said, as it was growing late. His sister fancied Lucy's company was an inducement to him to leave so early, but she discreetly held her peace.

It was almost dark, though the lamp was not lit at Thankful Rest, when Lucy reached home.

"You've kept your time," said Aunt Hepsy well pleased. "Did ye come home alone?"

"No, Aunt Hepsy," answered Lucy very low, and the semi-darkness hid her face. "Mr. Goldthwaite was at Dovecot, and walked home with me."

"Mrs. Keane's folks all well?" asked Aunt Hepsy, suspecting nothing.

"Yes; and O Aunt Hepsy, I have a letter from Tom: his picture in the exhibition has sold for five hundred dollars."

Aunt Hepsy uplifted her hands in mute amazement.

"Marcy on us," she exclaimed at last. "What a power o' money for a picter! Is't true, Lucy?"

"Yes, quite true; and he has got such praise for it," said Lucy joyfully. "Aren't you proud of him, Aunt Hepsy?"

"I guess I am," said Aunt Hepsy. "Five hundred dollars! Dear, dear! What will Josh say to this? Does he say anything about coming home soon?"

"I'll read you the letter when the lamp's lighted, auntie," said Lucy.

"Well, light it, there's a good child; it's 'most time anyway. I've been idle a good half-hour."

But Lucy did not seem in any hurry. She hovered about in an odd, restless kind of way, and finally came behind Aunt Hepsy's chair, and folded her hands on her shoulder.

"What is it, child?" said Aunt Hepsy wonderingly.

"Summat you have to tell me, I reckon. Anything in Tom's letter ye haven't told me?"

"No, Aunt Hepsy," and Lucy's voice fell very low now. "I want to tell you—I have promised to be Mr. Goldthwaite's wife."

"Bless me, Lucy, 'tain't true?" cried Aunt Hepsy, starting up; and seeing in Lucy's downcast face confirmation of her words, she sank back to her chair, and for the first and only time in her life Aunt Hepsy went off into hysterics.

* * * * *

In the tender gloaming of an August evening Tom and Lucy Hurst stood together within the porch at Thankful Rest. They had been at Pendlepoint visiting old friends, and, after walking slowly home, lingered here talking of old times, and loath to leave the soft beauty of the summer night. A tall, broad-shouldered, handsome fellow was Tom Hurst now, towering a head above his sister, who stood very close to him, her head leaning against his shoulder.

"Do you remember what a pair of miserable little creatures stood just here five years ago, Lucy?" he said half laughingly, half earnestly.

"Yes," said Lucy softly. "What a difference between then and now."

There was a moment's silence. Tom's eyes watched the stars peeping out one by one in the opal sky, his heart full of the happiness of the present and all the hope and promise of the future.

Presently Aunt Hepsy, ever watchful for Lucy now, called to them to come in, for the dews were falling.

"Tom, has not God cast our lines in pleasant places, and given us a goodly heritage?" said Lucy softly as they turned to obey the summons.

"Ay," answered Tom, his voice softening also. "May He help us to be truly grateful for His goodness all our lives, Lucy."

THE END.