

THE OLD DISTILLERY;

OR,

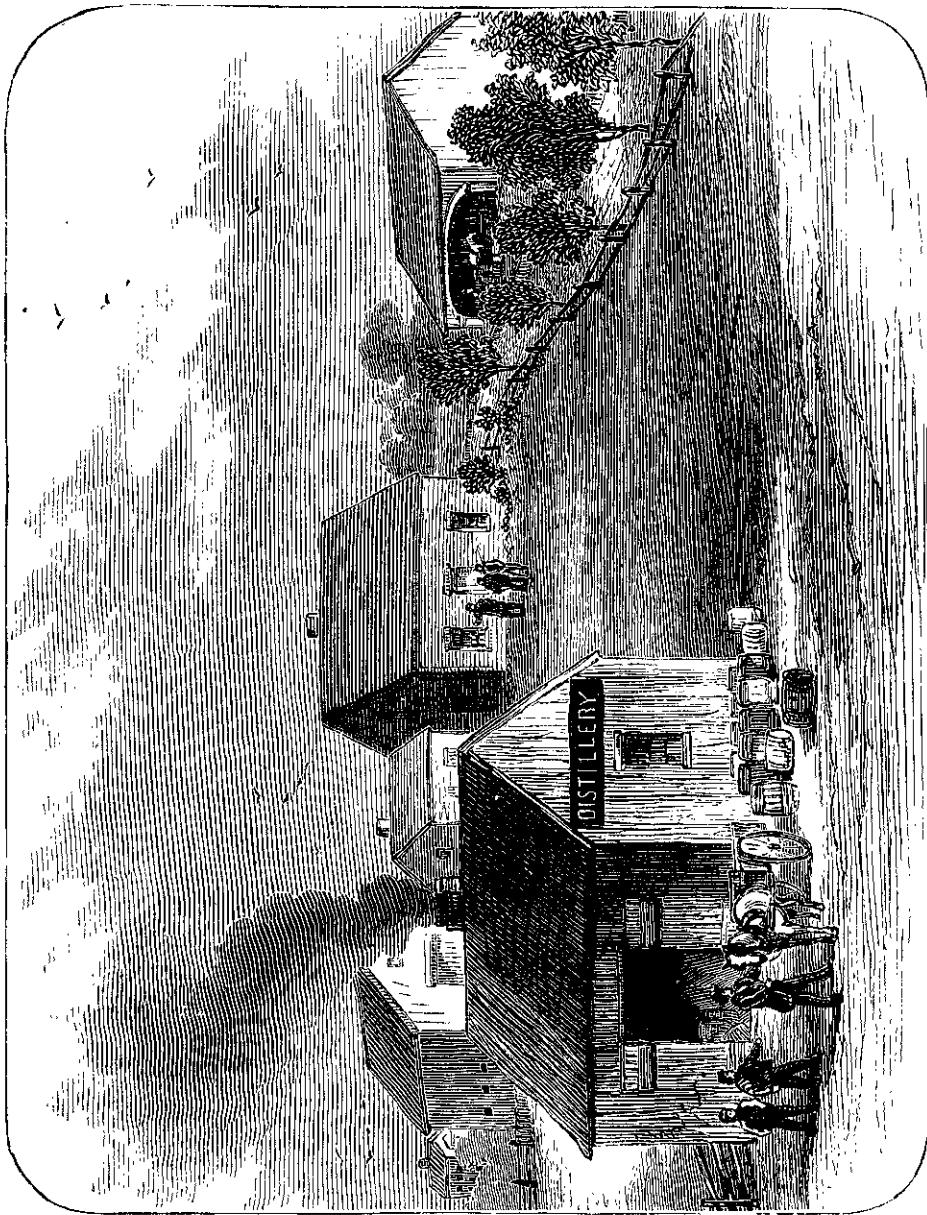
HOPE ARCHER.

BY A. J. G.,

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Carefully read and

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CHAPTER I.



QUIET, serenely-gliding river, describing all varieties of figures in its course through a valley of unsurpassed fertility, gentle uplands crowned with oak and maple, lowlands dotted with substantial farmhouses, here a broad piece of dense woodland, there green, level fields, the whole intersected by smooth carriage-roads, and intricate foot-paths, constitute the main features of the spot where our story opens.

The town of Plumley here embraces an interval of the richest soil, containing several thousand acres. Years ago, it was one of the cherished haunts of the red man; his canoe alone broke the ripples on the surface of the quiet river, and the rough paths of the dense woodland were trodden by no foot but his. But the white man discovered the beautiful valley. The wood, the river, the plain, must henceforth serve his needs; there should be no more smoke of wigwams on the hills, nor gay dance and song in the valley below. Hunted, baffled at every point, the Indian sullenly withdrew, but at the same time made his preparations for defence.

The bloody French and Indian War now broke out, accompanied with the terrible burnings and massacres so graphically described in the history of that period. The inhabitants of Plumley will still point you to the spot where the murderous Indians rushed upon a defenceless family, and re-

late, with a shiver of horror, the story of the massacre and captivity that followed. We will not dwell upon this. Plumley is now one of the most quiet and delightful retreats of our Northern States, and, save that hatchet-heads and arrow-points, with an occasional skeleton, are turned up by the plough, there would be nothing save the historical fact to remind the traveller that he was in a spot once so deeply stained with the blood of his ancestors.

Just when we introduce the reader to this quiet township will never be known, save that it was in that season of the year when the feathered tribe return from their sojourn southward, and begin to demonstrate by actual performance that "the time of the singing of birds has come." We shall not give you, we say, more of data than this concerning the facts of which we write.

In truth, if you had looked upon the exquisite beauty of that spring morning,

you would not care in what particular year it might be. Sol had risen in his fullest dress of light, — risen, too, with considerable show of gayety for such a steady old traveller as he usually is ; for, first, he had sent up skirmishers in gray, thin, scarcely definable cloud-forms, but suddenly these were displaced by a dainty body-guard in pink and white, that dashed boldly about, and settled on the blue summit of the far-off mountains with a most provokingly saucy air. But ah, they, too, were speedily vanquished ; a train of light shot up in the east behind them, and meekly they yielded to the conquering glory of their superior.

It is not probable that Deacon Archer, who had watched the sunrise from his doorway, also took note of this little contention among the clouds ; but it is certain that when the first sunbeams came flashing along the grass that shook off its dew at his feet, he stepped back to a narrow stairway, and shouted, —

“Boys, sun’s up !”

“Ay, ay,” answered a pair of stentorian lungs.

The deacon resumed his stand, while a trampling of heavy feet in the chamber above followed, and was finally succeeded by a universal blundering down the stairway, as of people only half awake.

“Jethro,” said Deacon Archer, sternly, turning round to the one whose feet first touched the lower floor, “you were out late last night. This must not happen again !”

Jethro yawned, stretched his burly frame with the utmost unconcern, and betook himself in the direction of the barn.

There he swung across his shoulder a hoe, and calling to his brother Isaac, who had followed, to do the same, the two were soon striding across the “mowing” to the field beyond. Here they fell steadily to work, and for an hour not a word was spoken. At the end of that time, Isaac straightened himself up, bent forward a mo-

ment in listening attitude, and shouted to his brother, who had gained on him a considerable distance, —

"Halloo, Jeth! Breakfast's ready!"

Jeth shouldered his hoe and came up to Isaac.

"Smart worker you are, Ike," he muttered, scornfully, measuring with his eye the distance between the end of his row and the point at which Isaac had stopped. It was true that Jethro had outdone his brother; but then there was not a man in all Plumley that could compete with him.

"You may work, and be hanged," was the coarse retort. "I'm not goin' to kill myself for the 'old man.'"

"Keep your temper, Ike," said Jeth, good-naturedly. "You're 'most twenty-one."

"And you're more'n that! You're a fool not to quit!"

"Look there, Ike," said Jeth, stopping in his walk, and pointing toward the beautiful lowlands which sloped off from the foot

of the hill on the side of which they stood, "do you see that field stretchin' off beyond Jake Keyes's place? I've got the promise of that as soon as I can make any show towards payin' for it. And I've got enough to start with!" He clapped his hand on his pocket as he spoke.

"You, Jeth! You're lyin'!" exclaimed Ike, reddening with sudden anger and amazement. "You haven't got it! You haven't come by it honestly!"

"Keep cool, Ike," said Jeth, patronizingly. "Keep cool! I've got it, and no mistake!" and he chuckled, holding aloft his pocket-book.

"Show it to me, or I'll tell all Plumley you're a liar!"

Jeth sat down upon a rock, and drew out from his pocket-book a large pile of bills. He counted them carefully, Ike looking on.

"You're always in luck," said the latter, as Jethro replaced them, giving utterance to an illy-repressed ejaculation of an-

ger and disappointment, "but now you shall tell me,—how did you get it?"

"Why," said Jeth, evasively, rising and walking toward the house, "haven't I always been doing odd jobs here and there?"

"Not enough to get that pile! Oh, I know,"—a sudden gleam of intelligence lighted up Ike's little gray eyes,— "the mill!" They had just reached a small building which stood on the opposite side of the road from the house. "The old man's been partial to you,—I knew that,—and you've just been and taken advantage of it. You didn't get all that by fair means! Next fall, we'll see if this mill don't turn me out something! There'll be a great apple crop this year; wont the cider run?"

"Ike," said Jethro, as they neared the house, "you needn't say anything about this!"

"Well," said Ike, indifferently, making, however, the mental reservation that he should do pretty much as he'd a mind to.

The family were already seated at table

when the two sons joined them. The only notice taken of their entrance was to push toward them the platter of meat, a motion evidently understood to imply, "Help yourselves." In truth, helping one's self, and no one else, seemed the universal custom in the deacon's family, and not only at meals, but through the day.

The breakfast was nearly despatched, when Deacon Archer, complacently disposing of the remnant of his Johnny-cake, addressed himself to Jethro:—

"I want that piece all hoed to-day, Jethro. I shall take Maurice down to the meadow with me, and Ike and Ben shall go with you. See to it they work right smart!"

"If they work smart, it wont be because I'm there!" was the response. "I'm bound another way!"

"Cool," interposed Ike, with a grim smile. "I'm bound another way too!"

Now Ike had not before had the slightest intention of quitting home that day, and it

was not strange that Jethro lifted his heavy eyes wonderingly. Perhaps the involuntary fear that Ike meant to follow him showed itself there.

"Don't trouble yourself," said Ike. "I sha'n't creep round after you! I'm bound another way. I've got business too!"

"Business!" said the deacon, standing aghast. "What business have either of you to have business that isn't *my* business?"

Jethro flushed a little, and Ike smiled again, grimly as before.

"*Business!*" ejaculated Mrs. Archer.

"*Business!*" laughed Susan, and she pulled Jethro by the sleeve, and whispered something in his ear, at which her brother, flushing still more, rose and walked up-stairs.

"Business or no business," said the deacon, severely, with an ominous shadow gathering on his brow, "that field must be hoed! Jeth may do as he likes; but do you, Ike, take Ben and go along."

"I told you I was going another way," muttered Ike. "Take Ben yourself!"

"Isaac!" thundered the deacon.

Isaac started. With all his hot-headedness, he was something of a coward; but it would not do to give up at once.

"Well, it's a good day to hoe, and I can take some other day to be off just as well."

The words had hardly crossed his lips, when he felt his father's hard grip on his shoulder.

"No, sir, not a day this spring do you get to be off!"

The hand, the hoarsely-muttered words, were more than the young man's spirit would endure. He shook it off with a half-suppressed oath, and turned his blazing eyes on his father.

"If you dare" —

Here Maurice interposed.

"Don't, Isaac! don't, father! We shall all have a holiday by and by. Come, Ben,

run along with Isaac, and I'll come after I've helped father in the meadow."

The storm was averted that time. Isaac, though in a most wrathful state of mind, finally shuffled out, and Ben followed. The deacon sunk down on the nearest chair.

"Ungrateful children!" he exclaimed. "What an affliction they are to me! But 'the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth!' I have tried to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and they mock at me. Maurice, you have always obeyed me thus far, but remember how the Bible speaks of children who dishonor their father and mother."

Maurice was silent. There flitted through his mind disjointed fragments of a passage he had read about fathers dealing gently with their children, not provoking them to wrath; but his filial respect was firm, and if the whole passage had recurred to him, he would not have repeated it. Maurice was not Young America, by any means.

CHAPTER II.

MAURICE was a sort of mystery in the Archer family. With a temperament wholly unlike the rude, unrefined disposition of the rest, he had learned from early childhood to hold himself aloof from many of their interests, and thereby earned the reputation of being odd and strange. This was not wholly untrue. While he was quite young, they thought him girlish, and that he needed an extra amount of petting in consequence; and petted he had always been, after their fashion. Never was made a greater mistake. Maurice was not ungrateful for kindness; but his high sense of justice and unselfishness could brook no show of fondness, unless it came spontaneously, or

was equally bestowed on others who had as much right to it as he. And so it was, that a sort of estrangement gradually grew up between Maurice and the rest of the family. He came ere long to turn from them with a dissatisfaction sometimes almost amounting to disgust; and they, in turn, left him to himself.

Maurice was now sixteen. Thus far he had never been opposed in the indulgence of his tastes, save one, — his love of books. Not one of the family, not even his two sisters, had any sympathy with this fondness. His father was not a man of small abilities; he had managed without study to lay up such information on general subjects as was very creditable to a person in his position in life; his mother was held throughout the neighborhood as a smart, capable woman, one who could spin or weave with anybody, show a nice dairy, and bear no small share at the numerous quilting and donation parties, and all such merry affairs as usually call out the

first culinary and "managing" talent in the parish.

Now the deacon always averred that he had made a man of himself without education, and there was no sense in Maurice's thinking he could not do the same. It was sheer folly, nonsense! If he had the making of a man in him, it would come out fast enough, books or no books.

"But, father," Maurice ventured one day, after listening to a long harangue on this point, "if you will only consent to my borrowing books to read, I will not say a word about going to school. Only let me do this, and I can learn by myself."

"I wont have a boy of mine making a fool of himself," stoutly protested the deacon. "There are books enough in the house for you. If you'd read them as much as I have, you'd be a good deal wiser than you are. But as sure as I give you leave to get books here and there, of nobody knows who, there's no knowing what Satan'll lead

you to! Besides, you're delicate and babyish enough already, and it's my duty, as a father, to keep books away from you. You shall go right into the farm-work this summer, and learn to mow first thing. It'll make you strong, mind and body."

Maurice gave up the point for that time. He smiled, as he looked at his good-sized arms, at the thought of his being delicate; but it was with a most bitter, defiant spirit that he yielded to his father's authority. About the farm-work he went with proud sullenness, and so Maurice was voted "odder" than ever.

It was a thing heretofore unknown for him to interpose in the contentions that often took place between his father and elder brothers. Usually he took himself out of the way as far as possible, and waited till the storm was over. A different impulse had controlled him on the occasion of the scene described in the last chapter; but he had succeeded in his office of peacemaker only so far as to pre-

vent a prolonged altercation. But this gave him no satisfaction. On the contrary, he felt more embittered than ever; and the shadow on his brow deepened perceptibly. His sister Susan noticed this as he followed his father out of the house to the meadow.

"Maurice is as sullen as can be this morning, mother," she remarked, watching his slow footsteps. "What an odd boy he is!"

"Odd," repeated Mrs. Archer, in a tone as if something lay under that thought for which she could not find expression. "That boy has tried me more than all the rest of you together. He isn't fretful,—never was; he isn't disrespectful either; but it seems as if he had a way of his own about things; and if you don't speak just so, and act just so, it's all of no account. I hope some day he'll find he's got to come down from his notions." And Mrs. Archer, having freed herself of this burst of virtuous indignation, took herself and the butter she was working off to the dairy.

While this little conversation had been going on in the kitchen, Maurice and his father proceeded in silence to the meadow. There they went to work, still in almost perfect silence on Maurice's part; for this morning he was in one of his most impenetrable moods. At last, the deacon, receiving answers only in monosyllables, became quite impatient.

"Maurice," he exclaimed, sharply, "what is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Maurice, for the moment wondering at the question.

"Nothing! then why have you said only 'yes' and 'no' to me all the morning? You are growing stranger than ever, Maurice; I won't have a boy of mine so odd! Now, hereafter, remember that, when I put questions to you, I shall expect to be answered with something more than 'yes' and 'no.' Will you remember, in future, that those two words mean very little, hey?"

"I cannot, sir," was the reply, though uttered very respectfully.

"Cannot! and why not, pray?"

"Because"—still respectfully—"they do mean a great deal sometimes."

"Nonsense!" retorted his father. The word, spoken as it was, was evidently the concentrated expression of a great many ideas in the deacon's mind. "But remember what I say! Now how do you like farm-work, right straight along,—week in and week out, from sunrise till sunset? Is it going to make you strong?"

"I do not like farm-work," said Maurice, simply,— "not so much of it. And I do not know that it is making me strong; for I always was strong, I believe."

The deacon paused in his work, and leaning on his spade, endeavored to get a full view of his son's face; but it was impossible.

"Look here, Maurice," he said, after a moment's consideration, "if you don't like farm-work, what do you say to a trade,—blacksmithing, perhaps? I should like one of my

boys to be something besides a farmer. What say?"

Maurice straightened himself up. "I would rather be a farmer, sir," he said. But the deacon saw that something lay beneath his words. In spite of himself, his eyes were held by the unusual expression of Maurice's; and so for a minute they looked at each other, the father and the son, — only a minute, and the pent-up storm in the boy's breast burst forth.

"Father, father!" he cried, flinging his spade from him, as if, with the action, he would have dashed through every obstacle that hindered the accomplishment of his wishes, "you know what I want, — you know!"

"Yes, I know," was the unmoved reply. "And I know, too, that it is better for you to do as I wish to have you."

The boy's frame writhed under the cold tone.

"Father," he said presently.

"Say on!"

"I will not be any expense to you; I know how it can be managed. Luke Wortham paid his own way at the academy easily."

"Yes, and almost broke his father's heart by forsaking the religion and the church he was brought up in, and going off to join some other. He'll come to a bad end; mark me, he will!"

"I am sure Luke is very good," answered Maurice; "but I was only thinking of how he got his education. And if I" —

"Not a word more of that, Maurice, unless" — The deacon looked thoughtfully down at the turf he had been spading.

"What is it?" cried Maurice, eagerly. "Oh, I will do anything!"

"Will you?" said the deacon, doubtfully, and with a thread of sarcasm running through his tone. "Well, I've been thinking" — he stroked his beard with a great amount of satisfaction — "of there being such a demand for cider last year, and considering whether it

would not be profitable to build a distillery, and make cider brandy; and if you would put right in and help" —

"You know I will not do it!" interrupted Maurice, with indignant scorn. "Make cider brandy! Oh, I don't see" —

"Stop!" said his father, with stern authority. "I choose to make cider brandy, and, as soon as the fall work is over, shall build a distillery. Take up your spade, sir, and go to work, and remember you've lost one good chance! No more whimpering to me about school!"

Maurice took up his spade; but he worked furiously, and the hard set of his lips did not relax all that forenoon. At night, when they went in to supper, they found the good elder of the parish waiting to take a seat with them.

"Well, Brother Archer, how is the Lord prospering you?" he inquired, after the meal was in progress.

"I may say well, Elder Leonard," answered

the deacon, complacently. "Chastenings come occasionally, in various forms," — here he glanced at his sons, who sat opposite; "but we cannot always receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not evil."

"True, true, brother. But, in temporal matters, God seems to have been very gracious to you of late."

"I spoke only of some troubles that weigh down my spirits at times, elder," was the deacon's succinct reply.

The elder changed the subject, and inquired concerning the crops.

"Hay is coming in good, I think. The grass has got a fine start, at least. Fruit-trees never looked better, apples especially. Apples," continued the deacon, "are our great staple product, taking into consideration the profit of cider-making. There'll be an almost untold quantity of cider made this fall, if we may judge by the apple-blossom."

"And," said the elder, with an intonation of his voice that brought the deacon's eyes to

bear upon him with keen scrutiny, "with this untold quantity of cider, and the taste it is fast giving for something stronger, comes, also, an untold amount of misery, — misery that will not stop with this year or the next ; no, nor will it ever."

"Well," said the deacon, after a pause of some length, "no doubt there is some truth in your remark, but it is a trouble that is entirely needless. Misery never follows sensible, moderate drinking ; but when people cut themselves loose from all restraint, they must expect to pay the penalty, and there is no one to be blamed but themselves."

"You are wrong, Brother Archer," said the elder, mildly ; "they indeed commit a great sin, but what shall be said of those who lay temptation in their way ? Nothing ? And besides, there are few men — very few — who, having once acquired a habit for intoxicating liquor, have sufficient moral strength to avoid drinking to excess. I have sometimes seen such ; but human nature is weak

at best, and especially so when unassisted by true religious principle. You cannot but admit this truth, my brother."

"Of course," the deacon replied, "I admit this. But it does not take from men the moral obligation to restrain their appetites and passions."

"Certainly not. But does it not lay upon Christians a solemn obligation to avoid doing anything whereby a brother stumbleth, or is made weak ? And where, in the light of this, does he stand who prepares a harmful draught for his fellow-man, even though he does not directly put it to his lips, and force him to drink ?"

Whether the deacon would ever have answered this question is not known, as, the meal being now concluded, he arose from the table, and the subject dropped.

A half-hour afterwards, as the elder was urging his horse towards home, he overtook Maurice going for the cows. He drew rein at once.

"Will you take a seat with me, Maurice?" he asked. "You are going directly my way, I believe;" and so Maurice climbed into the elder's chaise.

"I have been wishing to see you for some time, Maurice," he said, as they drove on. "You are troubled; may I not know the cause?"

What a real kindly sympathy there was in that tone!

"You know, Elder Leonard," said Maurice presently, "that I have wished to go to school very much. But I must give it up. Father will not hear a word about it."

"And what reason does he give?"

"None, only that he thinks it foolish. I think it's not money that's in the way. I told him I would gladly work my way through."

"No," said the elder, "it is not the lack of means evidently. Your father, Maurice, has found cider-making very profitable, pecuniarily."

"I know it," said Maurice, sorrowfully.

"Jethro shared the profits with him last year; and"— He hesitated.

"I will not urge you, Maurice," said his companion. "Tell me only what you choose."

"Father said to me to-day," said Maurice, speaking as if he were ashamed of the words, "that if I would help him about that next fall, I should go to school, and it was my only chance."

"I am glad you will not do it," said the elder, earnestly, laying his hand encouragingly on his shoulder. "Keep away from everything of the kind, my son."

"Oh! but, Elder Leonard," said Maurice, "I did so want to study; I don't know but that I should have yielded, if he had not told me that he meant to build a distillery next fall."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed the elder, sadly. "My dear boy, I am very sorry; I would this evil could be crushed."

"Oh, sir," said Maurice, "can't you do anything?"

"I can use all my influence privately, Maurice, and have and shall; but, to come out publicly, my people are not prepared for it, neither am I."

Maurice was silent. He knew enough of the past to judge what the future would be, with a distillery in direct connection with his father's well-known cider-mill, and there was no help, no escape.

"Maurice," inquired the elder presently, "how is Tom doing now?"

"Not well, sir; he goes over to the village two or three times a week."

Tom was the eldest son of the deacon's family, married, and living in a small cottage not far from his father's. Like his brothers Jethro and Isaac, he had inherited a coarse physical and mental nature; was fiery, unreasonable, and loved rum, a taste for which he had acquired in his youth, beyond and above anything else.

Over the river to the village he generally went two or three nights a week, to procure

the desired article. It was no wonder the elder sighed as he heard Maurice's information.

"Well, Maurice," he said presently, "do not be discouraged. Believe me, I shall not forget you. And you must have books. You have not been over to borrow any lately."

"I have no time now to read, sir."

"I suppose not. Well, you must leave me here. Keep up good heart; and, my dear boy,"—he took his hand tenderly,— "remember the knowledge of books will not fit you for heaven; Christ will have us seek him, be we ever so ignorant. Good-night, my son."

CHAPTER III.

T might have been a week later that Jethro, having been absent another whole day, came home in the early twilight, and sought his sister Susan. She came at his call, with a shawl thrown over her shoulders, and bonnet in hand.

"Oh," said Jethro, in a disappointed tone, "I didn't know you was goin' away."

"I wasn't going far," said Susan, — "only down to see Ruth Davis."

"I'll go a part of the way with you. Where's the rest of the folks?" said Jeth, glancing furtively about.

"Mother and father have gone to evening meeting; Maurice is about somewhere. Come, if you're going; I'm in a hurry!"

They walked away from the house, Susan rather taking the lead, and expressing her impatience at Jethro's leisurely steps and the heavy swing of his brawny arms. Jethro heard her talk good-naturedly; but at the distance of a few rods down the road, he halted.

"Go 'long, and see Ruth," he said, throwing himself down by the roadside; "I'll wait here."

"No, I wont," said his sister, stopping short. "I can't be away long on account of the milk, and if you've got anything to say, I'll hear it now; if you haven't, I'll go on."

"Sit down, then," said Jeth.

She sat down. Jeth drew a pipe from his pocket, and lighted a match.

"I thought you had something to say," said Susan. "If you're going to smoke all night first, I may as well go along."

"Don't," said Jeth, detaining her; "what a fret you're in! I haven't had a smoke to-

day. What should you say, Sue, if I should tell you I'd bought a farm?"

"Well, I guess I should say, 'What else?'"

"What else? Why, a house and a barn."

"Is that all?" inquired Susan. "Why don't you say you've bought a wife?"

Jeth grinned. "Because the bargain isn't exactly finished up, Sue! Ha, ha!"

"What's in the way, Jeth?"

"Nothin', I s'pose, but time, and time never waits for no man," said Jeth, smiling grimly at what he thought a sharp remark.

"Who's the girl?"

"Now just as though you don't know! Who should it be?" asked Jeth, annoyed.

"Who should it be? Ann Perkins, maybe."

"Ann Perkins!" repeated Jeth, with a dissatisfied grunt.

"Well, then, who is it?"

"I believe her name is Linda Waters," answered Jeth, rather deliberately. "You don't know her, I s'pose."

"Don't I! I know she's a proud piece!"

"Hang it!" ejaculated Jeth, taking his pipe out of his mouth; "it don't hurt a girl to be proud; does it?"

"She'll put you and your money round fast enough. But it's none of my business. When are you going to get married?"

"Oh, before a great while; and not goin' to make any fuss about it. That's what I wanted to say. I thought I'd let you know, and you needn't go tell the whole neighborhood. Some of these days you'll hear of furniture being brought to the empty house down by old Keyes's place, and then, after a while more, you'll hear I'm married; that's all. I hate a fuss. You keep it to yourself now."

"Well," said Susan, carelessly.

"Say, 'I promise.'" Like a great many other people in the world, Jeth was fond of talking largely, and impressing his hearer with a belief that that was a great secret which really was no secret at all.

"I promise then;" and Susan rose up, wrapping her shawl about her closely; for it was growing damp.

"Are you goin' to see Ruth?" inquired Jeth.

"No, it's too late. Hark, what's that?" It was a harsh, grating sound, as of some heavy article being dragged across a rough surface. "What is it?" repeated Susan. "There it is again!"

"Oh, I know," said Jeth, after a moment's intent listening. "Colonel Evans keeps a boat on the shore just the other side of the woods. The river is high now. He's goin' to cross, most likely."

"Oh," said Susan, with a breath of relief. "But I must go home;" and off she ran to the house.

But, after she had gone, Jethro remembered that he had seen a figure, a few minutes before, which looked like his brother Tom, making his way from the house to the other side of the wood. A suspicion

crossed his mind, and shaking the ashes out of his pipe, he just put it in his pocket, and sauntered off in the direction of the sound.

It was some time before he was able to reach the shore, and when he finally did so, it was to see the boat nearly to the other side. It had but one occupant; that was all the gathering twilight enabled him to make out. "It's going to be a nice evening," thought Jeth, observing the moon just rising, "and if that is Tom, I'd give a good deal to know it. How in the world did he manage with that padlock? He must have had a skeleton-key." At that moment his ear caught the sound of footsteps, and hastily choosing a hiding-place in the shadow of some bushes, Jethro concealed himself till the person should pass along the shore. He started inwardly as the moonlight revealed the owner of the boat.

"I've got into a fix now!" he said to himself, as the colonel came up, and in great

surprise looked about for the missing boat. "Twont do to show myself, and here I must sit curled up till I'm stiff. 'Taint likely he'll go away till the boat comes back."

The colonel had evidently no intention of going. He walked up and down the shore a few times, as if to assure himself that the boat was really gone, examined the marks made by it when dragged along the sand, fitted a key into the padlock which had evidently been dropped in haste, to make sure that he had the one belonging to it, and then, having arranged for himself a comfortable seat, sat down to await the return of his property. And, not more than a rod from him, Jethro half sat, half lay, groaning inwardly with pain and rage.

It was a long time — to Jeth it seemed hours — before the profound stillness was broken. But the colonel's patience held out. Hardly so with Jeth. He had several times been on the point of creeping out from the bushes, and making for home. But

at last, there was a faint sound of oars. It came nearer.

Swash, swash, went the oars through the water, as softly as the rower could make it possible, but not softly enough to prevent the echo from the other side.

The colonel drew back into the shade of the woods. Swash, swash, went the oars again, and again the echo sounded. This time the boat came in sight, round a little stretch of the woods on the right into the water.

"Steady, old boat," whispered the occupant, who was now clearly seen to be Tom, as he drew cautiously to the shore. "There now, keep still; can't ye?"

For the boat was in no wise disposed to second Tom's efforts, and grated and scraped harshly on the sand. Tom finally got her into position, stepped out and grasped the chain. On the instant the colonel sprung forward.

"Rascal," he exclaimed, "thought I couldn't

trap you ; did you ? I know you, Tom Archer ! This isn't the first time you've played this game. But I'll have no words with you to-night. Hands off, sir ; I sha'n't fight. We'll look into this a little more to-morrow."

And shaking off the young man, who made off, pouring out abuses and oaths without stint, the colonel secured the boat, and picking up the skeleton-key, — which Tom had procured for the purpose of opening the padlock, and had dropped in his confusion, — started for home. It so happened that he came near stumbling over Jethro, who had not yet dared to stir from his position.

"Oh, ho !" said the colonel, peering into the bushes, "an accomplice ! You, Jethro, is it ? Get up, young man."

Jeth got up, moved more by the commanding dignity of the man than by fear of him.

"Wait a minute, sir," said the colonel, as Jeth attempted to move away from his gaze. "Had you anything to do with this affair ?"

"No," said Jethro, doggedly.

"What are you here for, then ?"

It was rather a curious situation for Jethro ; nevertheless, he blundered through with the story, telling the whole truth.

"Well," said the colonel, "in future you'd better mind your own business, and not creep about to see what other people are doing. Take my advice, and keep out of the way of evil-doers. I believe you are a good-hearted fellow. I wish I could say the same of some of your brothers. This isn't the first time Tom has served me a mean trick ; and he must be made to remember that I will not be trifled with."

And the colonel was true to his word. Tom was compelled next day to abide judgment and pay a fine, which he did with not very good grace. But the only salutary effect the affair had for him was to make him avoid appropriating the colonel's boat for future excursions to the village.

CHAPTER IV.

JUNE and July came and went; August, with her fiery heat, had nearly run her course, and with the next week, September would ascend the throne. It had been an unusually productive summer, and now it almost seemed as if the earth were running over with her harvest of fruits. This was Elder Leonard's remark, as he came out of the parsonage-door one pleasant evening, and seated himself by his wife and little daughter, who had sometime before sought the coolness of the porch.

"I'm glad you've come, father," said Bessie, leaving her little chair to run round to him. "Now we'll have a nice talk."

Her father raised her face in his hands,

and kissed her. Now Bessie Leonard was one of those little girls who seem made especially to be caressed. It was not because she seemed to expect it; it is doubtful if she would always remember it five minutes. Neither was it because she had faultless features and a lily-white complexion and flowing ringlets and a sylphlike form. Bessie had not one of these. To be sure, she had a fair face, and very clear, unshadowed blue eyes, and soft, light-brown hair, that *would* have fallen in curls, if her good papa and mamma had not feared it would make the child vain. But ever since Bessie had been old enough to understand such remarks as these,—remarks which some injudicious persons are in the habit of making when they are attracted by something beautiful in a child,—“Bessie, how lovely you look!” and “Bessie, how sweetly your hair curls!”—ever since then, we say, Bessie's hair had been kept nicely braided, and now it never dared

show any propensity to curl, except in the soft waves about her forehead that it could not possibly help, or when, once in a while, some unusual exercise would loosen its fastenings, and cause it to reach down in light rings about her neck.

This is Bessie Leonard, whom we left a few minutes ago standing by her father's side in the porch. But we have not told you why everybody loved her. Perhaps you will be able to see that for yourself.

Now, this evening, the little girl stood a long time by her father's chair, after he had given her that silent kiss, waiting for him to speak. But his thoughts seemed to be far away. At length Bessie ventured a low "Papa!"

"Yes, dear!" His manner told her to go on.

"I thought we were going to talk!"

"Shall I tell you," he asked, rather absently, "what I was thinking of?"

"Yes, father, if you please."

"I was thinking how unlikely it is that we shall always be together as happy as we are now. And I was wondering," he resumed, after another interval of silence, "whether my Bessie was receiving such training as would make her a woman of strong character, and whether her faith was anchored so strongly in God that it could never be shaken,—not by the severest trials that could ever come to her. What do you think, Bessie?" The elder drew her round in front of him, and stroked the light rings of hair from her forehead.

"About the first thing, papa? I don't know."

"About the second, my child. How is it? The first stands with God and us who are to teach you in his fear; the second, with God and yourself."

"I think, papa," said Bessie, her eyes caught and held by the intense and loving earnestness of his, "that I could not be sure my faith never would be shaken,

if it did stand with me alone to keep it fast."

"Thank God!" said the elder, fervently. "You know whose strength is promised, Bessie. If you have anchored at the right haven truly, my child, sorrow and trial will only keep you there more steadfastly."

"Father," said Bessie, rather under breath; "do you think there is any great sorrow coming to me — soon?"

"I hope not, dear. But I have seen children led through much suffering."

"I saw Maurice Archer to-night," said Mrs. Leonard, the recollection evidently brought to mind by the elder's remark, "and I think he was feeling very sad."

"Did you speak with him?" inquired the elder.

"No, I was walking along the road, and he was sitting on a rock in the field where he had been at work, bent down so that I could not see his face. But his attitude spoke plainly of complete discouragement."

"Maurice is a fine boy," observed the elder, "and strangely enough, to some people, entirely different when at home from what he is with those he loves out of the family. But it is not so strange. There is no sympathy there with his tastes; but he does not complain, — in fact, I think he cares little for sympathy; but he is starving for books, and he is disheartened, disgusted, by the necessity that keeps him from study. I am afraid things are far from right. It is only too easy to see what Tom is coming to, especially since that affair with Colonel Evans brought some other matters to light. It is no wonder Maurice, with his peculiar sensitiveness, gives way to despondency at times. Poor boy! I think I shall venture to carry him some books to-morrow."

"Papa," said Bessie, "may I go with you, if you ride over?"

"Yes, daughter; and now do you know what time it is?"

Bessie left his side to put away her lit-

tle chair, then came back to say good-night.

"What have you new to think about to-night, Bessie?"

"I shall think," said Bessie, with an unusual depth in her blue eyes, "that I must be very sure I love Jesus truly."

"Yes, dear child. And is there anything besides?"

"Yes, papa. Maurice is in trouble."

"But what can you do for him?"

"I can pray, father."

"And may God hear you, my child! Good-night."

Bessie lingered. "Papa," she said, "may I tell Maurice I am sorry for him?"

"I do not know, Bessie," said her father, hesitatingly; "I think it would hardly be best. And here is another thought for you, dear: there are numberless ways in which we may show sympathy, when it is not best to express it in words. Can you understand me, Bessie?"


"I think I can, papa."

After Mrs. Leonard had gone up-stairs with Bessie, the elder went to his study, took his journal, and wrote,—

"The Lord is dealing very graciously with his unworthy servant. To-day completes my fifteenth year with this people. Most of those with whom I commenced my work here are still living, to hold up my hands. Yet I fear a cloud is gathering. I am moved to inquire seriously whether I have done my whole duty in not publicly lifting up my voice against the inroads of intemperance. The evil is spreading fast in the family of one of our most influential members. I hear rumors that I would gladly discredit, if I could. The Lord give me wisdom and zeal for the right!"

After the elder had laid away his writing, he selected from his shelves a copy of English History, and Travels in Palestine, to be carried to Maurice on the morrow.

CHAPTER V.

 HE next morning, after breakfast, Bessie was on the alert for the promised ride. The day was fine, and the freshness of the morning air gave a keen zest to her pleasure, as the elder's horse trotted slowly along a road bordered with some of the most picturesque scenery our country can furnish. Most of the way the road wound along by the river-side, underneath the shapely branches of graceful hemlock. Here the opposite bank of the river was entirely of brown, mossy rocks, against whose feet the water dashed with a soft, gurgling sound that was especially exhilarating to the spirits of the little girl. She

stood up in the chaise, and clapped her hands gleefully.

"Father, father," she cried, "do you see how beautiful it is! How close the white foam keeps to the rocks, just as if it knew it would be scattered all about if it got away! There, now the trees are in the way. I can only see it now and then. Now we are out of the shade, and I can see the rocks, down, down, ever so far, green and wet. Isn't it beautiful, papa?"

He scarcely knew of what she was talking, so deeply was his mind occupied with the probable result of this day's visit. But he answered, —

"Very beautiful, Bessie."

She noticed his preoccupied look, and said no more till they reached Deacon Archer's.

"Good-morning, Elder Leonard," said a brisk voice, and Mrs. Archer made her appearance in the doorway. "Good-morning, Bessie. How does Mrs. Leonard do, elder?"

Let me lift you out, Bessie! Bless me, how fine you're dressed, child! Why, that's nothing but calico, is it? but your mother *has* got a faculty. There, run right in. No, elder, the deacon isn't at home, and he wont be till night. But you'll come in."

"I'm sorry Brother Archer is away. It's something unusual for him to be gone for a whole day; is it not?" said the elder, as he proceeded to fasten his horse.

"Why, yes, sir,—no, not lately. He's had business that's taken him away two or three times just so. Run along, Bessie. Come this way, Elder Leonard, into the front room; it's cool there."

They were ushered into a large, square room. Bessie's eye naturally took note of the appointments of every place she visited, and as Mrs. Archer directed her conversation to the elder, she allowed her thoughts to run on somewhat in this fashion:—

"How solemn this room always looks, just as if the things in it never dared to stir,

or to be stirred, from one year's end to another. The curtains are always drawn back just so far, and no farther, and that little dog on the mantle is always in precisely the same spot. I never saw that cricket off that place but once, and that was when — Yes, ma'am."

The last words were spoken aloud, in answer to a question which she suddenly became aware had been put to her.

"Don't you go to school this summer, Bessie?"

"No, ma'am; I study at home."

Mrs. Archer did not direct any more questions to her. If she had turned her attention from her, Bessie would have felt very grateful. She could not help feeling an unpleasant consciousness, not only that Mrs. Archer had suddenly seemed to have lost the brisk cheerfulness with which she had welcomed them, but that she was keenly surveying her from head to foot.

"I know what's coming," thought Bes-

sie. "She's going to say something to father about me."

Bessie's intuitions were not wrong. Mrs. Archer turned solemnly to the elder.

"I suppose you are hoping Bessie will be a great comfort to you in your old age, Elder Leonard. I hope she will, to be sure. But good daughters are getting scarce."

"Bessie is a little girl as yet, Mrs. Archer; but she hopes she loves the Lord Jesus."

"Ah!" more solemnly still. "I did not know Bessie was one of the converts. Must you go now, elder?" observing that the elder was rising.

"I think it is time, Sister Archer. The day bids fair to be very warm. Where shall I find Maurice?"

"Over beyond the cornfield, sir, near where the roads cross."

The elder went out to unfasten his horse, Mrs. Archer and Bessie following. The for-

mer seized the moment to utter her parting advice.

"Bessie, I am truly rejoiced to hear that you have chosen the Lord for your portion. But guard against worldliness and vanity, Bessie, — against *vanity* especially."

"I will try, ma'am," murmured Bessie. She climbed into the chaise, and with a kind good-morning, the elder took up the reins and drove off. He had no sooner driven out of the yard than Bessie threw herself across his knee.

"Crying, darling?" he said, bending down to her. "Bessie, perhaps that was just what my little girl needed. It is sad to see one given up to vanity."

"Oh, papa," said Bessie, "it wasn't that; but it didn't seem as if she were real glad that I should be a Christian. She looked as if she thought I hadn't any right" —

"Hush, Bessie!" said the elder, gently. "Is this altogether right, my child? Is it for you to pass such judgment?"

"Oh, no, papa! I am very wrong, I know!" said Bessie, now sobbing violently.

"I wish I hadn't such thoughts."

"Ah, my child, wrong thoughts are something you will always have to contend with; and remember this, dear child, that Christians are by no means alike; although actuated by the same Spirit, they may still say and do things in entirely different ways. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law;' if we keep our hearts full of that, we shall not find it hard to recognize the same in others, though it shows itself in a way we might not be prepared for. Now wipe away your tears, for we have come to the spot where I must leave you, unless you want to go over into the field with me. Do you wish to go, my child?"

But Bessie thought she had better not, and tying the horse in the shade of a tree, the elder passed into the cornfield, and was soon lost to sight. He had not reached the spot where Maurice was at

work, when the boy perceived him approaching, and came toward him. The elder needed but one glance at his face to see that there was no improvement in cheerfulness.

"Good-morning, my son." He took Maurice's hand with all the tenderness of a loving father. "I came round to see your father this morning, and to bring you these." He placed two books in his hand.

Maurice took them, turned the leaves over almost fondly, and returned them, saying, gloomily, —

"I thank you, sir; but I must not keep them."

"Must not? Is there not a moment to be spared for reading?"

"No, sir."

The contraction of the boy's brow was painful.

"Is work so much more pressing since Jethro was married?"

"No, sir, not since the haying was over."

Maurice would not say that his father had forbidden his reading, which fact the elder suspected, but spoke cheerfully nevertheless.

"Just so we often find obstacles in our way, Maurice. Let us hope that this will be overcome in time. After your fall work is over, I will try to make an arrangement to have you come and study with me. How would you like that?"

"Like it! Oh, sir!" — the only brightness that had shone in Maurice's eyes for months flashed out then; — "but it can't be!"

"Nay, son, it is not impossible. I would you had a Christian's faith and hope, my dear boy. 'For we know that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!'" And with another affectionate clasp of his hand, the elder left him.


Maurice stood rooted to the spot. "How

long! how long!" was his unspoken cry. It seemed to him as if the summer had moved with leaden wings, — as if this dreary, dull aching for the winter must lie at his heart forever. The summer's work had done more for him than weary his limbs; it had kept him on a wearing stretch of hope that he felt could never be realized. Every passing day had only left him with an added burden: his father was absorbed in the cider-mill and the prospective distillery, his brother Tom adding one disgraceful act to another, his sisters coarse and unsympathizing, his mother buried in household affairs. And much as he had longed for the winter, what was before them then? Maurice ground his teeth as he pictured to himself the scenes of the distilling season, — the drinking, the riotous and vulgar mirth, the carousals about the neighborhood, with their countless accompanying evils. And yet the elder wished he had faith and hope! Faith! In what?

In rum-drinking, forsooth! Talk about being a Christian! He was no baby to begin to think about religion for the sake of a little comfort. Besides, he doubted the reality of the whole thing. And he was proud, this boy was; his whole life had been exclusive; he could do without sympathy or hope or faith!

Then another thought struck him,—a thought that had come to him vaguely sometimes, but that now shaped itself into a distinctness that seemed to leave no room for question. He would leave home! He would go that instant! There were no ties of friendship to cut loose unless—what would the elder think? But perhaps he would say it was best. The elder was not one of your one-idea, one-sided men. He would go! He threw down his hoe, cast one glance towards his father's house, and plunged desperately into the woods.

CHAPTER VI.

 CROSS the road from Deacon Archer's, not directly opposite the house, but a little farther towards the "centre," stood the dwelling of Tom Archer. Some years previous, before he had attained his majority, he had married an intelligent, fine-looking girl, poor, and without much education, but possessed of excellent sense, habits of economy and industry, with an ambition to rise in the world. How much of disappointment and distress these last few years had brought her, we shall not attempt to say. Judge for yourselves as our tale is developed. There are strong natures that disdain to complain; they encase themselves in an armor of cold reserve, and though an acute reader

of human nature may easily see that there is a terrible heartache gnawing beneath, no sign ever betrays to the world what its source may be. Such natures bear up under a tension of body and spirit that never wholly gives way till the cord is stretched to its utmost limit, and rest comes that shall last eternally. Then often the features, that have grown sharp and hard, settle back into the old placid look they wore before anguish attacked and tore the soul; death smooths out the hard lines of the brow, and relaxes the despairing set of the firm mouth, and friends say, as they bend over the quiet frame waiting for its burial,—

“This is the old look,—the look that face used to wear.”

At the time of Tom's marriage, his father built him a little cottage, and with industry and economy, it might now have been all his own. But for the past two or three years nothing but his wife's exertions had kept them from absolute poverty. For sev-

eral years, in fact, Tom had been going steadily, though not at first swiftly, downward. At one time, indeed, there was a short season of sobriety, when a little daughter was born, and the mother—moved, perhaps, by fancy, she never said what—named her Hope. The little girl was now seven years old.

Little Hope had this morning watched Elder Leonard's chaise drive away from her grandfather's, and caught sight of Bessie as she came out of the door, looking so neat and fresh in the light dress and white sun-bonnet she wore. The child's admiration was excited. She went out and sat in the doorway as they drove by, watched the elder tie his horse at the bend of the road by the cornfield, watched him disappear amid the corn, and return. Still she gazed with a vague, childish expectation of seeing the chaise turn back, but no, it went on, and Hope became sure she should not see them again.

It was doubtless something in the contrast between herself and Bessie that had enchained her so completely, and now woke the desire to follow and see the pretty sight again. Hope was a child of quick, strange impulses, daring and determined. With a hasty glance into the kitchen, to make sure that her mother was not watching, she slipped off, bareheaded and barefooted, her short, ragged dress fluttering about her as she ran.

But when she had reached the spot where the elder had tied his horse, she could not remember which way the chaise had gone. There were two roads here,—one leading off to the centre of Plumley, the other to Charemont. Hope stood still an instant, then moved a few paces down one road, then came back and, turning down the other, began to run swiftly.

It was just at this time that Maurice, having passed through the woods that lay on that side of the road where he had been at work,

came out into the road to cross over and find the path which he knew led through the forest on the opposite side. He had not yet given himself time to consider the step he was taking, and only thought of getting through the long stretch of dense woodland that lay between Plumley and Charemont; and with his heart yet rankling with passion, he climbed over the wall.

Little Hope, speeding along, her flying rags making her a most grotesque-looking object, caught his eye as she was just disappearing round the bend. He saw in an instant that she was alone. There was no alternative; he must overtake her.

It was a brisk little run the child gave him, but soon accomplished. He neared her; another instant, and he had caught her by the arm.

"Let me alone," she screamed,— "let me alone!"

"No," said Maurice, firmly. "Hope Archer, what are you running away for?"

"Let me alone!" and she stamped her little foot violently. "I will go, I will go!"

"Wait a moment, Hope," said Maurice, soothingly. He sat down upon a flat rock, and with a few quiet words calmed her into something like stillness. "Now, Hope, tell me what you want."

"I want to see the little girl riding. I don't go riding."

"Who was the little girl?"

"I don't know. The minister was with her."

"Oh, 'twas Bessie — Bessie Leonard. She's the minister's little girl, Hope. And you thought you could go riding with her, with your dress all in rags, and no bonnet, no shoes on! Bessie didn't look so, Hope!"

"No," said Hope, shaking her head decidedly. "Uncle Maurice, will you ask her to let me ride with her sometimes?"

"Perhaps I will take you to ride myself some day. And now is little Hope ready to go home?"

She said "Yes," and slid down upon her feet immediately. Maurice took her by the hand and led her back to the road that ran by her father's house. Then he stooped and kissed her.

"Good-by, Hope," he said.

"Good-by," she answered brightly. "You'll take me riding to-morrow?"

"Hope," said Maurice, "perhaps I sha'n't be at home to-morrow."

"Nor next day either?"

"Nor next day."

"When will you, then?"

"I don't know." Maurice was at a loss for an answer. "Perhaps when you get a new dress and bonnet and shoes, so that you will look as nice as Bessie!"

Maurice had made a mistake. The child's breast began to heave, but she did not cry. She faced round upon Maurice, and again stamped her little foot.

"Uncle Maurice, you tell lies! What are you going off for?"

Maurice's lips were sealed. What was he going off for, surely?

"I don't care!" continued Hope, vehemently. "I'll go find Bessie, I will!" and upon that she darted off again.

Maurice did not follow immediately; for the road she had taken this time was level for only a short distance, and her little feet could not reach the top of the hill beyond half so soon as he could overtake her. Besides, his heart was filled with conflicting emotions that for the time held him from action. What was he going off for? What? The child's simple question was one he could not answer satisfactorily. It came to him again and again as he stood there, knocking at his soul, as it were, for answer. "What are you going off for?"

Because he was weak, and could not face trouble? That would be cowardly. But was it really cowardly? His whole nature recoiled from the thought of the uproar, the nightly carousal, the low jests, and fear-

ful profanity that he must, in a measure, see and hear. Was it cowardly because he could not face these without shrinking? Perhaps it was, in a certain sense. What was he to do when he became a man? Vice was all over the world; should he run from one form of it only to plunge into another?

If his principles, if his tastes were worth anything, how much better grounded they would be, if he stood this test firmly. Would he be brave, he must face danger; and if he stood firm, what might not his example do?

Little Alfred Hunting had last winter, on his persuasion, promised never to drink a drop of liquor. And he had kept his word faithfully thus far. What more might he not do? Yes, he would try to be a man! Some new light seemed to shine along the future; something seemed to whisper to him to put on new strength, a new ambition.

The words of Elder Leonard at this moment occurred to him: "I would you had a

Christian's faith and hope, my dear boy." But no, he was not going so far as that; he was on independent ground yet. And he was not sure that this religion did a great deal for people either. His father was a deacon of the church, and had taught his children that to indulge in rum-drinking was no great wrong to themselves or any one else. As if it were not a fearful sin that he must see was leading to ruin!

It was not quite so easy to dispose of Elder Leonard. His true, unaffected piety and loving interest in the young people of the parish had won every one of them, and to Maurice he had perhaps been more than to others. If anybody was a Christian, it was the elder. But then, if one person had religion, it was no sign it was necessary for every one; and he would wait; he would see what the future would develop; he would not leave home; he would be a cringing boy no longer, but a man!

While the latter part of this soliloquy had

been running through Maurice's mind, he had been walking swiftly up the hill toward Hope, who had not yet gained the summit. He reached her now, and caught her by the hand. With a swift, unexpected movement, she wrenched it away from him.

"Go 'way!" she burst forth. "I hate you! You tell lies!"

"No," said Maurice, smiling to himself as to his cleared vision the ludicrousness of this whole affair burst upon him. "Hope, look at me!"

She had turned away; but, at his words, she half relented, and cast a keen, distrustful glance at him from under a pair of strongly-marked eyebrows.

"Hope," said Maurice, "did you ever know me to promise you anything, and then not do it?"

She shook her head slowly.

"I did not say," said Maurice, "a few minutes ago, that I would certainly take you to ride. But now I come to say that I *will*!"

"When?" she asked, giving him a fuller sight of her face.

"As soon as grandfather will let me have the pony."

He had need to speak in just that kind, even tone; for the child — little as she was — was keenly observant of his manner. But now she came round to him and slipped her little brown hand into his.

"Well, Hope?"

"You'll take me to ride?" she answered confidently.


"When?"

"As soon as you can have the pony."

"Yes. Do you want something else?"

"I want to go home;" and Maurice took her hand, this time unresisted, and the two went up to the cottage.

CHAPTER VII.

ADN'T you missed Hope?" said Maurice, questioning the child's mother as they entered the house.

"Yes," she answered, absently, "a few minutes ago; but I could not go for her."

"Maurice," she asked, as he was turning to go, "where is Thomas?"

"Isn't he about?" said Maurice, evasively.

"No. Didn't you see him go away with the horse and wagon?"

"Why, yes, I believe I did." For some reason, Maurice shrunk from the gaze of his questioner.

"Maurice," she said, — her lips were ashen, and her hard, measured tone chilled him to the very heart, — "what has he gone for?"

His only answer was to lead her to a chair. "You are sick, Mary," he said, seriously.

"No." Her strong nature triumphed. "Tell me, Maurice."

"I suppose" — Maurice spoke as if the words were forced from him — "that he has gone — for — lumber."

"Yes; and for what?"

"For the distillery."

He had feared for the effect of his words; but her lips only uttered a low moan. Then she rose and went to her work again.

Maurice lingered a minute, and then went up to her. He was to be a man now.

"Listen, Mary," he said, speaking very low.

She turned half round to him.

"It's of no use now to hope that this trouble may not come."

"It has come," she answered, wearily.

"Yes," said Maurice, in a choked voice; "and, Mary, I am going to try to meet it

bravely. It's true that I have been weak and boyish; but that must not be again. And, Mary, if you need help, if you can trust me" — He could not finish the sentence.

"Dear Maurice," said Mary, and her lips parted in a dreary smile, "yes, if I need help, I shall come to you." She laid her hand on his arm with a quick, tender movement. "Maurice." Her voice sounded to him as if it came from the grave. "It will be a terrible battle for you. Are you strong?"

He drew himself up manfully. She looked at him with a sad, hopeless smile.

"It will be terrible, Maurice. Can you fight for the right in the midst of curses, low jeers, and actions that would shame a dumb brute?"

"I will do what I can, Mary. You fear for me."

"I do not more than I should fear for any one. You have not seen all!"

"I have seen a great deal, Mary."

She looked in his earnest eyes with a new light in hers.

"Yes, you will do what you can, Maurice. Shall I give you a charge?"

"If you can trust me, Mary."

"Sometime, Maurice, my frame will yield to this. I may hold out a long time yet; I think I shall; but when it comes, and it will be sudden I am very sure, will you, Maurice, remember that I have left Hope in your charge? She is strange, Maurice; you know how strange. She needs a strong, calm mind to guide her, to help her restrain her wild impulses, to teach her how to discriminate clearly. Will you take the charge, Maurice?"

"Oh, Mary, such a charge! Can I do what you would have me?"

"I think you can, Maurice. You will remember that you are to be a boy no longer, —and it may be years first."

"Are you not mistaken about yourself,

Sister Mary?" he said, looking at her anxiously, though in truth he could not have wished that slender frame had more suffering before it.

"Rest must come, dear boy," said she, drearily. But she could add no more; and presently Maurice left the house, and went to his work again.

That last hour, that era in his life, would he ever forget it? Never! That was the day when he began to put away childish things.

Maurice never, till some years later, spoke to any one of his impulse to leave home, nor how his adventure with little Hope had been the innocent cause of bringing him to himself. But it is certain from that day he began to love the child. Before he had only bestowed upon her casual attentions; but now he came to regard her almost with reverence, as one holds very precious something that has stood between him and unfathomed danger. This affection on his

part naturally secured a return on hers, and the two were very much together. Hope had always been allowed the freedom of her grandfather's house, a liberty which was now almost constantly improved when Maurice was there; and, as the fall wore on, there came to be a tacit understanding in the family that Hope belonged especially to Maurice.

"Isn't it queer, mother," said Susan, one day, as Hope, after rushing in and out of the house, calling for Uncle Maurice, at last disappeared in the direction of the barn,—"isn't it queer how Maurice and Hope do take to each other lately?"

"No," was the reply, "not a bit. They're as odd as they can be, both of 'em."

"Well," said Susan, "but that isn't the way the world goes. It's always people that are unlike that like each other."

"Well, I didn't say it wasn't! I suppose there's different kinds of oddity in the world as well as different kinds of anything else.

Proving that two people are odd, isn't proving that they are exactly alike; and, as to the liking, there's Harry Ives, he's smart, and you're smart, but that isn't saying you don't like each other; is it?"

It is to be remarked that, during the latter part of this little speech, Susan was making a very unnecessary clatter putting away the dishes.

"As I was saying," resumed Mrs. Archer, when the noise had ceased, "Maurice is odd, and Hope is odder yet, if possible, and they are very fond of each other, and"—

"So we are, mother," said Maurice, entering at the moment, with Hope dancing by his side. He was smiling, not very brightly, but cheerfully. "Now, Hope, sit on Uncle Maurice's knee, and tell grandmother why you love me."

"Because," said Hope, decidedly,—"because you like me better than you do any other little girl, and take me to ride, and"—

"Very natural reasons, little one. Now

I must help Aunt Susan lift that heavy basket."

"No," said Susan, pausing, "let's have both sides of the story. I want to know why you've taken such a liking to Hope. How is it you love her so?"

"How is it?" said Maurice, parting the child's hair mechanically with his fingers, and seeing not it but a road bordered with cool woods, on a late August morning, a little girl, ragged, trembling with passion, himself arrested in a foolish impulse by an innocent question,—"How is it I love her?" He bent down and kissed her twice before he answered.

"I love her, Susan," he said then,— "I love her very much. That is all I can tell you."

He presently put Hope down from his knee, helped his sister lift the basket, and went out, Hope running after.

"There," said Susan, as the door closed after them, "if you can say that aint queer, I am beat! Anyway, Maurice is pleasanter

than he used to be; he don't look as if he was always ready to bite somebody."

"I think he improves," said her mother; "and he never was disobedient."

"It's more than can be said of some of your boys," remarked Susan, sententiously. "I'd like to see you get Isaac or Ben, young as he is, to church; and, as for Tom, he's gone clear over the bay."

"Susan," said her mother, "it is not becoming in you to speak so of your brothers."

Susan smiled, tossed her head knowingly, and went humming up-stairs.

Meanwhile, the work of preparing for the distillery went on. September was half gone; the timber was waiting; and, one fine morning, Deacon Archer called Ben to him.

"Ben, go round to the neighbors, and ask them to come to the raising to-morrow; just our neighborhood, Ben; I don't want the whole town here."

Ben started off in raptures.

The next day brought a small, but eager

and somewhat noisy, company together; for it must be confessed that this little neighborhood was not strictly of that quiet puritanic sort that distinguished many of our town some years since. It is very much to be feared, especially since Deacon Archer's cider-mill was in full operation, that its character was of quite another order. And this, notwithstanding good Elder Leonard's influence, his true, unaffected piety, his wise counsels, his firm adherence to good principles, and his hearty abhorrence of bad. Was there something at fault? This community loved rum. The elder had not as yet taken an open, uncompromising stand against it.

Deacon Archer welcomed his neighbors warmly, and the usual glass of liquor was passed to each. While they were thus regaling themselves, he said, stepping upon a log that lay by, and raising his voice, "Friends and neighbors, this is but a small affair that calls us together to-day."

"Not so, deacon," put in Moses Williams; "you're gen'ally right, but you've made a mistake this 'ere time;" and Moses laughed at what he took for a witty speech; and, as in duty bound, the company laughed too.

"Thank you, Mr. Williams," said the deacon, bowing graciously. "I was going to say, friends, though it is so small, yet I am bound to do the thing handsomely; and I invite you all, after the raising is over, to walk over to my house, and you shall be treated to the best it affords."

"Three cheers for Deacon Archer!" shouted Seth Wilcox, throwing up his cap. "Now! one — two — three!"

The deacon bowed low; and, stepping down from the log, led the way to the spot selected, and the work began. Then followed an amount of noise and talk, mingled not unfrequently with words our pen shall not repeat. In the midst of it all, there came a call for help from one quarter of the building. Several sprung forward; but

still there wanted one. The boys lounging about were all too small.

"Where's Maurice?" shouted the deacon. "Send him along."

"Maurice haint been here," answered half a dozen voices.

"And he told me last night he wouldn't have anything to do with it," added little Jemmy Waters.

"Hold your tongue, boy!" said some one near him. "Don't you know better'n to say that?"

Jemmy curled down, and kept silence.

"Well," said the deacon, "nobody can run after him now. Put on your strength, my men; an extra glass of toddy to every one of you, if it goes up. Now, steady!"

It was done; the beam rose slowly to its place, and was quickly secured. The pail was brought round, and the contents speedily swallowed.

"That 'ere was handsomely done, deacon; wa'n't it?" said Moses Williams, before men-

tioned. "Reckon you put some o' your own grit into that."

The deacon rolled up his shirt sleeve, and showed his brawny arm.

"There's real grit there yet, Moses."

"'Twont bear comparin' with mine, no-how," said Moses, rolling up his sleeve also.

Moses had evidently stated his proposition the wrong way. There was a general "ha, ha!" as he displayed his arm, a small, weak limb, not much more than half as large as the deacon's. Moses stood the laugh however.

"I tell you, neighbors," he said, as it subsided, "it takes the sperit to make an arm like that," pointing to the deacon's. "You see, I don't often get nothin' stronger'n cider, or poor rum, leastways."

At this, there was another general laugh and stir.

"Where's the toddy? Give him some more, deacon."

But the pail was empty, and must go to

the house to be replenished. The workers, we mean those who could be relied on as real, efficient helpers on the occasion, drew off to consider the raising of another section of the building, leaving Moses rather in the lurch.

"Guess I'll go over and see Tom's wife a minit," he soliloquized, surveying the little cottage from his position on the grass. "Fine gal she was. They wont miss me here; I aint much good, nohow," — a self-evident proposition, by the way. He rose, and sauntered lazily off.

Little Hope, who had been watching the proceedings with intense interest from the window, was the first to catch sight of Moses' advancing figure. She ran to Maurice, who had just entered by another way, and whispered that somebody was coming.

"If it's a neighbor," thought Maurice, "he shall not come in." And bidding the child go stay with her mother, he stepped out of the front-door.

"Halloo, Maurice," said Moses, as he came up. "This 'ere looks well! I should say you ware as lazy as I am, if I didn't know you was a real smart un; and besides, Jemmy Waters said as you said you wouldn't have anything to do with it. How's that, Maurice?"

"I said it," answered Maurice.

"Was't the raisin' or the *rum*?" said Moses, with a curious stress on the last word.

"Both," said Maurice, decidedly.

"Whew!" ejaculated Moses, giving him a long stare; "guess you don't like to be talked to."

"No, Moses, I have no objection to talking. Sit down."

Maurice sat down on the flat doorstep, and Moses followed his example.

"What did you come to the raising for, Moses?"

Moses evidently thought the boy was crazy. What did he come to the raising for? To help, to be sure, just as the rest did.

He could not but understand the smile that broke over Maurice's face.

"You see, Maurice," he continued, deprecatingly, "I came to help; but there's enough without me, and leastways I aint very strong. Why, you oughter see my arm side o' your father's! And I thought maybe twouldn't be taken amiss if I should come over and give Tom's wife a call. Maybe she aint ter home though?"

"She is at home," said Maurice, "but cannot see any one to-day."

"Sorry," said Moses. "Sick, is she? I'd like to seen her. Nice gal she was. Poor, you know; no disgrace, as I know on; no edication, but she knowed a heap for all that."

"Moses," said Maurice, suddenly interrupting him, "what do you think of rum-drinking?"

Moses looked stunned, but finally took refuge in the very convenient reply that he didn't know.

"Then why do you follow a habit that you know nothing about, supposing it were so? But you do know; you know it is bad, ruinous!"

"Never hurt me," said Moses, rallying; "must have suthin to keep me up."

"You have a little girl; haven't you?" said Maurice.

"Yes. She's a mite of a thing."

"And a boy?"

"Yes."

"You drink moderately now," continued Maurice; "but the habit strengthens. Suppose you had nothing laid by for a time of sickness or trouble. You go on drinking till you cannot earn from day to day. Your little girl goes ragged, hungry sometimes. Your boy learns to drink, and swears at you; swears at his mother too. You, meanwhile, go down, down, till you lie in the gutter. By and by you are picked up dead. What are your family going to do? Is your boy fit to take care of his mother and sister?"

"I never looked at it that way," said Moses, soberly; "and my boy sha'n't learn to drink."

"Isn't he over there?" said Maurice, pointing to the group across the road.

"Yes, he is. What made me let him come? But they're goin' up to the house now. You wont come, Maurice?"

"No. But, Moses, suppose you promise me you will think about this?"

"Why, yes, I will, Maurice. But 'taint often as I think of anything long. I s'pose any other body would have made me mad. But you're goin' to be a parson, I guess, — leastways, you've begun preaching. I shall tell 'em so over there." And with this attempt at facetiousness, the poor, miserable man moved off. Maurice sighed deeply as he re-entered the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

SEVERAL days after the raising took place, Elder Leonard harnessed his horse, and set off to visit Deacon Archer. This time he took no one with him.

"Glad to see you, Elder Leonard!" was the deacon's cordial greeting. "It's been an uncommonly long spell since you was here."

"It is some time, brother. But I have been twice and found that you were away."

"Yes, yes, I have been away considerably lately. Building, you know, makes business that we cannot always attend to at home. I've got a snug little place over there," pointing to the distillery. "Wouldn't you like to walk over and see it?"

"I will go," answered the elder. But it was not with the satisfied tone of the deacon's words.

They crossed the street and entered the distillery. There was nothing striking about it, of course, and after the deacon had explained the operation of distilling, there was a silence. The elder had not uttered a single congratulatory remark.

"I suppose, brother," he said presently, "that you are counting on a large profit from this?"

"Well, sir, I cannot say how large. Very likely not much this first year. The people will want to be sure that I can make good brandy before they'll venture."

"And what, my brother, will the profit be shown to have been when you and I and the people that will patronize this distillery shall be in our graves?" pursued the elder, with gentle earnestness. "What, when the judgment-day shall have come, and the books are opened, — what shall be the record

there? Can it show that this has added any brightness to your crown, my brother? Will it not rather stand all on the side of loss for you?"

The deacon turned a flushed face toward the speaker. "These are uncommon words from you, Elder Leonard."

"I would to God," answered the elder, sadly, "that they were not so. My own garments are not free from this stain. I have seen the evil, but I have not always lifted up my voice against it. The memory comes back with keen reproach."

The deacon stood mute. It was some time before he could summon his voice.

"I think, Elder Leonard, that this matter is one it will do no good to discuss. I have counted the cost, and am willing to abide by the issue."

"Nay, brother," said the elder, "do not leave the subject so. I have not come to speak harshly. We are as 'a city set upon a hill,' you know, and it becomes us to con-

fer together in brotherly love as to what will advance or hinder the cause of Christ in our midst. I must speak; the very stones will cry out against me, if I hold my peace longer."

"Then," said the deacon, "I must hear."

"The necessity for hearing is from God, not me," answered the elder. "We are commanded to take counsel together concerning the things of the kingdom; and when a temptation is laid in the way"—

"When temptation is laid in the way," interrupted the deacon, a little testily, "it will be time to talk. Elder Leonard, why do you come to me with this? What have I done? Everybody drinks; there would be a cider-mill and distillery somewhere else in town, if not here. Go to those who will make themselves drunkards, who will drink in spite of reason and common sense, and go miles to get their liquor rather than not have it."

"I will go," answered the elder. "I will

begin with your son Thomas, and ask him how it is that he has such a thirst for drink, and if he tells me the truth, he will say, 'I acquired the taste when a boy, when my father used to give me a little from his glass, and you, elder, stood by, and though you never drank, did not warn me against it.' Brother Archer, is Tom a good son to you, any comfort to his wife, anything like a father to his child? Say, my brother, shall we continue in this great sin?"

But the deacon was looking steadfastly at something down the road.

"And I will go," continued the elder, "to Jethro and to Isaac and to Benjamin, and I will say to them as I have done before, 'My sons, how is it that you have learned to profane God's name, and to go about doing shameful deeds, and to love the company of scorers of truth and scoffers at God's law? How is it that you have long forsaken the assembling of our

people on the Sabbath, until your faces there would be as the faces of strangers?' And if they answer me at all, they will say, 'It has been owing in a great measure to the influence of this cider-mill, the company it brought about us, and the taste for exciting scenes and loose mirth it gave us;' and does this sin lie at their door alone, oh, my brother?"

The deacon turned carelessly away. He had made up his mind to consider the elder as becoming demented, and to treat his last appeal accordingly.

"Come with me to the house, Elder Leonard," he said. "You are nervous, worn out with some unusual care. My wife shall make a cup of hot tea for you."

The elder doubted if he had heard rightly. The deacon was certainly making his way off very coolly. Then it flashed upon him.

"No, Brother Archer," he said, sadly, "I am not nervous nor worn out. And per-



"THE DEACON HELPED THE ELDER UNFASTEN HIS HORSE."

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haps you think I speak wildly; but these are words of truth and soberness. I will go up with you and get my horse."

They went silently. The deacon helped the elder unfasten his horse. Then the latter took him by the hand.

"If I have seemed to speak harshly, my brother, it has not been in my heart. But I love my Master's cause."

For the first time in his life, Elder Leonard drove away from Deacon Archer's without being urged to come again soon.

Before going home, he called at Tom's cottage, talked as cheerfully as possible with his wife, and made Hope happy by telling her he would some day bring Bessie to see her. But no opportunity offered by which he could drop even a casual word of comfort or sympathy. How could he break over that barrier of icy reserve? So their talk touched all subjects but the one nearest home; glanced round it and over it, but the barrier was not removed

a single instant. And yet after he had gone, the proud woman wrung her hands with agony and with shame. She knew he would meet her husband, and Tom hated the elder.

The elder had not yet reached the village, when the well-known horse of the deacon appeared, driven by Tom. He purposely slackened his own horse's pace, that he might, if possible, speak one word; for the elder's kind feeling and innate courteousness never allowed him to pass one he knew without some friendly word of salutation if possible.

"Good-morning, Mr. Archer," he said, pleasantly, as Tom came alongside. "What have you there?" he asked, not with inordinate curiosity, but simply following the custom of those familiar times.

"Been to mill, and carrying home the grist!" shouted Tom, and with a furious cut at his horse, and an ejaculated, "Can't stop me for a 'pious' talk this morning!" he was


out-of-hearing distance before the elder could possibly have spoken again.

Now Tom had in his wagon, not the "grist," but the "worm" so called, being a portion of the apparatus for the distillery.

That evening, Elder Leonard, after a long conversation with his wife, went up to his study and wrote this in his journal:—

"The clouds thicken about me. But the Lord is my shepherd. I will remember who has said, 'When thou passest through the floods, they shall not overflow thee.' 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' I must prepare a sermon on intemperance immediately; 'for woe is me, if I preach not the *whole* gospel.'"

CHAPTER IX.

CTOBER moved swiftly on to meet November, and the cider-mill and distillery were in full operation. Here, as elsewhere, the nights crept along with the soft, hushed movement that is the beauty of October.

There was scarcely a perceptible motion of the trees; beneath them the light and shade slowly walked to and fro, and anon lay at rest. There was no rustling of corn, nor restless waving of grain in the fields, and the few gay autumn flowers that yet remained clustered together silently, as if they, too, like all things else, were holding their breath while this queen of the months was passing by.

Did we say there was silence every-

where? What is that sound arising from the building that stands nearly opposite Deacon Archer's? What is that dark smoke polluting the evening air? Ah, what shall we say when an unholy work, too unholy for the light of day even, is permitted to profane such a night as this!

The distillery is kept going by night as well as by day, and Tom, installed as its chief engineer, has here his bunk of straw on which he may catch a few minutes' sleep in the intervals of replenishing the fires. This night he sleeps little. It cannot be the contrast between the scenes of the evening, the noisy crowd of boys and young men, who have been passing idle hours with him, and taking "horns" of his brandy,—it cannot be, we say, the contrast between their oaths and shouts of coarse laughter and the beauty and stillness of nature without. Some consciences it would disturb, would fill them with a guilty fear and longing for some sound to break the

spell. But not so with Tom. He is beyond that. Still he cannot sleep, but ever and anon rises and peers out through the crack of the half-open door.

Out of the shadow of the homestead where he had concealed himself when he left the distillery an hour before, now steals a dark figure keeping in the shadow of the trees,—steals noiselessly, scarcely breathing. Isaac Archer was a coward at any time; now he trembled at every beating of his own heart. But he crept on; he had not forgotten the pile of bills Jethro had once displayed to his greedy eyes, and now, as then, he would see if this “would not turn him out something.”

He began now to near the building; now he had passed to a little distance beyond it, and halted by a number of barrels, in which was kept the brandy waiting for transportation elsewhere. Ike drew forth a can he had carefully concealed behind him, and adjusted it in the right position under a barrel for the purpose of filling it.

Tom had all the while been on the alert, and through the crack of the door had seen the whole affair. He managed to restrain himself till the can should be nearly full, and his triumph more complete. Presently he stole out from his position, and creeping up to Ike noiselessly, caught him by the neck.

“Thief!” he exclaimed, prefacing the word with an oath, and giving Ike a shake that sent the can from his hand, and its contents mingling with the earth.

For a moment, Ike’s head was in such a whirl he could not have stood on his feet alone.

“What do you mean,” screamed Tom, “coming here to carry off my brandy?”

Ike’s temper flamed at the words “*my* brandy.”

“It aint your’n, you liar! Take your hands off o’ my neck. I’ll fight you!”

“Come on then!” Tom released his hold and threw off his coat. Ike did the same.

"Now!" muttered Tom, hoarse with rage.
"I'll soon stretch you out, you villain!"

Tom had mistaken his man. His was the more burly frame of the two; but Ike had the advantage in a more supple form and dexterity at dealing and warding off blows. But we do not wish to enter into the details of such a disgraceful scene. In less than ten minutes, Tom lay senseless on the grass.

Isaac gave him one horrified glance, and fled. He had steered for the woods, and knowing the paths well, was soon able, by the aid of the moonlight, to make his way into the thickest of the forest. Ike was not wholly hardened, and his natural timidity was increased tenfold by a terrible fear of what lay behind him. Terror urged him on with a speed which well-nigh cost him his life. He stumbled over underbrush, and ran headlong against the trunks of trees, sometimes almost wishing he might thus accidentally kill himself. On and still on, till

the moon set, and in utter darkness and terror, he was forced to find himself a place to rest.

We shall not longer follow Ike's course. Would that he could have slipped off the chains which youthful vice and a slavish love of strong drink had bound about him as easily as we now slip him off our tale! Only one word more as to his future. He never went home again, but made his way to a remote corner of the State, where he married, lived a life of profanity and debauchery, and was rewarded by seeing children of his own stamp grow up about him. Verily, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Tom lay insensible some time from the effect of Isaac's blow, but finally, coming to himself in a degree, rose and staggered to his bunk, too stupid to think of looking for Isaac. In the morning the deacon came over.

"Did you hear any strange sounds in the night?" he asked of Tom.

"It's nothin' strange to hear a row any time o' night," was the rather surly reply. "But d'ye see that?" He raised his cap, and pointed to a large bruise on the forehead.

"What! what!" said the deacon. "How came that?"

"I'll beat that rascal when I get hold of him!" Tom burst forth.

"Beat who?" said the deacon. "What's he done?"

"I'll pay him, the villain!" muttered Tom, shaking his fist and his frowlsy head at an imaginary Isaac.

"Who?" reiterated the deacon, in despair. "Who's been here?"

"Who? That sneaking Ike, and was carrying off brandy, and gave me that when I laid hold of him. The" —

"Where's the barrel? I hope you didn't leave it all running out!" The deacon walked off with an anxious countenance to examine into the state of affairs. Sure

enough, the ground was flooded with the escaped liquor.

"Why didn't you see to it, you" — The deacon was too full for words.

"See to it! How'd I know he was going to lay me out there like a dead man?" muttered Tom. "I'd like to know where the scoundrel is!"

"Most likely he's run off," said the deacon, still ruefully contemplating the ground. "He wasn't at home this morning."

"Glad of it! We're better off without him. I'll warrant 'taint the first time he's been at the barrels." And Tom went off to his breakfast, and to repeat the story to his wife. She heard him through with no other visible sign of emotion than the increased pallor of her already white cheek.

"Nothin' to say, as usual," said Tom, insolently, as he finished his narrative and his breakfast together. "Hope, come here!"

Hope, after a trifling verbal resistance, went and stood a few paces from him.

"Wont mind, minx! We'll see. There!" seizing her, and pulling her against his knee, with such force as made her catch her breath for pain. "Next time I say come, you'll come, my lady!"

Hope braced herself up, and looked defiantly at him.

"Now, no lyin', girl! Who's learned you to be so saucy?"

"You," said the child, quickly.

"Say that again, if you dare!" and he brought his heavy hand against her ear. "Now, mind you tell the truth, minx; does *she*" — pointing to his wife — "ever talk to you about me?"

"No, she don't."

"Never, does she?" with a sneering, inebriate laugh.

"No."

"Very well, be off! and mind, if she ever does, and you don't tell me every word of it, I'll" — He shook his fist threateningly at her, and went muttering out.

Hope stood looking after him in a curious state of rage at the brutishness with which she had been treated — which, however, she could not by any means have put into words — mingled with childish tenderness and pity for her mother. The latter predominated. She went to her mother's side, climbed into her lap, and began kissing her passionately, over and over again, — her cheeks, her hands, her very hair.

"Mother, mother!" she burst forth, "what is the matter? Don't look at me so, mamma! Speak, mamma! speak to Hope, mamma!"

And the mother did speak at last, but it was like the wail of a broken heart.

"Oh, Hope, my child, my child!"

The breakfast dishes stood unwashed, the minutes wore on one by one, a half-hour passed, an hour, still that profound, dead stillness, except that at intervals that wild, mournful cry rang out, "Oh, Hope, my child! my child!"

CHAPTER X.

ELDER LEONARD had prepared his sermon; he had not done this hastily; his study could have borne witness to many a prayerful season of deliberation, many an agonized beseeching to be directed aright. Nor was he indifferent to results, but, leaving this in the hands of Him whose servant he was, wrote an impartial and tender, yet most impassioned, appeal to his people. The day for its delivery had come, — a raw, searching day in November; nevertheless, it was strange that so many people got out to church that morning; for there was old Squire Peters who had given up going to public places long ago, and Abner Hartt, who had been laid up with a broken arm, and had been

nearly broken-hearted ever since; for he lived off among the hills alone, and surely, as Aunt Comfort Lyndes said, he must have felt uncommonly "smartened up" to come out such a day; and there, too, was Widow Elliott, with a double shawl that she had borrowed of a neighbor, she was so "feared of this raw, windy spell;" and so, all over the large meeting-house, could be seen one and another who had been drawn out to-day by vague reports of something strange from the elder, and most of them, too, looking shame-faced enough, just as though they felt everybody understood they had come to hear their dear good pastor make himself ridiculous, which, indeed, it is to be confessed was too near a true statement of the case with some of them.

Not with Abner Hartt, however. He came at the earnest solicitation of the elder, and because, in the gratitude and love of his heart for the good man who had waited on him most tenderly when he was help-

less and discouraged, he was anxious to hear all he could from his lips, quite sure that nothing evil could fall therefrom.

But as the world is made up of persons of divers tempers and habits of thought, and some with no habits of thought at all, so it is not strange if all these classes were represented in the elder's congregation that morning.

The younger portion of the parish, with few exceptions, had come willing to hear, and ready to treasure up, whatever might be given them,—come with full hearts and eyes many of them; for all through the parish it had begun to be pretty generally known that the elder was taking a more decided stand against intemperance, and as soon as it was known that he was to preach on a certain Sabbath on an important topic, no one was at a loss to guess what that topic would be, and the subject had been pretty thoroughly discussed in every homestead.

Little timid Margaret Young had wept all the way to church, because her father—a blustering, boastful man—had threatened to keep his whole family away from meeting, if the elder dared to come out with anything personal; and another of the late converts—for there had been a revival the winter before—came distressed and nervous beyond measure, because Martin Grant said he was going to “get right up in meetin’ and give the elder a piece of his mind.”

Such was the state of feeling in the first parish of Plumley. The elder alone was unmoved; his feet were upon the Rock. The petty waves of public opinion might beat against him; they were all alike harmless; he was looking elsewhere for support.

There was never more dignity in the elder's manner than when he rose to invoke the customary blessing; a certain sublime tenderness, combined with an unwonted

erectness of form, yet with a most humble expression of countenance, struck even the most indifferent heart in the assembly, though to most of them it was as indefinable as it was beautiful. "For these be thy people, O Lord," he prayed, stretching out his hands over the congregation, "and many of them the children whom I trust thou hast given me, thine undeserving servant; therefore help us to-day to reason together, that we may see whether these things are so, and may have respect unto all thy commandments, and so be enabled by thy grace to walk before thee in the *whole* beauty of holiness." We shall not transcribe for you his discourse, glowing with the fervor of his intense interest in the subject, and rich in its illustrations from profane and sacred history, his eloquent, moved appeals to his flock to consider the great question, nor his unfeigned sorrow when he spoke of his own short-comings in this respect. He did not hold himself afar off, talking to his

people from a standpoint far above them; but with a ready and most delicate appreciation of the varied characteristics of the people before him, he plead with them, reasoned with them, and warned them, with that beautiful simplicity which is the peculiar endowment of a noble and powerful mind.

Yet there were not a few that were offended; but of this more hereafter. The last appeal was finally made, the benediction pronounced, and the congregation dispersed.

It is to be remarked that Deacon Archer had listened to this discourse with a curious smile lurking about his lips,—a smile, we say; it could hardly have been called that, yet we can define it by no other term. It struck one at the first glance, but looking steadily, the lines about his mouth seemed to be in their usual repose; still the impression lingered, and could not be removed from the mind.

The next morning Deacon Kilmarth rode over to chat with his brother deacon.

"Good-morning, good-morning, Brother Kilmarth," said Deacon Archer, cheerily, as his brother drove up to the door. "It's a dreadful raw morning; isn't it? Puts us in mind of winter!"

"Yes, winter's coming surely! But you're a hale man yet, Brother Archer, fit to endure any weather."

"Yes," ejaculated the deacon, fervently, "the Lord is very good to his unworthy servant! Come into the house, Brother Kilmarth," he continued; "this wind is cutting; I'll have something warming for you."

"No, thank you," returned the other, rather nervously. "I mean — I'll go in a few minutes; but I guess I'll do without anything else. I thought," he continued, in an undertone, as they entered the house together, "that I would just ride over a few minutes and see how — what you thought of the sermon yesterday?"

Was it that same transient shadow of a smile that flitted across Deacon Archer's

face? Deacon Kilmarth looked at him with some curiosity mingling with the anxiety that had come into his countenance, and looked again; but the second time he thought he must have made a mistake.

"What did I think of the sermon?" said Deacon Archer, slowly, after he had given Deacon Kilmarth a seat by the fire, and established himself in his customary chair at the other side of the hearth, — "what did I think of it? What should you think, Deacon Kilmarth, if your wife, who's always been as meek and mild as a lamb, should all at once start up and begin to rave at you, and denounce everything you were doing as contrary to reason and common sense and God's law, when you knew perfectly well you were right, and doing nothing that you had not done a thousand times before?"

"Why, brother," returned the other, after turning over this somewhat extraordinary speech in his mind, and not seeing a very close application of the deacon's illustra-

tion to the case in hand, "What do you mean?"

"I don't say I mean anything," was the somewhat succinct reply, and again Deacon Kilmarth's gaze was attracted by that same swift working of the deacon's mouth; "but wouldn't it alarm you?"

"Why, I suppose it would."

"And not for your sake alone, but for hers?" and here Deacon Archer looked up very gravely.


"But—but, Deacon Archer, you surely cannot mean that!"

"I don't say I mean anything," said the deacon again, this time more forcibly. "It's driving a man into a tight place to make him say he means what perhaps he don't mean, or don't mean what you think he means."

The deacon was talking enigmas; Brother Kilmarth was in despair, and changed the subject. But he went home with a heavy heart, and a vague suspicion that he in

vain tried to put away. "He's on the track," said Deacon Archer to himself, as his brother rode away. "They wont get anything out of me; let the thing work. I've thrown the pebble into the water, and the circles'll widen round them' too; I shall be outside on dry land. I aint going to have my business ruined. Not I!"

CHAPTER XI.

 HE last days of November came and went. The parish of Plumley wore nearly the same aspect that it had always done. It was not a new cause of trouble to the elder that his congregations grew rather thinner; they always did that when the cold winter days came on, for many of the people lived at a distance, on unfrequented, narrow roads that were often impassable for snow. His church-members met him with no complaints about the sermon, nor about sundry other exhortations he had given them on the same subject; for the elder was not one to put his hand to the plough and then look back. On the contrary, there was an almost absolute silence,—a silence that was at first

not unpleasing to the good man; for who knew, he said to his wife, but that the fallow ground was breaking up, and the seedtime and harvest would be abundantly blessed! Even Martin Grant's children—their nearest neighbor—had ceased their accustomed malignant hectoring of Bessie, and only came and stared curiously through the gate at her. And so the elder took courage, and talked and prayed and labored in season and out of season with all zeal. And if he did often notice that his people listened with a curious or preoccupied look, his genial, kindly nature attributed it to the working of some hidden thought on the subject, and prayed and labored with more zeal than ever.

Perhaps it was strange, but the more the people kept silence, the more absorbed the elder grew. Still his fervor never outran his gentle courteousness, never interfered with his discharge of his various parochial duties; but it was plain that his whole heart

and soul were in the work. But this silence could not always be borne. The elder longed to see his people awake, putting by their glasses, emptying their barrels of cider and their demijohns of brandy. But when it came to that, his listeners only looked at him sadly, pitifully, as if they would have said, "You know not what you are saying." Strangest of all, Deacon Archer did not seem to be in the least offended with the elder, took all his remarks without any display of testiness or ill-humor, yet with that old haunting set of his lips. The elder could not but notice this; but it was not his way to speak of people's peculiarities, even to his wife. Frequently, under the pressure they produced, they were carried to his Father's ear, and there left with childlike trust.

The deacon, too, to Maurice's unbounded joy, gave his consent that he should occasionally take books to read from the elder's library, though beyond this there was no

advance. Study-books were not allowed. Maurice might spend awhile each evening in reading, but he must have no algebra, no Latin. District-school learning was enough.

In this way December wore on, — wore on literally with Elder Leonard. Everything seemed to have come to a stand-still, a dead level, whether through indifference or policy, it was utterly impossible for him to tell.

It had always been the custom of the parish to give their pastor a "donation" on New Year's evening, filling up his larder with such articles for home consumption as are known to be always exceedingly acceptable. Very pleasant and happy occasions these had always been, dropping into the still current of life at the parsonage, with so much of innocent gayety and mirth, and drawing more tightly the bonds of Christian love between the pastor and his flock.

Two or three days before New Year's,

Aunt Comfort Lyndes—dear, good woman, always putting the best face on everything, and especially on that which seemed to be exciting reproach or slander—ran over to talk with Sister Innis concerning the preparations for the usual donation, and very naturally inquired what she was going to carry.

“I don’t know,” said Mrs. Innis, thoughtfully. “We haven’t made up our minds really. I suppose they need as much as ever.” She stole a glance at Aunt Comfort, and sighed.

“Why, of course they will!” exclaimed the other, much astonished. “And, Sister Innis, it’s been weighin’ on my mind that we haven’t been doing just right by our pastor. It struck me last Sabbath, when the elder had closed his prayer,—I never heard a man pray as he does lately,—that any one who could get so near heaven as that couldn’t be far out of the way. And have you seen anything strange about him,

except that he has taken to preaching and talking about intemperance? And I’m sure since that trouble with Deacon Archer’s Isaac, we can’t have a face to say we don’t need something of the kind; can we, Sister Innis? It seems to me,” she continued, “as if we were doing unjustly by the elder, to let these reports gain such ground. But I’m only a poor, weak woman, and can’t ferret out the mischief. It’s all crept in so gradually, so slowly, too, I do believe sin lies at our door in not putting a stop to it. Sister Innis, who was it said the elder came of an insane family?”

But Mrs. Innis could not remember.

“Well, sister,” said Aunt Comfort, presently, rising to go, “don’t let us fail to make our pastor’s heart glad. I mean to carry more than ever; shall we not, Sister Innis?” she asked, in a sort of desperation; for Mrs. Innis’s monosyllabic replies had chilled her.

“Why, Aunt Comfort, I certainly mean to do well by my pastor always.”

"But, Sister Innis, you certainly do not believe there is any truth in these reports!"

"I hope not, Aunt Comfort."

"Oh, it can't be! I know it can't be!" said Aunt Comfort, greatly distressed. "A man that can pray as he did last Sunday! Well, good-by, I believe I must run over to the parsonage, and see how they're doing." And the good woman ere long presented herself at the parsonage-door. Bessie answered her knock.

"Dear me, Bessie, how sweet you look!" was her ejaculation as she followed the little girl into the house. "Give me a kiss, child. Is your mother at home, and your father?"

"They are both at home, Aunt Comfort;" and away bounded Bessie to call them. The elder and his wife presently came in.

"Elder Leonard, you are sick!" was Aunt Comfort's sorrowful return of his greeting. "Isn't he, Mrs. Leonard?" for the elder disclaimed the fact instantly.

"He is not looking well, Aunt Comfort; but he does not complain."

Aunt Comfort looked at him. The anxiety of the last few weeks had done much for the elder's not over-strong frame. How she longed to tell him she did not believe the suspicions that had been raised against him! Was it possible Sister Innis did? "I don't, nor I wont!" she uttered aloud, still gazing at the elder in a sorrowful reverie. Aunt Comfort had quite lost herself. "I don't, nor I wont!" she repeated, more energetically.

The elder smiled. "My good sister, what is it troubles you?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed in great confusion, "I had forgotten where I was! What was I saying? Well, it's all owing to your prayer last Sabbath, elder; I'm sure I never heard such a prayer before, and then I thought of—but I wont speak it; only, Elder Leonard, don't you believe Aunt Comfort has anything against you;" and

at this the good woman broke completely down.

"Aunt Comfort," said the elder, "do not be troubled. The Lord will take care of his cause and of me; I expected to bear reproaches."

"Oh, but, Elder Leonard, you didn't expect this! From people that have known you so long! But then, to be sure, we didn't know your father."

The elder could not help smiling.

"My good sister," he said, "why may I not know what this trouble is? I can defend my father perhaps better than myself."

"You oughtn't to have to defend anybody!" burst forth Aunt Comfort. "Why can't they see? I'm sure I can. And that prayer. But I must go! No, I can't tell you; 'twould choke me! Only, Elder Leonard," she added, going towards the door, "don't you believe I believe it!" And she hurried nervously away, without half accomplishing the object of her call.


Mrs. Leonard accompanied her caller to the door, and came back to her husband. He was sitting just where she left him, absorbed in thought. The true-hearted wife went up and, leaning on the back of his chair, laid her head caressingly against his.

"John," she said, with all the freshness of her young love and the beautiful tenderness of the old leaping from her heart into the words, "'the Lord reigneth.'"

The elder drew her face down and kissed her.

"They are precious words, dear wife. 'The Lord reigneth.' Yes, 'he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help.'"

CHAPTER XII.

 HE last day of December brought a heavy storm of snow. Since the severe cold weather had set in, Abner Hartt, who had never been a well man, had seemed to be rapidly failing; and on the morning of the first of January, the elder was summoned in haste to go to him.

The storm of the day before had not ceased. The sky was yet heavily overcast, and the snow came down thickly driven by a strong wind.

"Do be careful of yourself, father," said Mrs. Leonard, anxiously wrapping a comforter about her husband's neck; "that's such an open place Abner lives in. And, if I am needed, send right back for me; I shall not mind the drifts."

The elder set off. For the first part of the way, the horse carried the sleigh easily; but as they left the travelled road for the almost untrodden one leading to Mr. Hartt's, he began to plunge, the snow clung to his feet, and presently he went down heavily into a drift.

The man who was driving sprung from the sleigh, followed by the elder. It was found only necessary to clear the way a little. Providentially, they had brought a shovel, and this was soon done. The elder's companion took the reins again.

"I shouldn't have thought," said he, as he chirruped to his horse, "that this would have filled in so since I came along; I hope 'twont happen again."

But it did more than once, and both pair of arms were necessary to aid the horse to his feet. By the time the house was reached, the elder was several times reminded, by an unpleasant chilliness, of his wife's injunction to be careful. He had been careful not to

tell her that he was already suffering with headache and languor.

But all this was forgotten the moment he stood by the sick man's bedside,—the weariness, the increased pain, and throbbing of his temples. There was nothing to be thought of here but heaven; for the poor, weary invalid was panting for his other home, and neither storms nor cold were aught to him; for beyond these faith caught the white glimmer of the gates of pearl.

"I am going," he said, clasping the elder's hand, "to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God."

"Amen," responded the elder. "Your faith is clear, brother."

"I see," said Abner, with a bright smile. "There is no darkness at all. Elder, you have done so much for me, I thought I could not die without you. I do not want anything, only that you should sit by me here."

He presently relapsed into a state of dreamy unconsciousness, from which he was

never fully aroused. The elder sat by his side, holding the hand for whose clasp death was waiting,—sat in silence, save that now and then, as he thought it possible Abner might hear, he spoke some word of triumph or cheerful hope. There was no interruption of this quietude. Abner had no family; and only at intervals the neighbor who lived nearest stole in to offer refreshment or assistance.

The hours crept slowly towards noon. The storm passed away; the sun began to stream into the little rude, dark room; and, as if he had been waiting for this expressive symbol of the Sun of righteousness, the soul of Abner Hartt went up to "the land that has no storms."

The elder assisted in some necessary preparations for the burial, and then, with the companion of his morning's ride, set out for home. This man, Parris by name, was known to the elder only by report, and that represented him to be a person of not much dis-

crimination, besides being exceedingly talkative and prying.

"So Abner's gone off at last," was his first remark, as he drove away from the house. "Wonder if he's left anything? Hadn't any kin, had he?"

The elder's heart was too full to answer. Parris's tongue ran on again.

"Maybe he's left suthin' to you; he says you've been his best friend, and he didn't believe the stories nuther."

This last clause took away any answer the elder might have made.

"Why, you *are* queer," said the man, evidently amazed that he did not speak, and peering round into his face. "I wonder now" —

"What do you wonder?" said the elder, now giving him a good look at his face, and speaking with as much steadiness as the darting pain in his head would allow.

"I was only wondering if ye had raly lost your mind, as they say ye have," said the

man, not once dropping his eyes or his voice.

A stifled groan broke from the elder's lips. Was that it?

"Do you think I look like it?" he asked, in a firm, clear voice, and fixing his full blue eyes on the man's face.

"Can't say ye do," said the man, still unblushingly; "I aint afeard of you, nohow!"

It was towards the middle of the afternoon when they reached the parsonage. The elder dismissed Parris, and went into the house. His wife had prepared him a cup of hot tea; and, as he drank of it, after Bessie had brought his slippers and loose gown, she inquired if Abner were still living.

The elder put down the cup, and pressed his hand to his head.

"No, dear wife," he said, "he has gone home triumphantly."

"Father," said Mrs. Leonard, coming round to his side, "your head aches; don't it? Oh, how hot your hands are!"

"I am afraid I must give up, wife." He threw one arm around her, and another round Bessie, who had drawn near. "My precious ones, in health or in sickness, in life or in death, let us remember 'the Lord reigneth.' Bessie, daughter, can you remember this always?"

But Bessie hid her face.

The rest of the afternoon was passed by one in unavailing attempts to sleep, and restless anxiety by two others. Mrs. Leonard tried her usual remedies,—and she was well skilled in common attacks of illness,—but nothing availed. Towards night she went out into the kitchen, and called softly for Bessie. The little girl came; and as her mother stooped to speak to her, clung to her as one that could not be comforted.

"Bessie," whispered Mrs. Leonard, "what did papa tell you to remember?"

"'The Lord reigneth,' mamma."

"If he had said those same words a few days ago, Bessie, would you have found it

hard to realize that it is a very precious truth?"

"No, mamma."

"Should it be more so now, darling,—in life or in death, Bessie?"

"Mamma," said Bessie, after an interval of silence.

"Yes, darling."

"I will remember." But the little head sank with the last word.

Mrs. Leonard took the trembling child in her arms.

"My Bessie, papa is very sick. You must go for Dr. Hamilton, and stop and tell Aunt Comfort I want her; and to-night, darling, people who do not know papa is sick will come, you know. You must see them, unless some one else should be willing. There must be no confusion. Oh! I would spare you this distress, my daughter; but our Father's will be done."

"Yes, mamma."

Bessie left her mother's arms, and put on

her thick cloak and hood. She came back to get another kiss from her mother, and fortifying herself with the words "The Lord reigneth," went out into the twilight. Trembling still, but with no more yielding to emotion, she asked Aunt Comfort to go to her mother, and went on to Dr. Hamilton's. He was in the yard, about putting up his horse for the night.

"I will go immediately," he said, as the case was made known. "Step into the sleigh, Bessie, while I go in and tell father and Sister Grace not to go over."

He was gone but a moment, and then, springing into the sleigh, drove on rapidly. With all sorts of questions as to her father's illness and its probable cause, he plied Bessie. Sometimes the answers came unsteadily, but always properly, and the doctor could only guess what acute suffering was in the little heart that beat beside him.

Arrived at the house, they found a company of perhaps half a dozen young people

assembled, waiting till the doctor's decision should be made known. Aunt Comfort had met them all, and the utmost quiet was observed. No one, indeed, had any disposition for anything else.

But Bessie was not allowed to escape them as she would gladly have done. Some one seized upon her as she was attempting to go up-stairs.

"Is that you, Bessie?" said a sharp whisper; and before she could beg to be released, she was drawn into a group collected about the sitting-room door. "Poor child," said the same voice, taking her into closer proximity to it, by raising her to her knee, "how pale she looks!" And a chorus of suppressed voices echoed, "Yes, how pale!"

"I mean to ask her," said another voice aside; and some one who never could have been noted for discretion or kindness came up and inquired of Bessie "if she had ever noticed her father's saying or doing strange things before he was taken sick?"

The child's astonishment was extreme; but even that did not rise above her heart-rending sorrow. Answer for such a question at such a time she had not, and with her sad, sweet blue eyes dilated, gazed at the questioner speechless.

"What have you been doing?" said a deeper voice than had yet been heard, and Maurice Archer made his way through the group. "Lucy Perkins, you ought to have known better! Bessie, will you come with me?"

She slipped down from the arms of the astonished girl who held her, and followed Maurice into the kitchen.

"Bessie," he said, shutting the door between them and the gathering company in the other room, "your mother has commissioned me in your stead to wait upon the people that will come. As soon as there is any word from the doctor, they will go away. And you need not see any of them unless you wish."

"Oh, no, Maurice! How long will it be?"

"Before the doctor goes? I think not long, Bessie. Had you not better sit here by the fire, and I will come and tell you as soon as I hear anything."

"I will stay here, if I can do no good anywhere."

She sat down in her little chair by the fire, to which Maurice thoughtfully added a fresh supply of wood. Then he brought her a cricket, and with a cheerful word went out.

A little later he returned. Bessie was still in her place. Her attitude — the weary drooping of her head upon her hand, the profound stillness, for she did not move at his approach — touched him deeply. He went up to her; and, in order to speak conveniently, bent on one knee beside her. Her eyes were shut, and for an instant he thought she had fainted; but she opened her eyes before his fear had assumed a tangible shape.

"Oh, Maurice!" she said, starting a little;

but she had no power to ask the question that rose to her lips.

"The doctor has not come down yet," said Maurice, anticipating the words she essayed to speak. "I came in to see how you were doing."

"I am doing well, thank you," she said, rousing herself to smile at him; but it was a poor little smile that faded immediately.

"I am so sorry for you," said Maurice, his voice losing somewhat of its usual clear steadiness. "It is very hard."

"No," she said, lifting up her blue eyes, and with another little smile, that Maurice took note did not fade so quickly as the one that had just before lighted her face a moment, "it is a great deal easier than it would have been once."

"Bessie, Bessie!" There was more surprise in Maurice's tone than he had meant to show.

"I should have thought it very hard once," said Bessie, "to have papa so sick,"—her

voice faltered, and her head drooped again,—
"and I obliged to stay here, away from mamma; but now I can think that God loves us, and that we all love him."

"*We!*" said Maurice,—"you, Bessie!" Maurice's astonishment quite got the better of his usual careful manner of speaking.

"I love him," said Bessie, simply. But nothing could have added weight to her words.

Maurice felt rebellious. He didn't believe the child knew what she was talking about. But it was no time to dispute her then,—sometime he would. Years after, he wondered if Bessie guessed what was in his mind then; for she said, looking up at him with most childlike, and yet intense, earnestness, "I wish you did, Maurice."

It was the one drop too much. Maurice rose abruptly and went out.

It was not long, but it seemed to Bessie hours, that she still sat alone, waiting for tidings from the sick-room. But, at last,

Maurice came again, — came to tell her that the doctor had pronounced her father very seriously threatened with fever, that the people were all gone, and she was to go upstairs presently.

“And,” added Maurice, “Aunt Comfort is to stay all night, and I to go if anybody else is wanted.”

But this did not seem to be all that he had to say. He came back to Bessie after he had once turned to leave the room.

“I did not mean to be rude, Bessie,” he said, “when I left you awhile ago.”

“I did not think you did,” said Bessie, pleasantly.

“No,” stammered Maurice, — he was very clearly losing his self-possession — “but I suppose” — and here he gave utterance to the very thought he had not meant to speak — “that I don’t see those things just as you do.”

“What?” she said, with a little wonder in her gentle look and tone.

“I mean I don’t believe that” —

It was not usual with Maurice to hesitate in his words; but he stopped in utter confusion. The blue eyes were on him again, deeply saddened by pain and doubt, but kindled with another expression Maurice could not understand, but never forgot.

“I believe,” she said, an accent of joy quivering along her sweet, unaffected tones, “I know, that Jesus loves me, and that I love him.”

Her manner was so childishly humble, and yet showed her to be so deeply and happily sure of the ground on which her belief rested, that Maurice felt exceedingly humiliated before her. It was again the drop too much; and, wishing Bessie a low good-night, he went out again.

Bessie presently went up-stairs and into her mother’s arms. But this could not be long. Mrs. Leonard saw her safe in her little bed, and went back to watch with Aunt Comfort by the elder’s bedside.

CHAPTER XIII.

MORNING came, and with its first beams came, also, Dr. Hamilton. There was no change for the better; fever of a serious type had set in, and by night all the doctor's skill was in requisition.

Day after day, night after night, heavily-burdened hearts watched the rapid progress of disease,—watched with hope that day by day grew fainter, that almost fled as the dreaded hour of the crisis drew near. It came at last. Was life or death to be the issue? Oh, with what sinking, what anguish of spirit, they who ministered in the sick-room took note of the passing moments!

Mrs. Leonard hung over the unconscious

sufferer with face not less white than the pallid one that pressed the pillow. Was it possible life could triumph in that exhausted frame? It might be. She clung to this little remnant of hope, staying herself with the thought that, among others of the same precious nature, had kept her up during these trying hours of illness,—the words that had been almost the last to leave the elder's lips, “‘The Lord reigneth,’—in life or in death!”

Aunt Comfort had drawn to a little distance and taken Bessie in her arms. The little girl leaned against her, perfectly motionless, yet with sight and hearing quickened to painful intentness, losing not a movement, not a breath, that broke occasionally the otherwise absolute stillness.

There was a little stir at the bedside. The doctor leaned over the elder. What was the change he saw there,—life or death? For none could tell, not even they whose eyes were accustomed to read every vary-

ing line of his countenance. Life? God grant it!

Another minute of fearful suspense, and yet another.

And now even, when the last wavering of uncertainty was past, the doctor did not turn his eyes from the elder's face; but every vibration of his voice, as it rose through the dead silence, was in itself a song of triumphant yet subdued gladness.

"It is over," he said; "I think, I believe, he will live!"

So his words fell on the ears that had been strained to hear. But if lips and hearts had been mute before, they were dumb now with the great and joyful assurance. Possibly for the worst they had been better prepared than for this. But joy does not generally keep silence long. Aunt Comfort burst into hysterical sobs.

With that sound the spell was broken, and Bessie sprung to her mother. Yet she neither spoke nor cried. There seemed to

be rather a mute beseeching in her eyes that her mother should speak, as if she waited for one word of certainty from her before she could give admission to the hope that was held out,—the hope so beautiful, so blessed.

"Yes, my precious child," said Mrs. Leonard, her quick instinct grasping at the unexpressed desire, and giving utterance to her motherly tenderness and her song of thankfulness together. "The Lord gives life, Bessie, blessed be his name!"

How brightly the sunbeams streamed into the kitchen that afternoon! Bessie had gone back to her seat in the little straight-backed rocking-chair, and through the happy hours sat and took pleased, but still scarcely conscious, note of them, as they ran over the yellow painted floor, and by and by, when the twilight drew near, climbed up the walls, and chased each other about the old-fashioned bookcase. Aunt Comfort bus-

tled in and out; Mrs. Leonard looked in occasionally; friends came to be assured that the glad news was really true; and finally, Maurice, who, all through the elder's illness, had come over to perform out-door duties at morning and night, came in with light step and joyous countenance to talk with them upon the one theme that engrossed them all. And meanwhile the subject of their thoughts slumbered sweetly, very, very weak, but with the terrible fever no longer consuming his frame.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREE or four weeks passed along, the elder, meantime, gradually recovering, but very slowly. There had been too complete a prostration of his system for rapid improvement to commence; and, even at the end of weeks, he was still unable to leave his room, or, indeed, to sit up for a length of time, without extreme fatigue.

While he had lain, as it were, between life and death, his parish had held no religious services. But now that he was comparatively out of danger, there had been and still was considerable discussion as to what course should be taken with regard to supplying his place in the pulpit.

As it had always been the custom of the deacons, whenever their pastor had not been able to appear before them on the Sabbath, to read sermons to the people, so now the plan was again resorted to. But for some reason it did not give satisfaction, at least, with a portion of the parish. The deacons, too, seemed to feel that, with no stronger hope of Elder Leonard's complete recovery than there was at present, it was expedient that some one should be engaged to give them stated supplies.

But who could be obtained? There was little changing then of pastors in the quiet New England towns; nearly every minister was settled over his flock for life, and those who, either by choice or by circumstances were not, were so few and scattered that it was difficult to have communication with them.

But in this emergency Deacon Archer stepped forward. An old friend of his, a most devoted pastor, was then not engaged

with any church; he had been obliged to leave his former charge on account of his health, which had become re-established, and it was possible, he thought it, indeed, highly probable, that his services could be secured to them, for some time, if necessary.

It was a providential circumstance, so the brethren who had met to talk over the matter concluded, and Deacon Archer was requested to write to his friend, Elder Darwin, at the earliest opportunity.

We should not say this was the universal conclusion. The elder Hamilton went home with a few words for his son's ear. It was late, but the young doctor had been called out in the afternoon, on account of an accident some miles away, and was now at supper. His father took a seat near him.

"You are tired, father!" said the son. "Will you have something?"

"I am not very tired, son, and I will not have anything. Hollis, what do you think of Elder Leonard?"

"I think he will be well—in time," said the other, thoughtfully breaking a biscuit.

"He is very much reduced?"

"Very much."

"But you think he may be about in a few weeks?"

"Oh, yes."

"Deacon Archer's Maurice is there yet?"

"He comes over night and morning."

"Does the deacon visit them?"

"He has been in a few times."

"How does he seem?"

"Talks and smiles—very pleasantly."

"You are very non-committal, Hollis!"

"It behooves men at times to be so."

The doctor spoke gravely, but a little merriment was dancing in his face.

"You are not afraid of me, son?"

"Never!" said the doctor, emphatically.

"But what new developments are coming to light, that you question me so?" He pushed away his plate, and waited for the answer.

"I am afraid," said the elder Hamilton, "that Elder Leonard will not be our pastor long."

"Ah, and why?"

"It has been voted Elder Darwin, a former friend of Deacon Archer, be invited to supply the pulpit for the present."

"And does that set Elder Leonard aside, or, rather, do you think it will eventually?"

"I fear the growth of the feeling that prompts it."

"So the world goes," said the doctor, with a soft, continuous drumming of his fingers on the table, and with his eyes fixed intently upon the glowing fire, as if he saw something there he was trying to read,— "so the world goes. Deacon Archer wants to make cider brandy undisturbed, and Elder Darwin will probably not trouble him."

"I think," said his father, reflectively,— "I think Deacon Archer is a good man."

"I think he is," said Hollis, very com-

posedly. But as his father looked up, probably attracted by the intonation of his voice, he burst suddenly into a most unbounded laugh. "I am non-committal, you know," he said presently, growing grave again, and rising from the table. "But if speculations in cider and brandy haven't led to speculations of some other sort, then I'm not a Hamilton. Good-night, father; I have to be away early in the morning, and must be excused from further discussion;" and he gracefully left the room.

In the deacon's household this winter there had been one change. Susan, the eldest daughter, had married and gone to live in an adjoining town: so that the family, from the eight members that composed it on its introduction to our readers, was now reduced to five. To Maurice this decrease in numbers was not unpleasant, his evenings being much more quiet than they had ever been before.

Isaac's last disgraceful act and consequent departure he deplored deeply; but the subject was never mentioned at home, and at last seemed to be forgotten. Jethro had never been missed. Susan's absence was somewhat regretted; she had been, in the main, a kind-hearted, lively girl, but in his books and his increasing delight in little Hope's society, the gap made by her removal had been soon filled up. Then, too, the elder's sickness and his daily work at the parsonage had for the last few weeks absorbed him completely.

It had been very trying to Hope that he was away so much. Previous to Elder Leonard's illness, Maurice had undertaken to teach her, and as a reward for her really strenuous efforts to do what he required, had at times interested her with descriptions from the books he read. He did this, after all, as much for his own sake as for hers; for he found that it strengthened his memory wonderfully, and

gave him clearer perceptions for his next reading; and at length to take Hope on his knee, and give her a condensed and simple account of his last book, became as much a matter of necessity as the reading itself.

There had been a long cessation of this, until now it was to be renewed again. The elder had, for those times, a greater variety of books than was to be found in every minister's library: works upon the natural wonders of the earth, the air, and the sea, histories of various countries, lives of distinguished men, travels on land and sea, volumes of poetry and art, all of which were to Maurice a yet unexhausted source of pleasure.

And Hope, not even Maurice, knew what they were to her, these "talks" that took her so completely away from the life she lived at home. She would have sat hours at any time with strained eyes and ears hanging on Uncle Maurice's words.

One cold, stormy afternoon, in the latter part of February, Hope stood gazing from the window of her grandfather's kitchen, impatient for Maurice's return from the village; for she knew that, the evening before, he had finished the volume he was reading, and he never forgot her the next night.

It was nearly dark, and the storm was beginning to rage fiercely, when the welcome figure appeared in sight. Hope sprung to open the door.

"Ah, little Hope!" said Maurice, stamping the snow from his boots, and quickly throwing off his overcoat. "Time for you to go home; is it? Well, we'll have a few minutes, and then I'll carry you home. What do you think I've got for you?" He went into the kitchen with her, and seating himself by the window which gave entrance to the most light, took her up, and placed in her hand a small book. "Bessie sends you this, Hope, and she hopes you will be able to read it very soon."

Hope's eyes danced with delight.

"Did Bessie send it to me, Uncle Maurice? To me really?"

"Yes, to you really. And now what shall I say to her for you?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Hope, with a long-drawn sigh at the difficulty of saying enough. "I wish I could send her something! Oh, I know, Uncle Maurice, you can give her a kiss for me!"

"Oh, Hope!" Maurice laughed, greatly to Hope's surprise, and laughed again. "What a child you are! No, little girl, Bessie must wait for that sort of pay till you see her!"

"Bessie who?" said a savage voice from behind. Maurice started; it was Tom's voice, and Hope involuntarily hid the book under her apron, but not before her father had seen it.

"Give it to me!" he thundered. The child dared not disobey.

"So this is from Bessie, sweet Bessie!"

he said, with a leer, reading the name on a fly-leaf. "Well, Maurice, do you tell her what I did with it, and if you bring any more of her books to Hope, I'll"—Tom's threats were often left unfinished, probably because his conception of them was more terrible than would admit of expression. "Look here, Hope!"

Hope had hidden her face on Maurice's arm. Her father seized her by the hair, and forced her to look, while he flung the book into the fire, and the leaping flames eagerly devoured it. Hope shrieked with rage.

"Hold your noise!" roared the half-drunken man. "Go 'long and get your things."

She would not stir, not even when a blow on the ear made her brain whirl, till Maurice put her down from his knee, and whispered to her. She gave him one look of appeal, then went out to the entry and brought them in. Mrs. Archer, who had sat by in silence, put them on for her, while Maurice donned his overcoat.

"Now, Hope," he said, stooping down to her, "put your arms around my neck."

"No, she don't!" shouted Tom. "Take your arms off his neck!"

"She shall not!" Maurice raised himself and Hope at the same time. His voice was not pitched above its ordinary tone, but its firmness and the steady fire of his eyes awed Tom completely. "I am going to carry her home."

"Carry her then," muttered Tom, with an oath; "we'll see who's who when we get there;" and staggering to the door, he flung it open, and the three passed out.

A few steps brought them to the cottage. Maurice entered with his little charge, followed by Tom. The room was dark.

"Molly!" shouted Tom, "Molly!"

His wife entered from another room with a flickering candle. She seemed to Maurice, as the light flared over her hollow cheeks and unnaturally bright eyes, like one coming from the grave.

Mary sat down, and taking Hope from Maurice, who went immediately away, began to unfasten her cloak. The child was shivering violently; but the mother dared not ask the cause. It was not the cold, she knew; Hope never shivered so for that.

"Hope," said Tom, settling upon a chair that stood near, and bending towards her with a horrid grin, "why don't you tell what the matter is?"

She drew back from him with an expression of the utmost scorn. "I hate you!" she muttered.

"Hope!" said her mother, sternly.

"I do hate him,—I *do*!" persisted Hope, her cheeks growing livid at the memory of the scene at her grandfather's. "He burned my book, and"—

"Hope, I will not hear this!" Mrs. Archer forcibly turned her about, that she might not face her father. But the child freed herself with the violent strength lent by passion.


"I hate you!" she muttered again, resting her burning eyes full on her father's face. "I always will hate you, and sometime I'll burn *your* things, I will!"

"That's right, minx!" said Tom, with a hideous, drunken laugh. "Splendid temper! I like it! Give her some more lessons tomorrow, Moll! I'll have another drink!" He blundered his way to the closet, drank deeply, and stretched himself on the floor, where his wife found him, when, an hour later, she came back from Hope's bedside, in the dead sleep of the drunkard.

Mrs. Archer did not sleep that night. Sleep! There was no rest for her, mind or body. She was afloat on a raging sea, tossed and driven of the winds at will, with no power to handle the rudder or to cast out anchor. She sat and gazed at the prostrate form of her husband in a mute agony,—an agony that for the time held at bay every thought save one: what was to become of Hope? Yet of this she

could not think coherently. The thought, if thought it could be called at all, seemed to separate itself from her mind, to frame itself into the shape of some horrid, intangible thing, that floated tauntingly before her in the air, or danced about in the shadows of the half-lighted room, and anon came close to her, torturing her soul with the sharp, stinging thrust, "What is to become of Hope?" So the night passed.

CHAPTER XV.

T was a glorious morning in mid-winter that dawned on the wretched woman and the stupid creature on the floor,—as glorious a morning as ever flung out its crimson banners, and heralded, with its mute but most eloquent voice, the coming of another of God's precious gifts to man,—a fair and beautiful day.

Tom slumbered on, more insensible than the brutes of the beauty that was being lavished about him. Maurice's tame pigeons at the barn opposite shook out their snow-white feathers, and cooed to one another as they ran and fluttered daintily about their perch, and chanticleer sounded again and again his shrill trumpet, as if he could not

make too noisy a demonstration of his joy. Perhaps it was the contrast between the brightness and gayety outside and the dead stupor that reigned within that at last roused Mary, though it was to nothing more than a mechanical performance of her duties. She left her chair and kindled the fire; then, after she had prepared a simple breakfast, endeavored to awaken her husband. It was in vain; he had drank an unusual quantity of liquor the night before, and her efforts were fruitless. Sometime later, he opened his bleared eyes, and after a few minutes' confused speculation upon his position, managed to rise and make his way to the table.

Mary waited upon him silently through the meal, of which he ate without noticing that she tasted nothing, and presently he went out. It might have been a half-hour later that Maurice opened the door.

He stepped lightly in, speaking as cheerfully as he could command himself to do,

with that bloodless face and despairing, dreary expression before him; but answer he had not. Instead, the question that had all night haunted her slipped from her tongue:—

“Maurice, what will become of Hope?”

Maurice started at the lifeless, apathetic manner in which the words were uttered.

“She was my hope,” she continued, as if she did not know nor care that he had not answered. “I have clung to her and she to me; but now she defies me, and I have no power, no will. I am losing her—everything!” She paused a moment, and went on in the same dreary, lifeless tone: “Maurice, I used to believe I lived in something beyond this; it was years ago,—a good many years ago, and then I—married;” the last word was uttered with a shudder. “I felt after that, when Hope was born, as if all were not gone. I think I prayed sometimes; but I can’t now; I am confused, things are so blind, so strange. I have left God, and he has left

me, and now Hope is going. What shall I do?”

Maurice had no answer for this. He wished the elder were here, and so he sat speechless, while something mockingly whispered, “You were going to be a man, and help Mary. Where now is your help?”

The voice stung him sharply. He drove it away, and asked Mary if there was anything he could do for her; if not, he must go over to the parsonage.

“No,” said she, crossing her hands wearily on her lap, “you cannot reach this,—not you; you never knew anything about it.”

She meant no rebuke by her words; but how keenly they smote his conscience! He plunged out into the sharp air, as if that would rid him of them. Why should that implication come to him with such reproach! What though he never had known anything about it? He was proud that he never had, that he never would subscribe to such a weakness, if this were to be the

end of it all, — confusion, helplessness, and despair. A miserable piece of delusion and inconsistency it was !

Nevertheless, though he comforted himself with these thoughts for the time being, he had no sooner reached the parsonage, and as usual attended to the wants of the elder's dumb family at the barn, than he went into the house and asked to see the elder.

"Go right up to the study, Maurice," said Mrs. Leonard; and up he went, and went in, receiving the elder's salutation with a very preoccupied look and manner.

"How soon will you be able to ride out, Elder Leonard?" he asked, as soon as he could do so suitably.

The elder shook his head. "I am gaining very slowly, Maurice; I fear not for a long time. Why," he asked, smiling, "are you impatient for the pleasure of driving me?"

"Oh, no, sir," said Maurice, coloring, and looking much more sober than the occasion seemed to demand. "I don't mean, sir,

that it wouldn't be a pleasure; but it wasn't that at all."

"Tell me then, son; and you need not stand all the time. Come round to this chair by me."

Thus bidden, Maurice obeyed; but even then he did not seem ready to speak. The elder attempted to help him.

"Is some one wanting me?" he inquired.

"No, sir, perhaps not."

"Am I needed somewhere?"

"I wish you could see Mary, sir," said Maurice, feeling that he must come to the point, but wishing in his heart he had not undertaken this task.

"Does she talk to you more than usual?"

"Somewhat, sir, in a way that I don't understand."

"And can you tell me why? Is it because you do not understand her, or the things she talks about?"

"I suppose both, sir," was the hesitating reply.

"But the last is rather the more difficult; is it not?" asked the elder, gently.

"I don't know, sir!" stammered Maurice. Then, as if he feared the elder would think his reply rude, he added, "She says I know nothing about it, sir."

"My dear Maurice," said the elder, taking his hand in his, "Mary needs help that neither you nor I can give. Oh, this terrible evil! If it touched nothing but the physical nature; but the spirit must suffer, and that so keenly! I would," he continued, "that you could give Mary the small degree of help mortal can give. But oh, Maurice, though in many things you are beyond your years, at this point you are lacking; you have not the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

The elder was weary, and Maurice took up his cap to go. His pastor detained him a moment.

"Do what you can for your sister, and," he added, most impressively, "for yourself, *consider.*"

Maurice went away wishing numberless inconsistent things, not the least conspicuous among which was, that the elder wouldn't talk to him so, and that he was more like him!

Just beyond the gate, Dr. Hamilton drove along.

"Have a seat, Maurice?" he said, with his usual careless ease of manner, and stopping his horse's lively trot. Dr. Hamilton and his equipage were well matched this morning,—in gay order everything was, doctor, horse, and cutter.

"Perfect day; isn't it?" he remarked, as Maurice took his seat, and giving his horse the reins.

"Yes, sir, it's pleasant, very," Maurice answered, rather absently.

"Pshaw, Maurice! *pleasant!* See here; you sha'n't ride with me unless you can say something less commonplace than that. *Pleasant!* Wake up, boy! Just look off at the hills!"

Thus appealed to, Maurice sent his gaze in the direction indicated.

Perfect, indeed! The clear blue of the unclouded sky against which rested the mass of snow-white hills, glistening in the sunlight, the dark hemlock and pine, that here and there, through the white folds of snow, thrust out their green branches beneath, the glassy, ice-bound river, and nearer the broad stretch of level land, dotted with farmhouses.

"It is perfect," said Maurice, with emphasis; "as nearly so, I suppose, as anything is here."

"Very good, my young philosopher! What sort of mood are you in this morning? Been taking a dose of the elder's theology?"

"I was only thinking," said Maurice, half laughing, half sober.

"Thinking, boy! You've no right to think in such an air as this. Why, I could do nothing with a thought to-day; I should only hold it off or dodge round it; couldn't

let it be in my mind a minute. There's a time for everything, Maurice! I'm sure, if I had written Ecclesiastes, I should have specified that there is a time to think and a time not to think!"

"What would it be not to think, doctor?"

"Not to think! You want to set me at work, I see! Why, it is to be receiving so much through every one of your five senses that mental effort is held at bay, completely. I see this splendid sunlight and landscape; my ear drinks in the sound of the sleigh-bells and the quick tread of Juniper's feet; I taste and feel the keen winter air till my intellectual forces succumb to mere animal enjoyment, and I think no longer, but receive!" The doctor finished his speech with a gay little laugh, in which Maurice joined, seemingly.

"Well, now," said the doctor, "you've thrown me on to your ground in a degree, and I've brought you on to mine, and Juniper's obliged to walk up this long hill, and

take us away from the dazzling beauty below; so let us, or me, rather, work off some of this exhilaration, and think, if possible. What are you going to be, Maurice?"

"Going to be, doctor? I don't know!"

"You needn't jump so," laughed the doctor. "But I thought perhaps you had some plan in your head. How old are you?"

"Seventeen, last fall."

"Seventeen! No taste for farming?"

"I don't dislike it particularly; it's good work, but I would rather do something else."

"Humph!" said the doctor, turning on him a swift, quizzical look, and taking, as it were, a rapid inventory of his features and qualities, "here's a youth, seventeen years old, with a fine frame, intellectual head, resolute mouth, has a taste for books, not much for farming, don't know what he wants; in short, is undeveloped, needs an impulse, perhaps, or an opportunity!"

"Stop, doctor! said Maurice, laughing,

but a little uneasily. "What right have you to discuss me in this style?"

"The right of a fellow-creature," said the doctor, gayly. "If you don't give it to me, I take it; though seriously, Maurice," he added, with sincere kindness, "I don't wish to be inquisitive; but if you would let me try to be a friend to you, I would like it."

"Indeed, Dr. Hamilton," said Maurice eagerly, "you have always been that! and you may ask me whatever you please!"

"Thank you, my boy; and now for the question again. I have heard that you wish to study."

"Yes, sir."

"Have I not seen you taking books from the elder's library?"

"Yes, I have read a good many this winter."

"You have had no real study since you left the district-school?"

"No, sir; but I hope to study with the

elder as soon as he is able. He is getting well so slowly," he added, despondingly.

"Very slowly," said the doctor, thoughtfully. "He never was strong, and this fever has prostrated him completely. Maurice!"

"What, sir!" wondering what was coming.

"How do you like the new elder?"

The doctor had taken a new tack, and Maurice's thoughts had wandered so far another way that he could not collect them immediately. The doctor waited quietly.

"I like him very well," was the careful answer, given after a few minutes' thought.

"Yes; do you suppose he will ever give us temperance sermons?"

"I think not," said Maurice, searching the doctor's face.

"Well, my boy, I don't want to dishearten you; but do you not see what is ahead?"

That Maurice did not wish to was clear, but no less clear that he did.

"I have been afraid, Dr. Hamilton. Do you think it will come to that,—that the people will prefer him?"

"I see no other probable conclusion, Maurice. Not that it will be so with all, but with many. And the elder will never stay where he is not wanted."

"No, indeed!"

"Elder Leonard was not settled here for life. He did not wish it; yet I do not think he ever thought of this,—not till he took that stand against intemperance."

"But he has been prepared for anything since, I think," said Maurice.

"Yes, no doubt. But he has friends yet, and strong ones."

"He has been such a friend to me," said Maurice, sadly, "I don't know what I shall do without him."

"I am sorry for you, Maurice, very. And I would not have troubled you with all I have said, if it had not been to open the way for something else. It is useless for

you to think of studying with the elder. The spring term of the academy at Charemont commences in a few weeks. If you wish to attend, I think I can use my influence to secure you a standing above what you might unassisted."

"Oh, doctor, if I could go!"

The doctor needed not to be assured, after that tone, that it was a thing next to impossible; but he spoke brightly.

"Yes, Maurice, be sure you come to me, unless you can find some one who can do better for you; or, if it should happen that spring work is too pressing for you to leave, and the elder is not here, perhaps I can serve you in some other way; I have some books, and some time to spare."

Maurice looked the gratitude he could not put into words; but that it was recognized there was no doubt.

"You were going home, were you not, Maurice, when I overtook you?" was the doctor's next remark.

"Yes, sir."

"And I am going directly by there! Now, Juniper,"—drawing the reins tightly as they commenced the descent of the hill,— "fix your eye on Deacon Archer's, and step lightly. Maurice, what's that?"

They were in full sight of the little cluster of farms below,—the deacon's house, the mill and distillery, Tom's little cottage,—his only nominally,—the barn and shed adjoining. Two or three moving figures were seen, apparently bearing a burden into the house.

"It's Tom!" exclaimed Maurice. "No—Mary! Oh, doctor!"

The doctor gave Juniper the reins and a slight touch with the whip. In less than five minutes they were at the house.

Dr. Hamilton flung the reins to Ben, who stood waiting; and followed Maurice into the cottage. In the inner room they found a group about the bed.

Mary was lying senseless, with no apparent

wound, save a slight bruise on the forehead. The doctor proceeded at once to use his lancet.

"How did this happen?" he asked, as he made the necessary preparations.

"We knew nothing about it," said the elder Mrs. Archer, "till Hope ran over to bring us, and we found her as you see."

"Where's Tom?" asked Maurice.

"He's went off," said Hope, who had curled herself up in a corner. "I guess he wont be back very soon," she added, with evident satisfaction.

The doctor looked at her curiously; she met his look without flinching.

"Can't you tell how much she is hurt, doctor?" said Mrs. Archer.

"The right wrist is broken, Mrs. Archer. But that is of far less consequence than this insensibility."

A few minutes passed, with no sound save the dull dropping of the blood, which had at last begun to flow; other restora-

tives were not neglected. Five minutes more, and Mary opened her eyes.

"Where's Hope?" were her first words.

"Here I am, mother," said Hope from her corner.


"Come here, child," said the doctor, with another keen look at her, "where your mother can see you. Hope is safe, Mrs. Archer. Now that wrist must be attended to."

He raised her hand as he spoke; a sharp cry of pain broke from Mary's lips. Hope ran and hid her face on Maurice's arm. He led her immediately from the room and took her out of doors.

Maurice could not but think, as he left the cottage for the second time that morning, of all his experience since his conversation with Mary: his interview with the elder, the doctor, and now this new trouble; and in the midst of it all, the conviction was again mockingly flung back upon his startled consciousness, "You cannot help

Mary." He walked mechanically about, diverting Hope's mind as best he might, till the doctor came out to take his horse, and to say that the broken wrist was set, and Mary comparatively comfortable.

CHAPTER XVI.

HŒBE ARCHER, Maurice's second sister, and the only one now at home, took Mary's place, as well as she could, at the cottage. But it was a sorry change. Mary was neat, quiet, and most efficient.

Phœbe was not fond of work; neat she never was, nor was her tongue by any means a still one. Unrefined in speech, in temper hasty, in manner repulsive, it was no wonder that, under her rule and Tom's combined, the house became a continual scene of discord. Half the time, Hope sulked in the corner of the kitchen; Phœbe scolded or boxed her ears; Tom was brutish and exacting to the last degree; and Mary, suffering in spirit as well as in body, lay in the adjoining room,

helpless, and trying, in the midst of darkness and doubt, to solve this new and mysterious problem of her life. In this manner nearly a month passed along. There were always more or less times of relief, when Maurice was able to look in upon them with a cheerful word. Whatever Maurice was obliged to leave undone for Mary's comfort, he was exceedingly watchful as to the wants he knew he could meet. He talked kindly with Phoebe, did for her heavy work that Tom would not, drew Hope from her sullenness, combed her tangled hair, and having, either by the magnetism of his fingers, or, better still, by his own good-humor, won her to a sunny mood, took her into her mother's room.

It was hard for him often to do this ; but the annoying consciousness that Mary had spoken of a need he could not reach touched him with enough of reproach to make him considerate to a degree that, in one so naturally reserved and undemonstrative, was very beautiful. In vain he hoped for some re-

newal of the last conversation previous to Mary's injury, though he could hardly have told the reason why. But it was because, fearful as was that momentary revealing of her inner nature, it was infinitely better than the proud silence she had relapsed into,—a silence that was now deeper than ever ; probably because, in that last outbreak of despair, she had fully revealed the depth of her trial, and now would wait and see whether any light would rise in the darkness. Perhaps Mary had no such definite thought as this ; in her weak state she was hardly capable of so much mental effort. Yet, as she lay, day after day, weary, but uncomplaining, it seemed to Maurice as if her eyes had taken on a deeper look, and her thoughts, what few she expressed, a new and deeper significance. Hardly that either ; it was something more indefinite ; yet Maurice always felt in her presence as if there were a vague, uncertain reaching forth of her spirit for something to come.

Dr. Hamilton's visits were an absolute blessing to the household, with one exception: Phoebe could not be reconciled to his bantering speeches. For the rest, there was nothing, if we except Maurice's efforts, that so lifted the cloud of gloom, and made the little cottage for the time cheerful.

Maurice had as usual one day brought Hope to her mother, and was about going away, when in the kitchen he encountered the doctor and Bessie Leonard.

"Good-morning, Miss Phoebe; good-morning, Maurice," cried the doctor, merrily, leading his little charge up to the fire. "Here's a little lady I've brought to see Hope. It's been a cold ride; give her a warm seat, Maurice."

The doctor watched to see that his injunctions were carefully obeyed.

"Well, Miss Phoebe, how is Mrs. Archer?"

Phoebe replied, rather shortly, that she guessed she was better; she hoped she was, to be sure.

"I hope so, certainly," said the doctor. "I wish she was able to be using that broom instead of you."

To judge by Phoebe's eyes, she would have liked to lay the broom about the doctor's ears. It is not certain that she would not, if she had not stood a little in awe of him.

"I must go see the lady," said the doctor, drawing out his watch. "Miss Bessie, you may yield to Maurice's invitation so far as to lay off your cloak and hood; for I mean to leave you here till I come back from the 'Corners.' Miss Phoebe wont sweep you out of doors, if Maurice stands guard, I'll engage;" and, with a mischievous glance and gesture at Phoebe, he disappeared.

He had no sooner shut the door than Phoebe set herself and her broom down.

"I hate Dr. Hamilton!" said she, with an expression of the utmost disgust. "I don't see how you can ride with him, Bessie."

Bessie laughed. "I like to ride with him, Miss Phoebe."

"Don't 'Miss Phœbe' me," interrupted Phœbe; "I'm nobody but Phœbe Archer, and never shall be! Dear me, what a pretty hood you've got! Let me take it, Bessie. It's a sweet, pretty thing," said Phœbe, poising the dainty silken article on her not over-clean hand. "Some folks *do* get nice things; *I* can't."

If Bessie had not felt some dismay at the position of her hood, she would perhaps have told Miss Phœbe that the article owed its beauty entirely to her mother's skill. As it was, she ventured nothing.

"I am very glad, Bessie," said Maurice, at this point, deliberately taking the hood from Phœbe's hand, and carefully laying it with Bessie's cloak, "that you have come to see Hope. She has talked of you almost all the time since I took her to see you."

"I have wanted to see her very much," said Bessie, very frankly, yet with a sweet timidity, nevertheless, in face and manner.

"Miss Phœbe," said the doctor, at this mo-

ment entering briskly, "what have you been doing with my patient this morning? She's better, decidedly. I thought of that broom a dozen times while I was in there."

"I haint done nothing," growled Phœbe, getting up to use her broom again. "Seems to me folks is mighty consarned about what I do!"

"About what you don't do, you mean," said the doctor, wickedly. "Miss Phœbe, I wish you success in getting this room swept. Miss Bessie, little Hope is waiting for you in the other room, as I fancy one would wait for an angel's visit,—

Looking off to paradise,
All her soul is in her eyes;
Hark! I hear her softly say,
'Angel, come without delay!'"

He bowed with mock reverence, and was gone.

"He is funny; isn't he?" said Bessie, laughing. It was a clear, tuneful laugh,—a laugh that did not die directly on leaving her lips,

but vibrated in pleasant echoes, as something near and yet afar, — something you bend your ear to catch, but it is gone, and yet makes itself audible to the spirit long after. "I wonder," she continued, rising to follow Maurice into the other room, "if he made that as he spoke."

"Very likely," said Maurice; "he can do most things. But you're not in paradise."

"Oh!" said Bessie, "but I'm not an angel!"

"I meant," said Maurice, "that this place is so unlike the ideal world to which that name was first given. You know that was a Persian fancy, Bessie."

Bessie did not know it; and she said so, with very modest frankness.

"I shouldn't," said Maurice, with equal frankness, "if I had not read it in one of your father's books. But Hope is impatient. Come this way, Bessie."

He led the way as he spoke.

"Come, Hope," he said, after Mary had



"THE TWO CHILDREN SAT TOGETHER ON A LONG, WIDE CRICKET."

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exchanged a few words with Bessie,—“come; do you know whom you have been so anxious to see?”

Hope came forward to Maurice; but, very strangely for her, clung timidly to him, and could not be persuaded further.”

“I think, Bessie,” said Maurice, with a laughing glance, that Mary did not understand, “that she must have heard of the ‘angel.’ Hope, little girl, I must go away to my work, and leave you to talk with Miss Bessie.” He gently disengaged the arm she had thrown around his neck as he stooped, and went away singing to his work.

The first restraint soon wore off. Hope brought out her childish treasures,—little pictures, one or two books, and some ordinary toys. It was a pretty sight. The two children sat together on a long, wide cricket,—Bessie, with her dark merino dress and white apron setting off the fair face and deep blue eyes, in striking contrast with the brown cheeks and short, dark hair falling over them

that marked the little one who sat by her side. The bright sun of the winter day streamed in upon them; and Mrs. Archer, as she lay and listened to their low, earnest voices, thought of pleasant things, and at last fell into a sweet sleep, and dreamed of her childhood.

"Have you learned to read any in the little book I sent you?" asked Bessie, by way of making conversation.

"No," said Hope, glancing at her mother; "and you mustn't send me any more, Bessie."

"Mustn't?" said Bessie.

"No,"—Hope drew nearer to her, with some of the old temper kindling her eyes again,— "because my father'll burn 'em."

Bessie looked shocked.

"Your father don't do such things; does he?" said Hope.

Bessie shook her head; she was glad Mrs. Archer was asleep.

"I know he don't," continued Hope; "and if my father didn't, maybe he'd get me nice

dresses and stockings and shoes like yours; don't you believe he would?"

"Perhaps so," said Bessie, looking troubled.

"Well," said Hope, very positively, "I know my father aint a good man."

"Why, Hope," said Bessie, softly, "you ought not to talk so."

"Well, it's true, anyway;" and Hope looked as if she would have disputed the whole world on that point.

"Hope," said Bessie, to divert her thoughts, "let us look at the pictures in this book. What is this? What a pretty little boy!"

"What's he down on his knees for?" said Hope, bending over it.

"He is praying, Hope."

"Oh!" said Hope, "I say prayers sometimes; but I say 'em anyhow, not that way. What's the use?"

Bessie looked at the child in sorrowful wonder.

"Don't you think it pleases God better to kneel than to ask 'anyhow'?"

"I don't know," said Hope, carelessly.
"What makes you say 'ask'?"

"Why, because we do ask when we pray."

"Do you?"

"Yes, for some things."

"Do you ever get 'em?"

"If I ask for right things, in the right way."

"Oh, well," said Hope, with a flippancy of speech that shocked Bessie, "'twouldn't be any use for me to ask for anything; my father'd say I shouldn't have it!"

Bessie was silent; she thought Hope was a strange child. Before either spoke again, Mrs. Archer opened her eyes.

"Bessie," she said, "come here, my child."

Bessie went to her side, wondering a little.

"Do you think," said Mrs. Archer, slowly, "that you know what religion is?"

"I think," said Bessie, with most childlike and reverent simplicity, "that I know what the love of Jesus is."

"Yes, I meant that. But do you suppose,

child, that it will always be just as it is now?"

Bessie's eyes filled at Mrs. Archer's tone.

"I think, ma'am," she said, very humbly, "that, if it isn't always just as it is now, it will be my fault."

"And what would you do?"

"I must get back where I was before."

"But if everything was dark, child, perfectly dark before you, so that you could not see?"

"If it was so dark," said Bessie, forgetting her timidity in her intense interest in the subject and her questioner,—"so dark that I could not see, I would hold out my hand, and Jesus would know it."

"Are you sure, Bessie?"

"I am sure," said Bessie, putting her hands together involuntarily, her blue eyes kindling.

Mrs. Archer closed her eyes in silence. Little Hope stole up to Bessie's side.

"What are you talking about, Bessie?"

"Dear little Hope," said Bessie, flinging her arms about her, "we were talking about Jesus."


The sound of sleigh-bells was heard. It drew nearer, and ceased. Phoebe came to say that the doctor was waiting.

"Bessie," said Mrs. Archer, "will you come and see us again soon?"

"Yes, ma'am, if I can."

Bessie kissed Hope good-by, and went away. But Mrs. Archer never saw Bessie Leonard again.

CHAPTER XVII.

HE first parish of Plumley had for several weeks been in an unquiet state, — very. Little knots of people holding grave converse might be seen here and there, at the church on the Sabbath, or on week-days in the streets of the village. Mysterious looks were exchanged, mysterious words dropped, preceded or followed usually by sundry wise nods, or shakes of the head.

Elder Leonard had recovered so far as to be able to preach, and so the burden of conversation in the circles of the parish was, —

"What will be done now?"

Elder Darwin was well liked by the people; even those who would rather have seen

Elder Leonard in his place could find no serious fault with him. Squire Hamilton said to his son, as they sat together one Sabbath morning, that Elder Darwin was a man of considerable power, pleasant address, and seemingly devoted to his work. But he thought they should get no more temperance sermons, if he stayed.

"You want them, father," said the son.

"You know I always discountenanced the free use of liquor, Hollis. And I was always glad of anything Elder Leonard gave us."

"Why do you say the 'free use' of liquor, father?"

"Well, I meant it," said the old gentleman, leaning back thoughtfully in his chair. "I don't wish to gloss over anything. I never did condemn a moderate use till I began to see what ruin was coming to Deacon Archer's boys, and I knew how gradually they were led to it. What a family that might have been, and what a

wreck it is! Tom a perfect sot; Jethro not so much addicted to drink, but so coarse, with all his innate good feeling; Ike gone nobody knows where; and Ben,—that is a *dreadful* boy, Hollis. I heard him down street the other night, swearing fearfully, and daring the boys to fight him. But there's one bright spot," he continued, — "Maurice!"

"Maurice is a splendid fellow!" said the doctor, bringing his hand down forcibly on the arm of his chair,—"a splendid fellow! I'm sorry for him, his way is so hedged up as far as learning is concerned. He says it is impossible for him to go to Charemont. I don't know why; I think his father is bent on getting his mind off his books, if possible."

"Too bad, too bad!" ejaculated his father. "I should think the deacon would be proud to give him an education."

"Proud!" said Hollis, scornfully. "All he wants of him is to dig and delve on

that farm. I believe in my heart he means to keep him down. 'Learning is power,' you know. Deacon Archer is looking ahead. Maurice's influence may ruin his business some day."

"You are hard, son."

"*Hard*, father!" said the doctor, bitterly. "It's time to feel hard, and speak hard, when such a boy as Maurice Archer is kept from an education by such a man as Deacon Archer. The deacon's a perfect piece of policy; he's got the world in his right hand, and religion in his left, and he works with one or the other, just as it suits best. It's oftener the left hand though. It's a policy that can't always stand, thank Heaven!"

"Hollis, my son, who art thou that condemnest?"

"I'm your own son, father," said the young man, with a slight, satisfied smile. "But I know I'm not what you think I ought to be, for all that."

"What *I* think, son?" said the father, anxiously following him with his eyes, as he rose and began to walk the room.

"Well," said the doctor, taking leisurely steps from one figure of the carpet to another, "I can't say, even to please you, that it is what *I* think I ought to be. I've seen so much of the world and religion mixed up together, that I have come to doubt people's sincerity very much. I know there's plenty of better men than I am; but after all, I don't know but I have as good a right to the name of Christian as some that wear it by virtue of a mere profession."

Squire Hamilton sighed. "I know, son, that there are many who shall in that day say, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?' to whom the Judge shall profess, 'I never knew you;' but, Hollis, are we to make any mortal our standard in this matter? When Christ says, 'Come unto me,' shall we look about to see how many

others are following, or whether there are not some, as you say, carrying the world in one hand, and religion in the other?"

The doctor continued his walk. His father took up the subject again.

"The term religion, my son, does not, I think, quite reach the case. It may be possible to reconcile the forms and habits of certain religious beliefs with the world, but not to carry the unrestrained love of the world in one hand, and the *love of God* in the other."

"There's no love about Deacon Archer," now put in the doctor,—"inherent nor acquired."

"The love of God is never acquired, Hollis."

"What then?"

"Kindled, communicated by him when our eyes are opened to see what his love has done for us, and our hearts yield themselves willing subjects."

"Well," said the doctor, with an attempt

at his usual lightness, "discussions are not in my line. I can get along with a homily on medicine, but not on theology. No disrespect to you, father. By the way, Elder Leonard preaches for us to-day; does he not?"

"Yes, my son."

"And the Hamiltons must be represented as well as their numbers will allow. I wish Sister Grace were at home once more." And the shadow of pain which crossed the doctor's face deepened as he thought of another,—the mother who would never come home again.

The Hamiltons were all in their places at church to-day, and so were the deacons' families, and the Reids and the Hanscoms from the far "north district." Deacon Archer, looking about the church, thought everybody was there. And the elder preached well this day. Not with his wonted strength, nor was it a studied discourse he gave them, but rather a familiar and most lov-

ing talk. Yet this did not detract in the least from his innate dignity.

The services were over for the day, and, very tired, the elder had thrown himself upon the wide lounge which always occupied a corner of the "family room," while his wife sat by interspersing the moments with desultory talk.

"I was so happy to-day," she broke out once, with a tender accent on every word, "to see you in the pulpit once more. Our Father has been very good to us, husband."

"Yes, dear," said the elder, looking up at her. But she rightly judged there was more than that thought in his mind.

"What is it, John?" she asked.

His eyes were again fixed where they had been for the last half-hour,—on the bit of dark blue that was visible through the window, now becoming thickly gemmed with stars. Suddenly, and without answering her question, he repeated, —

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth re-

joice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof;' 'clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;' 'the Lord reigneth.' Dear wife, can you fully accept that blessed truth,—I mean practically, content with all the mystery of God's dealings with us? 'The Lord reigneth.' What a comprehensive view those words give of God's perfect and complete sovereignty. Can you, dear?"

"In a measure," she said at length.

"The Lord sent us," returned the elder, then, "to work with this people; shall he not also call us away?"

She had guessed what was coming; had struggled with herself to answer, as she knew she ought, trustfully and cheerfully. But her woman's nature asserted itself in one convulsive burst of sorrow.

"Oh, John, I can't leave this place!"

He knew where her thoughts had flown,—to that spot in the village churchyard, where

they had laid, in their sweet childhood, a darling girl and boy. He was silent, gently caressing the head that rested near him. Presently he spoke again, in tones that rang with sweet and holy triumph.

"My precious wife, it is well with the children; is it not?"

"I know," she said, "it is well."

"And whether we be here or there, it is well still?"

"Yes, John." Her voice would not go further.

"And they forsook all, and followed him.' So James and John followed Christ. Is there so much of earth clinging to us that we cannot follow our Master to another part of his vineyard, but must cleave to the perishing dust here? Is the spirit willing, or are spirit and flesh both weak?"

"I am afraid both," was her reply. "And it does not seem as if this were the Lord's work. May it not be that you are still wanted here?"

The elder's own voice shook as he answered, "My own heart clings to this people, and I doubt not some of them to us; but there are unmistakable indications of another spirit. You have seen this, dearest?"

She could not say she had not, and the pain kept her silent.

"Where is Bessie?" asked the elder presently.

"I sent her to Sister Dwight's with something for their little sick Johnny. It is time she was home."

At that instant Bessie's tread was heard on the porch, and her mother rose and went to the door. But instead of the joyous smile she had expected to meet, Bessie most unaccountably averted her face from her mother's gaze.

"What is the matter, my child?" said Mrs. Leonard, taking from her hands the shawl and hood she was vainly endeavoring to hang up, and putting them in their places.

"Do not mind me, mamma," said Bessie, in a quick, troubled way. "I"—

"Bessie," said her father, from the inner room, "come to me."

She went forward to his side. Her mother followed. By the flickering candle-light, she saw that Bessie was strangely agitated, her color coming and going in irregular bright spots on her cheeks, her blue eyes full of a deep indignation and pain she had never seen there before.

"What is it, my child?" she said, alarmed.

"Mamma," cried Bessie, "I have heard something. Don't ask me to tell you; I am not fit to tell you now!"

"Bessie," said her father, "let me see you a moment."

She turned round to him, but could not meet the look he gave her.

"Dear child," said he, "go away till you can come back and speak without bitterness. Is this the spirit of Him who said, 'Father, forgive them'?"

She turned to go; but before she left his side, he caught her to his breast with a murmured prayer. It seemed a long hour that the parents waited for her return; but then she came in softly and calmly.

"My little daughter," said the elder, as she drew near. She knelt by his side, and kissed him. "Can you speak now, Bessie?"

"Yes, papa."

"And how? As Jesus would have his little child speak?"

Her sweet mouth trembled; but there was no trace of indignation left in face or speech. "I will try, father."

"Yes, dearie." His manner told her to go on.

"Must I tell all, papa?"

"Yes, dear, all."


It was a long story,—a story of a conversation she had unavoidably overheard, most unjust and bitter against the elder, even more so than he had anticipated.

"It would not have been so hard to bear,

papa," said Bessie, as she finished, "if they had not been just the ones they were."

"Even so," said the elder, "'they whom I loved are turned against me.' But cannot we endure all this and more, cheerfully for the truth's sake?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

IME drew the year on to the middle of March. In the cottage of Tom Archer, quarrels had of late come to be the order of the day, almost of the hour. Tom drank to excess. Phoebe scolded louder than ever. Hope alternated between fits of passion and sullenness, and Mary, at last, by an effort of strength which seemed almost impossible, rose one day from the lounge, and tottered to the kitchen. Then she decidedly but pleasantly sent Phoebe home, and resting herself as well as she could in a miserable rocking-chair, resumed her quiet, efficient rule.

Her arm must still be carried in a sling; but that was nothing to the slow, feverish

consumption which was wasting her life. Yet how the aspect of this cottage in a few hours was changed! Dr. Hamilton wondered, as, in his visit that morning, he walked unimpeded through the outer passage, where for two months he had regularly stumbled over numerous housekeeping articles, how such a spirit of tidiness could have taken possession of Phoebe Archer. But he forgot Phoebe the moment he opened the kitchen-door.

"Mrs. Archer," said he, resolutely, "this will never do! You must go back immediately!"

"No, doctor!" There was as much determination in her quiet tone as in his.

The doctor leaned against the mantel much disturbed. He knew Mrs. Archer too well to suppose any ordinary presentation of the risk she was incurring would move her, and yet even now the scales of her being were wavering between life and death.

While he debated with himself, Tom walked in, already under the influence of his morn-

ing potion; he gave the doctor no further salutation than an unintelligible grunt. Then he proceeded to the closet, and filling a glass, offered it to the doctor.

"No," was the reply.

"Don't drink, hey? Take it myself then," suiting the action to the word. "This for Phoebe's going. She's a trump, doctor! Glad Moll's well! Been a reg'lar Bedlam here! Needn't come any more, doctor; Moll's well."

"Mr. Archer," said the doctor, sternly, bringing his eyes to bear upon the half-drunken man with force enough to quiet him for the moment, "your wife is not well, and if Phoebe wont do, you must have some one else."

"Some one else!" roared Tom, with a fearful oath. "No, sir! Moll does the work in this house in future. She's well enough. You — off with you! No more o' your lyin'!"

"Mrs. Archer," said the doctor, going round to where she sat with closed eyes and pallid

cheeks, "will you go to your own room before I leave?" His lips said, "will you?" but his tone, "you must," — not harshly, but most delicately appreciative of, and sorry for, her position.

She half rose from her chair, but on the instant Tom was beside her; one hand he laid on her shoulder, pushing her back, the other he shook threateningly at the doctor.

"Get out of the house! I'll show you how to come round here with your soft lies! Begone! or I'll put you out!" Tom's eyes glared fury.

"I will not give you that trouble," said the doctor, coolly, at the same time proceeding to pour out a draught for Mrs. Archer, of which he bade her drink frequently. Then he as coolly bowed himself out and rode away so wrapped in painful thought that he did not see Hope coming up the path till he was close upon her.

"Poor child!" he said to himself, as she stood back, looking up at him from under

the shabby hood that hung over her eyes, — "poor child, what will become of you?" It was a question that came to other hearts than his that day.

Tom Archer, as Dr. Hamilton drove away from the door, released his grasp of his wife, and taking a seat near by, watched her sullenly. It was evidently his determination to see that she made no attempt to go back to her room. He need not have feared; the excitement of the last half-hour had left her as powerless as an infant. Presently Hope entered.

"Come here, you minx," said Tom. "Well, did you hear anything about the old elder this morning?"

"He aint old!" said Hope indignantly.

"Aint, hey? You're a little fool! When's he going off?"

"This week," said Hope, with a recollective burst of grief. "And Bessie — and I'll never see Bessie any more!" She ran and flung herself across her mother's knee.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Tom, with stupid, maudlin glee. "Good! I'm bound to have another drink on that! Phoebe's gone, elder's goin', and pretty Bessie! Good!" He drank again.

"You sha'n't talk so!" said Hope, angrily, forgetting—as she was very apt to do—her mother's injunctions and her own promises.

"Hope," said Mrs. Archer, as forcibly as it was possible, taking the excited little girl's hand.

"I don't care, mother, he's so mean! He's so wicked! Oh, dear! I wish I was Bessie! Her father's good!"

Tom Archer sprung from his chair with another terrible oath, and seizing Hope, shook her furiously. Then holding her off, he commanded her to take back her words.

"I wont!" said the child, stoutly.

"You wont! Then I'll flog you!" He reached for a stout stick that lay by, and prepared to use it. Hope did not quail.

At the instant he raised his arm to lay the stick across the child's shoulders, his trembling wife stood between them.

"Thomas," she pleaded, "she's a little child; I cannot see her whipped so! Hope, tell father you are sorry; you will not talk so again!"

But Hope stood unmoved; she did not even look at her mother.

"Hope, my child!" wailed the distressed mother. "For my sake, Hope"—

She was not permitted to finish the sentence. Tom pushed her one side, fuming with rage, and the first blow descended. Mrs. Archer reeled—fell; a dark stream of blood issued from her lips.

"You've killed her! You've killed her!" screamed Hope, throwing herself down by her.

"I haven't! Hold your tongue, and let me get her up!"

Tom was frightened sufficiently to throw down his stick, and lift the prostrate form

from the floor. He carried her into the other room, and laying her upon the bed, attempted to use restoratives.

"It's no use!" he muttered, as, after wiping away the blood from her nostrils, and applying camphor, no sign of life was manifest. "Hope, run over and get your grandmother! And mind you say she was weak and fell. If you dare say any more, I'll" —

He might have spared his last words and the wrathful demonstration with his fist; for Hope was already beyond hearing.

It so happened that Dr. Hamilton, turning into the main road from the cottage, had met Maurice and stopped for a few minutes' conversation. It was well that his few minutes had lengthened into several. Hope came up white and breathless. "Mother! mother!" was all she could say, pointing in the direction of the house, and ran on to find her grandmother.

In a short time an anxious group hung

over the unconscious Mary. It was long, very long, before signs of life were apparent. But when she at last opened her eyes, it was with a frightened start and pained cry.

"Where is Hope?" said she, faintly. "Is she killed? Was it her blood I saw?"

"No, Mary," said Maurice; "Hope is safe. I will take care of her."

"How noisy it was!" she continued, as if her mind were wandering. "And I was so weak!" She started again. "Hope! Is she safe, Maurice?"

"Yes, Mary."

After one or two such periods of bewilderment, she became rational, and looked round upon them calmly, and even smiling. She wished Hope placed by her side, and as the little girl nestled up to her, kissed her feebly and looked inquiringly at Maurice.

"You will remember, dear boy?"

Maurice assented without words; it was impossible to command them.

"Maurice, dear brother," said Mary again,

"when you see Bessie Leonard, tell her I thank God for the words she said the day she was here, dear little girl! I held out my hand in the darkness that very day. Jesus did not turn from me. Dear Maurice, thank Bessie; tell her never to let it get so dark between her and the Saviour; it never will, if she never stops praying."

Mary's words died away faintly, and they who looked on her thought she would never speak again; but she rallied.

"Hope, darling, kiss mamma; be good and mind Uncle Maurice. How tired I am! Oh, I must sleep!"

"Dr. Hamilton," said Maurice, hoarsely, grasping the doctor's arm, "she must not go! Can't you save her?"

The doctor shook his head gloomily.

"The hemorrhage alone would be fatal, Maurice. She has had some terrible shock besides."

"Oh, then," groaned Maurice, "there is no hope. Mary, Mary!"

"Uncle Maurice," whispered Hope, awe-stricken, yet half angrily, "what makes you talk so?"

"I will tell you, child," said her grandmother, seeing that Maurice had no words for her: "your mother is dying, Hope; she" —

"She isn't, I know she isn't!" said Hope, persistently, her dark-gray eyes flashing. "If she was, she'd take me too!"

She lay down by her mother again, with her head close to the death-white cheeks. One or two stepped up to take her away.

"No, no," she said. "I will be still. Mamma wants me here. I shall help her to get well!"

The doctor and Mrs. Archer exchanged glances.

"What shall we do?" said the latter. "She is so wilful!"

"Let her be; only see that she keeps still," was the low reply. "Poor child, what will become of her?"

Hope's position alone prevented her answering this verbally; but in quaint fashion enough it was answered. Maurice stood by the bedside; she reached out one hand and laid it in his.

"How strange she is!" whispered Mrs. Archer, as she and the doctor moved away. "Mary charged Maurice to take care of her, and she seems to know it. Mary always thought there was no one like Maurice."

But her last words fell on an unheeding ear. Dr. Hamilton's mind was taking a swift leap into the future. Such a task! He trembled for Maurice. Take care of that strange little compound, the most incomprehensible little piece of humanity he had ever seen! But who would do it better? Who else could do it at all? Involuntarily his eyes came round to Mrs. Archer. She was watching his abstraction narrowly.

"You see Mary had queer notions," she said. "Nobody else would have thought of such a thing."

"Perhaps not," said the doctor, looking over at Maurice and Hope; "but she was right, Mrs. Archer! He will do it, if anybody can!"

"If anybody can!" echoed Mrs. Archer, her gaze following his. "But nobody can!"

Mary lay quietly. Once or twice, as they watched the faint breath, it seemed that the spirit was going; and they bent down, to see if there were, indeed, any flutter of the pulse. Perhaps the little face so close to hers, the slight pressure of the little brown hand that looked so strangely beside her thin, blue-veined arm, kept her lingering on earth after the spirit had prepared itself for flight.

The day wore on to sunset. All the afternoon Hope had lain wide awake, but perfectly motionless; suddenly she lifted herself upon her knees and bent intently over her mother; there was not a breath heard in the room.

"Hope," ventured Maurice, to whom the

silence was becoming terribly oppressive, "what do you see?"

She looked quickly at him, as if she would have said, "Do you not see?" Such a darkening look of pain, of keen anguish and despair, Maurice had never seen in any child's countenance, as settled upon hers then. An instant she gazed again at her mother, then her head sank, her arms fell nerveless, her frame swayed to and fro, and Maurice took her up and laid her upon the lounge.

It was all over.


Only the child's acute perception had caught at the moment when the spirit left. What was the mysterious tie between the living and the dying that the little one, by no outward sign, knew when the precise moment of parting came? How subtle are the relations between kindred souls!

Yes, it was all over. Awhile later, Hope awoke from her partial unconsciousness to find no mother, but a white-robed figure

waiting for the grave; no low, pleasant voice to soothe her, but hushed footsteps and solemn, business-like whispers; no cheerful sunset light streaming into the room, as at this hour it had been wont to do; but, instead, a close, unnatural darkness, that seemed not only to fill the room, but to permeate her whole being; and the child, realizing for the second time something of her great bereavement, crept out into the kitchen, and into Uncle Maurice's arms, moaning, with exceeding and passionate sorrow,—

"Why didn't mamma take me, Uncle Maurice? Why didn't mamma take me?"

CHAPTER XIX.

NCE more we repeat, it was all over, —not only in the house of Thomas Archer, whence a freed soul had gone to find the mystery of its earth life and death solved in another existence, but in the family at the parsonage, where other souls were about to begin a new experience, to work out a new life-problem, —not as Mary, in the light of a higher life, but with the insufficiency of earthly life and knowledge. Yet, to the extent that mortal may draw from divine sources for wisdom and guidance, Elder Leonard had in this step of declaring his resolution to leave his flock. He had not done this with the least prejudice or bitterness, but decidedly and unconditionally. His

resignation was immediately accepted, —not without opposition and very deep sorrow on the part of Squire Hamilton and a few others, but accepted nevertheless, and a few days after the death of Mary Archer, the elder and his little family were ready to leave Plumley for a town in New York, where a sister of the elder resided.

The elder had, in meeting Maurice a moment at the cottage on a call there a day or two previous, asked him to come to the parsonage for some books which he wished to leave in his care, which meant, in the elder's mind, no less than giving them to him. Maurice went over the evening before their anticipated departure. He had not forgotten the message Mary had left for Bessie, but from the effort of giving it he shrunk. To-night would be the last opportunity. Oh, if Mary had only left this with some one else!

He did not see Bessie till his talk with the elder was quite concluded, and then

she came in with her mother from some work in the kitchen. Maurice's heart was in his mouth. Let Bessie go away without Mary's message, he could not; but if a crushing weight had been laid upon his tongue, it would not have seemed more impossible for him to utter the words. In his dismay and confusion, he quite forgot to return Bessie's quiet "Good-evening." She did not appear to notice it, but took up a book and sat turning the leaves, listening to a remark the elder was at the moment making.

But for Maurice there was no more thought but of that message, and how he should deliver it. He looked at Bessie's fingers gently turning the leaves, and still turning; he became aware that the elder had ceased speaking; remembered, with another pang of dismay, that he himself had spoken of going, and yet sat rooted to his chair, with his cap in hand. He knew that Bessie was beginning to feel uncomfortably; knew that

he was making himself a ludicrous object in his friends' eyes; but oh, that message! But the effort must be made; there was no alternative.

"Miss Bessie," he said, with a desperate effort, rising and stepping towards her, and speaking rapidly, "Sister Mary left a message with me for you, to tell you she thanked God for something you said to her one day, and to tell you never to let it get so dark with you; it never would, if you never stopped" —

Maurice had felt he should stumble at the next word, and there he stood, his lips refusing utterance, working nervously with his cap, and Bessie, who had involuntarily risen, a little way off, seriously expectant and greatly pitying his confusion. It was a picture! The elder came to his relief, not with words alone, but drew near and stood by him, resting a hand on his shoulder.

"She meant, Maurice," he said, in a tone that, to Maurice's relieved mind, had never

sounded so beautifully, "to tell Bessie that it would never get dark between her and the Saviour, if she never ceased to pray." How easily and with what a glad, tender reverence that word dropped from his lips! "Was not that it, my son?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Maurice.

"Bessie will remember, I trust," said the elder, placing one hand on her now bowed head; "and you, dear boy, have you yet begun to pray?"

The not altogether unexpected turn took away Maurice's power of speech entirely. He gave no answer.

"Remember, Maurice, Christ, weeping over Jerusalem, exclaimed, sorrowfully, 'I would, but ye *would not!*' Shall he so lament over you, my son?"

Maurice contended with himself a moment more, then gave his hand silently to the elder, and with a low good-by to Mrs. Leonard and Bessie, went away.

How much of life had been crowded into

that week! Sabbath morning came; as Maurice in its stillness looked back on the last few days, it seemed to him as if he had been hurried through a scene in some terrible tragedy, and set down apart, paralyzed and helpless. Mary, Mary! How his spirit groaned as her memory swept over him! And she had left him Hope, not, indeed, to be fed and clothed, not to be taken from her father's house or care, but to be watched, to be guided, with a love he knew, and Mary had well known, she could be sure of from no one else. With what a keen longing to raise the veil of the future did Maurice's mind strive to compass this subject! What had the years in store for him? What for Hope? And it ended in a deep, deep sigh that the elder and his wife had gone, and Bessie! They would have done so much for Hope, and he could do comparatively nothing. It was with a very sober face that he presented himself in answer to his father's call to come to prayers.

"What is the trouble, Maurice?" said his father pushing up his spectacles to get a fair look at him. It is probable that Maurice attempted an answer, but certainly none was heard.

"I understand," continued the deacon, — still with his head elevated, that he might keep his glasses in position, — "that Mary has left Hope to your care?"

Maurice assented by a grave nod.

"And how? What are the conditions?"

"There are none, sir; there were none needed."

"And why not, pray?"

Maurice felt as if he could not bear much of this. He answered simply, —

"Mary knew I would never interfere with her father's authority, when he was himself."

"Humph!" said the deacon, "then you've only a secondary trust; and you've a hard row to hoe, — a hard row! I hope you looked at the subject fairly, before you consented to assume this responsibility."

Maurice felt as if he were choking; but he managed to answer clearly, —

"I told Mary I would do what I could, sir. She did not expect me to do great things."

"Of course not," said the deacon, in a chilling tone. "But I should like to know your ground for thinking you can do anything."

"I have none, sir, — only that I am sure that Hope is very fond of me."

"Pooh!" said the deacon, "I should place about as much dependence on that as on the wind. But still it is well not to trust everything to your own cleverness in this task."

"I do trust myself for one thing," Maurice answered, perhaps a little proudly.

"What's that?"

"I am as fond of the child as she is of me."

"Poor doctrine!" said the deacon, with a sinister smile. "If that had been the rule

I brought you up by, poor show I should have for my pains. It's a very romantic notion to suppose love will do much. I hope you haven't been reading novels, hey?"

"No, sir," said Maurice, meeting his gaze with proud scorn.

"Well, see that you don't put any more quirks into the child's head than she's got already. She'd better be here a good deal of the time with her grandmother. Tom's going to have her learn to keep house, is he?"

"It seems so."

"Coming eight, isn't she? Well, I had sisters that knew how to do all kinds of work at that age. She'll fret; but 'twont hurt her. See that you don't fill her head with your book notions, and she'll do well enough. And, Maurice, having taken this great responsibility upon you, it will become you to be a very constant attendant on the stated means of grace, as well as the occasional meetings for social prayer.

And you had better talk freely with Elder Darwin on this subject; he can advise and instruct you. He's a man of uncommon discrimination, and has brought up a large family of children. Phoebe, hand me the Bible."

Now Maurice's subsequent experiences with Hope, his unabated yearnings for the study that seemed yet farther off than ever, Hope's gradual growing to a clearer apprehension of her young life's trials, the wide-spread patronage of the deacon's distillery, Tom's increasing sottishness, together with some matters of minor interest, must all be passed over for the space of four years, at the end of which time we will again present them to the reader.

CHAPTER XX.

FOUR years later. Plumley looks now much as it did four years ago, save that the earth is wrapped in the warm embrace of October instead of the chilly arms of March. Some changes have taken place in the parish; the only one among which it concerns us to mention is that Dr. Hamilton, for nearly the whole of these years, has been absent from the place, following the duties of his profession in a town some miles distant.

Just now, the doctor has come home on a short visit, and instead of taking you at once, good reader, to the house of Deacon Archer, we shall invite you to enter the low, sunny sitting-room in Squire Hamil-

ton's residence, which, at this hour, seems to be the chief point of attraction for the inmates of the house. There the doctor sits, gracefully poising himself in an attitude few persons could have taken without infinite danger to themselves and their chairs,—to say nothing of striking other and most ungraceful attitudes,—but into which he has fallen as nonchalantly as if the principle of gravitation had never been discovered or demonstrated. There is, too, just the same dash of playful sauciness in his conversation, and, a little more defined than before, an easy, satisfied air, as of one who thinks he has looked over life pretty thoroughly, and has settled down with the gratifying consciousness that he is in as fair a path as most people. It may be noticed, on this particular morning, that the young doctor seems to be especially pleased with himself. Hardly to be wondered at, when the soft October zephyrs are laying their fingers so flatter-

ingly to his cheek, and the hazy, amber atmosphere outside is throwing its floods of delicate light in upon him through the open window. But the doctor rises at length; he has long been lazy, he confesses, and must have exercise.

"Come, Grace," addressing his pet sister, "this is just the day for a boat-ride; the air is delicious, and there will be just enough of it on the river to rock the boat to one of your light little songs. Besides, I want to see Maurice Archer, and there's a good landing not far from the deacon's. Come, father will do without us for a while, and appreciate us better for our absence. Say you not so, father?"

"I shall say go, my children. I want you to see Maurice very much, Hollis. I have hardly had a glimpse of him since you went away."

"What is the state of things in that part of Plumley?" inquired the doctor, lingering while Grace prepared for the excursion.

"I can hardly say, Hollis. I suppose Maurice's letters have given you an account of the few terms he has managed to spend at the academy. I hear he has done finely, as one might expect. But that distillery is ruining everything but him. Tom has opened a tavern on his own account in the old house the other side the river,—a wretched place it is,—and he and Ben divide their time between that and the distillery. I understand Jeth's not a bad fellow, though he drinks somewhat. I believe Maurice has had some influence with him. He manages to make his farm yield pretty well; his wife is a high-spirited, showy woman. But that distillery and tavern,—the town ought to take the matter in its hands and suppress the liquor trade. I thank God I have no boys to be ruined there. I hope you never put a glass to your lips, Hollis, not even wine. I warn you, if you have ever been led to it, never to let it pass them again,—never!"

"You need not fear, father; your son will never disgrace you or himself in that respect. But how's the deacon?"

"Well, the deacon was laid up a good deal last winter, and that reminds me I heard his lameness had come on again, and he was confined to the house. I have fancied he looked worn, and as if things didn't quite suit."

"Little that will avail now," said the doctor, turning in answer to his sister's call; "he invited trouble to his house, and he must not complain if it remains there, and stings him pretty sharply too. Good-morning, father."

The doctor and Grace were soon at the shore, and out upon the frolicsome waves. The breeze was just strong enough to stir the boat gently.

"Ha, how fine this is!" said the doctor, lazily handling his oar. "Sing, Grace!"

She sung for him a quaint melody, simple, but full of tender pathos.

"Charming!" said the doctor, after a few moments' reflective silence; "it is just like the day, takes one up out of life, as it were, and wrapping him in a soft texture of beauty and sunshine, lays him by to enjoy it. Grace, did it ever happen to you to experience such moments, when you might, as it were, imagine yourself a human chrysalis, resting apart from the world awhile, waiting to come out in a certain sense new?"

"If it has," said Grace, looking thoughtfully over the boat into the water beneath, "I never put it into words. You are more fanciful than I. But your comparison will not apply to the present case, Hollis. The air and the sunshine are doing the work for you, while the chrysalis weaves his own 'soft texture' about himself. His comes from within, yours" —

"From without," said the doctor, taking the words from her lips. "Very good, my practical sister. And I know what you are

ready to add, that I always let outside influences do the work for me."

"I didn't say it," said his sister, with a playful gesture.

"But confess it was in your mind."

"You always know what is in my mind, Hollis," said she, looking at him with half-serious earnestness; "why should I tell you?"

"You confess then? Well, fair preacher, what shall I do?"

She laughed at his comical look, but grew serious again.

"What shall you do, Hollis? Begin to do small duties that are disagreeable to you."

"Bah," said the doctor, with an expressive shrug, "why should one soil one's fingers by dipping into everything that comes to one's hand?"

"It does not follow that one need always soil one's fingers."

"That is not quite clear to me. However, waiving that, tell me why I should, in your opinion, begin to do disagreeables."

"I said 'disagreeable duties.' Chiefly, because it is a great part of the discipline necessary to form a firm character. And then, after you have learned to do disagreeable duties, there are so many ways in which the performance of distasteful offices, not particularly your duty only, would help your fellow-men, and be a real blessing to them and yourself."

The doctor laughed lightly. "Well, Grace, your opinion of me is even worse than I had dreamed. But what have I done that I should receive such a lecture from your lips?"

"Ah," said Grace, with a little shake of her head, "it's what you have not done, my dear brother!"

"I am dumb!" said the doctor; "pray define your position."

She hesitated a moment, and then resumed. "You have lived in Plumley long enough, Hollis, to see a great deal of the ruin and misery brought on by rum. As

a young man, and not without influence, does it not belong to you to take a public stand on the side of temperance; to throw yourself right into the midst of the reform movement now being inaugurated in many places; to sacrifice yourself somewhat, if need be, to do good in this respect?"

The doctor did not seem inclined to answer, and Grace resumed. "Since you came home, Hollis, I have watched to hear some word from you on this point; I have been disappointed."

The doctor rested on his oar. "Thank you, my wise little sister! But you know I'm an idle, careless fellow."

"You only need waking up, Hollis. I wish you could know even as little as I do of what Maurice Archer has done."

"Has he done so much?"

"A great deal here, and, I am told, still more elsewhere."

"How, — publicly?"

"No, privately, unostentatiously, but effectively. But you will hear of him yet in public."

The doctor mused awhile, and spoke again. "Grace, you have been comparing me with Maurice Archer, and have come to the conclusion that I am not as much of a man as he!"

"You know I am very proud of you, Hollis!" and there was no lack of testimony to her words in Grace's truthful, loving eyes.

Her brother was a little mollified, but yet not quite satisfied by her reply. He had no answer ready, however, and the boat rocked steadily along, to the motion of the warm, fragrant winds, that little recked how their sweet influence had contributed to awaken a train of thought that otherwise might long have slumbered.

They were nearing the landing-place in silence, when the doctor's eye was caught by an object a little way from the shore.

It was on his lips to direct his sister's attention to it aloud; but on a moment's reflection, he merely touched her hand, pointing towards it, and saying, in a whisper,—

“Is not that Hope Archer?”

“I think it is,” said Grace. “What is she looking at?”

At this point of the varied shore, the river, when high, widened so that it took in most of the low rocks and bushes that at other times found a break between it and the woods. Some distance back, on one of the very highest of these rocks, and grasping a branch of alder that close by reached out its friendly support, knelt the little girl, gazing down intently into a pool of water below. So completely was she absorbed that she did not hear the sound of the coming boat, which, soft as it was, would have arrested the attention of one less absorbed at a greater distance. The doctor, with a look toward Grace sufficiently explanatory, leaped from the boat,

and stepped noiselessly over the rocks till he confronted the child. Hope sprung to her feet.

“Hope, child, how do you do?” said the doctor, putting out his hand. “I am glad to find you. And are you glad to see me again?”

“Yes, sir,” said Hope, briefly, allowing him to take her hand.

“You have grown, Hope,” said the doctor, choosing himself a standing-place where he could see the object of Hope's curiosity. “I should hardly have known you, if it had not been for my sister; you shall go and speak to her presently. And we are going to see Uncle Maurice. But I want to know first what fascinated you so down there?” pointing, as he spoke, to the tiny sheet of water lodged in the hollow of the rock at his feet.

Hope, too, looked down, and said, “It wasn't anything.”

“Wasn't!” said the doctor, with feigned

astonishment. "Now confess that you were looking for a sea-serpent or a mermaid!"

"No, sir!" said Hope, coloring violently, and twisting off one of the strings of her sun-bonnet in the displeasure she felt at his questioning.

"Well, then, a crab, or a" —

"It wasn't any such thing," said Hope, desperately. "Dr. Hamilton, you always were plaguing me!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed the doctor. "Well, Hope, forgive me! I haven't had any one to 'plague,' as you say, for so long. But now please tell me what you were looking at, really."

But the doctor had lost ground. Hope was immovable.

"Come, then," said he, "you will surely go down with me to see my sister, and we will row to the landing and go up to the house together. Shall I help you over these rocks?"

He spoke now gravely and respectfully,

as to a young lady of mature years. But Hope passed him and his offer silently, not politely, it must be confessed; but Hope generally took her own way about things. The doctor took his way too, and reached the boat just as Hope had stepped in.

"Well, Grace," he said, as he took up the oars, "here is a study, too hard to be dealt with this October day. But if, from time to time, you will make observations, and send me the result, I will be your 'most devoted,' forever."

Grace looked at Hope not unkindly, and made her sit down by her. Some impulse moved her to ask if she knew what the doctor meant.

"Yes, ma'am," said Hope, surveying her with a pair of keen eyes.

"Do you? What is it?"

"He wants you to find me out, and tell him. But you wont?"

"No, child; he must do his own work of that sort. Don't you think he had better?"

"I don't think he can," said Hope, decidedly. Somehow, she had not been favorably impressed with the doctor to-day.

The matter was dropped here, however, and she showed no more signs of disturbance. But that evening, after the visitors had departed, Maurice drew Hope into conversation, and casually discovered her deep indignation at the doctor.

"He talked to me as if he didn't think I knew any more than a baby!" she said, her cheeks growing crimson at the recollection. "Asked me if I was looking for a mermaid in that bowl-ful of water!"


"What were you looking at?" said Maurice, suppressing a smile.

"I was thinking of what you told me about objects in water throwing back the light from their surface, so that they appear different in position and in shape. But Dr. Hamilton need not have thought I would have told him anything after that. And then he told his sister to watch me."

"Never mind, Hope; bring your philosophy, and we will study something more about the laws of light. What particular part of the subject are we on?"

"Refraction, Uncle Maurice, — rays of light entering a different medium." Hope brought the book, and soon forgot Dr. Hamilton.

CHAPTER XXI.

EXT morning Hope was up bright and early, as she always was. But this morning she stepped about even more briskly than ever, as she prepared her father's breakfast; for to-day Uncle Maurice had promised to go out into the woods with her to gather wild grapes. Such days were an era in the child's dull, matter-of-fact existence, — an existence which, but for Maurice's interest in her, would have been almost insupportable, not to say harmful. Care she had, in a certain sense, from her grandmother, — care for the externals of life, so far as she was not yet able to provide for herself; but the inner life, how was that fed? By no one fully; Maurice did what he could,

and to him she clung as her only and always ready guide; but even he failed sometimes. He was not in entire possession yet of her "being's key." Tom lounged in to swallow his breakfast, like the brute that he was, with scarcely a word or glance at Hope. It was infinitely better so than the mood he was often in, and when he left, the child's spirits were absolutely dancing. With rapid fingers she cleared the table, swept the room, and taking a dilapidated basket, the best the house afforded, ran over to her grandfather's.

"Why, Hope Archer!" exclaimed Phoebe, as she rushed in, "what on earth's the matter?"

"Where's Uncle Maurice?" demanded Hope, impatiently.

"Uncle Maurice?" repeated Phoebe, with a mocking drawl. "He's hid himself up, and given orders to send all inquiring young ladies home."

"I know better!" said Hope, with a stamp of her foot.

"I wouldn't now," said Phoebe, drawling again. "You'll wear out your feet, and then you never can wear stockings and shoes!"

Hope set down her basket, and marched defiantly into her grandfather's room.

Maurice sat there, in earnest conversation with his father. He held out his hand to her without speaking.

"And so you are all ready?" he said, as his father finished a remark he was making. "Go round and bid your grandfather good-morning."

Hope obeyed. It was a remarkably happy face for her that presented itself to Deacon Archer's eyes.

"She's a better girl than I ever thought she'd be," said the deacon, surveying her closely; "but," addressing his son, "in view of the plan you have been proposing, what would she do?"

It was a question Maurice wished he had not asked, and merely answering, "Hope

will do well," he took the little girl's hand, and they went out together.

Out in the woods how delicious it was! The trees had just begun to show the effect of frost; the walnut leaves were a pale yellow, prettier at a distance than to take in one's hand. All this Hope gave as her opinion. Maurice smiled and broke a branch of flaming maple.

"What do you think of this?" he asked.

"That's splendid!" said Hope. "Uncle Maurice, everything is just right to-day!"

Maurice looked at her face all alive with subdued excitement.

"I think so," she continued. "'Twouldn't be if Dr. Hamilton were here. Oh, here is some of the blue frost-flower! And there's plenty of that tall yellow blossom I used to get such armfuls of! I must mark this place, and get them when we come back."

Across a corner of the woods, they now went, by a narrow footpath, into a piece of swamp-land beyond. The scattered grape-

vines here hung thick with clusters; but they grew high and were hard to gather.

"Dear me," said Hope, after running about here and there, in a vain endeavor to reach the vines, "I thought I was going to pick, and I'm of no use at all!"

Innocently enough, Hope had hit a thought which had all day been running through Maurice's mind in regard to himself. It had been as much as he could do not to feel envious of Dr. Hamilton's ease and good fortune.

"Wait a minute, little girl," he said, cheerily. "There are some bunches I cannot well reach, tall as I am. Now let me lift you to my shoulder, and you can reach forward among the vines."

"How nice it is!" said Hope from her high position, delightedly handing down the large purple clusters. "Now we are both needed! You couldn't do without me, nor I without you."

"I don't think we could do without each

other at all; could we?" asked Maurice, kissing her as he lifted her down to the ground.

"I'm sure we couldn't," said Hope, confidently.

Maurice suddenly sat down upon the bank and drew Hope to his side. "Dear child," he said, "I wish I could always keep you with me."

She read quickly the thought he did not speak,—the meaning of her grandfather's words that morning, upon which she had vaguely pondered in the pauses of her glee. The face she lifted to Maurice was white and almost as rigid as that of the dead.

"You are going away?" she asked, huskily.

"No! I don't know. Perhaps not!"

"You can't go without me?" she said, her fixed look relaxing somewhat; but her words were not assured.

"Dear Hope, your father will not allow you to go."

"Have you asked him?"

"Yes."

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope, a vivid spot of color coming into either cheek, "didn't mamma leave me with you?"

"Yes," said Maurice, with a groan; "but I am not of age; I have no legal right to act against your father's will."

"Then I will act for myself. If you go away, I shall go with you!"

"Oh, Hope," said Maurice, "you are a child; you cannot do it."

She turned away from him, and sitting down, buried her face in her hands.

"Dear child," said Maurice, "do not give up so. Let me tell you the whole story. You know Dr. Hamilton was here yesterday, and we had a long talk together on school matters. He brought me a note from Elder Leonard,—the doctor stopped to see him on his way home,—saying that there was a vacant scholarship in the university at Ryson. If I could come, he would

like me to bring you, and you should go to school with Bessie."

"And you will go, Uncle Maurice? Oh, you are wicked, cruel!"

"My dear child, you do not know how hard it would be to go without you!"

"Then take me!" she exclaimed, with vehemence. "Why should I stay here? You know I hate my father,—that I always did, and always shall. You know how he abused my mother, and he threatens every day to take me to the tavern; and if you go, he will! Oh, Uncle Maurice!"

"Hope," said Maurice, "you never told me this before."


"I thought you knew it, Uncle Maurice. Don't go and leave me. Grandfather can't do anything!"

"He shall do something!" said Maurice through his set teeth. "But, Hope, dear child, it is not very probable that I shall go; I shall not unless I could enter the preparatory school on the same provision

that is made for a university student, because I am not prepared for college. Do not take it so hard, Hope. Don't tremble so; I'd rather see you cry. Come, look up, and tell Uncle Maurice you are sure he will try to do the best he can for you."

She tried to speak; but her words were faint. It was the second great grief of her life. Over the bright beauty of the day a great darkening had fallen. She did not think of frost-flowers or yellow blossoms on her way home.

CHAPTER XXII.

NOTHER twelvemonth went on, and it was again autumn. Not now October; November was driving about his blustering servants, the wind and the rain, and between them they seemed determined to make ruin of everything in Plumley. For three days and nights they had held high carnival in the vicinity of the river, not sparing the fine orchard of Deacon Archer that bordered thereupon. Almost powerless with infirmities which not age alone had brought upon him, the deacon lay in his bed and groaned through the long nights as he listened to the shrieking of the blast, and its terrific rushing and tearing among his trees in the orchard.

The storm swept on, snapping limbs from stout trees and uprooting others till they lay at full length on the ground; in the woods, stripping the oaks and maples of their "crowns of glory," and bowing slender birches till their pendent limbs swept the earth. Down by the riverside the alders, too, lay prostrate, and the waters rose and rushed over their submerged branches. Altogether, when, after the third night of the storm-king's will, the winds were at rest, and the sun showed fully the extent of the calamity, it was a most desolate scene. The deacon called for help to go to the window, and shut his eyes involuntarily at the first look.

"My God," he groaned, "have I deserved this?"

As he spoke, Elder Darwin, who had come in, took his trembling hand, and, without his customary salutation, began to repeat in a deep, reverent voice, those sublime words of the Holy Book:—

"The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled.

"The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; their arrows also went abroad.

"The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook.

"But the Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters.

"The Lord sitteth upon the flood, yea, the Lord sitteth king forever."

He ceased speaking, and stood looking thoughtfully from the window. The deacon motioned him to a chair.

"Nay, brother," said the elder, "I cannot stay; there are many of my parish in trouble this morning,—so many I can but speak a word here and there."

"Stay, Elder Darwin," pleaded the deacon. "There can be none in such trouble as I. Oh, my trees, my trees!"

"Brother," said the elder, "this is a serious loss indeed, but whose hand has done it?"

"But they were my pride, elder, and now, look! the stout limbs shivered, and the young shoots bent and ruined. The Lord's hand is heavy upon me, elder. Have I deserved this?"

"Would you call God to account?" answered the elder, somewhat severely. "Doth he not always chastise in judgment?"

"But, Elder Darwin," said the old man, persistently, "do you think I deserved it? Do you think I deserved it?"

"It is not for me to judge," replied the elder, rather at a loss for an answer. "It may be a part of God's plan that you should learn some lesson from this. Still I cannot see that you deserve special chastising more than others who have likewise suffered, and some far more severely. I hear that Moses Williams has had his barn and haystack swept away by the breaking away of the

dam. I must not stay, my brother. Good-morning. The Lord will give you better consolation than I;" and the elder left.

"If I do not deserve it," said the deacon, with another disconsolate look at his orchard,— "if I do not deserve it, I can bear it better. Wife, tell Maurice to go down and see if Jethro is in trouble."

"He has gone, long ago," was the reply. "He did not even wait for breakfast."

"Hark!" said the deacon, a few minutes later, "isn't that his step I hear? Yes, and Jeth's too."

They entered presently. A striking contrast the two brothers presented as they stepped into the room side by side. The elder coarse, untidy, and with a curiously shame-faced air, as if he had been all his life bluffed off in the attempt to hold his head up, and was always ready to dodge a blow, a rude stick in his hand, and an offensive pipe in his mouth; the younger

in reality a little less tall, but, with his erectness and the easy, dignified carriage of a fine head, seeming several inches taller, his countenance marked by that peculiar quietness that indicates mental and moral strength, a mouth rather stern, when at rest, but in conversation easily breaking into pleasantness, keen, but sunny-brown eyes, and, withal, a neat and well-put-on attire; this was Maurice. Jeth threw his stick on the floor, and deposited himself on the wood-box, which happened to offer the most accessible seat. Maurice stepped round to his father's side, with a kind "Good-morning, father. How did you rest last night?"

"Not at all." The deacon's eyes wandered from the window. "The orchard, Maurice, such ruin, such ruin!"

"I suppose we must take things as they come, father. It will recover from the shock in a year or two."

The old man shook his head, and turning

to Jethro, asked him how his trees had stood the gale?

"Well enough," said Jeth, with a motion of his head, intended to be upward, but which began and ended obliquely; "don't b'lieve the wind whipped so down there. Didn't rip up anythin' but some old apple-trees that haint had any life in 'em this forty year."

"Strange!" said the deacon, "how some spots are passed by. I wonder if I deserved this," he continued, rather in an undertone. The deacon seemed childish on this point this morning.

"What's that he says?" queried Jeth, addressing Maurice.

"He was wondering if he deserved this trouble."

"Deserved it," said Jeth, with deliberate accent, "why, that's a view of the subject I shouldn't ha' thought on. Well, some folks deserve such things, an' some folks don't!"

"What did you say, Jethro?" asked the deacon, observing that his son's lips were moving. Jethro had spoken low, and the deacon's hearing was becoming rather dull.

"You tell him," said Jeth, with a good-natured grin, nodding to Maurice, who sat near his father.

"He says," said Maurice, turning to the deacon, "that some people deserve trouble, and some do not."

"Does he think I do?" said his father, looking querulously from one to the other.

Jeth shook his head at him with a subdued "he! he!"

The deacon leaned back in his chair, and fell to thinking. The fire on the hearth blazed cheerfully, and won all three to a reflective mood very naturally. But, strangely enough, the minds of the deacon and Maurice leaped back to that scene in the meadow, touched upon in the second chapter of this tale, when the deacon opened the project of the distillery, and forbade his

son to speak of school again. On from that to more pleas for the study that was still denied, the eager devouring of books obtained from Elder Leonard's library, the lull that followed his removal, broken by the troublous times that accompanied an expressed determination to go to the Charemont academy, the displaying of hard-earned cash in Maurice's hand, a silent but forcible plea that could not be wholly thrust aside; but here minds diverged: Maurice went off to Hope, and years to come, and the deacon to a contemplation of Maurice, as he sat before him, "every inch a man," and wondered, with the same breath, if he deserved all the trouble that had come upon him.

It is impossible to say how long this abstraction might have lasted, had it not been interrupted by the entrance of Tom. He came shuffling in, remarking to his father that they might as well square accounts on the distillery.

The deacon roused up at his words, and called for his writing materials.

It was a long task, and not an easy one, but closed up at last, and Tom deposited in his pocket-book the money he had received as his due. Jethro watched him greedily.

"I wish that distillery was mine," he said, as the last bill was counted in.

"You," said Tom, with a sneer, — "you can't manage your farm without Linda's help!"

"I wish the distillery was mine," broke out Maurice, suddenly, in a deep, stern voice.

Tom raised a coarse laugh.

"You!" said Jethro.

"I would to Heaven it was mine!" said Maurice again. "I wouldn't own it an hour before it should begin to totter!"

"Eloquent, aint he?" said Tom, looking at him with a leer that made his brutish countenance horribly repulsive.

"Father," said Maurice, turning to him with changed voice, "you do not wish anything of me to-day?"

"No, what are you going to do?"

"I am going to see Luke Wortham."

"I suppose," said the deacon, looking rather anxious, "that there is nothing Ben cannot do, unless he is going to be at the tavern all day."

"He'll be *there*, and no mistake," said Tom, with an exultant laugh and chuckle. "Never was a day yet that he wa'n't!"

The deacon kept down, for pride's sake, the sigh that rose half-way to his lips. Maurice bade him good-morning, and left the room.

"What's he want o' Luke Wortham?" said Jeth, with a sidelong glance, intended probably for his father; but it slipped to the floor before it reached him, and Tom answered, —

"'Hanged if I know! Somethin' about them confounded books he's always ravin' about, I s'pose. I must go home;" and Tom, who had with difficulty restrained himself from drinking his usual quantity of liquor

this morning, stumbled home, to drink more and swear at Hope.

"Talk about ravin'," said Jeth, apostrophizing Tom as the door closed; "you're the one as does that. I say, dad," he continued, "what's Maurice goin' to do? Twenty-one, aint he?"

"Yes," said the deacon, thoughtfully. "He does not say what he means to do."

"He'll go to college, I suppose. Well, I can tell you one thing," — Jeth spoke with a softened air quite unusual with him, — "he's the best boy you've got, by odds. I don't know what's made the difference, — the edication, or keepin' away from the rum; but it's plain enough."


"He has got along wonderfully, they say," said the deacon; "I don't see how he ever managed to keep on with the class, when he seemed to be at work all the time too. But he did. Elder Darwin was at Charemont two weeks ago, when he graduated, and told me he went through it splendidly."

Jeth presently made his way out to the kitchen, to have a chat with his mother and Phœbe.

Meanwhile, the deacon fell into a heavy slumber before the fire, and dreamed that mill, distillery, farm, everything, was swept away by some swift calamity, while in the distance a crowd of stern, reproachful faces, foremost among which were those of Elder Leonard and Maurice, looked upon him, saying in pitiless tones, that searched his very soul as with a sharp thrust of retribution, —

"You deserve it, you deserve it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

BOUT two weeks previous to the events described in the last chapter, Hope Archer might have been seen one evening busily engaged in writing a letter. It was evidently to her a matter of great importance, so very gravely she bent herself to the task, and so carefully did she write and rewrite an occasional sentence upon a spare bit of paper before transferring it to the sheet upon which she had commenced her letter proper.

We wish it were possible to give a picture of Hope as she sat, when the last word was written, and the letter, fully completed even to the superscription, lay before her; her head on her hand, the varied expressions

flitting over her face, and kindling her bright eyes, her short hair falling against her flushed, brown cheek,—for she was not a fair child,—her lips parted in her eagerness to make sure that every word was spelled just right, and the writing as neat as she could possibly make it, the rickety little stand, on which her arm rested, the short candle stuck in an old rusty iron candlestick,—this and more your imagination must supply. Hope would never have thought how she looked; indeed, it was a fault of hers that she never cared, unless her attention was especially directed to it,—a fault that was an exceedingly great trial to Maurice's sense of neatness. But we have not told you for whom this letter was intended; for no less a personage than Miss Bessie Leonard. Poor little Hope, she would have given worlds never to have had this letter go to Bessie, but for Uncle Maurice's sake; and we very much fear, if she had realized that Bessie was no longer the little girl she

remembered, that the letter would never have been written.

But Hope had dwelt with so much self-accusation upon the thought that it was chiefly for her sake Uncle Maurice had given up the attempt to go to Ryson a year before that now she would sacrifice almost anything. She had brought herself to a point when she could do better without his teaching and his care and love than to see him so continually baffled in his attempt to study, though it wrung hot tears from her eyes every time she thought of the dreary hours she must endure alone. But she wrote bravely, and, with the last effort of her heroism, put down the words, "I will not keep Uncle Maurice back now," then as bravely read and reread her letter, folded it, sealed it with a bit of wax she had found in the house, and then, poor child, yielding to the pent-up tide that would be repressed no longer, pushed it all away from her, and cried stilly. It was not like Hope to cry.

The letter went, and in the discussion it elicited at the parsonage at Ryson, Mrs. Leonard decided that Hope should by all means come with Uncle Maurice. It was true, Bessie had now left school; but she should live with them, and be as their daughter.

"That child is like her mother, I think," observed the elder. "What an undercurrent of pain there is in her words, and yet so proudly expressed!"

"She must come here," said Mrs. Leonard again. "That life she is leading is not good for her. A child of thirteen ought never to write such a letter as that! Bessie, daughter, what can we do for her?"

"Dear mother," said Bessie, lifting her earnest eyes, blue as they were in her childhood, but shining now with a rarer light than they had worn even then, "we will do all we can for her."

Elder Leonard immediately wrote to Maurice, saying nothing of Hope's letter, but

adding to his expressed hope that he himself could come a most urgent request that Hope should accompany him, which letter was received by Maurice as he dropped in at the post-office on his way to visit Luke Wortham. He read it over several times, then walked on with quickened step and thoughtful air.

The morning grew into noon, and noon into night. Deacon Archer began to fret. Maurice had not come, and Ben was still at the tavern; he wished Ben liked to stay at home better; as for Maurice, if he chose to be away, he supposed he had a right; he was his own man now. However, Ben came not, neither did Maurice. Phoebe went out and milked the lowing cattle, and performed such other out-door work as was necessary; the deacon, finally yielding to the joint persuasions of his wife and Phoebe, attempted to forget his anxiety in sleep; and the profoundest quiet soon reigned in the household.

It was not long. There came a hurrying of heavy feet to the door, energetic raps, and loud calls that soon swelled into louder cries. Mrs. Archer and Phoebe sprung up in the wildest dismay. There was terror in the voices that shouted, "The distillery is on fire!" and no wonder; for the flames were already under fine headway, and the wind was directly towards the house. It was a strange time for inaction; but every one seemed paralyzed. A few neighbors only had rallied; for the house stood in a valley, and the flames could not be seen at a distance. Yet the distillery was burning, — the deacon's distillery; but nobody could think of that now. The flames leaped and rioted furiously among the stores of liquor there, and the danger to the house was doubly imminent. Fortunately, the building was yet damp with the late severe rain.

It was a low, wide house, built in the fashion of those times, with a sloping roof on the back side that nearly reached the

ground,—on the front, low enough to be easily ascended by means of a ladder. At the instant some had come to their senses sufficiently to suggest the feasibility of ascending the roof, already smoking with the burning cinders thrown from the distillery, a young man made his way through the crowd with a ladder, and resting it firmly against the eaves, quickly mounted. A loud huzza went up for Maurice Archer, as he turned his face toward the little group.

"Back!" he shouted, as one or two pressed up, "hand your buckets of water from one to another, and so on to me. Send some one round the other side! Moses Williams, take this pail quick, and hand me another!"

"Maurice, Maurice!" exclaimed Moses, as he did his bidding with a very unsteady hand, "can't ye save the distillery? Do, for my sake, Maurice!"

"For *your* sake, man! Aren't you content with ruin yet? Another bucket, Moses, and don't talk for Heaven's sake!"

"But, Maurice, the distillery! What shall I do?" pleaded Moses, mounting the highest round of the ladder,— "oh, what shall I do?"

"Do? You'll do better than you ever did before, I hope!" said Maurice, pausing to put out a burning coal that fell at his feet.

"But, Maurice, you must save it! You don't know all!" and the miserable man writhed in agony.

"Moses Williams!" Maurice for the instant forgot his work, and fixed his astonished eyes on Moses' face. The man could not meet their scrutiny. He had betrayed himself; he saw that.

"You wont tell on me, Maurice!" he groaned, turning to hand another bucket, and spilling nearly all of its contents in his terror. "You've always been my friend. I wish I'd a-heard to you, long ago. Maurice, promise me; nobody has heard us. You hated the distillery, Maurice, promise me."

"I'll make no promise, Moses," said Mau-

rice. "I can talk no longer. You've been a weak, foolish boy; now see if you can be a man! Steady your hand, and help save the house."

The house was saved. The distillery was burned to ashes. Maurice, severely burned in his feet, which he had bared in order to stand on the roof, bore the pain quietly, and only replied, when pressed as to the cause of his staying away so late, that he was glad he arrived in time to help save the house. The circumstances naturally created suspicion.

Moses Williams staggered home, not drunken with brandy, but weighed down with a fearful looking-for of judgment. He had no doubt Maurice would betray him.

Moses had suffered severely by the late storm. A little way above his house stood an old, unused saw-mill. On the last night of the tempest, the dam had given way, and the whole flood of water broken loose upon his buildings, which stood not far from

the brink of the river. Had his barn been kept properly repaired, it would have opposed the force of the current; but it was old; the timbers were decayed, and very naturally the underpinning gave way, and it fell, a shapeless mass of timber.

All the succeeding day, Moses sat by his window, looking out upon the spot where his barn had stood. He was not "forehanded," as the farmers in the vicinity used to say of him; his small property had descended from his father, and, little by little, that was receding from his possession. He was a man of some good feeling, and always meant, though in a very undecided sort of way, to leave off drinking, and attend to his farm better. He never did, of course. Who ever quitted a bad habit so long as they were only half resolved upon it? Moreover, Moses had a curious fashion of laying the cause of his drinking and his misfortunes on other people's shoulders. He was always condemning Deacon Archer for building the

distillery, and Tom for tending it,—always complaining that the distillery was so near him that he couldn't help going to it, and the brandy so good that he couldn't help drinking it; and so, with weakly yielding to the worst side of his nature, Moses Williams, at thirty, saw himself stripped of half his possessions, his wife a crushed, well-nigh heart-broken woman, his children puny and spiritless, himself too weak in body and mind to repair his misfortunes, and vowing vengeance on Deacon Archer's distillery, as its only and prime cause.

It was the third day after the fire. Moses had not stirred from his house since reaching it that night. Now and then a neighbor dropped in to condole with him upon his loss, he meanwhile shivering with terror and thinking as little of his demolished barn as if he had never owned it. He wondered nobody came to arrest him, then he should be in some sort of peace; and he might as well be in jail as anywhere.

It was just at dusk of this third day that his little boy came in from a visit to the spot where the distillery had stood, and remarked to his father that they had found out who set the fire. "Everybody was talking about it, father," he concluded. "And oh, you can't think who it is!"

"Who, boy?" Moses felt as if his strength were going.

"Maurice Archer!"

"You're lyin', boy! Did he say he did it?"

"I don't know. Should you have thought he'd have done it, father?"

"Go 'way, child; he never did it!" groaned Moses. "Wife, give me my old coat; get my hat, boy; I'm going up to the deacon's. I don't know when I'll be at home," he continued, putting on his hat with shaking hands. "If I don't come back, it'll be all right. I'm goin' to stand by Maurice. Good-by."

Arrived at the house, he found his boy had greatly exaggerated the state of things.

There was no collection of people about the place ; everything was perfectly quiet. Moses crept round to the window of the deacon's room. The candles were not lighted by the firelight, Moses could distinguish the deacon talking earnestly, Maurice at a little distance, with his bandaged feet in a chair, looking weary and depressed. Moses could not stand it. He went round to the door, and knocked excitedly ; Phoebe opened it.

"Is that you, Moses Williams?" she exclaimed, coarsely. "What you been makin' yourself so scarce for these three days? Want to see the folks? Well, they're in the front room. Here, that aint the door. What's the matter?" Moses could not seem to find the door yet. Phoebe took him by the arm, and guiding him to the right one, ushered him in.

"Here's Moses Williams," said she, going forward to her father. "You'd better tend to him. He's got something on his mind,

seems's if." She left him standing, and went out to her work again.

"What do you want, Moses?" asked the deacon.

"Maurice," was the reply.

"Well, there he is."

Moses drew up to Maurice ; the latter held out his hand.

"Did you want me, Moses? he asked, pleasantly.

"No — yes," said Moses, nervously wringing the hand he held. "Didn't you want *me*, Maurice? Was you in trouble an' waitin' for me to clear you? An' all the time I was sure they'd be comin' for me."

"What's the man talking about?" said the deacon.

"Maurice," said Moses, disregarding the deacon, and clinging to the hand he still kept possession of, "I'm willing — you may tell him, Maurice, only don't let him be too hard on me, — not too hard, Maurice!"

"Moses," said Maurice, in a low tone,

but somewhat sternly, "it's not for me to speak. Be a man, and tell your own story."

Moses seemed to get strength for the moment. He stood up and faced the wondering deacon.

"Ye think bad enough o' me now, deacon," he said, unsteadily; "but I wasn't so bad that I mightn't have been better if ye hadn't built the distillery. Did you think I was, Maurice?" he asked.

Maurice shook his head.

"I heard to-night, deacon, as ye were accusin' Maurice of burning the distillery, an' I said to myself, 'Now my time's come.' I aint what I might have been if it hadn't been for the distillery, — as you know, Maurice; but I wont sneak away like a coward. I'm willin', for Maurice's sake, to own up, only don't be too hard on me. Ye may have all I've got, deacon. I'm the one; I set fire to the distillery;" and the poor, cringing man hid his face in his ragged sleeve, and sobbed outright.

"Moses Williams!" exclaimed the deacon, as soon as he could get his voice, "did you do this?"

"Yes, deacon, I did it," said Moses, humbly, still sobbing. "I don't know what made me. I didn't think on't a minute before. I'd lost so much, it 'most made me crazy; and 'twas the distillery as brought me where I am, — leastways, I think so; don't you, Maurice!"

"Poor silly boy!" said the deacon, contemptuously. "There's a little too much of you for a fool, and not enough for a rogue, Moses. I don't know what to do with you!"

"Father," said Maurice, "Moses has a sick wife and two little children. Let him go."

The deacon looked at Moses. "If you were a rogue, Moses, I should know quickly enough what to do; but here you come like a crying school-boy, I declare! What safety could I ever feel, to let you go un-

punished for this? My buildings are still exposed to the same danger, from the same hand."

"Father," said Maurice, "you will never rebuild the distillery. Let the tavern be shut up, and who knows to what degree reform might follow?"

"Reform!" said the deacon, with a sneer. "If folks *will* drink, they will! Shut up the tavern! That's Tom's affair. And as to the distillery, I may rebuild it. Moses, come here!"

Moses obeyed.

"I tell you, Moses, if I thought you were a rogue, I should not let you escape in this manner. But you are weak, and any reparation you might make would not repair my loss. You have sinned with a high hand. But I will be lenient with you. Go, and sin no more!"

As the deacon delivered himself of this little speech, Moses listened with incredulous astonishment; at the last sentence, he broke

down again, and the coat-sleeve came into requisition the second time.

"Thanks!" said he, wiping his eyes freely. "Thankee, deacon. I'm a poor, miserable cretur, I know! Deacon, I'll never put out my hand to hurt ye again. 'Twasn't ye I had so much against, only the distillery. You know I'd lost so much. Deacon, Maurice never'll tell o' this. Mightn't I ask that ye never would?"

"I never will, Moses." And when Deacon Archer gave his word, it was kept.

"Thankee, deacon." Moses moved towards the door. "I wont trouble ye no more. Good-night, deacon; good-night, Maurice."

"Good-night, Moses. As soon as I am able I will come down to see you."

"Thanks, Maurice."

Moses found the door with hardly more readiness than when he had entered, and walked home in some perplexity of mind as to whether he was really the Moses Williams who had set fire to and destroyed the

deacon's distillery, or another person of the same name.

"I've done a confoundedly foolish thing," said the deacon, rousing himself from a deep reverie some time after Moses' departure.

Maurice looked up with a slight smile.

"Miserably foolish!" repeated the deacon. "I believe I'm growing imbecile myself. Ten to one, the fellow'll be burning the house over our heads before long."

"Father," said Maurice, "you know Moses will do no such thing. He has acted just like a foolish boy, who has hurt himself with a plaything, and destroys it in the anger of the moment. Now that the hurtful thing is removed"—

"Good doctrine," said the deacon, interrupting him with a covert sneer. "Remove the thing that has led a man to sin, and he stands just as good and fair as before!"

"I was not going to say that," said Maurice, quietly. "But I say, let Moses be surrounded with good influences, and time be given him


to become stronger in mind and body, and you will see him far more of a man than he is now."

"Then," said the deacon, derisively, "the matter lies in your mind thus: I must not rebuild the distillery, lest Moses, poor weak man, be tempted to burn it again."

"What is a religion good for," asked Maurice, "that cannot put out its hand to help one poor weak man?"

The deacon seemed about to reply, but hesitated, and the subject was not entered upon again.

CHAPTER, XXIV.

 HE injuries Maurice had sustained in his feet, though not of themselves very severe, led to a more serious affection. Weeks even failed to bring the improvement that now began to be longed for with a feverish intensity which soon affected his health. Elder Leonard's letter was answered and laid by, sadly enough. It was not strange. Unable to step on his swollen feet, and with no prospect of doing so for weeks yet to come, it was hardly to be expected that he should, with perfect composure, see another opportunity for study slip from him. He had tried to awaken in Hope a wish to go to Ryson, had repeatedly set before her the advantages of

being at such a school, and with Bessie Leonard. She was perfectly immovable.

"Uncle Maurice," she said to him one day, after listening to him for some time, "if my father should give his consent willingly, I would not go to Ryson. It's of no use for you to talk about it any longer. I will not go!"

Maurice looked at her searchingly. She was very resolute; that was all he could gather from her face. There was no spirit of passion about this.

"Give me your reasons, Hope," he asked.

She flushed instantly. "Don't ask me to tell you, Uncle Maurice."

"I have a right to know, Hope."

"My reasons are foolish."

"Then I should certainly know them."

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope, hiding her face on the arm of his chair, "I cannot help them, and they would only worry you."

"But for all that, dear child, I must know," he said, quietly.

"Well, Uncle Maurice," she said, after a moment's further hesitation, "I like to study with you, but I am sure I should hate the discipline of a school, and" —

"Well."

"And I don't want to be always with such a *good* girl as Bessie Leonard."

"Oh, Hope!" Maurice bit his lips to keep from laughing outright.

"She is *so* good," said Hope, "and I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"I am sure," said Hope, as if it were a point she had considered long ago, "that I should never hate her, but I am sure I should hate her *goodness*."

"Hope Archer, what a child you are!" said Maurice, lifting her face up from the place where she had hidden it. "I don't know what to do with you!"

"I know what to do with myself," said Hope, half laughing; "I'm going to keep house for my father, and come over every

evening to study algebra and philosophy with you. Oh, Uncle Maurice," she continued in a whisper, with a glance at her grandfather, who had all this while been asleep in his chair, "you don't know how glad I am the distillery is burned. But is it not the strangest thing who did it? I'm as glad as I can be, only if it hadn't been for that, you could have gone to Ryson."

"Dear child," said Maurice, putting back the short hair from her eager face, "did you want me to go?"

"Yes," she said, and her eyes shone with some thought he could not read, "I wanted you to go."

"But yet you think you could not go without me?"

She shook her head.

"You think you could not bear Miss Bessie's *goodness* unless my wickedness was there to offset it."

"Oh, Uncle Maurice!" Hope laughed, but grew instantly sober.

"What is it, child?"

"What is the reason I can't bear that kind of *goodness*,—I mean like Bessie's?" asked Hope.

"Hope, child," said Maurice, "don't trouble your head with such thoughts."

"I can't help it;" Hope's face grew cloudy. "They will come."

"Take your books, then, and they will go quickly. Hope, you will soon know as much as I do. You advance, and I stand still. Must it always be so? Must I drag on more weary years, just as I had come to a point when I could act for myself?"

"Don't, Uncle Maurice." Hope never could bear to see Maurice troubled. "Can't you get books, and study this winter?"

"Dear girl, they are not all I want now; I want to go out into the world. I want experience, society, life."

"I wish I could get all these for you," said Hope, with a sigh, as she began to put on her bonnet to go home.

"I wish you would take them for yourself, when they are offered," said Maurice.

She turned quickly. "I know you want me to have all good things, Uncle Maurice; but I do not want these;" and her face clouded again.

"Never mind, Hope," said Maurice, cheerfully. "We will let the subject rest for the present. And don't you trouble your head with any thoughts but those which belong to your work and your study."

"Ah!" said she, "but they come into my head, and they will stay."

"Strange such thoughts should trouble her young head," said Maurice to himself, after Hope had gone. "It is not to be wondered at that I should rebel at this goodness; but she, a little girl, is sure she should hate it, and she never saw much of Bessie either."

Presently his father awoke. "Has Hope gone, Maurice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'm sorry. I wanted to send a message to Tom. I believe I almost woke up while she was here. Didn't I hear you speak of Bessie Leonard?"

"Her name was mentioned," answered Maurice, with apparent indifference, wondering why it was that sometimes his father heard so readily.

"Well," said the deacon.

"Well, sir."

"Was that all?"

Maurice felt indignant; but he answered, "It was not all."

"Well," said his father again.

"Well, sir" said Maurice, coolly.

"You wont tell me what was said; but I happened to hear. Hope's no fool of a girl. I don't blame her for not liking Bessie Leonard. I always thought she was an uppish little thing."

"You did not happen to hear correctly," said Maurice, as he paused.

"I did perfectly. Bessie Leonard can put

on an air like a saint, and Hope's sharp enough to see through it. I never did think much of children's piety. Superficial, always!"

Maurice took up a newspaper, and would hear no more.

A month passed. It was the latter part of December. One afternoon Hope rushed into her grandfather's room.

"Uncle Maurice," she exclaimed, "there's company coming!"

"Who, child?"

"Elder Leonard and Bessie! You know she's been visiting Miss Hamilton, and I guess the elder's come to take her home."

"Come here," said Maurice, "and stand by me. Oh, Hope, couldn't you have mended this ragged dress?"

Hope looked down at it regretfully. "I never think of such things unless you tell me, Uncle Maurice. I'm sorry; and Bessie is so nice!"

There was a slight rustle at the door,

and Mrs. Archer entered, followed by the visitors. In the little bustle of recognition that followed, Hope slipped behind Maurice's great chair.

"Mrs. Archer," said Bessie, with something of her old, childish timidity in face and manner, "I thought I was to find Hope here."

"Why, she was here," said Mrs. Archer, peering about. "Hope, child, where are you?"

Hope came from her hiding-place, and went up to Bessie, twirling her apron in her fingers, and looking rather shame-faced.

"You are not the *little* Hope I left; are you?" said Bessie, taking one of her little brown hands, which Hope managed to get away as soon as possible.

"We have come," continued Bessie, directing her conversation to Hope, "to see if Hope will not go home with us, and attend school at Ryson."

It was an embarrassing position for Hope.

She looked at Uncle Maurice; but he was turning the leaves of a book the elder had laid in his hand, and did not seem to hear. She looked at Bessie again. Poor child! she was so painfully conscious of the fact that Bessie was now a young lady, and looking very fair and sweet and nicely dressed beside her, an awkward, untidy little girl, that it required all her fortitude to meet the earnest eyes.

"Mother wants you to come very much," said Bessie, "and father, and I."

"I cannot go," said Hope, in a low tone, but very decidedly.

"Mrs. Archer," said Bessie, smiling at the little girl still, "does Hope always mean just what she says?"

"I never knew her to do anything she said she wouldn't," said Mrs. Archer, "unless Maurice said she must."

Bessie's eyes appealed to Maurice. It seemed to her a pained look crossed his face.

"Hope," said her grandmother suddenly, "go into the kitchen with Phoebe!" Hope started inwardly, but she did not stir from her position.

"Didn't you hear me?" said Mrs. Archer, rather severely.

"Yes, ma'am," was the unconcerned reply.

"Hope!" said Maurice.

He spoke but the single word. She left Bessie's side, and came towards him, with a pleading look in her eyes, as if she would have said, —

"And do you send me away too, Uncle Maurice?"

But Maurice had said all he had to say. She lingered for another word, but his face gave her no encouragement, and passing him slowly to the door, she went out, with a distress in her countenance it would have wrung one's heart to see.

Arrived at the kitchen, however, there was no trace of distress. She went resolutely to work with Phoebe, quite foiling

the latter in her attempts to find out why she had come there.

An hour moved on, and the visitors left, the elder with a kind word to Phoebe and Hope, Bessie with scarcely a word at all; but she kissed Hope most lovingly. Hope saw what lay beneath the kiss and the silence, and the instant they were gone, went straight to Uncle Maurice.

"Uncle Maurice," she exclaimed, passionately, "did you say I should go?"

Maurice sat shading his eyes with his hand.

"Hope," he asked, "must I not do what is best?"

"It isn't best!" said she, vehemently. "I know it isn't!"

"Does a little girl know better than all others what is best? My child, you are not capable of understanding all that is involved in this decision. Can you not trust us to decide for you, and submit cheerfully?"

"No," she said, "I can't, and I *wont*!"

Maurice took his hand from his face. She could not help seeing that he looked deeply sorrowful.

"Then, dear child, all we can do is to hope you may come to a better temper."

Hope put on her hood and shawl, and went home.

"What's the matter now?" said Phoebe to her mother as Hope marched through the kitchen on her way.

"She don't want to go to Ryson, I suppose," was the reply. "Dear me! I should be glad if things could be settled down quiet again. First one trouble, and then another. I wish Elder Leonard had kept away. I suppose, seeing Hope's going away, we've got to have Tom here; and how I'm going to live through it, is more'n I know."

"I'd like to know who's going to make Hope go, if Tom says she sha'n't?"

"Who? When Maurice puts his foot down about a thing, don't she always have to give up! You've seen that tried more

than once. Besides, Tom's got to such a pass that he aint fit to do nor say anything about what she shall or sha'n't do; and Maurice is of age now, and can do as he pleases."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE time fixed for Hope's departure to Ryson was not far off, and meantime the whole household was busy, except the two invalids, though Maurice could now hardly be called such; his condition was improving, and the last week of Hope's stay, he began to go about the house.

And Hope, what of her meanwhile? She could scarcely have told herself. To Maurice, and, in fact, to others, she seemed to have grown a twelvemonth older in the proud sorrow and indignation she by turns manifested. With Maurice, especially, she grew strangely reserved, almost haughtily petulant, if he attempted to draw her into conversation of any sort.



HOPE WAS SITTING BY THE FIRE, LOOKING GLOOMILY AT THE FLAMES.

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The last day came, and in the course of the afternoon her grandmother called her to help pack her trunk. Hope was sitting by the fire, looking gloomily at the flames. She paid no attention to her grandmother whatever. Mrs. Archer grew impatient. "What do you mean, Hope?" she asked, severely.

"I mean it's a wicked shame!" exclaimed Hope, springing to her feet, with cheeks and eyes aflame.

"You're a wicked girl; that's what's wicked!" said Mrs. Archer. "It's to be hoped Elder Leonard will make you better!"

"I hope he will," muttered Hope, scornfully.

"If he don't," said Phoebe, pausing as she was leaving the room, "he'll have nothing but thunder-clouds and lightning all winter! I hope it wont strike," she added, with a malicious chuckle at her own attempt to be witty.

Hope, too, turned to leave the room by

another way. Her heart was swelling with rage.

"Anywhere," she muttered to herself,—
"I'll go anywhere, I'll do anything, to get away from this!" and she was rushing blindly out, when she was stopped by Uncle Maurice, who was just coming in. He laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Where are you going, Hope?" he asked, very kindly.

"I am going where I please," she said, drawing herself up. "Let me pass you."

"No!" Maurice's tone was just as kind as before, but sterner than she had ever heard, even from him. "Hope, I will know the reason of your conduct. Come in here with me." He drew her into the kitchen, and placing two chairs by the fire, took one himself, and motioned her to the other. She took it with haughty carelessness.

It was some time before Maurice spoke. Hope had prepared herself for an instant outbreak of severity, and when no word

was heard, she began to wonder,—wondered till her surprise got the better of her anger. Maurice sat quietly waiting till he saw she was better prepared to hear, and then began:—

"There was once a boy, Hope, of whom I want to tell you a story. He was a boy of bitter, revengeful spirit, one who hated restraint, and chafed under his father's rule. At one time in his life, without any good reason, but simply following the impulse of a rebellious, passionate temper, he took the sudden resolution to leave his father's house forever, and seek his fortune in the wide world.

"But as he was on the point of doing this, he was arrested by a question from a little girl,"—Maurice glanced at Hope, and saw that she was evidently listening,—
—"a very little girl, whom he encountered on the road. She was his brother's child, Hope, and had run away from home alone, to find a little girl she had seen rid-

ing. The boy attempted to win her to go home with a half-promise that he would take her riding. She wanted to know when. He could not tell; he was going away, he said. The little girl looked up at him and said, 'What are you going away for?'

"That was a very simple question, Hope; but it changed the tenor of that boy's life. He began to think. He retraced his steps. He was unreconciled still to home, but now he resolved to meet trouble manfully, and not like a cowardly boy. And he has always loved that little girl very dearly.

"The little girl had a mother, Hope,—a mother such as few little girls have; but trouble and sickness were fast wearing her out, and seeing how much her husband's brother loved her little daughter, she gave the care of the child to him, after she should be taken from her, and it was not long before she went away.

"The boy grew to be a young man;

he studied as he could get opportunity, and taught the little girl. It was the one pleasure of his life. But finally, he began to feel it was better she should be taught at some school. It was a very great trial to him to lose her, Hope; but he loved her too well not to wish to do the best that could be done for her. He decided that she should go. Hope, dear child, this is a true story. I owe it to that simple question, uttered by you when you were such a little child, that I have not been all these years away among strangers, tossing about the world, with no little Hope to care for and teach. I think you have been unconsciously a little but strong anchor for me. And now do you think I could possibly spare you unless for the very best of reasons? Do you think I care less for you, because I would have you go away?"

Hope's face had long been hidden, nor did she raise it now. Maurice moved his

chair nearer to her, and took her hands in his.

"Hope, dear child, are you convinced that I am seeking your best good?"

She lifted up her head, and kissed him; but her words did not come further than her lips, and her head went down again.

"My dear child," said Maurice, passing his hand softly over her hair, "will you tell me now why it is so hard for you to be reconciled to this?"

"Don't ask me, Uncle Maurice."

"But I must know."

"I can't tell you any more than I have before."

"Is it because you cannot bear the *goodness* you have spoken of?"

"It will make me angry, hateful."

"Can you not try to overcome this, Hope?"

"I don't want to try."

"Don't want to try?"

"No;" she shook her head resolutely.

"But why?"

"I don't know!" There was a good deal of surprise in Hope's tone. "Why should I know why I like to be wicked? I can't give a reason for everything that comes into my head, Uncle Maurice. I asked you once why I hated that kind of goodness, like Bessie's, and you couldn't tell me, — at least, you didn't."

"It seems to me, Hope, that, though you can give no reason for this, you are old enough and have good sense enough to avoid cherishing a disposition which is certain to make you and every one else unhappy."

"I don't want to make you unhappy, Uncle Maurice, — indeed, I don't," she added, earnestly. "But for the rest" — Maurice waited some time for the rest of the sentence. "For myself, and for the rest, I don't care. You will have the whole, Uncle Maurice; I don't care whether I am good or not."

"Oh, Hope," said Maurice, sadly, "do you mean what you say? so young, and *don't care!*"

"It's no use to talk about it!" said Hope. "Let me go!"

"No," said Maurice. "Can you, Hope, look in my eyes, and say with truth that you care nothing for your own self-respect, nor for that of others?"

"I said,"—Hope's tone faltered a little,—"that I did care for you, Uncle Maurice."

"But, my child, how are you proving this? If my chief concern about you is that you should be worthy of every one's love and respect, are you proving that you care what I think by scorning to be such?"


Hope had no answer for this.

"Well," said Maurice, after a few minutes' silence, "we will talk no more about this. Only remember, my child, that you can never have such esteem as you wish from me, unless you prove that you are

trying to make yourself worthy of the same from others."

He released her then, and Hope went out without a word. The next morning saw her on her way to Ryson.

CHAPTER XXVI.

 FEW weeks after Hope had gone, Tom began to agitate the question of rebuilding the distillery. The tavern cellar would need replenishing in the fall; the spring and summer work would soon be on them, and it was his mind it had better be put up immediately.

The deacon hesitated. He concealed, however, the real reason, and made the objection that Tom was not fit to manage the matter of building. If Tom was bent on having the distillery in operation again, he must insist that while the necessary work was going on, he should not once allow himself to be found so deeply in liquor as he had been at times lately.

This brought on a terrible storm of oaths and invectives from Tom. He would build the distillery, and he would drink, and no man should prevent him.

Time after time the matter was brought up, always ending in a torrent of wrathful execration. At last the result was that he demanded an immediate settlement, swearing that he would have no more to do with his father in any shape.

The settlement was concluded accordingly, and Tom Archer left his father's house, overwhelming the whole household with abuse that one would have shuddered to hear.

What now should be done? The deacon put the question to Maurice anxiously, fretfully, as a child. Maurice had one plan to offer, and that was this: he would undertake to carry on the farm until the school-year opened again at Ryson, on condition that no cider should be made in the fall.

The deacon groaned and fretted, and attempted to form other plans, but nothing

seemed just right, and at last in sheer despair yielded.

And how, meantime, was Hope passing her weeks at Ryson? Strange, wilful child! From the moment of entering the elder's house, she had thrown into her speech and manner a chilling taciturnity that even the rare gentleness and love of the whole family had not been able to overcome. She did not ask herself now why she did this; why she flung back, as it were, every expression or token of her friends' love; why she crushed every impulse that would sometimes have led her to them; why she stopped every avenue of her heart that would have given entrance to the truths she heard daily.

With all her characteristic determination, she devoted herself to her books; buried herself in them, and would think of nothing else. Poor, unhappy girl! In spite of herself, there would come, ever and anon, a sickening desire to see Uncle Maurice, made still harder to bear by the memory of the

last few days she had spent with him. Let her still its voice with whatever excuses she would, conscience asserted itself there most painfully.

In the early spring, Maurice came to Ryson. He had never intimated his intention to come, wishing to take Hope by surprise. The tone of her letters had been all winter much like her manner as he had seen her last,—short, decisive, and, he could plainly see, with a strong undercurrent of bitterness. He determined to see for himself how far her conduct at Ryson was influenced by this.

He arrived there early in the afternoon. How pleasant it was to revive the memories of the days he had spent at Plumley with the elder! Here were they all again,—the elder, with that same rare blending of earnest gentleness and dignity; Mrs. Leonard, discreet, tender; and Bessie,—Bessie was changed; she was not the little Bessie of years back; but was she one whit less

modestly frank and lovely than then? We think not.

It is not to be supposed that Maurice sat and took note of all this. We are only giving you the sum of the impressions he now and then received by a casual word or movement that struck him for the moment, and then gave way to his thoughts of Hope again. There were things here that brought her forcibly to his mind,—the books of which his descriptions had given her such delight, when she sat a little child upon his knee. Well, she was a child still, but so swiftly outgrowing her childishness. What were the years hence to do for her? What could he do? He was forced to answer, nothing, unless she could be made to see her folly. And he was afraid it was beyond his power to effect that.

It was nearly dusk when Hope walked in with her books,—walked, not according to her wont, straight into the family room. And there sat Uncle Maurice. He sprung up at her entrance.

“Hope!” he exclaimed, putting out his hands.

She came to him, pale, searching every lineament of his face, as if she doubted her eyes. But then her growing certainty asserted itself in one long, long cry.

“Oh, Uncle Maurice!”

“How have you been doing, dear child?” said Maurice, after a long silence, sitting down and drawing her to his side. They had been left alone in the room. She leaned her head upon his shoulder, and did not answer immediately. But when he repeated the question, she replied,—

“Very well.”

“And *how* have you been doing well? Tell me all, dear Hope.”

“I have been doing well in my studies. I have had perfect recitations nearly all the term. I have told you this in my letters, Uncle Maurice. How are grandmother and grandfather and Aunt Phoebe and Uncle Ben?”

"They are well as usual," replied Maurice, soberly. "Hope, child, are you trying to evade my question?"

"I answered you, Uncle Maurice."

"Oh, Hope," exclaimed Maurice, sadly, "you understood it as I meant it. Tell me truly, child, are you doing *well* in *all* things?"

"What do you call *well* in *all* things?"

"You know," he answered, gravely. "Are you?"

"I don't know," she answered, carelessly.

It was more than Maurice could bear. "Oh, Hope," he exclaimed, "I did not think you would have come to this!"

"Come to what?" asked Hope, coolly.

"To this indifference, to this utter disregard of your friends' interest and care for you. What a path you are making for yourself!"

"You sent me here," said Hope, "and I wanted to stay with you." Her voice faltered for the first time. "I don't want people set to govern me."

"My dear child," said Maurice, "you are all wrong. There is no one in this family who wishes to be anything towards you but a most loving friend and helper. And you are wilfully and deliberately shutting yourself out from their circle. And do you think this is injuring them or you? Which, dear child?"

"I don't know that it is injuring anybody," turning her face from him.

"Beware, Hope," said Maurice, with a depth in his grave tones which startled even her, "of treating this matter lightly."

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope, suddenly, "will you tell me one thing,—why you talk to me so much about being good?"

"*Why?*"

"Yes, *why?*"

"Because I want you to grow up with a well-formed character, with good principles; because it is our duty to cherish good thoughts, and fill up our lives with good deeds."

"And that is all?"

"Isn't that a good deal?"

"Elder Leonard goes further than that."

"Does he talk to you much?" asked Maurice, "or Mrs. Leonard, or Miss Bessie?"

"No; when they do, I wont hear it. I wish I could go back with you, Uncle Maurice. Oh, wont you let me? Do, Uncle Maurice!" she began again. "I want to be with you. I don't learn any more here than I should with you; and it is so hard!"

"Dear child," said Maurice, "you must not think of it. Stay here contentedly and make yourself happy. The whole family are anxious to have you as one of them. They would be glad to call you daughter and sister. Do not keep yourself aloof from their kindness."

"Hope," he asked presently, "what has Elder Leonard said that made you think his way of thinking was not like mine?"

"He says many things now and then. But I always knew you didn't think as they do,

because you never said anything to me about"—

"About what?"

"About being a Christian. You're not a Christian, Uncle Maurice, like them?"

"No," said Maurice, feeling a thrust at his conscience that he did not like.

"I thought so, and I don't want to be different from you." Hope brightened up a little.

"Oh, Uncle Maurice," she exclaimed, presently, "who do you think has come to live here in Ryson?"

"Who?" asked Maurice.

"You never would guess. It is so strange. It's Dr. Hamilton, Uncle Maurice; and he has opened his office already. He was in here last evening, just as teasing as ever. I didn't use to like him; but I'm glad he's to be here now. It wont be so dull."

Maurice smiled absently.

"I think the dulness must have been in you, child. And oh, Hope, is there to be


no improvement? Remember you are laying the foundation of your character now. What will you make it?"

Hope made no answer.

"I only wish you," resumed Maurice, "to stop and consider what this careless, haughty disregard for others is leading to. And again let me say to you, beware of treating the matter lightly,—beware!"

He said no more on that point, and the conversation afterward touched mostly on home matters; it was interrupted by the announcement of tea, and Hope saw no more of Uncle Maurice, save an hour or so in the evening, for many a long week.

CHAPTER XXVII.

 HE spring went swiftly, and the summer, and the days began to grow short and cool. Maurice had studied and worked by turns, untiringly. His father was satisfied, as nearly so as it was possible for one who was never quite satisfied with anything he did not do himself. At the beginning of November, Maurice, having made all possible arrangements for the comfort of the family, took the pay for his summer's labor, and went to Ryson. The first person he encountered on leaving the stage was Dr. Hamilton!

"Maurice Archer!" exclaimed the doctor, "this is delectable! I had wind of your coming last night. Hope has looked her-

self almost blind for you. What a girl she is, Maurice !”

“Why ?” asked Maurice, laughing a little, but soberly.

“Why, indeed ! If you don’t know, I can’t tell you. Give her a long rein enough, and she’ll take you ’most anywhere. But come, come to my room, and share it with me as long as you like. By the way, what’s to hinder our having rooms together ?”

“Nothing, perhaps. But I’ll come to you by and by. Now I must go and see Hope.”

They parted, and each went his way, — Maurice to the elder’s, and the doctor to his room, which, very contrary to his usual custom, he arranged and rearranged with the utmost concern and exercise of taste. And really, it was a very inviting place into which he received Maurice on his return in the course of the evening.

“How do you like it ?” asked the doctor, after he had given Maurice a seat.

“I like my seat remarkably well,” was the reply, given with a little laughing of the eyes.

“Tut, Maurice ! How literal you are ! Must I specify ?”

Maurice laughed. “Your room is elegant, your fire is brilliant, like you, doctor, and your books” —

“Are solid, like you,” put in the doctor. “Such wholesale flattery must not be all on one side. On the whole, you like ‘it’ ?”

“I like everything,” said Maurice. “And if you still say come, I will come.”

“Good !” cried the doctor. “I like things to the point, laconic ! Some people’s diffuse, rambling speeches would wear me out in no time. Now I will give you a picture of how it shall be. Observe, the ‘it’ in this case means you and I. You will go to the university at set times ; I shall be in or out, as it happens. If, at any time, I enter when you are studying,

with some startling news to communicate, I shall endeavor to restrain my tongue till I observe your countenance relax as a signal of your willingness to hear; if I happen to be engaged in studying a case when you rush in with the latest news from Plumley, I shall hold you at bay with an ominous frown; this, you perceive, will regulate our social system fairly. And if, at any time, we are both disengaged and in proper mood, we will take a stroll to the elder's. So much for week-days. Are you going to church, Maurice?"

"To church? I had not thought. I presume so."

"To the elder's?"

Maurice answered by asking, "Where do you go?"

"There, when I go at all. Fact is, Maurice, I'm not exactly of the elder's way of thinking; but I can't get over my old liking for him."

Maurice looked at his honest, handsome

countenance, and wondered if he ever disliked anybody.

"Well, Maurice, will you sit under the elder's preaching?"

"So long as Hope is here, I shall. Doctor, you often drop in at the elder's?"

"Yes; splendid place to visit, — such a genial air about everything and everybody!"

"And Hope, has she caught this spirit?"

"Hope! Not she! Never could make her over into anybody else's mould!"

"I don't wish to. But would it be so necessary in order to her being like them?"

"Necessary? Wouldn't it be necessary to change the althea in my father's garden into a rose before you could say the two were alike?"

"Well, and is Hope the althea?"

"I didn't mean that comparison particularly; but she is just about as strong and lofty and independent as they."

Maurice laughed. "And the others are all roses?"

The doctor smiled, and, for some reason unknown, the subject was dropped.

Maurice soon discovered that the doctor was not far from right. Young as she was, Hope's character had decidedly an air of almost haughty, defiant stateliness. It was not superciliousness, not small-minded self-conceit; Hope's mind was too well-poised for that. But it strongly marked the contrast between her and the gentle, affectionate Bessie. Yet Bessie was not her inferior, nor was her character less deep and strong; but, oh, on how different a foundation had it been built! Hope did not now hold herself aloof from the family. Yet she could hardly have been said to be one with them. Absorbed in her books, she hardly gave a thought to anything else; did not notice, as the winter wore on, that Bessie's step often faltered when they were walking together, nor that she sometimes drew quick, pained breaths; nor were her eyes opened to this till one day in mid-winter.

It had been the custom of the two girls to walk daily together, and until now Bessie had resolutely braved all weather. But it could not be done to-day.

"I cannot go, dear Hope," she said, as Hope entered her room at the usual time, ready for the walk.

"Why? Are you going to have company?"

"No; but I am not able. Hope, dear, do you think I look well?"

Hope looked at her, and the truth flashed upon her instantly.

"You are not well, Bessie!" she exclaimed. "You are very ill!"

"Oh, no, not very ill, dear, only at times, with this pain in my side. With the warm weather, and the exercise I can take then, it may pass away. And if not, it will be well."

There was something in Bessie's tone which struck a terrible dread to Hope's heart.

"Why do you look at me so, dear Hope?" asked Bessie.

"I don't believe you will ever be any better!" Hope burst forth, with a strong accent of feeling in her voice that took Bessie by surprise; but she repressed the emotion instantly.

"But will it not be 'well,' even then?" asked Bessie, in the clearest and most fearless of sweet tones.

Hope stood gazing at her. How could she talk so?

"What are you wondering at, dear Hope?" said the clear voice again.

But Hope continued to gaze at her as if she had been a spirit, and had laid a spell upon her that she could not resist.

"Come here, will you not, and sit by me?" asked Bessie.

It came to Hope's tongue to refuse, but on second thought she complied, and summoning all her resolution, she took the seat close to Bessie.

"You seem to me almost as old as myself," was Bessie's first remark; "and yet I can remember when I thought you were quite a little child beside me. Do you remember those days, Hope?"

"I remember them very well," said Hope.

"We are neither of us what we were then," continued Bessie. "Hope, would you rather be that little girl, or the almost young lady that you are now?"

Hope suddenly faced round upon her. "Why do you ask that, Bessie?"

"I asked it without forethought, dear Hope. Forgive me, if it troubles you."

"Oh, no," said Hope, rallying, and not speaking quite the truth.

"I think," resumed Bessie, presently, "that I may never be any better, though God may let me live a long time; and, dear Hope, I have so wished that, while I stay with you, we might call each other 'sister.'"

Hope's face was averted instantly.

"I think you have doubted, all the time

you have been here," continued Bessie, "the genuineness of our interest in you; have thought we were anxious to rule you, or direct you against your will. But, Hope, have you not tried me long enough to know that I would not be your dictator but in the most tender and deep meaning of the word,—your friend, your sister?"

But Hope was mute.

"Do you know," continued Bessie, with the same sweet, undisturbed tone which Hope had sometimes noticed before when she had looked to see her troubled, "that I always think of you as my friend?"

Hope found her voice at this, and asked, with a shade of surprise, "Why should you?"

"Because I have felt that your indifference and reserve were more assumed than felt. I knew you had a strength of affection beneath it all, that only needed this clearing away of pride and prejudice to show it to be all it was in your childhood. I think you loved us when you were little,

Hope. Is it that you love us less now, or that you are trying to steel your heart against any effort we may make to win you to Jesus?"

"Why should I care for that?" said Hope, carelessly.

"You should care," said Bessie, with a loving, quivering accent along the words, "and more than that, dear Hope, you do care."

"Bessie Leonard!" exclaimed Hope, turning upon her with burning cheeks, "I do *not* care!" Her voice and frame shook with repressed passion. "If you have nothing more to say to me," she continued, rising up, "I will go!"

Bessie sat with her hand to her face; she did not offer any remonstrance, and Hope went out. From the house she went directly to Maurice's room. He was alone; the doctor had just been called away.

"What is the matter, child?" he exclaimed, as he opened the door to admit her.

"I don't know," said she, advancing into the room a few steps and standing strangely looking at him. Then she moved swiftly to his side. "Uncle Maurice," she said, in a deep, quivering voice, "I want to go back to Plumley,—I *must* go back!"

He drew back from her. "What do you mean, Hope?"

"I must go to Plumley, and whether you say yes or no, I *will* go!" she added, vehemently.

"Hope," said Maurice, turning coldly from her, "you are in no mood to talk. Sit down; I will hear nothing from you for at least half an hour."

There was a power in his stern tone that thrilled her through and through. It gave her no alternation. She sat down, and taking up a book, pretended to read; but she knew not a word before her.

"Now," said Maurice, when the half-hour was up, "tell me, if you can, coolly, what all this means."

"What I said," she answered; "I have told you."

"You want to go back to Plumley to be freed from what,—study?"

"No."

"From me?"

"No."

"From any restraint elsewhere?"

"No."

"From what then?"

"I cannot stay here," was all she said.

"What has been said to you?"

"A good deal," she replied, with flaming color.

"Of what nature,—faultfinding?"

"No."

"Advice?"

"No."

"It was said pleasantly?"

"Yes."

"And received in the same spirit?"

She did not reply; the color in her cheeks grew vivid.

"One more question," said Maurice; "and if you cannot answer it satisfactorily, my child, you must go back to the elder's. Was this you complain of *truth*?"

The crimson of her cheeks changed to a deadly hue, save where it centred itself in one intensely burning spot of red. Suddenly she struck her hands together, and exclaimed, in a tone sharpened with a fearful accent of wretchedness and shame, —

"It was *truth*, Uncle Maurice, and *I denied it!*"

"Hope Archer!" exclaimed Maurice, "have you come to that?"

"Yes," said she, her sharp tone changing to one of dreary melancholy, which reminded Maurice painfully of her mother, — "yes, I have come to that." She got up and walked to the window, but immediately came back and stood before him.

"Uncle Maurice, I must go back to Plumley."

"No," he said.

"I cannot stay here."

"Because of that wicked denial, or of something that lies back of it?"

"I cannot tell you," she said, huskily.

"You must go and make acknowledgment."

"Oh," said she, and her voice rang out as if he were torturing her, "you do not know!"

"Do not know what?"

"How hard it would be to tell her she is right about my caring for what they have said. And, oh, that is not all!"

"What is the rest, my child?" said Maurice, deeply moved by her distress.

"She wants me to call her sister, and I can't, and I cannot stay there without — now. Uncle Maurice, Bessie is going to die."

"What?" interrupted Maurice, sharply.

"She isn't going to live long."

"Hope Archer," said Maurice, "you are beside yourself! What do you know about her living or" —

"I know what she says, Uncle Maurice. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Go back to your home," said Maurice, sternly, walking away from her, "and do as you ought."

She lingered for another word; but he kept on his walk, and she dared not break the silence.

How wretched she was as she walked back to the elder's! She would have given worlds, had she possessed them, never to have crossed the threshold. If she had had one less kind and yet less stern than Uncle Maurice to deal with, she would not have remained in Ryson overnight. But rebel as she might, she knew better than to incur his displeasure further. Here, again, however, pride came to her aid. They should not see she had been troubled. To Bessie she must confess what she had denied. She would do it; but she would do it in such a way that Bessie should have no idea how sharply the words had stung

her. And so she walked back to the elder's with utter wretchedness of heart, but with quick, determined tread. It kept her up,—her miserable, shallow, deceptive resolution,—and when she knocked at Bessie's door, it was with as decisive and resolute a knock as Bessie had been accustomed to hear from her.

"Come," said the low, clear voice Hope knew so well.

Was it strange it shook her indifference for a moment? Nevertheless, she entered firmly, and went up to Bessie who was sitting just where she had left her.

"I came in," said Hope, in a careless tone, and looking, not at Bessie, but at the fire, "to tell you that I was wrong in being so angry when I left you awhile ago, and that I did not speak quite the truth when I told you I did not care for what you have said, because, of course, I do care somewhat, in a general way; I don't wish you to believe that I think it's

not worth any thought." She stopped here; she had nothing more to say; but before she turned to go, some impulse moved her to look at Bessie.

The young girl had bent forward at Hope's first words, and still sat, with one white hand upon the arm of her chair, her blue eyes uplifted and resting upon Hope's face with an expression so shocked, so deeply, so intensely pained, that Hope stood rooted to the spot.

But Bessie did not speak. The shocked look faded somewhat, giving way to another so full of loving, yearning pity that Hope was still held as by a supernatural power. Her lips quivered like a grieved child's; she attempted to speak; but the effort only ended in a low moan, and covering her face with her hands, her slight frame shook with anguish.

"What have I done?" exclaimed Hope,—
"what have I done? Bessie, Bessie, why do you care so?—why need you?"

"Hope, dear Hope, I care because I love you so. You are doing such a wrong to yourself. You are refusing to hear God's voice in your soul; I have seen it, I have felt it long; you are crushing down every impulse that would lead you to a better life."


There was no reply, and growing calmer, she left her chair, and putting her arm round Hope, stood with her before the fire.

"If this were not all, dear Hope, I care because you are so strong, so fearless in character; you are younger than I by years, and yet I could lean on you, and love you none the less, but more. And perhaps I am going away to leave you before many months, and, dear Hope, it seems as if I cannot go till I see all your heart, your powers, your energies, given to Jesus. I think I have judged rightly of the impulses that have controlled you while you have been here. Oh, Hope, remember that, though you may be false to yourself, and false to others,

you cannot deceive God. As surely as you have stood here, and told me you do not care for these things, so surely do God and your own inmost soul know that you do."

With these words they separated. But once in her own room, Hope did not leave it again that night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WO or three evenings later, Dr. Hamilton came to the elder's, bringing to Hope the startling tidings that her grandmother had died suddenly, and that she was to prepare to leave with Uncle Maurice early the next morning.

Mrs. Archer was dead. A false step, a single movement in the wrong direction, had caused a fall, the injury resulting from which had located on the brain, and she had lived but a few hours.

Maurice and Hope together left the next day for Plumley, and on the second day after their arrival, the remains of Mrs. Archer were laid in the little family burying-ground, a spot on the summit of a gentle swell of

ground belonging to the homestead, and guarded by a neat white fence. How vividly to the minds of both were brought the memories of other years!—to Hope the recollection of her mother, the scene previous to her death, her last words to Maurice and to herself, the message to Bessie. Hope remembered all this, and more,—how clearly no one knew.

Sometime she allowed her mind to run along the intervening years,—those weary years she had spent with her father, taking care of the little cottage, her fears when he came home in his drunken rage, her hatred towards him that had never abated, but increased tenfold. Hope never inquired for her father's welfare now. It was not necessary; Maurice always took care that she should be kept informed of his movements.

At the present time, to use his own expression, he was "running" the tavern, procuring his supplies as best he could. While

at home, Maurice heard reports of fearful scenes there, the utmost excess in drinking, of riots by day and by night. Tom had more than once come under the dealings of the town authorities, and been sentenced to temporary punishment.

And Deacon Archer, how had the last year passed with him? Still confined to his room, and at times to his bed, unable to ascertain the truth of the reports that frequently came to his ears concerning his sons, he spent his time in weaving complaints. It chafed him exceedingly that he could not be abroad. His spirit was kept continually in a state of turmoil and bitterness; his farm-work went at loose ends, and now that his wife was gone, the state of affairs indoors promised, under Phoebe's rule, to follow in the track of things outside.

But to return to Hope. Her thoughts ran riot among the past and the present in the days that immediately followed her return to Ryson. But let them take her mind when

they would, that question of Bessie's rang along like some solemn undertone beneath it all: "Would you rather be that little girl, or the almost young lady you are now?" Close upon that those other words: "You may be false to yourself; but you cannot deceive God."

Hope generally, from these moments of communion with herself, seized upon her books, and attempted to forget everything in them. She began, too, with a restlessness that plainly spoke of some discordant element in her life, to throw herself into the society that came to the elder's. She talked abundantly, and was gay almost to excess. Dr. Hamilton's calls came to be regarded by her as an absolute blessing, while it seemed to her that Maurice who rarely came to the elder's grew unpardonably stern and reticent.

Bessie's strength grew less and less, and now she seldom left the house. But it never seemed to Hope that she was ill;

for, though she could not but at times see the flitting color and difficulty of respiration, yet, from such momentary spasms of pain, Bessie looked up with such a fearless smile and tone that it reassured her instantly. Nor had Bessie left the family circle. Her sweet presence every day blessed them, cheerful, happy, and undisturbed by the possibility that so wrung the hearts of her parents; for to them it was as yet no more than a possibility. Was she not their last treasure?

March passed, and April had run out half her days. It had been unusually pleasant all the month, and for the last day or two, it seemed as if the beauty of spring weather had reached the culminating point. Bessie had passed the trying season of east winds, and hope breathed a new song for loving hearts in the soft breezes of April.

It was on one of these beautiful days that her father carried her out to taste the air that was so flooded with sunshine and fra-

grance. As she rested against him, silent with the serene pleasure the beauty afforded, Hope entered the garden-gate, and coming up, stopped by them.

"It's splendid; isn't it?" said she, leaning against a tree that stood on the border of the walk, and taking a survey of the garden and sky, the only landscape that was visible.

Splendid! That was not the word. The day was suggestive, not so much of splendor as of perfect rest and peace and purity. Her words jarred a little.

But the elder recovered his thoughts presently, and extended his hand to Hope.

"Come here, my child," he said.

She moved to his side.

"Of what does this beauty make you think?" he asked.

"Oh, of a great many things,—of rides and walks in the country. I didn't like school to-day."

"And of what does it speak to you, my

Bessie?" continued the elder, not quitting his hold of Hope's hand, but pressing his lips to the white cheek that rested against his shoulder.

"Of what heaven will be, dear father."

The elder struggled with himself a minute, but then spoke in tones as sweet and untroubled as Bessie's had been.

"Hope, my child, shall I tell you of what I thought, when you came so gayly up the walk?"

"Yes, sir, if you please."

"Of the spring-time of your life, so like this season in its gayety and laughter; and yet, shall I tell you how unlike this lovely day you are?"

Hope looked off at the garden-gate, and uttered a constrained,—

"If you please, sir."

"The day is serene, quiet, and untroubled; it sends praise to God with every breath of this soft air, and the motion of every budding twig; while my child Hope is rest-

less, fitful, and withholding, with every added breath of the life God gives her, the love and the praise for which he asks. And, too," continued the elder, "it struck me with deep pain, as I thought how pure and perfect heaven must be, that my two children were going so far apart, — one toward it, the other away from it."

Hope flushed to her temples; but her eyes did not move from the point where they were fixed.

"My dear child," said the elder, "have you no wish to go the way that leads to heaven?"

She turned and attempted to answer indifferently; but the words died on her tongue. With her face turned fully to the elder, she stood speechless, her cheeks alternately white and crimson, her eyes dropping with the emotion which not his words alone had called up; while into her soul, one by one, burned anew those words of Bessie: "*You may be false to yourself, but you cannot deceive God!*" In

that moment the sunshine, the fragrance, the serene sky, seemed to put off their beautiful aspect, and to settle about her dark and frowning, to combine in uttering one fearful, threatening sentence: "*You cannot deceive God!*" She knew it; she felt it; she pulled her hands away from the elder, not rudely, but as one that could not be restrained, and hid her face in them with a deep groan.

"My child," said the elder, "God is calling upon you for an answer to this question; go and settle it with him alone."

The next evening, very contrary to their custom of late, the doctor and Maurice came in. Hope had sat looking at her books, — simply looking; for not a word had she read. At their entrance, she pushed them away from her, and withdrew into the shadow of the room. Maurice presently came and sat down by her.

"How do you do?" he asked, gravely.

"I am well," was the constrained reply.

"How did you find school to-day?"

She cast a quick, troubled glance at him, and was silent.

"It was too pleasant to study; was it not?"

"No."

"Where have you been to-day?" he asked, in a lower tone.

She made no answer.

"I want you to come down and see me to-morrow morning," he said, after a moment's thought, and resumed his former seat.

Conversation seemed to flag this evening. The doctor's lightness was evidently forced, Maurice was absent-minded, and before the evening was half-spent, proposed to return to their lodgings, a proposal which was instantly seconded by his companion.

"Maurice," said the doctor, as they went out of the gate, a few minutes later, "what is the matter with you?"

"What is the matter with you?" said Maurice.

"Hum! I don't know, unless that I'm disgusted with myself and the world generally,—very properly, too, I suppose, in the first case."

"And what does this disgust spring from, doctor?"

"Bah! don't make me think of it! I don't want to recall everything that shows me the selfishness and false-heartedness of mankind." The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "It's a miserable world!"

"Why, doctor, what new ground are you running on to? You, who have always been so contented with life, suddenly take an unaccountable disgust for everything!"

"I didn't say *everything*!" said the doctor, quickly. "But I shall not go to the elder's much more."

"Because you see so much there that is false?"

"*False, there!* Then heaven is!"

"I should think, then,"—Maurice spoke with some bitterness of tone,— "that you

would want to get near heaven as often as you can!"

"Come, come, Maurice," said the doctor, putting his arm within his companion's, "don't get impatient with an old friend. But confess now, don't it disturb you to go to the elder's, especially since" — The sentence was left unfinished.

"It disturbs me very much," was the reply, given after they had walked several rods, "to see Hope taking the turn she is."

The doctor opened his lips to speak; but the words did not go beyond them, and the rest of the way was passed over in silence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE next day was Saturday. After the doctor had gone out on his usual rounds, and while Maurice sat abstractedly looking at his books, Hope came slowly in. She took off her bonnet, and sat down by her uncle. She looked tired and dejected.

"I wished you to come down," said Maurice, pushing away his books and papers, "that I might hear from you the cause of your conduct yesterday. Why did you leave school to walk out of the village?"

At another time Hope would have asked, pertly, how he knew that she did; but it did not occur to her now. She replied, after several minutes, —

"I went because I did not know what to do with myself."

It was not such an answer as Maurice had expected. There was no ill-temper here, nothing but utter despondency.

"I infer," he said next, "that you think you had some good reason for this?"

"I suppose you would not think so," she replied, leaning her head wearily on the arm of his chair.

"You preferred to follow your own judgment instead of mine?"

"I could not have stayed in school yesterday, Uncle Maurice."

"You had things of more importance to attend to?" he asked, with half-repressed sarcasm; but it did not escape her notice.

"Uncle Maurice," she said, looking up steadily at him, "you know before I came to Ryson there were some things that troubled me very much,—some things I remembered that my mother said, and Bessie. But you never spoke so; I knew you

did not care for religion as they did. You always told me to do the best I could, and that was all that was needful. Perhaps you will never believe that I have tried. I know I have not seemed to; but I have at times, Uncle Maurice; but directly I would get reckless, and do worse than ever. And you know to what I have come. It's no use, Uncle Maurice, I cannot keep it up any longer." Her head went down on his chair arm again.

"Well, child," said Maurice, presently, "I cannot see why this should have kept you from school yesterday, simply because you have made up your mind that they are right and I am wrong."

"Oh," said Hope, "it was not that! it was not that!"

"What, then?"

"I was so wretched, so unhappy! and to-day, so unhappy, so miserable!"

Maurice had nothing to say to this. He almost wished she would go away, and, as

if she had understood his thought, she did put on her bonnet, and moved slowly to the door.

"Hope," said Maurice, not knowing what to say, but not willing she should go without a word from him, "is there anything I can do for you?"

She stopped and asked, sadly, "What can you do?"

The implication stung him, as something of the same import had years before from the lips of her mother. How clearly he heard again Mary's white lips saying, "You cannot reach this; you never knew anything about it."

"You are fully decided," he asked, presently, "whether it pleases me or not?"

Hope stepped back to his side, and slipped her arm around his neck, as she had been wont to do in the impulses of her childish love. "Uncle Maurice, have I pleased you at all for these last few months,—for more than a year; have I?"

He could not but say, "No."

"Then," said she, "whether it pleases you or not, can you wonder that I dare not be satisfied as I am, and not because I have not pleased you, but because I have not pleased God?"

"Hope," said Maurice, "you are excited, agitated. Let this go. Sometime your reason will be clearer. Do not allow yourself to be carried away with everything people say to you."

"Uncle Maurice," returned Hope, decidedly, "it is not what people say to me, not that. You know I care little for others. I knew long ago I was not like Bessie; but I did not care. It's not Bessie I have been fighting against. Oh, I am so wretched! What shall I do?"

Maurice was mute again. Her deeply-distressed tone grated on his ear.

Hope lingered long by his side. It seemed strange to him that it was so hard for her to take herself away. But at last,

gathering up all her resolution, she kissed his forehead again and again, and went away. On entering the sitting-room at the elder's, she found Bessie alone, reclining on the lounge. She was passing by her to go to her room, when she was arrested by her pleading voice, "Dear Hope." Hope turned back and went to her side.

"Dear Hope," said Bessie again. It seemed as if she could not give utterance to the thought that prompted the words.

With a sudden impulse, Hope flung herself down by the lounge, and buried her face in Bessie's pillow, "Oh, Bessie!"

Bessie put her white hand on her head. "I know, dear sister!"

"Don't!" groaned Hope. "Oh, Bessie! I cannot endure myself; I cannot endure anything!"

"Dear Hope," said Bessie, "will God turn from the child he has so long plead with to come?"

"But I said I would not, Bessie. I

almost cursed him in my heart. It is too late, too late!"

"My child, you are judging God by earthly standards. Because he is God, and not man, he calls you still."

"No," said Hope, "I said it wilfully. I knew what I was doing when I tried to be so gay and wild, and yet I was so miserable. I told you a lie once when you told me I had cared, and told another when I did not dare let it go so; it was all pretence, Bessie, and you saw it. But I said I would not stop even then; I was going on just the same, and the whole world shouldn't prevent me. Oh, Bessie!" How full of dreary anguish was that girl's voice!

"Dear Hope," said Bessie, presently, "do you think we love you?"

"Yes, I believe you do, Bessie."

"And in spite of your indifference, your rejection of our love. Will God, then, think you, do less than his poor, weak creatures?"

— he who is himself *Love*, and has given them all the love they exercise? Dear girl, take this little Bible and read the passages I have marked there, and turn from yourself to Christ and the cross. Believe, dear Hope. Christ died that we might believe and live.”

“Believe, Bessie? It would be a mockery. God is just. I deserve his anger.”

“God is just, dear sister; but God is mercy. Did he not receive the thief on the cross at the ‘eleventh hour’?”

“He had not been like me,” groaned Hope.

Bessie lay back on her pillow, and folding her thin, white hands, said, —

“Let us try to pray, dear Hope.”

Oh, what a prayer that was for nearness to heaven! It was as if Bessie literally sat at Jesus’ feet, — as if she did in reality bear Hope there in the arms of her faith, and would not go away till she left her rejoicing in his grace.

The prayer finished, Hope rose from her kneeling posture, kissed Bessie, — it was the first time for years, — and clasping the little Bible, went up to her room. A few hours later she came in again, and with no eyes for anything save to see that Bessie was still in the room, went to her side, and kissed her tremulously.

“Dear Bessie,” she whispered.

“Dear sister,” was Bessie’s sweet answer.

“Do you think it possible that God has forgiven me?” were Hope’s next trembling words.

“I know that he is more ready to forgive than we are to ask his forgiveness, dear Hope.”

“But can it be? I hardly dare to think so, and yet, for all the world, I would not go back where I was a few hours ago; and I have not dared to come to you before, dear Bessie.” How strangely in contrast with Hope’s tone for the past year was that loving, humble sound, “dear Bessie”!

"I was afraid to trust myself. Do you think I may believe it?"

"Dear Hope, you gave up all, — pride, rebellion, unbelief, everything?"

"I did, Bessie. I felt I was too sinful to pray; but I said, I will, I do put away from me everything but the wish (oh, it was more than a wish, Bessie), everything but the longing to be different from what I am. If I must go on as I am, I would always be longing for something better; I would not give that up, not even if Uncle Maurice should talk to me, or be offended; and then, dear Bessie" — Hope stopped and kissed Bessie again, tremblingly as before.


"Call me sister, dear Hope."

"And then, dear sister, something seemed to assure me that God had heard me, and I felt so sure of his forgiveness and love that I could do nothing but praise him over and over again, and I did not think of you nor of Uncle Maurice for a long time." Hope stopped again, as if her heart were

too full to say more, and when she spoke, it was in even more subdued tones than before. "Do you think, dear sister, I may go to Uncle Maurice? I want to tell him; I want him to see as I do, dear Bessie. Do you think I may go?"

"Dear sister, I think you may. Yes, go, Hope," said Bessie, returning her caresses feebly, but with what a touching tenderness! "Precious Saviour, and blessed Hope."

CHAPTER XXX.

 HOPE did not find Uncle Maurice when she went down to his room, nor on one or two subsequent occasions. But one evening, three or four days later, he came to the elder's and called for her. She went down and found him waiting her coming in the sitting-room.

"Dear Uncle Maurice!" It seemed as if the long-pent-up tide of affection in Hope's heart were overflowing at once. She clasped him round the neck. She kissed him, not once or twice; she called him by every epithet of endearment she had been wont to use; she confessed how wrongly she had felt and acted towards him, and begged and would be assured of his forgiveness. She

told him with touching humility of her new hope, and how she wanted him to go with her in the blessed way.

By and by Maurice released himself, and drew to his side a chair for her. He began to speak of indifferent subjects, — of affairs at Plumley; but Hope could not hear that yet.

"Uncle Maurice," she pleaded, "tell me you are glad for me, — tell me, at least, you are not displeased."

"My child," he replied, at length, "I am not displeased; I am glad to see you so happy; but now I have come to talk with you about some matters at Plumley. Hope, I don't know but it is my duty to leave the university and go home for a while."

"Go home, Uncle Maurice!"

"I have not heard anything directly from our own family which leads me to think of this, though I did receive a rather melancholy letter from father a few days ago; but to-day I heard from Luke Wor-

tham, who has just come from Plumley, that affairs are in a sad condition; that your father is in the county jail nearly half the time; that Ben is leading a dreadful career at the tavern, and Jeth is trying to get the cider-mill into his hands, and means, if he can, to rebuild the distillery; that your grandfather is sick and disheartened, and Phoebe—you know what your Aunt Phoebe is, Hope—neglects him sadly. The question is, what could I do there? Perhaps nothing; but I think I must go and see.”

“Could you do anything about the distillery, Uncle Maurice?”

“I don’t know, my child, how determined Jethro may be about it, and how far he might persuade your grandfather. I am quite sure father will never have anything more to do with the liquor business directly, though he has never said so much; and it hardly seems to me like Jethro to attempt anything in that line. He has im-

proved so much, I had begun to hope for better things than we had seen from him yet.”

“Uncle Maurice,” said Hope, “what could you do about Aunt Phoebe? She would have no one set over her, and you could not help her about house.”

“No; but perhaps I could influence her somewhat.”

“But, Uncle Maurice, unless you could prove to the faculty that your reasons for leaving school were very urgent, you could not obtain permission to leave; and if you did, what a loss of time! Uncle Maurice, why may not I go?”

“You, Hope! My dear girl, what are you thinking of?”

“I am thinking of this,” said Hope, leaning her head against his shoulder with the old affectionate motion of her childhood,—“that I can help Aunt Phoebe, and I can cheer up grandfather, and perhaps I could persuade Uncle Jethro to give up the dis-

tillery. Do you not think I could do some good, Uncle Maurice? I know you can do more than I; but you must not leave your studies, and I can do more for grandfather than you."

"My dear child!" exclaimed Maurice, "do you think nothing of your studies, your lost time?"

"Yes, indeed, Uncle Maurice, I do think of them, and now more than ever; but do you not know that, with the end of this spring term, many of my class leave to teach summer schools, and that the course is so arranged that they can enter again in the fall, and lose nothing?"

"You are a strange little girl, Hope. Then you have not yet lost all desire to go back to Plumley?"

Hope's eyes filled. "Dear uncle," said she,—and he could not but notice the soft intonation of her voice,—“a few days ago, I wanted to go back to Plumley, that I might, if possible, get rid of thoughts that

would give me no peace; but now it is all changed, and"—her voice shook with the words—"I cannot bear to think of leaving Bessie; but if I can do good there, if I can save your time, I want to go. Perhaps God has work for me to do there,—something for father. You know how I have always felt towards him,—not like a daughter. Perhaps, if he should see that I care for him, he would do better."

She spoke with so much fervor, yet with such timidity, as if she feared he would think she was venturing too far, that Maurice hastened to reassure her.

"I am very sure," said he, "that you could do much, very much; but, dear girl, your father is beyond recall, I fear, and I do not feel willing to remain here and think of you there, without opportunity to study, and working as I know you would have to. If some one could only be there to take care of father; but Phoebe would not allow that."

"Then, Uncle Maurice, that is the very reason I should go. I shall be Aunt Phoebe's 'help,' you know, and yet I could do many things as I pleased. You know you used to tell me I was a brave little housekeeper!"

"You are a brave little girl," said Maurice, putting his hand lovingly on her head, "and quite willing to leave Ryson; are you?"

"Dear uncle, don't!" pleaded Hope. "No, I am not willing to leave my books, and the elder and Mrs. Leonard and Bessie and you,—not unless, Uncle Maurice, not unless I can do something for Jesus there."

"I never thought," said Maurice, interrupting, unconsciously, a word she would have added, "that Hope Archer would become an enthusiast. Have I been caring for her all these years, only to lose her now in a dream of fancied heroism?" He was sorry the instant the words left his lips. He had seen Hope deeply grieved

before, but never so hurt to the very heart; but when he would have begged forgiveness, her own words interrupted him.

"Dear uncle, if this is mere enthusiasm, I thank God it touches our deepest needs, and reaches to something beyond this life. And it is no fanciful dream, Uncle Maurice, but a very 'strait and narrow path.' And no one can walk it without help. But whatever God shows me to do for him, in his strength I will do it."

"Forgive my thoughtless words, dear Hope," said Maurice, as she paused. "I shall never fear your allowing anything, real or fancied, to run away with your good sense. And now I must go."


Hope followed him to the door. "Uncle Maurice," said she, as they separated, "after I am gone, wont you come here oftener? They will be so glad to have you, and I shall want you to tell me how Bessie is every time you write, because, you know," she added, with unsteady voice,

"she may not be able to write much longer. Will you, Uncle Maurice?"

"I will try to do all I can to please you, Hope," he replied. His answer seemed rather evasive, and Hope let him go without another word.

"I ought not to have asked it," she said to herself, as she watched him disappear slowly down the moonlit street; "but how shall I hear from Bessie as often as I want to?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

OT to enter into details, it will be sufficient to say that Hope went back to Plumley in a few weeks from the time of the last conversation between herself and Uncle Maurice. Maurice accompanied her there, remained one day, and then, with a feeling that he had left half his life behind him, returned to Ryson.

Phoebe was delighted at the acquisition of Hope to the household.

"I did have such a heap to do, Hope," she said, as Hope came into the house after bidding good-by to Uncle Maurice, "and your gran'ther is so hard to suit! I am glad Maurice had the good sense to let you come home; I never did see what he was

so bent on keeping you at Ryson for. So much studyin'! Law! I should be crazy if I knew half you do. You'd better by all odds be doin' housework. You wont miss your school after you and I get right into the work. You've got sperit enough for a dozen girls. I'm glad you aint one o' the cryin' sort."

"No, aunt," said Hope, "I have come home to help you, not to cry. Now let us see what there is to do: grandfather must have his room put to rights first. Is this the best broom you have, Aunt Phoebe?"

"Law, yes, child. I was a-thinkin' the other day we should have to get a new one when you got here; but that'll do awhile yet; 'taint more'n half worn up."

"We must have a new one, Aunt Phoebe. But where has this been?" Hope lifted it up and displayed the article with some disgust.

"Been? What's the matter? Oh, I left it out in the shed, and the young pigs roused

it round in the dirt. Land, they do that often enough. Never mind, Hope! Here, I'll clean it. You fix the thickenin' for gran'-ther's porridge."

Hope made the porridge, and took the poor apology for a broom, after it had received a vigorous cleaning from Phoebe, into her grandfather's room. But while he ate the porridge, she stole up to the little chamber above, and kneeling on the bare, unpainted floor, prayed God that she might be patient.

Her first day's experience at her grandfather's was a fair type of the succeeding. Phoebe was untidy to the last degree; and to Hope, whose early careless habits had been fully eradicated in a long stay at the elder's, this was a boundless source of trouble.

Phoebe, too, was proverbially indolent; and, after the first few days, began to throw much of the work on Hope's shoulders. However, Hope would not be trodden upon; she took her share cheerfully, and for the

rest, won Phoebe to many a busy hour, when, with a less patient and yet less resolute helper, the latter would have been lounging about the kitchen, or gossiping in the neighborhood.

Deacon Archer felt the change sensibly and most gratefully. He never had now to wait hungrily for his porridge or toast, nor found sundry suspicious-looking objects floating about on their surface; never was served with spoons and dishes that looked as if they had not seen water for a week; always found every needed comfort at hand, a pair of hands always ready to comb his hair, bring his slippers, make out his accounts, and willing feet to run on errands, and a pair of young, bright eyes and a clear, cheerful voice to read to him. These are not what every invalid has to make his heart cheery. Was it strange that Hope grew to be the light of her grandfather's eyes?"

Every morning and evening, Hope read to the deacon from the pages of the family

Bible,—read with such clearness of understanding, such reverence and apparent love for the work, that the deacon first listened in wonder, then with suspicion of the truth, and at last with conviction. On the Saturday evening after her arrival,—she had come on the previous Monday,—he asked her, after the reading was finished, how it was that she read so understandingly.

"There is a great deal I do not understand, grandfather," she said, sorrowfully.

"But you seem to; and you like to read, I think."

"Oh, I do, grandfather!" she said, looking up with suffused eyes.

"How is that, child?"

"It is God's word to me, grandfather."

The deacon leaned back in his chair.

"Dear grandfather," said Hope, "are you not glad I love the Lord?"

"Glad, child? Yes, yes! I thought it must be." He took off the spectacles he always wore now, and wiped his eyes.

“Well, Hope, I hope you’ll live right. Everything depends on that, child. Be careful you never dishonor your Master. I could tell you some sad tales about myself, my girl. Since I’ve been laid up with this lameness, I’ve had a good deal of time to think, and especially since Maurice went away, and more since your grandmother died and left me alone. Sometime, I’ll tell you about it, Hope. I didn’t use to think much of children being converted, Hope ; but it’s the best time,—the best time ; they can be Christians, and they don’t have so many bad habits formed, to be always thorning them afterwards.”

The deacon said no more at that time ; but the next evening, as they sat before the low fire,—for the days were yet chilly for an invalid,—he resumed the subject.

“I told you, Hope, I’d had a good deal of time to think while I’ve been here alone, day after day,—for Phoebe did not come in very often,—and I’ve sometimes almost given

up the hope that I ever knew what real Bible religion was ; I thought, when I was a young man, I knew what it was to love God. Perhaps I was self-deceived.

“After I married and came to Plumley to live, I began to be less interested, though I always kept up the forms of religion in my family. I think my prayers must have often been an abomination in the Lord’s sight. But they chose me deacon of the church here ; I have wondered many a time, and wonder still that I accepted the office ; for I cannot think there was much love in my heart for the cause.”

The deacon paused here, as if his thoughts were carrying him beyond his words.

“Well, Hope, I had always been brought up in the midst of liquor-drinking ; it was the custom then for every one to drink. You know there have been some steps taken towards reform lately ; but then, to drink rum and brandy was as little thought of as to take a cup of tea. Still when I first

determined to start the cider-mill, and afterwards the distillery, I had some doubts about its being the best thing for my boys ; but I wanted to do the best I could with my farm and orchard, and so set my scruples at rest, long before I gave any one a hint of my intentions. By that time, I was as firm as a rock. And yet when I saw that Tom was becoming a confirmed drunkard, I blamed him for not knowing how to restrain his appetite, but did not blame myself in the least.

You would think it strange, Hope, how all this time I was always ready, apparently, to aid every good work ; how I prayed at home and abroad, — I did not pray in secret, Hope ; how I was called one of the pillars in the church, and how little interest I felt at heart in the cause of Christ. Surely, I was one of those of whom the Lord saith, 'This people draw nigh unto me with their lips, but with their hearts they are far from me !'

"I was very self-willed, Hope, and hated opposition or any influence that was adverse to my plans, and for that reason, and no other, I determined to keep Maurice down in his attempts to study. I confess it, Hope. You are shocked at this, I know ; but see what my first wrong steps led me to. If Maurice had not hated liquor, and had wanted to study, nothing would have pleased me better than to have given him an education ; but I knew well, with his powers of mind, what his future would be, and I feared his influence. And so I blighted the whole of his life, the Lord forgive me !

"There was one more influence I determined to remove. Elder Leonard, though never an opposer of drinking, yet had a strong inherent dislike to it, and when I built the distillery, he roused up to preach against intemperance publicly. I set myself at work, underhandedly, to sow dissension, and succeeded. I worked the cards

pretty well; but it was a great help to my plans that the elder fell so sick that last winter he was here; it gave countenance to my suggestion for Elder Darwin's coming. But I tell you here, Hope, Elder Darwin, was in no wise knowing to any wrong motive in his invitation here. It chafed me, galled me, terribly to see Elder Leonard taking the stand he did; and I did not rest till he had left the place. But I was always courteous to him, after the conversation we had. I treated him like a mean, small-souled hypocrite, and he me like the Christian gentleman that he is.

"Well, Hope, there is your old grandfather's story. You know how it has been since; I've had to sit here for the last few years and see everything going to ruin, except Maurice. I honor the spirit that is in him, Hope; he is very noble, very firm, and has always treated me as a son should; still I know that he does not feel right towards me. It is no wonder,—no wonder!

And I can only blame myself that he has no faith in religion as I have professed it. It is another of the sins that lie at my door. Ah, Hope, my girl, never let down your standard in the smallest thing; live up to your faith, child. I don't know whether I can ever undo any of the evil I have done; but do you, my girl, see to it that you never have any evil to undo. Keep humble, and don't despise to be taught, and always be looking about you for work to do. God has not called you into his service for nothing. Your work has been in preparation for you many years, and, God forgive me, through me! Hope, you will never need to cross the water to be a missionary. You understand me, my dear child; do you not?"

"Yes, grandfather." Hope took his thin hand in hers. "We will work together, grandfather. I am young, and you shall teach me."


"Oh, my girl! my iniquities have separated

between me and God, and my sins have hid his face from me, that he will not hear! I believe in my heart I love the things of the kingdom, and I know that the Lord is plenteous in mercy even to those who have left their first love; but I am dumb before him. Hope, you are doing your work for me now. I know it must be hard for you to leave your school; but I did want you, my child, if you were anxious to come; and now I see the Lord's hand was in it. Do what you can for Aunt Phoebe and your Uncle Jethro, Hope; he has tried to get the spot where the distillery stood into his hands, and distil from my orchard; but I withstood his offers. He may build elsewhere, or, when I am gone, he may get possession of the old site. There's a capital cellar there, and it looks tempting; but it is not so much his work as Linda's. She's the master-spirit there. I suppose she thinks she could take care that he didn't drink too much to do the work, while she would

take care of the accounts. Oh, my children, my children!"

The old man wrung his thin hands with shame, and Hope stole out of the room to her little chamber.

CHAPTER XXXII.

 HE next day, after the washing was out and the kitchen nicely cleaned and arranged to Hope's satisfaction, she prepared for a walk, but first went in and announced her intention to her grandfather.

"Where are you going, Hope?"

"I hardly know where, grandpa, but in the direction of the tavern."

Deacon Archer looked at her. The fine, energetic features and clear, dark-gray eyes, touched now with a shade of wistful sadness, had never seemed to him as they did now. Hope was beautiful at this moment, though a passing observer would have called her plain.

"How old are you, Hope?" he asked.

"Nearly fifteen, grandfather."

"Fifteen! Hope, how much you look as your mother did when she was young. She was taken away from the evil. The Lord knew best. Well, go, child," he resumed, "but don't venture too far. I don't know that I ought to let you go at all."

Hope looked at him with a fearless smile, put a few finishing touches to the room, and went away. How could she ever accomplish the distance between her grandfather's house and the tavern? The old memories were almost too strong for her. Along this road she had laughingly chased Uncle Maurice, or gravely walked by his side, listening to his explanation of something that had perplexed her. She could well recall one such day as this, just such an afternoon in the early spring, on which she had tripped by his side, when the woods on either side were flooded with a soft, amber light, which, here and there, streamed in long rays through the trees,

making luminous vistas far into the depth of the forest. She remembered asking Uncle Maurice if they could not walk to heaven on those roads of light. Ah, what fancies are in the brain of a child! Hope smiled now at the memory, and smiled again, very differently, but with no less pleasant thoughts moving beneath, as she drew an involuntary comparison between that fanciful path and the real one that led to heaven. And had she entered the blessed way, and without the companion of her childhood's walk? Hope's step, that had been unwontedly slow, grew slower yet, and her head was bowed with the weight of feeling. While she thus walked, footsteps approached; voices fell upon her ear. She raised her head, and saw coming towards her her father and Uncle Ben. Her heart sank like lead; for though neither was intoxicated, there was in their faces an unmistakable air of insolence. She had seen neither before since she came from Ryson.

"How d'ye do, Hope?" drawled Ben, mockingly, sidling up to her. "Come back to Plumley, have ye? How'd ye leave the old elder? How's Bessie?"

The hot blood rushed into Hope's face, and something like the old indignation of her childhood flashed from her eyes; but it faded, and commanding herself to answer quietly, "I am very well," she stepped to her father's side with a pleasant greeting. He stood back and eyed her askance.

"What do you want o' me?" he growled.

"I asked if you were well, father," she said, in the same pleasant tone.

"What do you care?" muttered Tom, with his customary embellishment of an oath, and standing still farther off.

"I care very much," said Hope, feeling her heart sink. "Were you going up to the house, father, and you, Uncle Ben?"

Ben looked at Tom, and Tom at Ben, and both burst into a coarse laugh.

"Guess we may as well, Tom," said Ben.

"Come, it's a time since we've seen the old man. Maybe he'll have something new on the liquor question;" and both raised that uproarious laugh again.

It was well Hope had the fortitude to conceal her feelings. She kept down the wild beating of her heart as well as she could, and spoke again, gently as before.

"Then we will all go together. Father, did you know I have come to stay with grandfather for a while?"

"Guess I did; didn't I, Ben?"

"Guess you did," assented Ben, with a leer.

Hope ventured no more till they reached the house.

"You will come in and see grandfather?" she asked, as they entered the kitchen.

Again the two brothers looked at each other with that inexpressibly disgusting laugh. Hope did not wait for the answer.

"She's splendid, Tom!" said Ben, turning to Tom as the door closed. "If we

could only have her to tend the bar at the tavern! I say, Tom, she's your'n! Think o' that now!"

A day or two after Hope's encounter with her father and Ben, her Uncle Jethro shuffled into the kitchen. Hope was engaged in some work there alone.

"How d'ye do, Hope?" he exclaimed, awkwardly offering his hand, but with a glow of real pleasure breaking over his rude features.

Hope cordially shook hands, and giving him a seat, inquired for Aunt Linda and her little cousin.

"*They're* well," replied Jeth, taking the offered seat. "How did you leave Maurice and the elder's folks at Ryson?"

"They were all well," replied Hope, "except Miss Bessie."

"Yes, I'm sorry Bessie's so — so delicate. I allers thought she was a pretty little thing; allers spoke to me, no matter when or where, so kinder sweet, just as if she

liked me as well as she did her father; and, of course, I knew she didn't."

"I never knew any one she did not love," said Hope, with lips quivering.

"Well," said Jeth, rather uneasily, "that's the way; the best allers go fust. How the elder and Mrs. Leonard take it?"

"They feel very sad," replied Hope; "but I have never heard them speak one complaining word."

"The elder's a remarkable man," said Jeth, "a wonderful man. You wouldn't think it, maybe, but I was rale sorry when he went away from Plumley. Hope," he began again, after making a leisurely disposition of a quantity of tobacco, "how's Maurice doing?"

"He could hardly do otherwise than well, uncle."

"No, not unless he's altered 'mazingly. Hope, you've no idee what a worker he is. There's plenty o' folks round here, and further off, could tell you a longer story

than I can too. Then he's all right; is he? First in his class?"

"I don't know as to that," said Hope. "He is a fine scholar, they say."

"Well, I'm glad he's where he is. He's had a hard time to get his edication. What's he mean to make, Hope?"

"He doesn't tell me," said Hope, with a little smile.

"Then he doesn't tell anybody. How much he does think of you, Hope!"

She smiled again, rather sadly. "Not more than I think of him, Uncle Jethro."

"Well, you deserve it, both on you. Hope, come and sit here a minit." Jethro respectfully drew a chair near him. Hope took the chair. "What made you come to Plumley, Hope?" asked Jeth, in a low tone.

"I came," said Hope, "partly because I wanted to save Uncle Maurice's time, and I could leave very well for the summer, and besides, Uncle Jethro," Hope's eyes grew soft, and her cheeks flushed with

some emotion, "I love Jesus, and it seemed as if I must come home, and see if there was not some good I could do here."

Jeth gave a low whistle as she concluded; of what emotion it was indicative was not apparent; but his countenance was considerably disturbed as he looked up again.

"You meant well in comin', Hope, and I don't doubt you can do good here; but, I must say, I'm sorry."

"Why?" said Hope, starting at his tone.

"You met your Uncle Ben and your father the other day; didn't you?" asked Jethro.

"Yes, I met them on the east road."

"Did they say anything to you about tending the bar at the tavern?"

"No, indeed!" Hope's face grew white.

"Well, I happened to hear some o' their talk afterwards, and I'm afraid there's trouble in the wind. And I thought I'd just give you a word o' warning. I don't think they'd do any more than to torment you with their

talk; but still they're pretty desperate fellows, especially when they're in liquor, and as long as they're past doing any good to, you'd better not take much notice of 'em. I don't know as I'd oughter told you," said Jeth, with a touch of kind feeling in his voice. "I wouldn't take it to heart so, Hope. I declare I'm rale sorry."

"Do not think so, uncle," said Hope, presently. "I am glad you have told me; but, oh, is this to be the end of my coming to Plumley? I had so hoped to do something for my father!"

"It's no use, Hope," said Jeth; "so don't worry about it. They aint worth saving, either of 'em."

"Not worth saving! Uncle Jethro," said Hope's tremulous voice, "was I worth saving, when I had rejected God so long, when I had fought against him with such hatred? Do you think Christ thinks my soul not worth saving, Uncle Jethro?"

"I don't know much about such things,"

said Jethro, uneasily. "Seems to me it's a new stand you've taken, Hope."

"But not of myself, uncle. Christ drew me to his love, and can I do less than take a stand for One who has done everything for me?" Jeth was silent. "Dear uncle," said Hope, rising, "Christ wants you too."

Jethro rose too, and with a rather subdued good-morning, would have gone away immediately.

"Uncle Jethro," said Hope, "I thank you for coming to tell me, and I should like to ask something else of you."

"Out with it, Hope," said the coarse but not unkind voice; "I guess I'll do a'most anythin' for you."

"Will you, uncle?" she said, looking beseechingly. "Will you give up having anything to do with the distillery?"

"Why, Hope," said Jethro, turning back much astonished, "you don't know what you're askin' on."

"I do," she replied, sadly. "And I know more of the ruin it would bring than you."

"I know," said Jeth, soberly, "it killed your mother, that and some other things together; but Tom allers was a brute. Now 'twouldn't be so with me, Hope."

Hope shook her head. "We don't know what we are till we come to trial, uncle."

"I never thought much about what I was, any way," returned Jeth, meditatively,—"only I s'pose I'm kinder shiftless, and don't know how to calculate; Linda tells me on't enough. Sometimes I think I might have been smarter if I'd a tried. I could beat all Plumley at work once; but I don't care now, and Linda's kinder got her mind on the distillery; I s'pose she thinks it'll keep me out o' mischief, and I don't raly want to set up against her, Hope. I'd like to please you, Hope," he concluded, regretfully, "if Linda wa'n't so bent upon it. I s'pose I could set up that I wouldn't take care of it for her."

"Uncle Jethro," said Hope, "do you want your little boy to grow up like my father?"

"Why, no," said Jeth, soberly; "but I tell you, Hope, there wouldn't be the same danger."

"There would be the same danger, uncle," said Hope, sorrowfully,—"the same temptation and the same danger, and, though you may not think so, for you too."

"P'r'aps so," said Jeth, abstractedly fingering the door-latch. "I never did pretend to be perfect. Come down and see us, Hope. Good-day. No, I can't stop to see gran'ther to-day."

Jethro's warning was not entirely unnecessary. Not many days had elapsed before Tom came to the house, and insolently opened the subject, at first with large offers and promises. Hope replied to him coolly, yet most wisely and courteously, not wishing to provoke him to passion; but it was not possible to avoid this. Failing in offers, Tom had recourse to an assump-

tion of fatherly authority, accompanying his words with divers threats of what he could and would do. He swore to use physical force,—swore that, before another day went over her head, she should be at the tavern pouring out brandy for his customers, ending by demanding of her, savagely, what she supposed was going to prevent him. To which Hope replied that she trusted in God to take care of her, and restrain him in his purposes.

Her words were uttered in such a quiet, fearless tone that Tom was for the instant awed. However, it was but for a moment; he recovered the use of his tongue, and with it his customary supply of oaths, which he lavished on Hope freely, and went away, threatening ere long to return.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FOR the present, Hope was freed from further interference from her father; for on that very day, being found, in a drunken rage, inflicting injury with dangerous missiles, he was sent to the county jail for a term of sixty days.

The house settled after this into the quiet, ordinary routine of labor, with little interruption, with the exception of occasional calls from their immediate neighbors, and a few families at the village. Hope saw little of society. Letters came weekly from Uncle Maurice, and occasionally a line from Bessie, written as if on the borders of heaven; yet she had spoken of more strength, and even as if there were a gleam of hope

for the future. In the last letter, she had written, "I sometimes feel, dear Hope, as if God will not take me from earth yet; as if my work for him here were not quite done. The air of summer gives me strength; but the town is close and noisy. I want more breadth of air, more sunshine and exercise. Ah, if I could but live once more in the old parsonage at Plumley, with our old patient pony to take me through the woods, and along the banks of the river, where we used to go! It cannot be. But, dear Hope, you know I have relatives living far to the south of us; they want me there. Can I go? Dear sister, if it should be, I must see you first, if only for a few hours."

The letter broke off here, but was afterward finished in the same hopeful, sunny strain.

"Dear, dear Bessie," thought Hope, as she read and reread the precious words, "may God spare her for our sakes!"

With such links between Plumley and

Ryson, Hope had enough to do to walk cheerfully in her chosen path this summer. But cheerfully and bravely, though most humbly, she kept on her way, sorrowing often at heart, but joyful, too, in her thoughts of the dear Lord who walked with her. Her grandfather blessed her daily, grew less moody and restless, lost more and more his care for worldly things, and with his heart now fixed where his treasure was, lived contritely and humbly before the Lord. But now Tom's term of confinement at the jail was expired, and Hope's face, so her grandfather thought, looked pensive, and often deeply-shaded with anxiety. It hurt him to see her so.

"Hope," he said to her one evening, "you are looking sad. Do you want to go back to Ryson?"

"Oh, no, grandfather."

"Well, then, tell me what troubles you?"

"I cannot help thinking of my father, grandpa."

"Oh," murmured the old man, while the tears ran over his thin cheeks, "if I could but see my sons what they might have been! The Lord forgive me; I cannot forgive myself. Hope, child, when is Maurice coming home?"

"He will be here in two weeks, grandfather."

"I hope so. I want to see him. Hope, I want his forgiveness before I die; but I dare not hope for it, hardly to ask it. Oh, my sins are visited on my own head!"

"Grandpa," said Hope, after several minutes' silence, "Moses Williams came in to see you last night; but you were asleep."

"I was thinking of him," said the deacon, "just as you spoke. I always think of Maurice and him together. He sets his life by the boy almost. After the distillery was burnt, Hope, he began to look up a little. Weak enough he was; you'd hardly have thought he could ever have had resolution enough to keep from liquor; but he did

mend a good deal. But it has been slow work to come up even to what he is now, and that is poor enough, you know. Nobody will ever know what Maurice has been to him. He has kept such watch of him, and given him so much encouragement. Then that last summer he carried on this farm, he showed him how to turn his farm to the best advantage, and Moses did everything he told him, just like a child. He grew to care less and less for drink, and began to buy new things for his wife and children, and really seems quite a man to what he did once. I thought, when Maurice went to Ryson, that he would get back to his old habits, and be off at the tavern; but he told me one day that he promised Maurice to keep away from there, and I knew by his face then that he'd do it. Ah, Hope, you never will know all that Maurice has done, and for others than Moses Williams. But, oh, with all this nobleness of heart and of purpose, he yet lacks the grace that is

in Christ Jesus! It's the only thing, my girl; self-sufficiency is a foundation that at last will slide away like the sand. Renounce self; you may be weak, but in Christ you are strong."

Several days after the above conversation, Uncle Jethro dropped in at twilight to see his father. They were all gathered in the deacon's room, — Phoebe, Jethro, and Hope, — when a step was heard in the kitchen, and Phoebe went out to see who had come in. Almost instantly with her disappearance, a loud scream from her started Hope and Jethro to their feet.

"Hope," exclaimed Jeth, preventing her as she was darting out, "stay here, for your life, and fasten the door after me!" and he sprung out of the room. There was a prolonged scuffle heard, heavy blows, and smothered ejaculations. Then the sounds ceased, and a dead silence fell, until, after the lapse of a few minutes, a faint noise was heard at the door. Hope went up and listened; it

seemed like a stifled moan. She opened it cautiously, and found her Aunt Phoebe crouched on the floor, half fainting. With much exertion, she helped her in, and lighted a candle. Meantime, Phoebe came to herself, and, with the aid of water, was able to speak. But she shook with fright.

"Where do you s'pose they've gone?" she asked, in a thick whisper.

Nobody answered. Hope had sunk on the floor, and rested her head on a chair.

"It was Tom," said Phoebe again, thickly, "as drunk as he could be, and ravin'! O—h!" she shuddered, and drew closer to Hope.

"He came at me," she recommenced, recovering her voice a little, "and caught me by the arm. I suppose he thought 'twas you, Hope, and I screamed, and Jeth came. Oh, how they did fight!"

"Aunt Phoebe," said Hope, grasping her arm with the little strength she had left, "don't; I can't bear it!"

"Poor girl!" said Phoebe, in a tone that had never been heard from her lips before. "I'm glad it was me. I wont say any more, Hope, only I wish Jeth would come!"

Crouched and motionless on the floor they still were, when, some hours afterward, Jethro returned.

"Are you here, Hope?" he asked, making his way blindly through the room; for the candle had gone out long before.

"I am here, Uncle Jethro," said Hope. Her uncle relighted the candle, and came and sat down by her.

"I'm glad you're safe, Hope; I am thankful, if ever I was for anything!" His hearty clasp of her hand would have told that without his words. "I am thankful, Hope. I've heard people talk about Providence; I believe it was something of that sort sent me here to-night."

Hope drew nearer to him. "Uncle Jethro, where did you leave my father?"

"Don't ask any questions, Hope; I'm glad

you're safe!" Jethro fairly wrung her hand this time. "But I may as well tell you, Hope, you may make up your mind for anything now. Things have come to a worse pass than ever I thought they would. Tom's desperate mad with rum; I don't know what he'll do before morning. I never feared for my life before; I don't see what saved me."

Hope raised herself from her sitting position to her knees beside him. Such a look of hopeless agony as that young face wore Jethro never wanted to see again.

"Uncle Jethro," she whispered, hoarsely, "by what you have seen to-night, promise me that that distillery shall be given up! Uncle Jethro, *you will!*"

Jethro hesitated, but only for an instant. He leaned forward, and took her clasped hands in his. "Hope," said he, solemnly, "by what I have seen to-night, I promise you, *it shall!*"

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated the deacon; but from Hope there was no sound

heard. Jethro felt the flowing of her tears over his hands,—felt the eager, trembling touch of her lips there. It was enough for him; he would not have had her speak for the world at that moment.

Jethro did not leave the house that night, nor till the morning was well advanced; and when he finally went home, he marched with determined tread straight to his wife, and told his story.

"Now, Linda," said he, as he drew to the conclusion, "as I'm a livin' man, and don't want you nor the boy ever to see what I saw last night, I wash my hands clear of that distillery in any shape whatsoever. Whatever else I may do, and I'm not over-good, I'll not have it to carry with me to the judgment that I broke the promise I made Hope last night."

Tom Archer disturbed his father's house no more. He was taken to his now familiar home, the jail, and lodged there for a term of months. Would that we had no darker


record of him to sully our pages ! The rage which he had manifested gave way on his confinement there to a worse spirit, if could be, — a desperate, fearful sullenness. It was not long. The morning following, the turnkey, on looking into his cell, found him stretched on his bunk of straw, senseless, the life-blood dripping slowly but surely from an incision in the arm. He was beyond resuscitation, and ere night the word went forth through Plumley that Tom Archer's miserable life had been ended by his own hand.

Over the succeeding days we draw a veil. The shock, the agony, and shame opened afresh ; these are not for pen to depict. Judge ye who have ever looked upon the ruin worked by rum, who have seen the anguish of an aged father and a heart-broken daughter, how two spirits suffered as the body of Thomas Archer was brought to his father's house, and thence borne to the enclosure where slept Mrs. Archer and the broken-hearted Mary, *his, wife !*

If the town of Plumley had before been remiss in its duty concerning the traffic in liquor, it needed but the combination of the circumstances we have described to give it an impulse in the right direction.

It is doubtful, however, whether reform to the desired extent would have been effected, had it not been for the energy of Squire Hamilton. He, too, was wont to relate, at times afterward, and with deep emotion, how he should have turned back shrinking from the difficulties involved in the undertaking, had not a young girl, pale, sorrowing, but most noble and patient and resolute, come to his house to plead with him, as one pleads for something dearer than life, not to give up the contest until the last vestige of the unholy traffic had disappeared, and he thanked God that the good cause triumphed at last, if only for the sake of her who had suffered so deeply and so heroically, — Hope Archer !

CHAPTER XXXIV.

 FEW weeks in the warmest months Maurice was at home. With all the comfort his presence gave her, Hope could yet hardly command herself to be cheerful. It often required all his tact to win her from painful thought even for a few moments, and then he had succeeded only to see her lids droop again, and the lines of her mouth take on that grieved, resigned look that it hurt him so to notice. But, for all this, Hope never faltered in her work, either of heart or hand, and there were times of exceeding but chastened joy, when, in the sunny, hushed afternoons, she spent hours in the little chamber, with its unpapered walls and bare, white floor, its old-fash-

ioned furniture, dingy and rude,—hours when she sat at Jesus' feet, and learned more fully how precious is the divine love and the divine strength. Surely, the name of that chamber was *Peace*.

From the communion of those summer afternoons she went to Maurice with a deep, steady quiet in her countenance and a light in her eyes which forced him, though he did not put the impression in the same words, to admit that she had "been with Jesus." Others saw this also, and said to themselves, "Surely, she has learned of Him."

Dr. Hamilton, very unexpectedly, came in to tea one afternoon, and was invited by Maurice to remain overnight. Nothing loath, he remained, and the flow of conversation that evening in the family circle was unwontedly cheerful. It was good for them all.

In the course of the evening, Hope left the company in her grandfather's room, to attend to some preparations for breakfast.

She had not been long at her work, when the doctor stood beside her.

"I came out," said he, affecting a lightness which he did not feel, "to see if you could really make bread and cakes as readily as you can solve a problem in algebra? Is it possible the same head and pair of hands can do the one as well as the other!"

"I am sure it is not impossible, Dr. Hamilton."

"I see not! But, Hope, would you not rather be at Ryson?"

She looked up to answer, but could not.

"Forgive me, Hope," exclaimed the doctor, — "pray forgive me! I should not have spoken so; but you are so different from what you were!"

"Am I?" she asked.

"Are you not?" was all his answer.

"Yes," she replied, in a few moments, "Dr. Hamilton, I am different; 'I was blind, but now I see.'"

The doctor turned abruptly away, hum-

ming a low tune, as if she had given him something to think of. He took a few turns about the room, and came back again.

"Hope," he asked, soberly, "what do you think of me?"

"Of you?" said Hope, forgetting her work in her surprise at the unexpected question. "Dr. Hamilton, I don't know!"

"Am I such a puzzle?"

"I think not," said Hope, resuming her work instantly; "but you took me by surprise."

"You do not mean to tell me," said the doctor, after waiting in vain for something more.

Her eyes shone through tears, as she looked up to him.

"I think, Dr. Hamilton, that you yet lack one thing, — 'the one thing needful.'"

"And I suppose in your view that compasses everything?"

"In view of the life to come it does."

"And for the present life — what?"

"'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

"Well, Hope," said the doctor, "I'm an indolent sort of fellow, you know; always hated to make much extra exertion, or turn out of my way for anything. But perhaps, in fact, I hope, I shall some day come round to where you stand."

"Dr. Hamilton," said Hope, with a gentle but most powerful rebuke in her eyes and voice, "you never will until you are so deeply in earnest as to turn out of your way willingly, anxiously."

The doctor mused over her reply with a disturbed air, as if he had got more than he had asked for, and finally, without more words, took himself to the deacon's room.

The time drew near for Maurice's departure. It was an often agitated but still unsettled question whether Hope should return to Ryson this fall. As for Maurice, he would have taken her away, almost

against her will. It seemed to him he could not leave her at Plumley longer; he blamed himself continually for ever consenting that she should leave Ryson.

But Hope, much as she longed for her books, her school companions and pleasures, the life at the parsonage, the sweet society of Bessie, could not bring herself to leave her grandfather again to Aunt Phoebe's care. He was failing rapidly; the news of Tom's death had been a shock from which he could not wholly rally, and Hope would remain with him to the last.

"So long as grandfather lives," she said to Uncle Maurice, "I will stay with him. I do not wish to do otherwise."

"He has never done so much for you," said Maurice, with a bitterness that was not like him, "that you should continue to spend your best years in working for him. Phoebe can do very well for him now."

"Dear Uncle Maurice!" exclaimed Hope, sadly.

"What?"

"That is not Christ's rule."

"I don't know anything about that. I think it is a poor rule for you. I don't want the best part of your life to go as mine did. Think where I might have been now!"

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope, "perhaps you will think me very presuming, but may I tell you what I think?"

"You know you may tell me anything, Hope."

"Well, then, I think those years you complain of as being wasted were best for you."

"In some respects, it may be."

"You will be better prepared for your work in years to come, be better disciplined and wiser."

"Sound doctrine, my dear girl. You think there was danger of my being superficial?"

She stood leaning over the back of his chair, softly stroking his heavy hair from his forehead, and did not make answer im-

mediately, and when she did, it came in the form of a question.

"Do you not think, uncle, that there is always danger of that when one hurries through an education?"

"Why, Hope," said Maurice, half turning round to her, and drawing her round so that he could look in her face, "if I couldn't see you, child, I might think the spirit of my grandmother was behind my chair. Yes, I do think haste often incurs the loss of soundness, and a person's mind may become warped in the very effort to develop it. But were you going to apply this to yourself, as a reason for not going back to Ryson?"

"It had come to me among some other thoughts; but grandfather is calling me, and you too, Uncle Maurice," she added, listening. Maurice rose, and followed her into his father's room.

The deacon was sitting in his customary place, near the chimney-corner,—a place he

loved in winter because of its proximity to the bright, open fire, and in summer, because of the pleasant associations it called up.

"I should not have called you, my children," he said, as they entered; "but it is Maurice's last night with us, and I had something I wished to say before he goes. Hope, put back the curtain; let us have the light as long as we can. Maurice, sit near me, here. I have been anxious a long time, my son, to speak with you about my life, as you have seen it and before that;" and beginning with his early days, he gave Maurice much such an account as he had once related to Hope.

"I know, my son," he said, in conclusion, "that I have sinned grievously in the Lord's sight. I feel that I can but say, like one of old, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' I have cast a heavy shadow over your life, my son; I can never make amends for the evil; but, before I die, I want, if it can be,—I want to hear

you say you forgive me. Maurice, my son, will you, can you, forgive me?"

"Father!" exclaimed Maurice, hastily springing from his seat, "you do not know what you ask, and whom?"

"Nay, my son, I do know. I do not deserve it; but I could not die without the asking. As I have prayed the Lord, I pray you to forgive."

"Do not torture me," said Maurice. "I do not want to add sorrow to your life, God knows; but I will not perjure myself. Father, the wrong was so deep!" He walked the room in his agitation.

The deacon covered his face with his thin hands, and heavy sobs shook his frame. Maurice left his walk, and went up to him.

"Father!"

"Yes, my son."

"God knows I would not wound you afresh, and I would be all a son should; but when I think of this"—

"You cannot feel kindly, Maurice?"

"Father, I cannot!"

"My son," said the deacon, presently, — he had recovered from his agitation somewhat, and spoke calmly, though with exceeding sorrow, — "it is our hour of prayer; kneel by me here, just as you did years ago, and let me put my hand on your head. Hope, my child!"

"Yes, grandfather." She was already by him, and as she spoke, knelt by his side.

Then, with one hand on either head, the deacon prayed. Such a prayer Maurice had never heard from his lips before, — such a prayer, even in its broken plea for divine pardon, had never ascended from that room, such wrestling with God for the children he had wronged, that his own shortcomings might not prove a stumbling-block to them forever; but, more than all, that the grace that is in Christ Jesus might come to the dear son who knelt by him, that he might ere long, as a *Christian*, forgive as he hoped to be forgiven.

Maurice rose from his knees as the last breath of prayer went up, and gave his father his hand.

"Dear boy," said the deacon, "you may never see your old father again. The Lord bless you, my dear son, — the Lord bless you with his infinite grace!"

Maurice bent down and kissed the hand he held.

"Good-night, father."

"Dear boy, good-night."

Again, after Maurice's departure, early the following morning, the house fell into its wonted quietude, with one exception. Elder Leonard came, partly in answer to a request of the deacon, and partly to ask that Hope might accompany him home for a few days. Bessie was going to try the warm climate she had spoken of, and begged that Hope might spend with her the days that should elapse before her departure.

Hope went to Ryson for the time Bessie had asked. It was very precious to be there.

"I believe I shall see you again, dear sister," said Hope, as the time drew near for Bessie to leave.

"As the Lord will, dear Hope. Ah, if I could but take you!"

"You will take many with you in spirit, Bessie."

"Dear sister, yes; and the One Friend will be with us both always."

"Your Friend and my Friend," said Hope, "our Father." And so they parted.


It seemed to Hope, as she began to tread the old life at Plumley again, that the days moved solemnly; the heavy tick of the tall old clock in the corner of her grandfather's room seemed, to her fancy, to measure off every second, as if it were saying, "This is the last, the last, the *last*!" Was it only fancy? It came to be more than that, but not till the first light snows wreathed themselves around the dwelling. Then it was that the silver cord was loosed, and the golden bowl was broken,—on a Sabbath

morning. The fields outside were white, like the garments of angels.

Hope had risen early, as she always did, and stolen to the sick-room. Something in her grandfather's face drove the blood to her heart. She put her ear to his lips; he breathed, but at long intervals. She went out and brought Phoebe to the bedside. The clock ticked slowly, heavily. The last, the last! The slow breaths stopped; a gentle, placid look crossed his face, as if some hand were passing over it, smoothing with soft fingers the lines of care and sorrowful pain. His countenance looked like a little child's in innocent rest. Do we not begin the higher life as little children?

As Hope looked, in silent awe and sorrow, she became aware that the room was strangely still. The slow strokes of the old clock had ceased. The weights were down; the pendulum wavered slightly and hung motionless. It had ticked out the days of Deacon Archer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

 HAT shall we say more? Let a winter and summer and another winter slip by in your thought, good reader, and ascend with us the low hill that rises to the east of the house in the valley. Standing here, we can see the spire of the church, where Elder Leonard preached so long, the square red schoolhouse, where Maurice Archer studied in his boyhood, the scattered farmhouses, red and yellow and white. How gay they look among the green! Nearer is the little cottage across the road, where Mary Archer folded her tired hands in death; close by the cider-mill, now converted into a neat little barn, and there the site of the distillery. Look-

ing away down the river, you see not far from its brink a snug little house and barn. Do you notice a load of hay slowly moving towards the wide-open door of the latter, and the driver tossing up a little girl who, screaming with delight, throws down handfuls of wild-flowers at her brother below? The driver is the owner of this thrifty farm, and his name — ah, you have guessed it — Moses Williams. His little girl will never go hungry as long as he has hands to work with, and his boy will never by his father's example learn to love the liquor he can just remember seeing handed round at the raising of the deacon's distillery.

But down on the meadow there is another farm. That is Jethro Archer's. Jethro is Jethro yet, — rough, awkward, but with an undercurrent of kind feeling and a sort of open-handed honesty that gain him friends. His wife, Linda, still tells him once in a while that he is shiftless, and don't know how to calculate. Jeth laughs at her good-

naturedly, and tells her she may be thankful he is as good as he is, which is nothing to boast of, to be sure, but better than he might have been, seeing how three of his brothers have gone.

Ben Archer left Plumley when the tavern was ordered to be closed; but he is heard from frequently, wasting his substance in riotous living. As he made his path, so he treads in it. Will the mischief commenced by the deacon's false steps in his early manhood ever end?

Yonder is the little field of graves. Let us go up to it. That headstone where your hand rests is the deacon's. A single line forms its inscription,—"He rests in hope." They are old, familiar words, but very true of him.

A few weeks ago, Maurice and Hope Archer came from Ryson—for their school life there is not quite finished yet—to spend a few days at the old homestead,

now claiming for its mistress Mrs. Harry Ives, the Sister Susan of old acquaintance. The place will never fall into the hands of strangers.

One evening, just before the darkness fell, Maurice and Hope climbed the little hill, and sat there among the graves, talking low, as befitted the place and the hour.

After a while, there was a pause. In the mind of each seemed to be some thought they could not quite trust themselves to speak. It was Maurice who broke the silence.

"I know, Hope."

Her eyes answered him before her lips did. "He talked of you so much, Uncle Maurice, and that day before he died, so often, as if his mind were so full of loving thoughts for you that he could not be satisfied. Dear uncle, you forgive him now?"

"Yes, gladly,—how gladly and how sadly!"

"But as a Christian, Uncle Maurice?"

"May I wear that name, dear Hope? And

yet, until the day that old things passed away and all things became new to me, I could not put away that bitterness towards him from my heart. I knew I was not a Christian, because I could not forgive. Ah, that prayer, Hope! My father was a strong-minded, self-willed man, proud, and always, even in very small things, unwilling to admit that he was wrong. Yet that night he humbled himself before me like a child. I knew it was not childishness, for his mind was strong and active as ever, nor fanaticism; his life was too quiet, and himself always too cool and free from any sudden impulses for that. It was another spirit than I had ever seen in him. This was *truth*. May God forgive me that I could not forgive him then! Perhaps he knows that I do now."

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope, presently, "was it that prayer alone?"

"No, Hope. There were memories of other years." Maurice's eyes left the objects he

had been contemplating, and wandered to the far-off horizon, where the setting sun had left faint, broad bars of light to relieve the dense, dark blue.

"Uncle Maurice," said Hope again, "may I ask one more question?"

"As many as you will, dear child."

"But perhaps you cannot or will not care to answer it."

"I think I can. You are thinking of the future?"

"Yes. What will it be to you?"

"A blind question, my dear girl. But what would you best like me to be to it?"

"I would like you best to be a minister."

Maurice brought his eyes round from the distant landscape to hers.

"Dear Hope, as long as God gives me life, I will be, not a minister in the sense you mean,—I do not feel that God calls me to that,—but I will be a minister of *temperance*. Hope, by all that you and I and these dead have suffered, I dedicate my-

self to the uprooting of this terrible evil, so help me God!"

"Uncle Maurice,"—Hope laid her hand on his,—“years ago I had childish visions of what I would sometime do for little children whose fathers were—like mine.”

“Dear child, did you? How is it now?”

She looked at him with beautiful eyes.

“I am thinking of them still.”

Maurice rose and took her hand to walk down the hill.

“We will consecrate ourselves to the same work, Hope. We will try to reclaim the tempted, and raise up the fallen; we will carry light into the dark places of sin, and make the little children glad with the promise of hope. But it will be a hard battle, dear Hope. I am reminded of words your mother said to me once, ‘Are you strong?’ Are you *strong*, Hope?”

Her eyes shone with that same beauty from within. “God is strength, Uncle Maurice.”

“I know,” he replied, “God is the strength of our life; of ‘whom shall we be afraid’?”

“Uncle Maurice,” said Hope, as they neared the house, “there is one of whom we have not spoken.”

“Yes,” he answered, thoughtfully.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” said she, with her old quick, childish accent.

“It?” said Maurice, with a half-smile at her.

“Yes, how beautiful it is to think that when we go back to Ryson, *she* will be there,—Bessie, my sister! Ah, Uncle Maurice, you never can know what she has been to me.”

Maurice walked in silence.

“Uncle Maurice,” said Hope, again, “you cannot know how happy I am. To think Bessie is able to come back, and be with us once more *well*! Uncle Maurice, you are *so* still! But you cannot be so glad as I.”

“My dear Hope,” said Maurice, “you are

a child yet. I am glad,—as glad, I think, as you possibly can be, and that is saying a great deal.”

The darkness gathered thickly about them as they entered the house; but to one standing outside a light seemed to be shed where their feet had trodden, and in that light a vision was revealed.

A vision of years to come. First of two souls made patient and brave and wise through the weary waiting and the sorrow of youth, denying self to carry the balm of healing to crushed hearts, strengthening weak natures, setting on his feet the slave to that terrible taskmaster, *rum*, living and loving in the highest sense,—living for Christ, because he for them had died; loving, because he also had loved.

As the vision opened yet further, other hearts and hands were seen to join them, some not wholly strangers to us, the strong and the weak, the indifferent and the earnest alike, the lovely and the fair, bring-

ing themselves to the work, and still more, till the gathered crowd was too great to be numbered.

But the work was not of a day, but of long years. Cast down they often were, but not destroyed. They planted asylums for the fallen, and gathered the little children who pined in the hovel of the inebriate to pleasant homes, their banner ever borne aloft with the watchword *Temperance*, and crowned at last, weary but triumphant, with the reward of grateful hearts, and the consciousness of having labored not wholly in vain.