

GLIMPSES

OF

OUR LAKE REGION IN 1863,

AND OTHER PAPERS.

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GLIMPSES
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GLIMPSES OF OUR LAKE REGION.

SNNOOG'S POND! That is the old name for the clear sheet of water that stretches for two or three miles across the highlands which overlook one of our thriftiest New England villages. It is a lake now; in poetical parlance, a "pearl of a lake," blue and hyaline. But it is the same old pond, and there is scarcely a spot all along its green borders which has not its historical association or childish interest.

Not that in this changing world its banks have been permitted to remain unaltered. That were too much to ask, though inexorable Fate might have been fitly entreated to spare us the rude desecration of the beautiful which the vandalism of man has perpetrated. There

are long lines of Irish cabins on either shore, and the fairest ground in all the region for the prosecution of tasteful architecture or landscape gardening is covered with a set of low, dirty, rickety old huts, which are scarcely fit for the habitation of swine. A pig of tolerable intelligence would lose its self-respect and its ability to fatten properly if condemned to accept so unpromising a dwelling-place.

Notwithstanding this, when seen at a little distance on a summer's evening there is a quiet beauty about those clustering homes, and an air of homely comfort in the bearing of their etiquette-scorning tenants, which is curiously attractive. The shadowy trees, leaning over from the hill-side behind the cabins till they are reflected in the dark, still waters, give a coloring and finish to the picture. Women and young girls in the quaintest varieties of costume, bareheaded and barefooted, sit on the door-steps, or gather in clusters under the trees to enjoy a Babel of loud chatting; and the men, returned from the day's hard labor, refresh themselves with a quarrel or a fight preparatory to eating their suppers.

It is a question whether there is not more

real enjoyment of life and less anxious care in those apparently comfortless dwellings than in the more imposing homes of their Yankee neighbors. It is certain that the torpid, expressionless features, the pallid complexion, the listless air and languid step, which are the signs and seals of our artificial life, have no counterparts in an Irish cabin. Our cumbrous etiquette seems to be accepted there for the hollow humbug that it is; and they would think it a poor bargain to exchange their natural freedom of action and strong vitality for the shallow, paltry aims and elegant insipidity of our genteel society. So far they are our superiors.

There is, no doubt, an element of satisfaction in their cozy little fights and animated wranglings. There is no ceremony about them, no polite routine to achieve the desired recreation; but an off-hand dashing into the business, a relishing heartiness in the good, honest "knock-downs," which is truly inspiring. The whole enjoyment of the affair would be spoiled, lost altogether, if subjected to the conventional restrictions of refined quarreling. The result is delightful. A warmer friendship than ever blossoms out from the rudely shattered loves

of the past, and the perpetual renewal of the sacred affection keeps the heart young.

The beautiful "lake region" has been christened New Ireland, in memory of the well-beloved Erin across the sea. It is touching to witness the feeling exhibited by Irishmen toward the "swate jem o' the ocean blue, me lads." They forgive the "ould counthree" its poverty and degradation, its ignorance, and its discomforts—discomforts so unbearable as to have forced them into exile. No matter. We have only to mention the old loved haunts, and we awaken at once the warm, gushing sympathies of the heart, and the lowest and dirtiest bog is straightway idealized into a strip of veritable fairy-land. This love of country is refreshing. It would be a treasure if the Irishmen knew how to turn it to account. We have famous patriots who are doing a large business on a smaller capital.

Glancing up the long street into the heart of New Ireland, we notice that the whole place is alive with some absorbing interest. Even the children, the dirty, ragged little varlets, have caught the general enthusiasm, and are whooping, and laughing, and tumbling each

other about in the most gratifying manner. Look! Do you see, what it is all about? Jem Farlan and Terence Dougherty have come home from the wars. They have served three years, and they are mustered out of the service. They are lions in New Ireland just now. You may be sure of that. No wonder that the women are so noisily joyful, for during all this weary time they have seen two patient, lonely wives living on the expectation of this day. There is a new baby for each of the returned soldiers to rejoice over; not a wee, helpless infant, but a noisy boy or girl at play in the street; yet, in spite of its size, the baby still. Both nearly three years old, and telling plainer than any thing else of those long months of waiting. What a number of older children gather about the two men! They have grown out of all likeness to the Mat, Bob, Dennis, and Peter of three years ago, and some of them look nearly old enough to go to the wars on their own account. From their black eyes, and the green and blue bruises on their foreheads and arms, we conclude that the sublime art of fighting is not unknown to them. It is a happy time in New Ireland.

Let us turn to look down upon the neat, commodious houses of our Yankee village. We cannot help noting its evident thrift, its home comforts and tasteful adjuncts. It has, withal, a *proper* look, and we doubt if such a general expression of sympathy and honest affection could be got up in its well-behaved precincts. *Our* returned soldier came home last night. He came home to affectionate home-greetings, and in the evening Keepler's brass band gave him a serenade, and were treated with cake and iced lemonade as usual. Half hidden in the shadiest corners were faces radiant with unexpressed delight; but *our* soldier did not come home to the whole big heart of the community like those returned Irishmen. There was nothing even indecorous in our welcoming, no boisterous exultations, no excess whatever, whereas every son and daughter of Erin will be jubilantly drunk before ten o'clock to-night. They would be ashamed to be sober on so glorious an occasion.

AILEEN.

In all New England there is not a neater, smarter, or more knowing woman than Aileen.

It is fifteen years, "laving out the four o' them," she tells me, since she embarked for America. She was young and unmarried then, but she had a lover, "an uncommon lad and a fine one, wi' a talent for keeping still nowhere." That is, in American speech, a rolling stone which would not be likely to gather moss.

There were always such brilliant opportunities to get rich openings before him that, although the breadth of the ocean generally intervened between his Eldorado and himself, the golden chances gleaming in the distance quite prevented his giving his mind to the accomplishment of the work at hand. This trait in his character often made him a trial rather than a comfort to his betrothed; but it was seldom that she could look into his handsome face without forgetting his faults altogether. And yet her strong common-sense kept her from becoming his wife. She was prophet enough to foretell the result, and had too much pride to experience it.

"It's a lady I'll make of yees, Aileen," he would say. "An ye'll marry me at once and narry a bother more, it's off I'll be directly a seeking o' me fortune."

"No doot o' that," responded matter-of-fact Aileen. "I can belave that, and more, if ye plaze."

"Belave what?"

"That ye'll be off directly, shure. Ye're that onasy that nothing on arth, barrin' the skirling from one town or counthree to anither, can kape ye quiet at all; but I'll no marry ye, Dennis, till ye settle to something."

"Now, thin, Aileen, darlint, how can ye be so onreasonable? Isn't it for yer own sake that I want to be rich? Bother the goold, an' especially the working for it, an it were to be spint on meself. Think better of it, and let me spake to Father Adrian at once."

"No, indade. Whin ye give up yer grand scheming, and work for yer livin' I shall be ready for the praste. But I'll not work for *your* praties, lad, afther earnin' me own. Not I! An ye were a thousand times handsomer than yerself I would stick to that same."

Aileen looked pretty enough while making her protest of independence to have settled the mind of any common lover to remain with her, and work for her, too; but Dennis Maylan could not so easily part with his wonderful fancies.

"Arrah, Aileen," he said, "jist think of the dee when ye'll ride in yer own carriage, darlin'."

"Don't lave till ye've paid for yer coat, Dennis."

"It's scarce worth its price now, Aileen," replied Dennis, composedly displaying a couple of rents in the elbows.

"It was too fine to last. But ye're in debt for it the same. A hard-workin' man is Larry, an' too obliging for his own good, or he'd not trust pable to wear out clothes before payin' for them."

"I will pay for it wi' the first money I get."

"He has four lads o' his own, Dennis, and all his dead sister's children to mind. It were a sore shame an ye should forget yer debt to him, an he strugglin' to shoulder his burden."

"I'll not forget," again promised Dennis. "An when I come home from Australia he'll find me a frind worth havin', I'll promise yees."

"He kapes the bit laddies both bluff and tidy. He is mother and father both to the orphans. Ye'll remember it, Dennis?"

"Av coorse. An ye shall set oop the lile lads in thrade, Aileen, and we'll build a snoog cabin for the ould tailor. We'll not be getting stinginess wi' our riches. That would spoil all," said Dennis, smiling benevolently over the bounteous provision in store for his worthy creditor.

"It will be time enough to lay out the goold when we have it in hand," suggested Aileen, "though for the matther o' that we will be blind wi' ould age when it comes. Ye can go to Australia whinever ye mind. I'll not hinder ye. I'll go wi' me Uncle Matt to America the while. That's the counthree for me."

"Will ye truly, acushla?"

Dennis threw his old straw hat into the air and cut out such a variety of new dancing steps in his animated evolutions about the room that Aileen paused in her work from sheer admiration.

"I go with yees, Aileen. I'll be yer coompany. It's better than Australia, a long way; and we'll not be parted aither. It's a fine plan intirely; good luck to it!"

"Yes," said Aileen quietly.

"Say that ye're glad o' the change that kapes

us together, mavourneen. Ye look so cool and continted like it half angers me."

Aileen burst into a merry laugh.

"It's no good to be glad, Dennis," she said. "Ye'll be flittin' again as soon as we're safe landed; there's no dependence on yer brave plans, barrin' the worrit o' hearin' yees rin on. Ye'll be off to Californy belike, or to the world's ind."

"And if I do, Aileen, ye'll wait for me, shure."

"I'll no promise you that. There's Mike Phelan—"

"The rusty ould pig that he is!" interrupted Dennis scornfully.

"And Terence—"

"Ay the milk-and-wather laddie."

"And Pate Roan—"

"Och, the mane red-head!"

"I can pick from the three," said Aileen, "and no fear o' drawin' a blank."

"Ye'll niver think of it," said Dennis, coming close to her side and gazing earnestly down into the clear blue eyes so honestly raised to meet his. "Ye'll niver think of it, Aileen. . So as we have grown oop together, so as we have

danced at the fair and on the green, ye'll not throw me over now."

"Not till we've tried America together," she replied. "But, Dennis, avick, can ye pony yer passage money? We'll be off Tuesday week, and we sail wi' me uncle."

As Aileen expected, he had not thought of this.

"But I can work me way," he said cheerily.

"I will pay it for ye, Dennis. Och, if ye *would* but thry to steedy doon whin we get to the new home it were a pleasure to start wi' ye. But there's no trust to yees."

We will not stop to recount the fair promises of Dennis, or the fresh budding hopes of Aileen. They were both founded in air, and passed away like the fleecy clouds. He was off to California, as Aileen had predicted, within three months of his arrival at New York, and she, with the slightest of hope in his return, but with a heart brimming full of love and vain regrets for his persistent waywardness, came with her uncle to live in New Ireland.

For three long years she waited for him, and then she married Mike Phelan, who had fol-

lowed her to America. Mike was a kind husband, and a steady, industrious man compared with a majority of his countrymen, and Aileen was, as she expressed it, "quite comfortable like" while he lived. He died in the second year of their marriage, before their only child, golden-haired May, was old enough to lisp his name or to understand her loss. After his death Aileen opened what she called a "respectable liquor shop," and as there were few Irishmen hard-hearted enough to refuse to get drunk for the benefit of the widow and orphan, Aileen prospered finely till the war of the Rebellion broke out, and so raised the price of ardent spirits as to destroy the profits of the business. Nothing daunted, she at once sought work as a day servant in American families, and soon established an enviable reputation both for neatness and quickness of execution.

Aileen is a devout Romanist—more intelligent than the majority of her fellow-worshipers, for she can read and is fond of her book, but as staunch a Catholic as the most ignorant and bigoted.

"How can you pray to the Virgin?" I asked her one morning when she had been showing

me her pretty bedroom with its white curtains. It looked very neat and inviting; but I was attracted by a small ivory crucifix in a frame on the table, and a rosary hanging above it. A picture of the Virgin and her babe was tacked to the wall behind the cross, and, altogether, Aileen's bedroom was a cozy little shrine that reflected rather strongly upon our more careless Protestant worship, if only the outward show were considered.

"Arrah! we niver does that," she replied to my questioning. "It's a hiritic lie ye have heard shure. We pray to God himself, and it's the holy Maria as takes charge o' the prayer, shure; it's betther off in her pure hands than in our wicked ones."

"But you confess your sins to the priest, Aileen."

"There it cooms again. Whatever good can come o' such lyin'? Didn't God himself give us the pastors and teachers? An how can they lead us if we shut up our hearts from their sight? It's confessin' to God all the same. O, thin," said Aileen earnestly, "ye've surely more sinse than to belave that the praste is our God."

"Not exactly; but his will is your law, and his word is God's word to the most of you."

"Wherehever did yees get the quare notions? Ye should be a Catholic and judge for yerself. Ye'd like it, shure; and ye deserve a religion wi' some'at to it. Ye'd be a saint, belike, wi' yer fine warm heart and feelin' for the poor."

"Thank you for your good opinion. Do you understand the service in your Church, Aileen?"

"As much as I nade of it, ma'am."

"And you really find comfort in your religion?" I asked incredulously, struck for the hundredth time by Aileen's cheerful contentment.

"Coomfort, ma'am? An what would I do without it? It's a rare coward I am, and no disputing it; but when I kneel down at night wi' lile May, and go from ind to ind o' the rosary yon, we can crape into bed and slape without fear. No harm on earth can coom to us then. And so I just leave the door and windows open for the air."

I questioned no further. How much of real trust in God and faith in Christ may be hidden by the outside trappings of Romanism I cannot say, but I cannot find it in my heart to disturb

Aileen's confidence in the heavenly watch-care. I think the devout Catholic will stand a better chance in God's great day than multitudes of careless Protestants. Look at her. Day after day she works steadily with her hands to secure an honest living. Her little purse almost opens of itself to relieve the needy. Her cheerful face and obliging manners are a perpetual lesson of contentment and kindness. She believes her religion to be true, and she is never ashamed of it. She carries it with her every-where. It would be, indeed, a terrible storm which would keep her from her place in the public Sunday worship. According to her knowledge she is consistent. Alas, for the contrast with our lazy Protestantism!

Put her side by side with the fashionable female leaders in your Church. It does not matter to what sect you belong: you are so unfortunate as to number among your reliable "pillars" those who are also the props of worldly fashion, and you have them in your mental eye at this moment. Aileen has no taste for the "gold and pearls, and costly array" which, like a glittering sign-board, proclaim their hollow hypocrisy. The pride of

position which inflates those poor perishing worms of the dust, which asserts itself, even in God's house, by the rustle of silk and the sheen of diamonds, has never entered her thoughts. The coolness with which they ignore Christian duty, and their evident contempt for those who painfully bear the cross of Christ, would be incomprehensible to her. Indeed, what mind can fathom the hypocrisy which, serving only self and Mammon, puts on the holy mantle of Christian profession and brings its unsanctified offerings to the very altar of the Highest!

Good, honest-hearted Aileen! Her clear voice is at this moment trilling a cheerful Irish ditty in our next neighbor's kitchen. The cross children have gathered around her wash-tub to listen, and the pale, tired mother smiles to see the demon of ill-humor so easily exorcised.

HINGHAM.

Our "lake region" presents a singularly wild and unfinished appearance. It looks as if it had been rained down upon the earth. Not in a regular, orthodox, graduated storm, but in

a helter-skelter summer shower—a shower of great drops and little drops, of tornadoes, and whirlwinds, and hard-knocking hailstones. There is no order, no method about it.

A man wants a house, and straightway goes out to choose the site thereof. The streets may run any way they please—all ways, if they like—for he does not take them into consideration. When the house is built it will be time enough to make a street to it.

The incongruity of a little cottage perched upon a hill-top does not hinder his securing a fine prospect, neither does it tempt him to build a large house with as many mortgages as piazzas. Very likely it fronts in a different direction from any other house in the place, or it may, without meaning offense, have brought its outhouses almost into the front parlor windows of a neighbor.

The great black forges and factories which, from constitutional necessity, sit down in the cool laps of crystal cascades, make a prominent feature in the prospect. The fate which has thus thrust them in among the dark leafage of the primeval forest-trees along the river banks gives them a picturesque aspect in spite of the

long, red tongues of flame that gleam from the furnace chimneys, and, on stormy nights, throw a lurid light all over the village.

Our village is mostly used in summer for a lodging-place. The inhabitants scatter off like bees during the day, some to the neighboring city, some to the splendid sea-beach at Hull, and others, like eccentric comets, shooting out every day into entirely new orbits. Like most sensible people, we will eschew the cities and the outside sweep of the comets, and spend the afternoon's leisure in a drive to the beach.

We have the easiest of carriages, and a horse which has one good trait and one not so good; he is quick to go and quick to stop. After the latter trait has thrown us from our seats and nearly dislocated our necks a few times, we cease to believe in sudden stoppages and devote ourselves to developing the other characteristic.

We pass through the fine old town of Hingham, and ride slowly so as to observe the elegant houses and pleasantly-shaded streets. There is an exclusive, aristocratic air about the whole place, and the trim finish of every thing suggests a comparison with our scrambling "lake

region." There are many objects of interest in the place, and the experienced tourist in distant lands might spend a pleasant week here, and find in its living beauty and its perpetual reminders of the good old Pilgrim days a refreshing alternative from stereotyped curiosities.

There is the old well-preserved church, the oldest in New England, and also in North America, bidding fair to outlast the youngest of its competitors. It is still a favorite temple of worship, and as a memento of the past is worthy the reverence and admiration it receives. The square gray tower amid the great trees, which are doubtless older than itself, involuntarily recalls our ideas of English rural scenery and architecture, and so does the lovely burying-place for the dead, which stretches over the hill slopes and valleys in the rear of the church. The inside of the church is, on a larger scale, very like the Puritan churches which most New Englanders in middle life can yet remember, but which are nearly all removed to make way for modern sanctuaries. This old church, standing so vigorously upon its ancient ground, seems to have treasured up our whole childhood for us. There are myriads of precious associations

nestled snugly under those bare huge rafters. That perilous sounding-board is full of condensed childish awe and wonder. We go up and down the intricate alleys and sit down to think in the square pews whose latticed railing makes a snug inclosure higher than our heads. The high galleries and lofty pulpit are not so far from us as they were thirty years ago; but the old enchantment of distance is not all lost to our older vision. We think of the baby forms that used to be softly lifted to those corner seats where they couldn't see the minister, and we shut our eyes to watch the youthful growth, then the maturity of human life, then the half-unconscious travel down the slope of time to the rest of the quiet graves so near us. It doesn't require much fancy to catch

" Rustling along the sounding aisles
The measured tread of ages past."

But we must leave the old church. Further on our way we come to a famous elm-tree, a giant among its fellows, and we stop the carriage to examine it. It was transplanted from England in 1729. It seems to have taken kindly to the new soil and climate, and to have made up its mind at the outset to outdo every

thing American, and it has attained a growth which its Yankee brethren have striven in vain to emulate. It is not so graceful as the native elm, but it has a rugged, haughty, defiant look, a pompous, exclusive manner, which is very characteristic. It is a grand-looking tree, and we are willing to do it homage.

We are consoled for our voluntary humility directly, for we come out all at once to an unbroken view of the ocean. We have reached the beach and we are ourselves again. There is nothing in England nor anywhere else to beat this.

The ocean is an old friend. It has not changed, like every thing else that interested us in childhood. Its voice has the same heavy, murmurous undertone. The green waves, miles and miles in length, their white crests gleaming in long, foamy lines, come hurrying up and break along the beach just as they have done for thousands of years. The sea has never been still. It tires us to think of its ages of unrest. There has been a gale, and there are white caps all over the distant harbor. At low tide a white, hard beach stretches along for five miles, making a ground for trotting horses. Ten car-

riages abreast is the usual number. But we do not care for horse-racing.

In the distance is Minot's Ledge, not yet ready to succumb again to old Neptune, who still carries on his vigorous siege. The break-neck sort of recklessness with which the great waves gather their strength and dash themselves into nonentity upon the rocky base of the beacon almost frightens us. Their baffled power and ferocious persistence assume a certain intelligence in our eyes, and human skill, for the time, seems a frail reed to trust to. There are several ships and smaller craft apparently near the ledge, and just coming round by the Boston light is a brig. They had better be shy of coming this way.

Alas, how many times has this beautiful beach been strewn with the spoils of the angry deep! There is a wreck here now. It lies on the shore, an unsightly skeleton, all its grace and beauty gone forever. It has not the sad interest of many others, for the crew were saved.

We do not tire of the sublime view, but we notice after a time that the day is not waiting for us, and that we must, however reluctantly, turn our faces homeward.

The evening boat for Boston is just leaving the Hingham wharf as we come back to the stately old town. We stop to watch its easy march across the waters, and then, not yet tired of our antiquarian researches, we drive briskly away to look at an old bridge. It has a particular interest for us because it has always been a toll-bridge and is to be free to-morrow. We expect it will somehow put on a different look now, a sort of independent bearing. But it don't. It has the same old, stolid aspect. It is impossible to ennoble many things besides human nature; and this bridge, which has been discussed and quarreled over enough to secure an enviable notoriety, is the same stupid, wooden concern that it ever was; its manifest destiny, to be trodden under foot of men.

But it isn't free yet, and an old man comes slowly out to take the usual toll. How natural he looks! He is one of the landmarks of the age. He came out just so twenty-five years ago, and we asked him then, "How much?"

"Ten cents."

Now we prolong the dialogue. "How long have you kept this bridge?"

"Forty-six years."

"And now it's going to be a free bridge?"

"Yes."

"You will be lost without it. You will wake up whenever a carriage rolls over it at night. You will come out for the toll before you think."

"Well, I can't say about that. The bridge is to be free, at any rate; and there's going to be a great celebration or something on account of it. Processions, and music, and a dinner, I believe."

"Ah, I am sorry for it. It just breaks off another link from the old times. I'd rather pay the ten cents, just as my grandfather did."

The old bridge-keeper begins to yawn. He has got up so often at night that he has lost all the sentiment out of his soul, and, just as likely as not, is thinking that it will not be disagreeable to hug his warm pillow on a winter's night instead of hurrying up to open the gate. So we leave him, and, rumbling over the old bridge, get up a poetic rapture over a shady, green hill-slope and meadow, with demure sheep and tricky, frolicsome lambs browsing upon the juicy herbage. The sunset's crimson light gives a rich coloring to every shrub and tree, and duplicates itself in the shining pool of water at

the foot of the hill. And this, with a score of companion pictures, occupies us till we come back with a hungry interest in tea, and bread, and butter, to our own "lake region," with its odds and ends, its strange contrasts and quaint independence of bearing.

THE INDIAN HOUSE-ROCK AND AN IRISH WAKE.

There is a rough old rock on the southern border of the lake which has its historic interest. It is called the Indian House-Rock. In the days of the old Indian wars, in those times when King Philip, and Uncas, and Anawan were famous and living celebrities, this was a pleasant rendezvous for the red man. There were then no settlements near to destroy the wild beauty of God's own handiwork, and to this day the immediate vicinity of the House-Rock is unchanged.

It was one of my favorite resorts in youth. What wonderful dreams I used to have as I sat by the water-side! Idealized after my fashion, there was nothing but poetry and freedom in wild, savage life. At the east, where the slanting sunset beams now fall across wide openings, there was then a pathless wood. Every green

nook was well peopled with strange fancies, none of them probably so strange as the actual insect and animal life which filled them, but more suited to my ideas of what such a solitude ought to be. They come back to my memory like realities now. There was much that must have been *rather* real then.

The old rock itself, with its mysterious cave and long, dark entrance, its summit still blackened by the fires used in the preparation of food, its sides almost hidden with its soft beryl-line curtain of mosses and ferns, with the olden sunshine nestling among the feathery tufts of drapery, is still unaltered, and stands a present witness that there was some foundation to my aerial superstructures.

There have never been such cloudless days in mature life as those half-dreamy young hours, in which, without a thought of study or toil, botanical wisdom came of its own accord to us, and we began our life-long acquaintance with the unspoiled part of God's creation. No one interfered with our notions, and we built up our own theories. The oven-bird repeated his "chee, chee," close by our side, and the vireo fairly boiled over with melody as it swung on

the maple by its lace-covered, purse-shaped nest. The white and black woodpecker tapped away on the dead pine-tree as fearlessly as if we had been a silent partner in the same firm, and the partridge went into its little hollow under a bush or a clump of furze, and laid its egg without a pretense of secresy. Such pretty cream-colored eggs!

We attended the bird matinees for more than one season, and would not have backed down from our opinion as to the comparative merits of the robin, blue-bird, bobolink, and thrush to have accommodated Mozart himself.

I remember just where I found a ground-sparrow's nest thirty years ago, and how startled I was at first by the curious whirr of the partridge from out the bush growth of the thicket. Ah, hide away for a little time, dear old memories!

There was a wake last evening in New Ireland. Yesterday morning a strong man was lifting some heavy weight and burst a blood-vessel. He died in an hour from the hemorrhage.

For some reason death does not bring such a gloom into an Irish community as into our colder-blooded households. It seems an occa-

sion of rejoicing rather than sorrow, and the actual bereavement does not appear to be felt till the dead friend is buried out of their sight. We sent a messenger to ask if, without being intrusive, we might come to the wake.

"Shure, thin, coom an welcome," was the cordial reply. "It's as fine-looking a corpse as you'll find anywhere."

That was true. He lay upon a white bed as if in an easy slumber. His black full beard contrasted well with the pale face, which had not been wasted by disease. His shirt bosom and collar were of snowy whiteness, and he wore a long, brown Thibet robe, which covered his feet and was trimmed around the border and up the front with rosettes of ribbon.

There were twelve wax candles burning on a table at his feet, and as many at the head of the bed. By the side of the bed was a table, which was furnished with a good supply of the indispensable liquors, and with plates containing cigars and also snuff.

The room was nearly full of people, all apparently in the best of spirits, except when the season for wailing alternated with the time for refreshments. It is impossible to give an idea

of this wailing to one who has never heard it. Its unutterable woe goes to the very heart. Its unintelligible words add to the effect, and the strange, wild sounds thrill in the ear for days.

The still presence and rigid aspect of the corpse does not inspire either awe or fear. On this occasion the friends and acquaintances of the deceased crowded up to the bedside as familiarly as when those closed eyes and cold lips smiled an answering greeting and shared in the revelry.

"An how do ye like it, ma'am?" asked a man who seemed to have charge of the festivities and to be rather proud of his position.

"I don't know what to think yet. We are not used to seeing so little reverence on so solemn an occasion."

"Ay, thin, it's some'at besides riverence that is naded. We'd be loth to lave the poor fellow to himself and he but jist dead aither. We never shut one off in the dark like you Americans do. Arrah, the cowl'd-hearted crathurs ye are! It's a lone road he's to thravel, puir body, and it's only a kindness to kape within call."

The candles are kept burning till the body is

removed for burial, and are often carried to the door of the hearse before being extinguished.

There is little need of describing an Irish funeral. Every body has watched the seemingly endless train of carriages, of every conceivable kind, each crowded beyond all reckoning of its occupants.

The procession starts at first with tolerable regularity, but is soon brought to a pause in various parts of the line by objectless stoppages, or is thrown into confusion by the interlocking of wheels in the constant attempts to pass each other, or by the sudden whim for walking a few rods which seizes at odd times upon every man and boy in the company.

An Irishman looks forward to his own funeral as a sort of gala-day got up to honor him. The knowledge that an imposing display will be made nearly reconciles him to the after seclusion of the burying-place. Shall I ever forget how my well-meant condolence was received by a bereaved widow on her return from her husband's funeral.

"Faith, ma'am, it were an illigant time. There were a plenty o' pipes and fine liquors; and did ye see the funeral itself? Thirty

grand carriages, and no ind to the poorer sort. It were fit for a king, and it seemed such a pity that poor Jem could no' see it himself. It will be mony a dee before it will be bate in these parts, let alone the big sum to be paid for it all. Ochone, Jemmy, avick, an' who'll do the like for meself whin the time comes? But it were a fine sight, indade," she added, brightening up, "and a funeral worth the having."

There is a curious scene enacted on the arrival of the straggling funeral cortege at the consecrated burial-place. The occupants of the various vehicles scatter in all directions among the graves, and, throwing themselves upon the mounds which cover their lost friends, break out into a general wail for the dead which exhausts the whole gamut of agony.

Then the inevitable bottle makes its appearance, and is circulated freely till the excitable Irish brain loses its balance entirely, and the "illigant funeral" results in a row, not to be forgotten till broken noses are healed and broken carriages and injured horses are paid for. But an Irish quarrel or fight, no matter how curious, never outlives the occasion, and by some unseen providential guardianship is kept from serious

results, broken heads being accounted trivial matters in New Ireland.

OLD TIMES.

I hope I am not a croaker. I say not in my heart that the former days were better than these, but as my eye runs from range to range of the pretty white cottages, and notes the more imposing residences and public buildings before me—all of which are younger than myself—I confess that I should like to recall for a single day the old scenes as they appeared to my youth. Memory treasures them and reproduces them at pleasure; but I cannot thus exhibit them to others, and a pleasure unshared is but half enjoyed at the best.

There was a long street which ran through the town from north to south. It was, and is, five miles in length. The numerous streets which branch from it now, and the pretty squares where different roads meet, had never been thought of then. I can fancy the indignation of our stalwart farmers had a proposition been made to them for streets across their meadows, and for house-sites among the most exclusive nooks in the broad pasture grounds.

At each end of the long street was a reverend old church, with pews for pews, with high unpainted pulpit and galleries, with the tunnel-shaped inverted echo suspended like grim fate over the preacher's head, with great staring windows without blinds, with side, back, and front entrances, and the bell-rope hanging in the middle of the church.

Both churches were literally running over with doctrines. Half-way between the two was the Haunted Rock, a huge black boulder, which stood apart from all other rocks, a self-appointed guardian of the highway. It was an object of superstitious fear to others besides children, from the fact that a veritable ghost, wrapped in a sheet, according to the prevailing fashion in ghost-land, had been caught on it. Seen on it, would, perhaps, be the proper expression, ghosts not being "catchable."

The old churches have given place to a number of new ones, which, while agreeing in doctrine with the old and with each other, have rounded off the unsightly angles with tasty trimming, interpolating various little crotchets and improvements suited to progressive people. Underneath is the old foundation still; the

rigorous old creed asserts itself as tenaciously as ever; but it is only at rare intervals that it comes forth to the day, when the hammer of some spiritual geologist rouses it. For the rest of the old time, like a tired old bear, it contentedly hibernates.

The Haunted Rock—how we used to hold our breath and hug the opposite wall if caught on the road near it at nightfall!—has been blown to pieces by vulgar gunpowder. It has been put to several different uses, less poetical than its former position as a ghost's pedestal, such as walling fields and underpinning houses. It is to be hoped that a separate ghost will be furnished for every block of it till the perpetrators of the desecration shall be taught a wholesome dread of things unseen. There were curiously colored streaks running through the rock—real ghost tracks—which would have made a fine study for a geologist if the town had owned one. But it irks me to think of a set of unsentimental stone-cutters deliberately drilling holes in the Haunted Rock and blowing it up with gunpowder.

Up and down the long road were scattering dwelling-houses, sometimes two or three in

a sociable group, but oftener a single farm-house rejoicing in its cheerful solitude. Most of these were one-story houses, with an honest contempt for stairways, spreading themselves out upon the ground to any convenient distance. They were seldom painted, and when they were it was not to make them more pleasant to the eye, but to make the clapboards last. So the homelier, substantial colors were chosen, and dark-red or orange-colored houses, with white trimmings, nestled in among the surrounding fruit-trees as contentedly as if there were no other colors in the universe.

The school-house was red, and hither came all aspirants for knowledge, from the tow-headed urchins who breathed inward maledictions upon the inventors of primers and catechisms, to the great boys and girls who came to school in winter and read, and spelled, and ciphered, and recited abbreviations, till they were old enough to be married; the courtship often being done up, to save time, during the half-hour school recesses or the noon intermission.

There was no difficulty in getting an education then. Any body could do it. No one

supposed it impossible to become learned in one's own town, among one's own people. All the modern fuss and worry about educating young America would have been incomprehensible to our sturdy farmers, and any unusual scholarship—unless a boy was to be a minister—was a sign of “a weak spot somewhere.” It was not thought necessary to understand the enginery of the spheres or the compounding of a tornado in order to enable one to mind his own business. Our brains, such as they were, found ample space for development in the low, red school-house.

Not far from the school was an apple-tree, which all the urchins of my time will ever hold in loving remembrance. There was a natural seat in the fork of the tree, where we could sit and leisurely regale ourselves upon the juicy, scarlet-streaked fruit. Somebody owned the tree according to law, but no boy or girl ever believed in the ownership. There seemed to be an instinctive faith that it belonged to the children; and as they were left in undisputed possession of it, the owner probably had the good sense, as well as the good nature, to accommodate himself to what was inevitable.

There was a pear-tree down in the long meadow which drooped heavily in the late autumn beneath its weight of dark, mottled fruit. That is standing yet, gnarled and broken by time, but O what delicious pears it still gives us!

The apple-tree has gone with the old red school-house, and a narrow, stuck-up two-story brown house, with blue blinds and with a hedge all around it, has pompously established itself above the dear old dead roots. It has such an uppish look that it tempts a person to knock it down. It looks like an admiration-point set up in the middle of a tea-tray.

Purple thistles, and wild thyme, and barberies grew peaceably together in a little hollow near the school-house; and vigorous birch saplings, with a sense of the disciplinary virtue of their pliant twigs, obligingly took root by the very door.

I remember running a race with a supposed spirit round and round this hollow, one dusky summer evening, after spending several hours over a forbidden book full of the delicious horrors of ghost literature. In vain I attempted to beat a retreat or to execute a flank move-

ment; and it was only when, half dead with terror, I sank exhausted on the ground, that the spirit assumed the form of a playful black kitten, which, not yet tired of the frolic, sculled up the nearest tree with a "midnight cry."

It is like journeying through a familiar land thus to go back into the past. It does not weary us like a tour among new objects. Besides, we can journey just when we please, and when we stop to rest we are at home. Change of place, travel, is often prescribed for the sorrowful, but it is only the light-hearted who make journeying a pleasure. The heavy heart cannot be left behind, and its grief colors every thing. If there be rest anywhere on earth, it is in the old "home paths."

I pity those who seek for friends outside the tried home growth because other and more elegant associations gratify a fastidious taste. The disposition to aid us in need, to comfort us in sorrow, will crop out from the rough and outwardly hard nature, and the toil-hardened hands of those who fight life's battles are the soonest stretched out to raise the fallen, to succor the unhappy. The true friend who gives us an occasional healthy snub for our own profit is

not the person to listen smilingly while we are slandered. It will require a bold tongue to detract from our merits in his or her presence, and the harsh voice softens to sweet music when, in our extremity, it offers its uncouth consolation.

I don't know what Solomon meant by saying that the eye is never satisfied with seeing. Perhaps he referred to his own eyes, and it was doubtless true of them. There is an old man living in a retired spot just beyond that long belt of pines that serves as a dividing line between our town and the next in order. He has lived all his life in the same house, worked on the same farm, done over and over and over again the same things, and never was twenty miles from home in his life. He is contented with what he has seen, and is quite unwilling to see any thing more.

Once, as a great favor to a friend of the family, he did take a look at our lake—Snoog's Pond—and it so appalled him by its size that without waiting for his escort, he sought at once the security of his home.

"I declare!" said he, "what a sight of water there is in the world!"

He went home satisfied with sight-seeing. He sits by the wide fireside when his work is done, and ponders his own perfections. He has found out that a man is wonderfully made, though he is not sure about a woman; and his wife, listening to his infidel opinions on the subject, consoles herself by remembering that the Bible says "all *men* are liars," and that "it repented God that he made *man*."

"I don't wonder at it," remarked the good woman.

The very air of the house has a self-satisfied, conceited feeling about it, and you have a curious feeling that the quaint old furniture is just going to crow.

There are souls which seem to us the most wonderful of all achievements in the infinitesimal line—perfect *bijous*! What would become of them if God did not charge himself with the care of little things."

It is pleasant to know that he is just as truly active in the prolongation of insect life as in the continuation of human existence, and that the same skill which winds up the machinery of a giant mind keeps the tiny intellect ticking.

Coming back from the past, I turn with fresh interest to the present, and note its improvements. There are many pretending places, made popular by ephemeral fashion, that do not begin to possess the natural attractions of our "lake region." I think no tourist ever beheld a more charming view than that now before me. The hills wear such lovely shades of green, and contrast so exquisitely with the dark pyramidal firs which diversify their slopes, and there is a pleasant, exhilarating light upon the ocean.

Fort Warren, Castle Island, and the Island Hospital are all distinctly defined in the clear air, and seem to be our near neighbors. With a glass of moderate power we bring them near enough for a morning's call. Hush! it is the sea preaching its perpetual sermon. Its moral is the restlessness of mankind. Its changelessness or duration is a strong contrast to our short life and certain decay. It speaks to us of the infinite, of eternity. As we listen we feel the hollowness of worldly pursuits and fashions, and the mockery of earthly riches.

Such thoughts, too crude to be brought into tangible form, used to fill my childish mind

when, with my lap full of white shore pebbles and colored shells, I used to listen to the surf or strive to interpret the mysterious whispering language of the shells. It required but little imaginative power to idealize it all into spirit utterances.

"Ah, azure sea, the ancient sea,
Blue sea, forever young!"

"IRELAND FOREVER."

Hark! It is a strange clangor, unlike any other sound in the known world. We turn naturally, on hearing it, toward New Ireland for an explanation. At first there is no visible cause for the uproar, but we understand it all directly.

Imprimis. There are two goats racing along the south border of the lake, kicking up their heels and shaking their horns in defiance of the whole solar system. Close behind run two Irish women, dressed with a wholesome disregard of fashion as to the length and breadth of their drapery. Shoeless, bonnetless, and sleeveless, they are both intent upon one object, which is to capture the foremost goat.

A medley of ragged women and children are slowly following, and by degrees all of Ireland

that is at home turns out to witness the sport. It seems to be any thing but sport to the actors in the little comedy. No sooner does one fortunate woman seize the goat by the horns, or by the rope that depends from his neck, than the other manages to free the animal by tearing the hair of the captor, and scratching or beating her till she is glad to relinquish her prize and defend herself.

A babel of comment, both friendly and otherwise, mingles with the loud and angry voices of the disputants, and there are dogs barking, and an occasional expression of sentiment from a little coterie of law-and-order goats, who are watching the result from a convenient hill-top.

From the confusion, I gather that the two women have been swapping goats, and that one had repented of her bargain, while the other obstinately adheres to it. Both claim the foremost goat and ignore the other, who, for the time, belongs to nobody, but, like the apocryphal slave in Southern literature, is principled against freedom, and shows his desire to be appropriated by sticking to the company.

Differences of opinion now begin to circulate freely among the spectators, and harsh words

and angry gestures betray the birth of a legion of separate squabbles, which directly begin to take on a special prominence of their own. In an incredibly short space of time the whole population are engaged in a regular "shindy," and one or two women, with dark, scowling faces, and with stifling thick shawls thrown over their heads, are seen stealing rapidly down the river road toward the house of the constable.

It is impossible to keep this proceeding secret, and by the time the constable arrives with his men and handcuffs every body has shaken hands and become boisterously good-humored, the stray women and goats have been reclaimed from the hills, and a satisfactory compromise effected over a mug of hot toddy. Indeed, the whole community are ready to do the honors of Ireland to the officers, who have so obligingly left all their own interests to look after theirs.

It is easy to believe with Cervantes that "every man is as God made him, and oftentimes a great deal worse."

"An shure I'd walk me five miles any time to see a good fight."

So spoke our kitchen divinity, Bridget Katrine, and I have no doubt that she told the honest truth. There seems to be some indefinable enjoyment in fighting, and no one disputes the Irishman's ability to get it out. No other people will fight of their own accord during the dog-days. They do not have to be drafted into the service—that is, in the home department—but they are always ready at a moment's notice.

This was the laziest of summer mornings. It broke over the hills with a promise of scorching heat and thunder episodes. It required unusual energy to dress, and breakfasting was not attempted. The bare effort to live seemed all that human nature was capable of. Such a languid, dead morning! Such a hopeless stagnation of soul and body! What power can reanimate us?

Hark! a wild, ringing scream from the "lake region!" Dear Ireland forever! Our hopes revive at once. We know there is life somewhere. Like John's war-horse, we snuff the battle from afar, and it is a comfort to know that our inert lethargy is not the rule.

There have been five rows and two thunder-

showers since morning. The air never was sweeter.

"Teach us gently, father Time,
As we glide adown the stream."

As I muse upon the honest Irish nature, its impulsive warmth and quickness to take offense, I involuntarily repeat these lines of Barry Cornwall. For, joined to all this warmth, is an element of youth and freshness, a sort of verdancy, which contrasts refreshingly with the studied decorum and heartless propriety of artificial life.

The Irish songs are nearly as inspiring as their fights. They do not sadden and subdue your spirits like the plaintive Scotch airs; they are dashing, bouncing, rollicking melodies, with big, hearty choruses, albeit the humor is often too coarse for refined ears.

I cannot help respecting the women of New Ireland whether they are drunk or sober. They are the soul of enterprise. All the gardens are planted by them, and they put to shame the tilling of our masculines. They have early vegetables about the time that our tardy seeds push their two first leaves above the surface of the ground. They thus get the start of the

various bugs, which are all full grown and have attained the sharpest-set appetites by the time our tender shoots are juicy enough to be palatable.

They do not often plow the soil, but go over it laboriously with a spade. The fatigue is not thought of. No one knows better than an Irish woman how to

"Help gar the boatie row
And lichten a' the care."

What she lacks in grace she makes up in robust vigor, which is by far the most useful in her sphere. Our sense of the beautiful may revolt, but our common sense is attracted. If we take her as she is, with her rough surroundings and enforced ignorance, with her natural affinity for dirt, and pigs, and unnumbered babies, we shall find much to respect in the zealous effort and muscular activity which pushes on her little vessel and keeps it abreast of its fellows.

She does not seem to expect much of her husband, and it would be a blessing if many American wives could adopt her philosophical theory. He is a subordinate character in her establishment. If he behaves well, and brings

home a part of his earnings, instead of spending it all for liquor, she is mindful of the circumstance, and considers it rather a help to her than otherwise; but she is able to push her boat along without his aid and with his dead weight in it. She is perfectly independent; there are none more so.

Occasionally we find touches of refinement among these women. A desire for knowledge and an attempt at neatness will sometimes crop out from the hard soil and by persistent growth become beautiful. They remind one of the blue campanula growing upon the rocky steep.

Aileen is one of these. No palace boudoir was ever cleaner than her little kitchen. A spray of sweet-brier hangs across the window, and in the strip of rich loam by the door are marigolds, hollyhocks, pinks, and forget-me-nots. I have seen many a beautiful garden, rich with carnations, camelias, purple wall-flowers, pansies, and the rarest of roses; but the humbler flowers of Aileen have each their lessons, and no one can tell the value of their silent sermons in the heart of New Ireland.

Her child, the golden-haired May, is herself

a flower—an unpretending lily from the wild-wood. I often stop to rest in Aileen's room when fatigued with walking.

"I wonder that you have never married again," I said to her one morning.

She was sitting by a frame, quilting a silk cradle covering for a rich lady.

"O, thin, I should be blate to do that," she answered. "It would be good-bye foriver to pace an enjoyment. It would be rags for me-self an li'le May, an the bit cabin would be as dirty as yon."

She pointed contemptuously into the open door of the opposite hut, where a big, lazy man lay on the floor, smoking contentedly, and a room full of dirty babies were tumbling over each other.

"O no, Aileen," I said, "it could not be so bad as that. You would keep any place tidy where you are."

"It would not pay, ma'am. I'm me own wom-an now. I goes out when I plaze, an coom in the same. It's many a chance I get," said Aileen, with a touch of pardonable vanity, "but I'll no' marry again. I'm ower keen for that."

"But what if some wonderful turn of good

fortune should send your old lover, Dennis Maylan, back to you? What then, Aileen?"

"O, thin, that is past hopin' for. Belike he's married long ago, barrin' he's not dead, which were as bad to think of."

"But if he should come back, and should be rich too?" I persisted.

"He'd not look at me thin, shure."

"You think he might not forgive you for not waiting for him."

"Arrah, no, indade. He's no fool. Whath-ever could he expect? No, ma'am, he's not that onrasonable, not he. But it's oulder I've grown, an sthouter as well, an the roses have gone from me cheeks."

"I think you could charm him yet, Aileen."

"Indade, an I could. Shure no one but me knows the way to his heart. But I'd scorn to trap him wi' widowy devices. Ochone, Dennis, avick, where have ye got to, mavourneen?" exclaimed Aileen, pushing back the frame as she spoke, and giving way to a passionate burst of tears. I was truly sorry for having awakened such emotions, and I expressed my sorrow for my apparent heartlessness.

"Niver mind it, ma'am. Niver you care.

It's nothing new. It cooms over me often. Even when Mike was living I could not be quite free from it. He was such a handsome laddie, was Dennis, an—an, he loved me so much. There, it's all gone noo," said Aileen, smiling brightly through her tears; "an will ye plaze look at this pattern?"

It was a vine, and was to be quilted with crimson and black upon the blue ground of the silk.

"Is it not a beauty?"

"Yes; too beautiful for the use it will be put to. It wont take long to spoil it."

"She'll be wanting anither thin. The spoil-in' will bring grist to my mill, so I'll not wape for its loss. It's leddies like her as makes work for poor pable."

I thanked Aileen for the new view of fine ladyism which dignified it as a necessary evil. "You are right, Aileen. I see it now. The extravagance of the few puts honest bread into the mouths of the many."

"An did yees niver mind that before?" asked Aileen, her eyes opening very wide in wonder at my obtuseness. "Whatever *did* ye suppose the fine, useless pable were kept alive for?"

"I don't think I ever reasoned about it at all."

"But ye know that sorra a bit o' good cooms o' their living, barrin' the business they give us?"

"Yes, Aileen, I knew that. But I did not know they were created for that purpose."

"Shure they were. An the finer they dress, an the more illigant they live, the more work they make. They're naded ivery-where, wi' their pride an quare notions, an their flitting from one fancy to another. Don't you see?"

"Yes. Thank you for explaining what has often puzzled me. I have often heard that God made nothing in vain, and I am glad to know the use of fashionable people. What do you do for neighbors, Aileen?"

"Neighbors, is it? They're ower plenty on all sides. I'd like a lone wilderness for a change; but I maun live near me worruk."

"But you seem to have no intimate friends; none like yourself, I mean."

"Then you've never seen Kate Carrol an Margaret Lillendall?"

"No. Where do they live?"

"Just over the wather. Do ye see that big

rock, all covered with frostleaves and ivy, that pushes itself out over the pond?"

"Yes; I see the rock."

"Look just above where the goats are feeding. There's a boat with a flag on it on the shore near by. Do you mind?"

"Yes; I see the boat and the goats."

"It's but a step down the path beyond. I row myself and little May across often of an evening when my work is done. They live in a cottage together. It's worth going to see of itself, with its trees and its flowers. It rests me to go there. And there is my friends, ma'am—friends to be proud of, and to love for ever and ever."

There is something touching in the tried friendship of earnest women wherever it may show itself. True, unselfish friendships exist sometimes between men and women, but not often, because the more egotistical masculine nature has to be toned down to a certain point before it can reciprocate the purity and self-forgetfulness of real womanhood. And so it seldom happens that the sexes meet on a moral level. Ah, if men could but believe in the honest friendship, and even genuine affection, that

looks not beyond a sisterly expression of interest! Their strange infidelity shuts off from them the enjoyment of one of the purest of life's pleasures.

DARK DAYS.

Most people know what is meant by dark days. Not cloudy days, when the physical sun is hidden from our sight, but days of doubt and gloom, when every thing is out of its place and every body looks miserable. Perhaps this view of things cannot be helped; the misanthropy may be involuntary, or it may be induced by unhappy circumstances which we cannot control or by bodily indisposition.

We may not be able to explain our condition; indeed, we seldom try to do that; but we either sit down sullenly to endure our trouble, or else go steadily to work to make others as wretched as we are ourselves.

I had endured in silence, perhaps sullenly, a week of dark days. There was not a bright spot in all the world, scarcely in heaven. The nights—long, sleepless, weary nights—were more gloomy than the days. Ah, I said, it is a sad thing to live just for one's self, to have no

chosen one to pray for, to be solitary in the midst of a crowd; and this dark, hopeless destiny has Death wrought for me.

A dream roused me. The best beloved came to me in my sleep and unfolded a glimpse of the limitless future. All life's darkness melted away in the sublime presence of God's hereafter. It may be that our dreams are the *real* part of our lives, the fragments of our spiritual existence, the only part which is able to reach out and take hold of eternity.

In the morning I read of that kind-hearted, solitary woman, the mother Denis of Emile Louvestre. "Left by herself in the battle of life, she makes good her humble place in it by working, singing, helping others, and leaving the rest to God." I understood that to make others happy gives one heart to live.

Outside my window the birds were singing, and the air was soft with the breath of honeysuckles and musk-roses. A little lame girl went by, hopping along on one foot with the aid of crutches. She looked up and nodded her head, and smiled brightly as she caught a paper of bonbons which were thrown to her from a window below me. She is hopelessly deformed, and is

very seldom able to venture on the street. How her cheerfulness rebuked me! At the bottom of the valley, in that long green house with gables, a pale, slender woman toils for the maintenance of five children. She is not a widow, but bears a heavier sorrow. She is a deserted wife. Her little Aelise is dying slowly of consumption, and yesterday her oldest boy was brought home with a broken leg. The baby is blind. Not a murmur crosses her lips. Patiently, almost cheerfully, she bows her head to the baptism of sorrow. I cannot choose but be ashamed of my gloom and sadness, but they will not be shaken off.

The post brings me a letter. It has its strong words of sympathy and encouragement, its gentle reproof for sinful despondency. It counsels work—steady, absorbing work—work for the Master, who "will not leave us comfortless."

Then I go out and listen to a sad, sad story. O, what a pity that it should be true! Two years ago there was not a happier family in all the country than Edgar Green's. His wife was a most amiable and intelligent woman, and their only son was a fine, energetic youth of twenty.

Mrs. Green's father, to whom she was strongly attached, lived with them.

— When Arthur enlisted for a soldier, it was hard for the parents to submit and give him up; but they were patriots, and the country needed him, and so he went not forth without a blessing.

Four months ago the old father sickened and died. The husband and wife bore this sorrow *together*.

Three weeks ago the husband was walking slowly down the street when he met a baby-girl, the daughter of a friend, who was being drawn in a little chaise by her nurse. Stooping to kiss the child, he suddenly fell forward in a fit and was taken up dead. All night long the stricken wife lay in a deathlike swoon, only reviving at intervals sufficiently to understand what had happened, but utterly unable to take home to herself the fatal truth. Then came a wild, intense longing to behold her son.

"He is all I have," she said over and over again; "surely he *must* come home."

To-day, in the list of the casualties of war, we read, "Arthur L. Green, killed."

Ah, who will tell the mother?

I go back to my room full of remorseful penitence for my unthankful misanthropy, which, however, still clings to me.

It is one of the most beautiful mornings of summer. The grass in the meadows is rippled into sunny waves of green by the bold wind, the cattle are deep in the mysteries of clover rations, and changing shadows dance in and out of the little hollows where blue, truant violets yet linger. Far away, over the hills, a fleecy haze hides the line of the horizon and curtains the sea.

The people are crowding to the house of God. A soldier has been brought home dead to his mother, and the funeral services are to be held to-day. Almost every week some of our best and dearest are reported among the killed in battle. In nearly every house there is mourning. In the aristocratic mansion and in the low cottage there are breaking hearts which, for the time, refuse to be comforted.

The days of the mourner are long, long and sad; but God is merciful, the night is waiting, peace and rest are waiting, love and joy and the fruition of hope are waiting just ahead.

This little life is passing swiftly; the eternal

day is already dawning upon the mountains. As we go forward toward it we cannot quite help the tugging at the heart-strings, the yearning of the spirit for the loved and lost. The whole world is a blank, and the burden of the old song will come at times :

"I'm aweary, aweary.
I would that I were dead."

Only at times, because the sublime truths of God remain, and we have faith in the glorious future. And so we accept the brief probation of earthly life, and thank God for the discipline which purifies and ennobles.

Not that we ever forget the dead. They have the same hold on our affections as when they are living in our midst. True love cannot die. Its origin is divine, its strength immortal. It stretches into eternity, where alone it can find its full development. Its essence is spiritual, and nothing earthly can counterfeit it.

Yet God pity the poor mother who bends to-day over the open grave of her son! In the gathering crowd there are many mournful eyes that have no more power to brighten with joy, that well over with kind sympathy, that will share if they cannot lighten the burden of sorrow.

A narrow river runs like a thread of silver across the meadows, and winds about the hills till it reaches the sea. On its banks, hedged by willows, is the village cemetery. There was never a lovelier place set apart for the dead. It is a succession of gentle hill-slopes and quiet dells, and the very air seems to breathe repose. Those I have loved are resting there, awaiting a joyful resurrection. God has them in his keeping.

Along the valleys and up the hills the south wind brings the dirge for the dead. Its music swells up from the hearts as well as the voices of the crowd, for the young soldier belonged to us all.

Alas, how often do those sad notes fall upon our ears! Three times within a fortnight have we paid the last tribute of respect to dear ones who have died for their country. We will keep their memories green, and our regrets and our reverence for their heroism shall be their epitaph.

Dark days cannot be brightened, the heavy heart cannot be eased by thus contemplating the sorrows of others. The shadows deepen rather than disappear, and it is but a selfish

sort of consolation to feel that others are worse off than ourselves. It is scarcely a Christian's kind of gratitude to thank God that we are not as other men are. A great part of the melancholy in the world is sinful despondency. We hold the remedy in our own hands, but are too lazy to apply it. We sit down drearily in a corner, and brood over our trials, and hug closely the demons that torment us, till nothing but a herculean effort can shake off the Atlantean load of depression. And all the time, just over the way, or down the street, are missions of mercy awaiting Christian effort, with the certainty that our little acts of kindness will react upon our own hearts and restore the vanished sunlight.

Get out into God's sunshine, pale, pining misanthrope! Put *your* shoulder to the burden beneath which your neighbor is sinking. Do not fear to lift heartily while God strengthens you. It is much easier to do great things than little ones; but it is the quiet, unpretending ministry which is sweetest to the helped and to the helper. Our pride desires rather to

"Serve God *much*,
Than to please him *perfectly*."

MUSIC OF OUR "LAKE REGION."

No one ever disputes that our town's people are musical people, or that music is the alpha and omega of all our enterprises. The curious stranger cannot get rid of the impression that in some remote period of the good old colony times the place was settled by a company of cornets, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, dulcimers, and all kinds of music.

Every child born here has a talent for music born in him; it is inherent, like depravity. All other questions, even the war interests, and the election of the government officers, are obliged to succumb and be as nothing in the presence of this potent monopolizer. We could get along without being governed, without paying taxes to restrict our own comforts, without having the laws changed at our expense every congressional term, but we could not do without our arias, quartettes, and choruses, or the wondrous mechanism of our instrumental performances.

In our churches it has been understood, from time immemorial, that all the other parts of the Sunday service are subordinate to the orchestral display, and no quarrel in any of our

religious societies, no matter how serious, is considered legitimate unless it originates in the choir. Indeed, the singing gallery may fitly be compared to a mammoth brewery, inasmuch as a generous provision of infinitesimal huffs, miffs, and squabbles are there fermented and bottled up for preservation, and a good assortment thereof is constantly on hand, orders from any distance being filled with most agreeable dispatch.

Clergymen from other towns, who occasionally exchange pulpits with our pastors, are awkwardly embarrassed by finding themselves of no account in the sanctuary, and a painful, stammering hesitation attacks the extemporaneous speaker when he finds that his pet sermon is only endured, and that the audience are impatiently awaiting his last sentence, that they may give themselves up to the enjoyment of the closing anthem.

No funeral would be complete without singing, and it is not unusual for a circle of trained warblers to surround the grave and get off a final combination of musical noises as a farewell salute to the departed. When the music is well chosen, and the occasion one of general

interest, this last custom has a beautiful and soothing effect, and we recognize the divine power of sacred melody.

My pen pauses while I endeavor to sort out and set by themselves the various harmonies now being performed in my immediate neighborhood. First, in the parlor below me, a fine tenor voice is singing a song to a piano accompaniment. I just catch the refrain, "Hark! I hear an angel sing." To the company in the parlor, who hear it by itself, it is doubtless very sweet; but just across the way are two fiddles and a flute in full blast. A lad on the bridge is making his first attempt with a French horn. He seems, judging from the effect, to fill the instrument uncomfortably full of music before letting any off, and the pent-up sounds, when they do get a chance to escape, come dashing out without any attempt at order. A solitary violoncello is groaning by itself in the next house; and from a little further down the street we get occasional touches of a sprightly waltz, which is being done conjointly by a fiddle and a piano.

A young boy sits in the lighted upper window of another house, on the opposite side of

the street, after the fashion of Eutychus, exhibiting such a power of shrill whistle in his endeavors to render "John Brown" vigorously that we can scarcely help the amiable wish to see him further imitate the famous sleeper by falling to the ground. Ringing out above all, the cracked bell of the town clock is snappishly insisting that it is fourteen o'clock instead of ten, as my watch indicates. Shutting the windows to exclude a part of the concert, I sit down again to my desk, and catch myself humming snatches of old songs and marches as my pen tracks the paper before me.

There is a great deal about music, *modern* music, which puzzles me. I do not comprehend it. The sublime "harmony of discords" has no meaning for me. When other more fortunate people, who have kept up with the times, applaud and *encore*, I shrink back into the shade. I have a curious, unpleasant feeling that the lavish encomiums are not sincere; and though it would be sad to lose faith in the truthfulness of our associates, there is always a hope down in the depths of the heart that they do like real music, and find its modern counterfeit a bore. It seems quite impossible that any

one can be educated so far away from what is natural as to relish such artificial and aggravating entertainments, though we see that other morbid appetites, equally incomprehensible, are common. Ah, well! the standard of music in heaven was fixed long ago, before the advent of the late improvements, when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." None of these operatic embellishments will ever jar upon our ears in the "land of the blest," whatever immortality they may secure in the lower regions.

Not a great while ago I was invited to hear a difficult piece of music performed on the piano. The young lady player had been carefully trained at great expense, and could almost, it was said, "do the impossible." As nothing but kindness was intended in inviting me, I could not refuse to listen; but, as a slight indemnification, I stipulated that when the grand action should be over, I should be indulged with a favorite song.

To all the complicated tremolos, turnings, and pedal crashings I listened patiently, managing to abstract my attention from them by repeating to myself psalms and hymns and the

multiplication table backward, till I was so little disturbed by the noise as to be able to carry on a regular and connected train of thought.

How long it lasted I cannot tell; but all at once, without the least warning, the young lady straightened herself stiffly, threw back her head, rolled up her eyes, and gave vent to a succession of the most dismal shrieks that I ever heard. I involuntarily sprang to her assistance, not a little surprised that no one else exhibited any sympathy for her, or any disposition to aid her. Ah! what a relief it was, in spite of my shame and the singer's vexation, to find that what I had mistaken for a fit was only the effort to oblige me by singing my favorite song! And I, stupid, had not recognized a note or a word of it.

They tell me that *my* taste is at fault, that I need cultivation, that no one in a state of nature likes the higher style of music, etc. I hear the thrush and the robin trilling their old exquisite melodies, and I know that none of these popular false chords finds a place in the great anthem of nature.

How can I look out upon the sapphire sea, flashing in the golden light of the sunset, or

raise my eyes to the profound blue solitudes of the skies, or reflect upon the infinite motion and perfect harmony of the heavenly bodies, and then deliberately fill the soft air with discordant croakings?

An Italian street-singer and organ-grinder came with his wife and sang just under my window this morning. He is a Genoese, she from the island of Ischia. It was music, simple but *real* music, so I gladly ran down stairs to thank and remunerate them. I could not make them understand me. They knew so little English, and I so little Italian—I could only recall one phrase, "*Felice notte*," which they seemed to resent, for they shouldered their packs and were off at once, instead of singing more, as I hoped they would.

Down by the railway I yesterday passed a little tent, the temporary home of some wandering Indians. Two girls were singing over their work, but they stopped when they saw a stranger, and no persuasion could induce them to go on. The little that I heard made me think of the wind sighing in the forest, and wailing down the stony ravines before a storm. It was wild and shrill, like the Shaker singing.

Perhaps the Shakers borrowed their style from the Indians. I waited to look at their delicately plaited basket-work. The rushes were dyed with soft colors, and ingeniously twisted into a beautiful pattern. But I could get no more music.

Hush! From the adjoining room comes to me the sweet voice of a little child who is kneeling beside his mother and repeating the prayer, "Our Father," which is never old. As I listen I understand, but cannot explain what is meant by true music—*heart* music.

MATTIE KANNARY.

Imagine a great, staring, red brick house, without blinds to the windows, and not a tree or bush growing near it for shade. It is the Magrath House, once a hotel, but now the home of seventeen Irish families. In a little attic chamber of this crowded hive lives a poor friend of mine, Mattie Kannary. She is sixty years old, and her hands are so swollen with rheumatism as to be nearly useless. When I am inclined to murmur at God's providential dealings I go for a cure to old Mattie's room.

She has not a relative in the world, unless a

brother, who emigrated to the far West twenty-five years ago, should still be living. This is scarcely probable, for it is sixteen years since he has been heard from. I have written at odd times half a score of letters at Mattie's dictation in the vain hope of getting some information in regard to him.

How Mattie lives puzzles me often. She has no money and no visible means of support, and it is now two years since she has been able to work. She is wholly dependent upon the charity and kind offices of others; but she always has just enough for present need, and is never troubled about the future.

Every body likes her. It is a pleasure, after traversing the long, dirty halls and taking in all the odious sights, and smells, and noises of the great house, to come to her neat, quiet room and sit down by the little window, which is high enough to secure fresh air. It is like getting into a new world, the contrast is so great.

In the winter-time I like to sit down cozily by the old-fashioned stove and talk with Mattie. The real desolation of her lot does me good, because she is so unconscious of it, so hopeful, and so thoroughly contented. It puts me in

good humor with all the world—the heartless, deceitful world, which puts on an honest, well-meaning look when seen from her stand-point.

It was the last evening of the old year when she told me her simple life history. I had been repeating aloud, though it was for my own edification rather than hers, some lines which had haunted me all day.

“Old year, you must not go;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old year, you shall not go.

“Old year, you shall not die;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I’ve half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.”

“Ah, shure, that is the fine poetry, ma’am,” said Mattie, who had listened admiringly to my recitation. “Perhaps it’s a bit o’ yer own makin’?”

“O, no; I couldn’t write any thing half so sweet to save my life. It was written by Tennyson, a poet who belongs to your side of the water.”

“An Irishman?” she asked eagerly.

“No; I suppose he is English. But such poets belong to the world, Mattie.”

Mattie’s interest subsided at once. She does not like the English, and has little reverence for English genius.

“Tell me about yourself, Mattie,” I said. “I want to forget the old year and all its memories.”

“It’s little I can tell yees, ma’am. It’s a lowly road I’ve thraveled all me days, whether in America or in me own land over the sea, it were the same ivery-where; niver far oop, though often well-to-do, and niver forsaken, as ye see for yerself.”

“Tell me all you can remember, Mattie. I shall be interested, I know.”

“Ye’ll think betther o’ it, shure, before I get far in me story, but I can stop whin ye likes; only yees will promise not to let me rin on an ye’re weary.”

“Yes, I promise.”

“I don’t remimber whin I was born,” began Mattie, soberly, “but it was in the city of Dublin. We moved into the counthree whin I was a wake old, and I have no idea o’ the place to give you, for I was niver within forty miles o’ it afterward, and I was over young to fix it in me mind then. My father was bred in the

counthree, and the open fields and bit cabins were one and all like home to him; but me mother were city born, and she were, like a bird trapped after it is grown, too old to be tamed. She niver got used to the new life, but jist sat down and fretted all the rest o' her days.

"She had six children beside meself, all boys. They are all dead together, barrin' Phelan at the West, and there's small trust in him now. One by one the lads dropped off till half o' the six were gone, and thin, whin I were just turned o' twelve, me mother died. In less than a year me father was laid by her side, and all the money he left was spent in holy masses for them all.

"It were a lucky chance or a providence," said Mattie, "that the boys were mostly gone before their father, for it was as much, and more too, as Ted and Phil could do to kape themselves till the next Christmas, when Teddy died o' the fever and left us two by ourselves."

"How old was Phelan?"

"Nearly fifteen years, ma'am, but looking all of five years oulder. A great, stout laddie, wi' the beard already coom to his lips and cheek."

"What did you do? Had you no relatives or friends to care for you?"

"We had no relatives; leastways none came near us, which is the same thing. But we had friends on all sides. Too many, for aich o' the lot were full o' kind counsels, but no two o' them had the same opinion. We couldn't heed all, so we jist took counsel wi' aich other. We did what we thought was best; we jist broke oop the ould home and wint out to service. Patsey M'Shale, who lived near the town, took me at first to rin o' errands and mind the baby, and it was there I learned the nice laundry work which has been me thrade iver since. She was a frind indade, ma'am."

"Yes," I replied, "a true friend, for she made you independent and self-reliant."

"Whin I knew the business well," Mattie continued, "she got me a place near Limerick in a nobleman's house. I thought me fortune was made, shure. The young leddies were not afraid to put the most delicate work into me hands. Arrah, if ye could but have seen the illigant laces and muslins, and the fine, rich work on them all! It was a pleasure to do it. It were against nature to help loving my young

mistresses. I cannot describe them for ye; there's nothing in America to compare wi' them, the swate-spoken beauties! There were three of them, and aich handsomer than the others. One of them is a countess, and the others married into the proud English families who used to spind a part of aich year at the Hall. I had lived there three years," said Mattie, lowering her voice almost to a whisper, "whin I had a lover meself. It may seem a small matther to you, ma'am, but that is the time of all me life which kapes its coolors aye brightest. I sit here alone of a winter's evening and live it over and over again, an niver am tired o' the thinkin' and remimberin'. I shut me eyes, and there he sits. We are back again in the wide kitchen, an I hear his pleasant voice a-joking wi' the cook and the housemaid, and, though he says but little to me or I to him, I catch the sly, lovin' smiles and glints o' the eye. There were niver such eyes before. Bright as the very stars, and honest as well, and shinin' wi' sinse an good-humor, the fine laddie! An ye'll bring me that little tin box from the shelf yon I'll show ye a bit o' his hair."

I brought the box, and tried to open it for her; but she was not willing that any hands but her own should touch the contents, so I laid it in her lap after springing the lock.

"There!"

She held up a thick curl of bright, brownish-red hair. It shook in her trembling fingers, and changed its hue in the light of the near candle till it seemed to me, as well as to Mattie, like a living presence.

"It is, indeed, very beautiful," I replied to her look of inquiry.

"Yes, ye may weel say that. I've seen many a fine head o' hair since then," said Mattie, replacing the curl in the box, "but nothin' like that, nothin' like that. Forty years ago! Me own hair was bright thin."

"Forty years is a long time to look back upon."

"Is it? It seems like a drame. I was just twenty whin he left me to make a home for us both in America. Ochone! the dark day it was! But not so dark as it would have been had I known thin that I was niver to look on him more."

"O Mattie! Then you did not marry him,

after all. Poor Mattie!" I said pityingly, for the slow, scant tears of age and spent sorrow were coursing down her cheek.

"He had been gone a year," she went on presently, "whin me masther one day brought me a letther. It begged me to coom to America at once, where was a nice, comfortable home all in waitin' for me. The money for the passage over was in it, and enough to pay for me brother Phil too, for he could not bear me to journey alone, and he could not lave to fetch me himself.

"In a little time we were on the sea, and I counted ivery day that brought me nearer to him. Arrah, the hiven that New York looked in the distance! Me home was there—the home o' me heart. Whin we reached the long wharf, and came to a stop at last, there was no one to meet us. Me heart begun to sink; but I would not borrow trouble. 'It's all right, Phil,' I said, 'the fair winds have brought us before the time.'

"I knew betther, and so did Phil, for we were days behind time wi' the conthrary winds. I would not wait on board for Phil to look him up. 'No,' I said, 'we'll go together.'

"It were asy to find where he had been livin'; but whin we asked for himself, no one would answer at all. It were a kind of office, and there were three or four gentlemen waitin', an they looked first at us and thin at aich other; but no one spake. At last one of them came and sat down by me, and took me by the hand. No need to tell me then.

"'He was expecting you,' he said.

"'Yes, I know.'

"'His place is left all furnished for you.'

"'Yes.' The room began to look dark, but I held on to his hand.

"'He took the fever a fortnight—. Jim, bring a glass of wine!' he called out to a lad near us. He made me drink the wine, and then he said, 'He was buried yesterday. We tried hard to save him, but care and skill could not keep him. You were never out of his mind. His last words were, "Mattie, darling." There, don't be ashamed to cry; it will do you good,' said the kind gentleman. He was cryin' himself, and Phil took me in his arms and sobbed like a child."

Mattie could not control her voice to go on with her story. It was a new revelation of her

character to me. I understood now what had made it easy for her to accept her lot of obscure poverty. She looked at it in contrast with this life-sorrow.

"I canna tell yees," said Mattie at last, "what a sad cooming home it was. There was the new furniture, and all sorts o' odd little contrevances for convanience, and even his own new clothes laid ready for the weddin' that was niver to coom on earth. But he, the charm o' it all, was gone foriver. Forty years ago the thirteenth o' June!"

"Did you stay there, Mattie?"

"Nigh on to four years. Then Phil got married, and went to the West. I would not go wi' him, though he begged me wi' tears. 'No, no, Phil, don't ask me,' I said; 'I canna lave his grave. Let me stay where he is sleepin.' So I was left by meself. But I could not live alone. I gave up the house, and went to live as a laundress in the family of Mr. Lincoln. He was the gentleman who was so kind whin me throuble came.

"I stayed there five years. Then the family went South to live, to Mississippi, where Mrs. Lincoln belonged. She had a plantation there.

I could not go wi' them," said Mattie, proudly, "to be a white slave among niggers. It's plinty irksome to serve wi' your own color and nation, the low Irish in particular; but I canna bide niggers at any price. So I stayed in New York, rented a room, and kept entirely to meself for a time."

"Well, Mattie?"

A light broke over her face as she laughed merrily. All this time there had been scarcely a trace of the Irish brogue, or the national peculiarities of expression; but she seemed to change all over as she looked up to answer me.

"What happened next, Mattie?"

"Och, ma'am, it were a fool's deed next, for shure. There was Pathrick Kannary, the big, lumpy, freckled gossoon, wi' niver a house to his head, or a penny in his purse, wi' no stock on airth barrin' laziness an good temper; wi' his pipe niver out o' his mouth 'save whin atin' or dhrinkin'. He came to me room on a Sunday afther the mass, an' asked me to marry him. Arrah, the impidence of the crathur!"

"But you didn't, surely," I said, quite unable to connect such want of forethought with Mattie.

"Ay, but I did, thin. Isn't me name Kannary? It were the big folly o' me life, shure; but I did it all the same. Ye will mind as I was all alone in the world, and that lonesome that I could ha' worshiped a dummy an it had thruly cared for me. I was a woman, an ye need not be tould what a woman's life is without some'at to cling to. Anythin' were better than that yearnin', afther a fellow-feeling, that cravin' for somethin' for the heart to coom home to. So I married Pathrick Kannary."

"Did he work for you, Mattie?" I asked, rather doubtfully.

"Well, as to that, I worked for him. I didn't mind it. I was strong, and used to the toilin' an managin', an it was asy enow to kape all snoog and above board. It'll seem strange to you, ma'am, but, indade, I were happier now than I had been for long years. I had an object to live for, an it brought me contint at laste. Me lot was o' me own makin', were it bettther or worse, and there were little sinse in frettin'."

"And Patrick?"

"O, thin, Pathrick were like a gentleman born. He gave up both worruk and care, and was the invy o' all his comrades. The world wint fair

and smooth wi' him, wi' niver a hitch in the machinery. Ye may take me word, ma'am, that *he* niver repinted his bargain."

"I should think not," I responded, not relishing the sacrifice of a woman like Mattie upon the altar of masculine selfishness. "Did you love him?" I asked presently.

"Love him! Ochone! Niver. How can ye ask that? Me heart was in the grave wi' me ain laddie. That were the throe marriage before God; this was jist a matther of convanience. Don't you see?"

"Then you don't believe in second marriages?"

"Not whin the heart finds its mate in the first. There's mony a weddin' o' souls that niver is known on earth, an they are the throe marriages accordin' to my thinkin'; but thousands and thousands are livin' to-day like Pathrick and me did, married by the laws o' the land, but niver mated in hiven. The throe love cooms but once, shure."

"How long did Patrick live?"

"I canna say. He's livin' yet, for all I know. It was Catherine Murphy, an a rale beauty she was, an a bould girl as well, that

come between us. Ye'll mind that Pat, like mony anither, liked to brag o' his riches. Nothin' could bate his big notions, an he aired them ivery-where. And Kate Murphy belaved it were all Scripture. Thin she were taken with his perliteness and his fine clothes, so she kept hangin' aboot the place till she wiled him away. She was soon tired o' him, for the money gave out, an she would not worruk for herself, lettin' alone workin' for him. So he came back to me."

"Mattie, you did not take him again!" I remonstrated.

"No," said Mattie, slowly. "I'm not clare now whether it were my duty; but I tould him plainly that it were all over. I used to see him on the street, looking shabby and miserable enough, and twice he was bastely drunk. He was poor enough to have roused me pity for him; but I knew he could work, an I niver took him home. You see the love in me heart was wantin', and that made all the difference in the world."

"What did you do next? Live alone?"

"Well, I got me fine character as a laundress from some o' the first city ladies, and thin I

sold out me furniture and came here. I always prospered. I expected to. Pape build oop their own hinderances, I take it. I was coomfortable till me hands give out, but they're gettin' well again, ma'am."

This was a standing fiction which Mattie had persisted in believing from the commencement of her illness, and no one disputed the point with her.

"I'll soon be able to look out for meself," said Mattie, brightly. "God knows what is best. I'm contint to lave it wi' him. At the worst, it is only the almshouse, an that is fine livin' in America."

"We shall not let you try it," I said.

Mattie laughed cheerfully. "It were sinful to fret about it, ma'am. So as the good God has kept me all my days I'll not doubt him now. He'll lead me gently down the few more steps to the bottom of the hill. I'm contint."

I am afraid I envied Mattie. The little close room, the scanty furniture, the lack of future provision, the painful, swollen hands, the desolate old age, were all glorified by her simple trust in God.

I had left her and blundered my way down to the ground floor, when a door suddenly opened and I saw "big Kathleen," the largest and strongest Irishwoman that I ever saw, in the act of disciplining her husband, who had come home drunk. I saluted her, but she was too angry to respond to my greeting.

"I'll tache yees, ye ould hound, to coom home like a baste to yer supper."

Kathleen shook him up and down as if he were scarcely a feather's weight in her hands.

"It's a faste ye'll be losin', alannah."

He was just drunk enough to be contrary, so he staggered to the table and began to help himself in spite of her. I glanced at the "faste." There were boiled potatoes mashed with their jackets on and saturated with sour milk. But the offending husband was not destined to partake of it, for "big Kathleen," irritated beyond endurance by his unexpected opposition, seized him by his coat collar and the waistband of his trowsers and actually pitched him head foremost over the stairs into the open yard below. He was not hurt—Irishmen seldom are—though the fall partially sobered him.

Try it again, Mike," called his wife from above. "Coom, lad, there's plinty more, an ye like it. It's free as hiven's brazes for yees."

Mike showed no disposition to avail himself of the offered provision, but sat on the ground stupidly staring about him. A number of people were grouped upon the lower landing, attracted by the noise, and Kathleen's prowess was applauded uproariously. I was glad to get out into the quiet street and hasten homeward.

THE OLD BROWN HOUSE.

A glance along the hill-sides and down the valleys reveals to us, scattered here and there, the yet lingering dwellings of the old inhabitants. Over them all, to my eye, lies a heavy shadow. They are not desolate, but more crowded than of old, with every room full of noisy life, yet they belong to my past, and the careless tread and boisterous laugh seem like desecration. Those who were born and grew up beneath the roof-tree are all gone, and strangers sit down under the shade of the old trees without a thought of the hands which so long ago planted them.

Some of these old houses are scarcely habitable, others are better preserved, though the missing window-panes or the puttied cracks of the glass that remains foreshadow the coming ruin.

There is no tenant in the old brown house where my grandfather lived and died, where his children were reared, and where his noisy grandchildren came with their sports and schemes, sure of loving encouragement in them all. Old age has a closer sympathy with childhood than with mature life. It has patience with its capricious foibles, an interest in its most unreasonable gratifications. Every child understands this if he is not so poor as to have no grandparents. The mere babe will tottle by its mother to its grandmamma's arms, as if it has a wish to express of questionable utility. The mother who disciplined her own children perfectly is blind to the grandchild's dimpled hand which ravages her sugar-bowl. And so it generally is true that there is no place so inviting, so every way attractive to the young, as the old-fashioned homes of their grandparents.

I am glad that my grandfather's old house is uninhabited. I can go over it and recall the

past without observation. The somber, ancient furniture has been removed, but I know where the high-backed chairs and long tables used to stand against the wall, and just how the round light-stand, with its three carved legs and its furnishing of Bible, Psalm-book, almanac, newspaper, and spectacles, filled up the warm corner by the south window.

The window-seats, so deep and large that half a dozen flaxen-headed urchins used to crowd into one for an evening hour's storytelling or riddle-guessing, are as pleasant as ever. Childhood comes back, all the eventful intervening years vanish at once as we sit down in the familiar place. Ah, why did those dear, cozy window-seats go out of fashion? There has been no substitute for them furnished by modern improvements.

Children are now cheated out of half the pleasures which legitimately belong to early life. What they are going to do for childish memories when they come to middle life no one pretends to say. It will be dreary to look back upon a silent, barren wilderness where there should have been fresh, immortal flowers, and glad, spontaneous music.

Croaking is but a poor business at best. It does not pay even when it deals in truth; but, sitting in this dear old house, the mind and heart too will go back to the days when *children* were possible, before miniature men and women in the nursery were thought desirable, when the occasional bold utterances of a precocious youngster were overlooked as harmless impertinences instead of being printed.

The maturity of modern babies would have been thought a decided inconvenience by those who believed with King Solomon in the occasional application of the rod. We can imagine the picture of insulted dignity and outraged honor which a three-year-old urchin would now present if corporeal punishment were offered to him ever so delicately.

It was different then. The romps, and plays, and roguish tricks of youth were wholesomely flavored by discipline, and the grateful *tingling* remembrance of its efficacy in restoring good temper is not the least precious of our memories. We escaped a world of trouble by being born before the restraints of embroidery and ruffling, or the wearing of long hair in hot, twisted divisions, so as to imitate natural ring-

lets, were tolerated. Is it not a pitiful sight to behold a well-disposed child, that would be natural if it could, obliged all through the dog-days to sport those uncomfortable, meager proxies for curls without an idea of *why* it suffers?

O the sweet, glad freedom of old-fashioned childhood! It is worth living over. It went out with the old window-seats. No one knows the name of the bold reformer who first attempted to improve upon the beautiful arrangement of the Almighty so as to omit childhood from human life, but he was not a benefactor to his race.

There are strange things always coming to pass. Most wonderful is the progress of the times. But to one whose tired feet halt in the rear, whose weary eyes delight in familiar scenes, whose aching heart hoards its beautiful memories as golden treasures, the strange acts and wise plans of faster people often seem such prodigious freaks.

Diamonds cannot buy the fair pictures which grace for me every room of the old house, or purchase my childish right in the circuitous, dark stairway, and the thick cobwebs, full of

dead flies, which curtain the garret windows. The doors of the quaint little cupboards stand half open. The dainty china cups and saucers, small enough for a play-house now, and the bright teapot and silver spoons, are all removed, but in my mind I range them upon the narrow shelves in the old order and overlook the empty space.

There is no portrait of my grandfather as I remember him. He was eighty-four years old when he died, but his teeth were white and even, and his black hair flowed over his neck like a girl's. I used to think he was the handsomest old man in the world. Well he might be, for personal beauty has found no place among his descendants, and there is less and less prospect of it as the generations succeed each other.

All the children in the region knew and loved the fine old man. He was never happier than when surrounded by a noisy group of them, each good-humoredly contending for the privilege of ransacking his capacious pockets and bringing to light the rosy-cheeked apples and stray pennies which were always stored there for the encouragement of those young

pickpockets. In the summer evenings he would sit in his great arm-chair by the open door, and watch our frolics upon the green grass or our tumbles among the new-made hay. At a little distance was the family tomb. A pleasant, quiet spot to rest in," the old man said. He is sleeping there now, and I, sitting in the old door-way, repeat the words heartily which sounded so gloomy and strange then. Yes, "a pleasant, quiet spot to rest in." It is easy to understand now how one who is tired of the battle of life may hopefully anticipate its close while cheerfully enduring its crosses.

As I dreamily note the unaltered features in the prospect, what figure is it that comes flitting out of the past and trips softly up the sloping path by the old well-curb?—delicate in form, graceful in motion, fragile as a reed in appearance till you behold the might of unselfish love which brightens her face, beautiful with the immortal grace of spiritual loveliness, never growing older, but cherishing as a sacred trust from God the freshness and sympathy of the heart. It is my mother. It is six years since she left us, since she was born to eternal life in the home of the angels. A solitary

whip-poor-will comes and sings on the flat rock close by. Not the real bird, who used to sadden us with its monotone, but a bird from the shadowy land where the past is garnered. A kitten playfully mounts to the top of the long well-sweep; a host of dead old tabbies come trooping back to displace her. A black cow pauses to crop the rank grass by the gate. She is no relation to the old black cow who used to chase us down the long lane to the distant pasture. That cross old cow! She managed to make a mark in the old world so as to secure a remembrance. Her docile compeers are forgotten. No one can tell whether they gave good milk or poor, or even whether a post-mortem examination pronounced their beef eatable; but that crabbed, selfish, disoblighing old black cow, with every variety of hooking and kicking powers fully developed, gave the richest of milk in bountiful profusion, and furnished the dairy's pride of golden butter.

O for some spell to put on the old brown house and its surroundings—some power to hinder their certain decay! There is moss on the roof and on the lilac-trees, and the un-

trained roses are dying out by the door. The swallows build their nests and rear their young in the wide chimney as of old, and as I sit down on the dark-red settle by the hearth and listen to their homely chirping, the old home place is no longer empty. Every room is thronged. The faces so tenderly loved smile on me again; the hushed voices of the buried years are no longer silent.

From the window I glanee down the wide meadow-land. Beyond is the wood—rich groves of pine, and maple, and ash, full of labyrinthine paths, and gray rocks, and bright openings. Across the meadow gurgles a cool spring of clear water. I have lived to know that the green stones at the bottom are not emeralds. There is nothing striking in the view. Taken as a whole, it would be a tame landscape to the indifferent eye, but it is holy ground to me, changed as much of it is.

It is pleasant to look upward, where there is no change. The blue skies do not grow old, and the stars are as bright to us as they were to Adam and Eve in Paradise. The sun and moon pursue their steady course across the heavens just as they did then. The various

convulsions of nature and the art of man have united to change the configuration of the earth, but the heavens remain, and to all generations declare the glory of God and show forth his handiwork.

WITCHES.

Like every other part of New England, our "lake region" has its historic ghosts and legends of veritable witches. The latter marvels have not yet wholly leaped into the past, though witchcraft must have either gone out of fashion or changed its aspect in most places. There are persons yet living along the outskirts of modern society who have had enough trouble with the old-time witches to satisfy a regiment of unbelievers.

Over by Hurlbut's Hollow, just beyond that gigantic black rock which poises itself over the road and threatens destruction to the traveler, is an old farm-house which seems to have been a favorite theater for witch operations. It stands back from the road in a narrow green dell, through which runs a small spring of clear water, O, so deliciously cool in the sultry summer days! Every youngster who goes huckle-berrying in August in the pastures beyond

knows the way to that spring, and knows, too, the kindly old lady who sallies forth from the house with a pitcher of molasses to sweeten the limpid beverage and "keep it from hurting the children." There are very few boys and girls who do not relish the improved beverage.

This old lady can tell us about the witches if any body can. She early learned to measure her cunning with theirs, and also the best way to manage those who could not be got rid of. She has had her hands "about full of business" a good many times, but, like a true warrior, she likes to fight her battles over again. She attributes her unvarying successes in dealing with witches to her courage. She is still a fearless-looking person, and might be taken for a witch herself if we did not know better. Let me describe her: A little dried-up, wiry old woman, as spry as a girl, though she must be very old. I think she cannot weigh more than eighty pounds. Her short, scant skirt and blue sack cling closely to her *petite* figure, and make her look much smaller than she would if she were dressed like other old women. Her hair is gray, and she wears over it a high-crowned, wide-bordered muslin

cap, starched stiffly, and standing up like a tall helmet. Thus oddly *toupeed*, her tiny, pinched face, with the long, hooked nose and peaked chin nearly meeting over the toothless mouth, presents a ludicrous picture as to size and general outline.

The only large thing about her is her voice. It is loud and full, and rings out with a masculine power which startles you, coming as it does from so *spirituelle* a subject. She is very sociable. She will talk and laugh with herself by the hour rather than be silent. All her thinking is done with her tongue at the full wag. I have seen persons in various places who resembled her in this respect, though they belong to the present, while she just lingers to represent the past. The style of mind is the same, and the thinking of about the same quality.

There is nothing about the old lady more interesting than her unquestioning faith in ghosts and witches. Witches take the precedence. That is natural. You can't mix up ghosts with the every-day affairs of life as you can witches. They are a different order of beings, with more dignity, more exclusive-

ness. The old lady has often "hearn tell" about ghosts, but she *knows* about witches, and if a person can't stand upon their own experience, where can they find a foundation?

"There are people," she tells us, "who don't believe in witches. I hope you are not one of them."

"I? There have been no witches in our neighborhood, you know. I have had no means of making up a correct opinion on the subject."

"Sure enough! I might have known that. Perhaps you don't care to be convinced."

"O yes! I like to know what to believe."

"Well, then, you just sit down in that low chair, and I'll tell you some things I *know*. Not that chair; take the cushioned one, the rocking chair. So you've brought your knitting. Wait till I get mine, and we'll just settle down for the evening. We wont go in very deep. It would scare you to death if, I should tell you some things. But I'll tell you about old Marm Fulleston."

"The very old lady over to Rocky Lane?" I asked her.

"Yes; do you know her?"

"No ; I only know there is such a person. She is a hundred years old."

"She was a witch forty years ago ; is one now for all I know to the contrary ; was one then, at all events. She used to live in the other part of this house. Her old man and mine were both living then. She had one daughter and I two. Both of mine are dead."

"Did she live here long ?" I asked, for she came to a full stop in her narrative, and seemed to forget it entirely.

"Who ?"

"Why, Marm Fulleston. You were going to tell me about her being a witch."

"So I was, sure enough ! Yes, she lived here four years. We got on together nicely at first, but in the second summer my butter was better than hers and there was more of it, though we had the same number of cows. Every body praised my butter, and I suppose she could not bear it. I took great pains with it ; I always did with every thing. I never thought of putting her out, and I didn't know she was a witch at first."

"What did she do ?"

"She bewitched the milk the first thing. It

would sour and curdle before I could strain it into the pans.' I had to put witch-wood all round the pails and pans to keep it sweet. Then she tried the cream in the churn. It would turn as sour as vinegar as soon as we began to stir it. That made me mad, so I just put the shovel and tongs in the fire till they were red-hot, and then thrust them suddenly into the cream. I'll show you that churn."

She opened a dark closet near her and brought out a common wooden churn.

"Look here, see how I burned the sides and bottom. The old witch was glad to leave my churn and keep out of it too after that. She never troubled it again when I was at home."

"Why, how could the hot irons affect her ?"

"Don't you know ? Well, you *are* green. It was all the same as if I had laid them on to her bodily. She kept her bed more'n a week. They pretended 'twas the rheumatics, but I saw her girl making up a salve for burns. They couldn't cheat me. But I must own that I was real sorry, for I didn't mean to hurt her so much."

"I suppose you had no further trouble with your cream."

"Not till late in the fall. I went then to stay a couple of days with Nancy Lake, who was dying with consumption. I put the cream into the churn before I started, and the girls knew how to make up the rolls as well as I did. Well, the girls churned and churned upon that cream, and the old man *he* churned; they were at it nigh about all the time I was gone, but it didn't change a bit. When I got home it looked exactly as it did when I left it. As soon as I looked at it I knew what ailed it.

"Why, how could you tell?"

"Any body could tell that there wasn't a natural state of things in that churn."

"Well, what did you do about it?"

"O, it didn't bother me a minute. I knew just what to do. It wont do to speak when you are trying to start out a witch; you can tree them like a coon, and torment them if you want to punish them, but if you want to get rid of them you must hold your tongue. Do you see the difference?"

"Yes, I understand."

"So I said nothing to nobody, but went straight up stairs into the garret over the back kitchen, where I got two leaves out of an old

Bible. I put one leaf under the churn and laid one on the top, and that butter came in five minutes."

"Really, there must be something in knowing how to manage," I said heartily, beginning to feel that our late days were rather tame in comparison with "lang syne."

"Sure enough! But Marm Fulleston was in full mettle again. The very next day my old man came running into the back room where I was shelling beans and told me that the pig was bewitched.

"The massy!' says I; 'what'll come next?'

"Don' know,' says he; 'better 'tend to this 'fore any thing more turns up.'

"So I called Betsy to shell the beans and then follered the old man out to the sty. Sure enough! there was the pig whirling round and round on the very tip of his nose, with his hind legs a cutting through the air like a set of yarn swifts. I wish you could have seen it."

"Yes, it would have been a curious sight. Didn't you think of the Scripture swine that the devils entered into?"

"No; there wasn't any time to think of any thing. There's no use in thinking when you're

dealing with witches, if there ever is. You've got to *do* something first."

"Yes. Tell me what you did. I should have been at a loss how to manage."

"I wasn't. I went back into the kitchen without speaking a word and got a brimming ladle full of biling water and threw it straight into that pig's face. That brought his heels down and his head up pretty lively."

"Didn't it scald him badly?"

"The pig? Of course not. But old Mother Fulleston's face was blistered all over. It shows the scar now. I never see such a burn afore. She made believe she'd got the erysipelas, and old Doctor Brown actilly came and doctored her for erysipelas, but I knew better all the time. Have a pinch of snuff?"

"No, I never take it. Thank you all the same. I think that Ma'am Fulleston must have been cured of meddling with your affairs after that."

"Well, she was a little shy for some time, only if I left home she would bother the girls. You see a witch is a witch. The root of the matter is in 'em, and it will work out. It aint like a sickness that one gets well of or dies of.

It goes by fits and starts just as it gets a chance, and it keeps ye alive if ye try to govern it. Of course, I couldn't always stay at home to watch the house, and the girls were just like young chickens. The old man was good enough in his way, but the massy! he was no match for witches. So we had to warn them to leave, and they moved over to Rocky Lane."

"Where she lives now?" I asked.

"Yes; they bought the place."

"I suppose you have had no trouble since. No trouble with witches, I mean."

"Plenty of it, but no remarkable trouble with her; that is, after the first few weeks. She gave us up then, I suppose. But the next Sunday, when we were coming home from meeting, the horse stopped right before her door and would not stir for an hour. We were in an open wagon, and it rained as hard as it could pour. I would not go into her house, at any rate, and there was no other within half a mile. So we sat still in our best clothes and soaked and soaked till it stopped raining, and then the horse went home without any difficulty. Ever since that we've put witch-wood in the harness."

"I should like to see some witch-wood. What is it like?"

"That's witch-wood on the top of the settle. There's some on that nail over the shelf and on the looking-glass behind you. But it's dried up so that you can't tell how it looks green. It loses its power when it dries up. There aint much virtue in them twigs, though they're better'n nothing."

"Does Ma'am Fulleston tell fortunes?"

"No; bless you, child, *she'd* never own she was a witch at all. She'll die likely with some such lie in her mouth. But nobody ever saw her inside a church or anywhere among Christians. She used to read her Bible a good deal; it was easy enough to guess what for. Then she was everlastingly in the woods a-gathering herbs and roots and stewing them down into salves, and syrups, and all sorts of medicines. Folks called her odd. Odd! I guess she was. Half the neighbors would send for her sooner than a doctor if they were sick, and I suppose she 'witched' them all, for they all stood up for her. I don't suppose there were over a dozen people in our town who believed she was a witch. There was no use in telling

them. If I tried to convince them they'd turn as cool as cucumbers, and keep away from me instead of her. But what I know I know. A fact is a fact any day. You can't get away from that."

"That is true. You spoke of the old woman's daughter; what became of her?"

"She's married long ago; married into a first-rate family, too. She was a sweet, pretty girl, not at all witchy, like her mother. Her husband has been to the legislater twice. He is one of the selectmen now."

"Where do they live?"

"Over with the old woman. They've got a fine place of their own, but she stuck to her old home, so they shut up their house and came to Rocky Lane. Their children are off at school, and they'll stay, likely, while her old mother lives."

"Do you visit them?" I asked with some curiosity.

"No; but between you and me," said the old lady, hitching her chair nearer to mine and nipping a fresh pinch of snuff, "between you and me, I should really enjoy going over there some time if it were not for this witch business.

But when you know a thing you *know* it," she added, shutting her box positively, "and there's no such thing as getting rid of it. A chair is a chair, say what you will; and facts are facts, sure enough!"

SCHOOL-DAYS.

The fond attachment to the well-known place
Whence first we started into life's long race,
Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway,
We feel it e'en in age and at our latest day.

—COWPER.

There is no time in the past to which my memory clings more tenaciously than to the days spent in the old red school-house. It would be impossible now to recognize the most of my associates, even if they could be gathered together from the various parts of the earth to which they have wandered, and sit down with me for a chat this evening. They would have all outgrown my memories of them.

The partially gray hair and wrinkled cheeks, the faded lips and dimmed eyes, would not recall the bright locks and chubby faces that I remember. Some of them have been dead many years, others have become prematurely old with sickness or sorrow, and all have nearly

lost their identity beneath the changing touch of time.

Yet not one of them are lost to me. Every one of those fresh young faces are held safely in the casket of which my memory keeps the key. Ah, what pleasant, smiling faces they are!

It is strange that, among so many reminiscences, I have treasured so little that is sad. Those school-days are like a prolonged frolic. The mischievous pranks of the roguish pupils lose none of their keen relish when reviewed by maturer vision. My eyes readily moisten at the hearing of the tale of sorrow, but the mishaps of my youth retain only their ludicrous aspects; and whatever of pathos they may have had, the remembrance provokes laughter oftener than tears.

There was a pale, slender child in my class called Lucy. Our ages and natural tastes were the same, and we were seldom asunder. Light-brown, almost yellow, hair shaded her plain freckled face, but her clear blue eyes were almost beautiful. How restless she was! She seemed to have no power to keep still.

She was never a favorite with the teachers, though there was no difficulty about her reci-

tations. They were committed perfectly, and so she was a credit to the school. The troubles grew out of her leisure time. She was restricted to certain studies, which were like pastime to her, taking in as she did the whole scope of the lesson at a single reading. Mischievous became a necessity to her. She does not recollect a single tribute to her good behavior like the "rewards of merit" exhibited by other children.

Looking back over thirty years, it seems a pity that no one understood her, and that no effort was made to direct her surplus energy and restless activity of mind into wholesome channels.

I particularly remember, in connection with her, one summer afternoon in August. It was one of those sultry, listless days, when the most vigorous temperament succumbs to the enervating influence of the weather. How sleepy we were! How utterly impossible it seemed to trace correctly the outline of a map, or to commit those uncouth abbreviations! Even the teacher was conquered by the oppressive heat, and sat dozing in her chair behind her desk.

No one seemed to be fairly awake excepting Lucy. I can see her now, reaching over her desk to tickle the neck of a girl in front of her with a wisp of straw, and then suddenly twitching single hairs from the bowed head of a sleeping boy across the aisle. She pinned labels to the boys' jackets, and, slipping down under the benches, contrived to attach long strips of white and brown paper to the hems of the girls' dresses.

Presently the teacher roused herself, and called the second class in mental arithmetic to recite their lesson. It was this class that had furnished the subjects for Lucy's skill in the ornamental line, and she bent her head and industriously began to search for the most obscure places on her maps, when she heard the rustling of the paper appendages, followed by the stifled giggling of the whole school.

"Lucy Dow!" called the teacher. She always looked to Lucy for the explanation of any mischief. "Lucy!"

"Ma'am!"

"Take your books into the garret and study by yourself."

"Yes, ma'am."

Lucy obeyed with alacrity. She used to say that if there was one place pleasanter to her than another it was the old garret. The school-house garret had its disadvantages, being low, and hot, and dirty, but it was better than no garret.

There was a pail of water standing on a bench in the entry, and Lucy, mindful of the heat above, decided to take it along. She had no desire to study, no intention of doing so. There was a round hole in the floor, cut for the accommodation of a stove-pipe in winter time, and serving for a ventilator in summer. Lucy carefully placed her books on the rough casement of the little window, and then sat down on the floor by the hole to amuse herself by watching the children below.

The class in arithmetic were still on the floor, and one of the girls stood directly beneath the opening. To attract her attention Lucy brought the pail of water, and, dipping her fingers in it, showered a few drops upon the child's head, who, startled by the dripping coolness, sprang aside with a half-suppressed scream.

"Mary Lee, be quiet! What is the matter with you?" interrogated the teacher angrily.

"I don't know, ma'am. I—I guess the plastering leaks."

"Leaks! this dry, hot day! What a little simpleton!"

"My hair is wet," said Mary, putting her hands to her head.

"Is it? stand aside and let me see," said the teacher, happening to remember Lucy, and inferring at once that she was at the bottom, or, rather, at the top, of the mischief. Lucy did not choose to be so soon interrupted in her sport, but in suddenly drawing back from view she accidentally upset the pail of water over the hole just as the schoolmistress brought her face beneath it.

"O dear!" exclaimed Lucy, laughing hysterically at this climax of trouble, "what shall I do! what shall I do! I'll run away!"

She flew down the stairs and out into the open air before the teacher could regain her breath so as to speak to her. But directly two of the largest boys were sent out to bring her back to the school-room by force. This Lucy resented as an indignity. She would not submit to it. For the first time since the summer school began she felt angry.

"I should look pretty a-being lugged into school by those big boys. If she'd asked me politely I'd gone in of myself, but I wont go in now. And I'll keep the boys out too, if I can. Johnny Wilbur! say, Johnny Wilbur!"

"O, there she is, up on the hill," said Johnny, looking in the direction of her voice. "Come, Lucy. Tim Jones and me is to fetch you back. D'ye hear?"

"Look here, Johnny, you know those big peaches over to our house, down by the brook. We're going to pick 'em after school. Shouldn't you and Tim like to come over?"

"Yes, crackee! Them are peaches—real busters. Tim, have you seen 'em?"

"No, but Susy told me about them. I'll go."

"But, Lucy," said Johnny, scarcely knowing how to carry on hostilities in prospect of the peaches, the teacher told us to come for you."

"Well, what of it? I sha'n't go in, and you know you can't catch me if you try. You just get my sun-bonnet from the entry, will you? It's a blue one—gingham."

"I can't; she'd see me. You'd better go in."

"O fiddlestick! don't bother. You see," said Lucy, "mother don't like me to tan my

neck; but I can put my apron over it to keep off the sun."

"We shall catch it if we go back without you, Lucy," said Tim.

"She told us to get some birch sticks," added Johnny.

"To whip me with, I suppose," said Lucy, nodding her head at the school-house, and dancing about restlessly as usual. "Well, it's too hot to be whipped. I shouldn't enjoy it. If you go in perhaps she'll try it on you first."

"We've got to go in, you know."

"No; I don't know. You've got your hats on, and you can keep looking for me till it's too late to go in. Don't you see?"

The boys laughed. "To be sure," said Tim approvingly.

"Well, hunt for me down in that hollow, will you? I'll just show her that I'm alive, and then we'll hunt for peaches."

There were close wooden blinds to all the school-house windows. They were called shutters. Those on the shady side were open, but on the side toward the hill where Lucy stood they were shut to exclude the sun. It was easy for her to approach unobserved, and to creep

round to the open windows before any one saw her. Stooping under them, she managed to unfasten the shutters without noise, and ran fearlessly along the whole line, closing each blind with a loud bang as she passed it, and so shutting up the whole school in total darkness.

"Now," said Lucy as she walked contentedly away, "if she's got any manners I hope she'll show it next time."

She made no secret of the affair on reaching home, and did not object to the consequent punishment; but it did come hard the next morning to ask the teacher's pardon. To her surprise, it was graciously accorded, and the fine peaches, which she had brought for a peace-offering, but had magnanimously resolved to withhold till after her punishment was over, lest they might seem a bribe to her judge, were accepted with a cordial grace that went to Lucy's heart. "I wonder if I can be good," said the child to herself.

Thinking about Lucy and my school days, there comes up before me all at once a scene that I would give much to be able to portray vividly. Lucy had a sister Anna, a bright, pleasant girl, but so constitutionally timid as

seriously to affect her happiness. She was very much afraid of snakes. Most children fear them, and there seems to be a general antipathy between them and many grown people. Anna had a constant, morbid terror of them.

She could not enjoy berrying, because there might be snakes in the bushes. She could not gather for herself the ripe fruits of the orchard, because a snake might be coiled for a spring among the green branches of the trees. When the rest of us, venturing on forbidden pleasures, left our shoes and stockings upon the banks of the river, and leisurely waded up and down the stream, or hid under the cool, shadowy arches of the bridge, she could not be tempted to share the sport because of the harmless, striped water-snakes that sometimes tickled our bare feet. And when, one hot evening, it was found that a milk-snake had noiselessly entered the dairy window and helped himself to a supper of sweet rich cream, she lost all sense of security anywhere.

It was the next day after this serpentine "raid" that she was returning from school at noon, and thinking of mother Eve's courage in chatting confidentially with the old serpent of

all, when she felt a slight pull on the skirt of her dress.

"Hullo, Anna!" shouted a mischievous boy on the opposite walk, "what are you going to do with that snake?"

Poor Anna just glanced over her shoulder and saw a long, slender, dark object clinging to her dress behind. Of course, it was a snake, and she was wild with terror at once. Before any one could undeceive her she started off for home at a rate of speed that would have been impossible for any child not under the influence of mortal fear. It was not exactly a running race, for, with the effort to escape, there was also a struggle to shake off the reptile. The result was a succession of the most extraordinary leaps ever executed by any animal, the kangaroo excepted.

With every frantic bound into the air she uttered a shrill shriek, which would alone have frightened away a battalion of serpents.

The family at home were sitting quietly at their dinner, when, through the open doors, they saw Anna coming up the street after the manner described, jumping and screaming with all her might. In less than a moment she was

hurrying directly by her own door, and heading straight for the old South meeting-house, three miles away. Anna's father was utterly unable to understand this curious exhibition of gymnastic and vocal power in the usually quiet child, but he lost not a moment in hurrying to her assistance. He was too late to arrest her progress.

How far she might have gone it is impossible to say, though it is probable that she would have kept on till her unnatural strength had become exhausted if no obstacle had appeared in her way. But it fortunately happened that an old man was leading a horse across the road at a little distance. He stopped short when he saw her coming. He was a rough-spoken, though kind-hearted, old fellow, with a voice that was easily heard for half a mile when he chose to raise it. "Stop!" he thundered as his eye took in the state of affairs, "stop, or I'll knock you down. You great dumb, dory-head! where are you dragging that old brier?"

Anna stopped at once. There was not a child in the neighborhood who dared to disobey the old man, and Anna stood in especial awe of him. The revulsion of feeling on seeing for

herself the innocent brier would have been too much for her if she had found any sympathy in her trouble; but he kept on scolding her till the color came back to her face. It was the best service he could have done her. By the time her father came up with them she was able to explain her strange performance. How that old man laughed! How every body laughed! How people laugh still, after all these years, as they recall that wonderful exhibition of agility!

O the fresh, unstudied fun of childhood! It will not be forgotten. Its memories throng up from the buried past, and so insist upon their right to a resurrection that I have no heart to enforce a longer sepulture. Shall I make room for just another?

It was the close of the winter school. The teacher was a pious young man preparing for the ministry, and he had occasionally assembled the pupils and their parents in the old red school-house to listen to a short lecture or sermon. Every body liked the good young man, and it was with real regret that the announcement of his farewell lecture was received. A crowded house for that last evening was certain,

and a gratifying interest was manifested. Belonging to the school was a small boy, small in size, but at least half a dozen years older than he looked. The children called him Captain Joe. He had obtained this sobriquet by occasionally mustering the young militia of the school into regular lines and training them for soldiers. There were as many girls as boys under his command, and Captain Joe thus acknowledged the equality of the sexes in advance of all the "women's rights conventions."

It occurred to Captain Joe that some especial evidence of regard on the part of his young warriors might be acceptable to the retiring pedagogue, and, having matured his plan, he summoned the light infantry to the neighboring wood to be instructed in the programme. I was then about seven years old, and so fortunate as to be young enough to serve.

First, we were each presented with two smooth sticks, about two feet long, and instructed in their use as substitutes for fiddles and fiddle-bows. Next we were drilled in the pronunciation of certain cabalistic words which none of us understood then, or have since comprehended.

"Knicklenuckle, knicklenuckle, kernuck, kernuck, nuck."

When we were perfect in this, and could repeat the words in concert, with a uniform accent, we were next shown how to fiddle them properly. Captain Joe soon expressed himself satisfied with our proficiency. He then told us that he wished to give a gratifying surprise to our parents as well as our teacher, and, therefore, all information in regard to our plans would be contraband.

We were to sit together as usual on the middle aisle of the school-house, the side-seats being reserved for the visitors. As soon as the teacher had finished his lecture we were to rise simultaneously and march in couples up the center, and then, dividing our forces, pass down the side-aisles, fiddling and repeating as loudly as possible the words we had been taught. After which we were to report to his headquarters in the wood.

It was a lovely evening, cold, but as clear as a bell. I remember nothing at all of the lecture, for I was fumbling in the desk before me half the time to make sure that my sticks were all right. The rest of our little company were

as anxious as myself that all should go off creditably. The lecture seemed very long to us. It must have been interesting, for it completely absorbed the attention of the general audience, and when, in closing, the speaker solemnly and affectionately bade them adieu, there were few who did not shed tears. He was himself greatly affected, and covered his face with his hands as he sat down.

Now for it. We were in line in a moment. "Knicklenuckle, knicklenuckle, kernuck, kernuck, nuck," came out with a full sonorous power worthy of a "Fourth of July." The long sticks played in perfect time and we kept step to a charm. Up the center, down the side aisles.

We had not proceeded quite half-way down the side aisle when a strong hand unceremoniously twitched me out of the ranks, and I found myself in a seat with my mother, who held on to my arm with an iron grasp and shook me vigorously whenever she could stop her own shaking from hysterical laughter. The meeting broke up without the usual benediction. Ay, but didn't we catch it next day? All but Captain Joe.

FAREWELL GLIMPSE.

The splendor of the summer has gone by, and the russet leafage of late October is falling to the ground. All nature seems to be enjoying a grateful rest, and suggests to the thoughtful mind the sweetest rest that awaits the Christian when the feverish struggle of life shall be over.

At this season the mind seeks for itself a more serious cast of thought, a deeper experience, and a stronger feeling than was induced by the beauty and the maturity of the summer. I have no fellowship with the popular, poetic complaint :

"The melancholy days are come,
The saddest of the year," etc.

It has more misanthropy than truth in it. The autumn's bracing vigor, its long, cool evenings by the cheerful fireside, and the earnest reflections excited by its every-day teachings, make it for me the most desirable season of the year. Its sear decay is not a mournful sight when we remember that the great principle of life abides forever, and that the returning spring will bring to the lightest spray of the willow and the

scantiest mat of grasses a resurrection of verdure and beauty.

The wasted flower-bed by the garden-wall will again grow sweet with delicate myrtle bloom, and the blue gentian and crimson rhododendron will anew variegate the living robe of the hills. The beautiful cannot die ; at its creation God stamped it with immortality.

"A thing of beauty is a joy *forever*."

It is faith rather than poetry which inspires us as we look out upon the manifold works of the Almighty. As the mountain streams grow strong and swell out into richer fullness when the fervid summer is over, so we, sitting on their banks and noting on every hand the tokens of Infinite power and goodness, find our shallow rills of thought deepening into vigorous and refreshing currents, and our hearts growing strong while God reveals himself unto us. We understand and are thankful for the stern discipline of sorrow. It is God's method of teaching, of purifying. We need intellectual grace as well as intellectual strength ; and grief, patiently borne, has a subtile, refining power.

The rough-hewn character may be reliable,

but it is not attractive. There are those who pride themselves upon being "rough diamonds." It is like a disagreeable boy pluming himself upon a dirty face. They glory in the jagged edges which so irritate their neighbors. One cannot help doubting the quality of the diamond at times. God has given to these talent, and strength, and undisputed force of character. But he has not superadded the graces of culture, discipline, and refinement. Each person has to work these out for himself, and the rough diamond is like any ordinary stone without them. There is no outcropping of vanity so annoying as its fancied superiority to polish and culture.

We have "rough diamonds" as well as polished stones in our lake region. Indeed, almost every phase of human nature finds here its representative.

We can scarcely be called a humble-minded people. We believe in ourselves if we doubt every thing else. We have a sublime, serene faith in our own wisdom and capacity. Not in acquired wisdom, but in our inherent brilliance of intellect. I wonder who could tell us any thing that we didn't know before. Few people

ever attempt it. Those who have the hardihood to do so never repeat the attempt. They find that it cannot be done.

I saw the experiment tried not two hours ago. I knew it would fail, and it did.

"I say, Sam Boynton," shouted a waggish-looking fellow on the street, "did you know they'd caught a whale up in Snoog's pond?"

"Caught him, have they? I'm glad of it. I heard they were after one."

"They've just weighed it—weighs two tons."

"Yes, I hooked my steelyards under its gills last week just to heft it. It hasn't gained an ounce since. Whales keep about so always."

The man eyed Sam Boynton with profound respect, but as he went on his way he gave vent to a deep-seated, prolonged whistle, which was very expressive.

We have no public library. We do not need one. We are not dependent on outsiders for our thoughts. Besides, we have found out that thinking is not essential. There is nothing that worries, and frets, and tires one so much as thinking. An esteemed citizen told me in confidence that he could stop thinking at pleasure; that he often stopped for a couple of hours, and

that he always made it a point to stop at once whenever thinking disagreed with him.

In his opinion, thinking was at the bottom of all the evils of society. "Let me just prove it to you, ma'am," he said. "If people had not been a-thinking there wouldn't have been a war. I suppose you can see that?"

Yes, I saw that. "And if there hadn't been a war, we shouldn't have had to pay a tax on every thing more than the thing itself is worth. There wouldn't be any war on taxes either if folks would give up thinking."

I could not dispute that, but I expressed a wish, which he sneered at as "weakly womanish," that his theory of "thinking" might not become a regular system or institution in my dear native town. I think that our thinking powers would occasion but little trouble if we could somehow have the conceit taken out of us. But it is childish to be always wanting something that we cannot have.

As to religion, we are in the front rank. We serve God whenever we conveniently can. Our churches are crowded on every occasion of special interest, and the choir service is effective in all kinds of weather. Our Sabbath-

schools are up to the times, and their machinery has all the modern improvements. Our sewing circles adopt the approved methods of combining wholesome recreation with money-getting.

Indeed, no one can be blind to the marvelous changes, if not improvements, which have modified our religious life during the last twenty years. Bunyan's footsore pilgrims are glad to get into the shade since the building of the "Celestial Railroad."

To become a Christian, once, it was supposed important not only to experience a change of heart, but to exhibit the effect of that change in the outward conduct. Any body could identify a Christian after a moment's observation of him. Regeneration was the commencement of a new life, and the redeemed spirit experienced a positive distaste for mere worldly pleasures and soulless recreations. The veriest worldling was so far behind these illuminated times as to discover an impropriety in the presence of professors of piety at dancing parties, and also in their children's attendance at dancing schools.

It would have looked inconsistent, to use no

stronger term, for a devout lady to spend three fourths of her time over the details of a fashionable toilet, or to consecrate all the powers of her mind to the maintenance of an aristocratic position.

Private prayer and self-examination were held indispensable, and the doctrines and mandates of the Bible were not classed among whims and oddities. A religious life was a laborious, painstaking life. Its genuineness would have been doubted if it had not cared for the sick and the destitute—if it had spoken no words of comfort to the sorrowful or attempted to reclaim the erring.

It was a life of crosses, of manifold trials, of weariness often, of patient watching and earnest striving to walk worthy of the high profession made before God and man. The baptismal vows were held sacred, and the covenant between the repenting sinner and the reconciled God was fearfully sublime in its eternal bearing upon the soul's interest.

The name of God was spoken reverently, and the sacred truths of revelations were humbly acknowledged.

Nobody thought of whittling off the sharp

corners of the Commandments. Hair-splitting cavilers preferred staying outside of the Church. All these things, so strange and trivial now, had a certain weight and importance in those primitive days.

There are people yet living, besides myself, who can remember when a Christian was expected to "love God with all the heart, and his neighbor as himself;" when he was not considered demented or hopelessly behind the age if he tried to honor God with his substance, and to "do all to the glory of God."

Well, it can't be denied that there was much real enjoyment in that old-fashioned, self-denying way of serving the Lord Jesus. They trod in the low valley of humiliation, but the golden sunbeams of heaven penetrated to the very depths. It seemed full of dark, threatening vapors to those who only looked over the brink, but a steady, serene light cheered the accustomed traveler. Those who lived godly lives suffered the divinely predicted persecution, but there was no power that could touch the precious life hid with Christ in God.

Remembering their contented joy in the midst of tribulation, catching again the gleam

of their radiant faces upon the couch of death, I would fain be the subject of a like experience, a like earnest, living piety. And this in the face of all modern improvements upon God's original plan for saving souls.

Casting aside, as worthless dross, all the speculative tinsel and plausible worldliness which makes the temple of the Master like a "den of thieves," I would clasp to my heart the dear old-fashioned Bible of my ancestors, never yet altered by God's permission, and take it for my chart of life here, and my guide to the purity and happiness of a life in heaven.

NATURAL HISTORY.

A FEW ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SPECIES "BORE."

IT was a raw, cold morning in March, too unpleasant for any body to go out, and not pleasant enough for any body to come in—just such a morning in fact as a tidy housekeeper loves to see, when the week's washing and ironing being done, the universal mending and sorting comes under her inspection. It was such an occupation that the ever-busy fingers of Emily Howard, the wife of our minister, were engaged, and although she was one of the most cheerful and brisk little housekeepers in the world, it must be confessed that a look of dismay settled upon her face as she unfolded piece after piece of boyish attire and surveyed the various rents therein.

Who is not thankful when a good old maiden aunt, with plenty of leisure at her command, presents herself, thimble and needle in hand, in such a domestic crisis as this? Aunt Phebe's

kind face never looked dearer than when it peered into the door on this particular morning. As soon as the work was sorted out, and the business of replacing a button here and a stray tape there was finally commenced, Aunt Phebe turned to her niece and said,

"Have you heard, Emily, about the lady who is giving lectures in Snowton?"

"Yes, aunt."

"She has wonderful talents I am told. I should like to hear her. Don't you think, my dear, that Mr. Howard will invite her to lecture in his pulpit if she comes here?"

The young minister's wife raised her eyes and her hands beseechingly.

"Don't, Aunt Phebe," she exclaimed, "pray, don't mention the thing to George. There is nothing so sure to give him the blues as the advent of one of those self-commissioned lecturers or lecturesses. And I confess I am almost as bad as he is."

"Why, what is the matter?" asked the old lady in some astonishment; "it is a free country. Haven't they a right to lecture if they choose to do so? Don't be unreasonable, Emmy."

"If the right to lecture were all that they

required I would not object, though I should think they might be better employed; but, aunt, their rights should not be suffered to infringe upon the rights of others."

"I don't understand you."

"Why, don't you know that they expect to be conveyed from place to place, and to be sumptuously boarded and lodged at other people's expense? Don't you know that whenever they make a descent they expect that the plans of pastor and people, and often the regular religious services, must lie dormant while they ride their hobby unasked? And don't you know that they expect a liberal remuneration for their services?"

"Why, Emily, how hot you are! It is too bad to grudge them the necessities of life, when, as I've often heard, they spend their time and strength to advance the great interests of society."

"They remind me of a strolling exhorter in Connecticut, who complained piteously that he had gone about doing good till every body hated him!"

Ah! Emily, Emily!"

"Please do not frown and shake your head,

• aunty. Let me give you a little of my experience, and see if you have then a heart to scold me. We had been married and keeping house about six weeks, when the first strolling claimant upon our bounty and services appeared. He was a reformed inebriate, and had come from a neighboring State to enlighten us. No temperance society authorized him—nothing but pure benevolence. The Washingtonian fever was then at its height, and our townsmen participated in the excitement. So George, being inexperienced in such matters, gave him leave to lecture in his pulpit. He was so poorly dressed that we were ashamed of him, and to make him presentable taxed the limited wardrobe of George rather heavily. As we walked to the lecture we indulged—at least I did—in many forebodings, and the crowded house only served to strengthen them. He opened his theme very well indeed, and told in pathetic language of the ruin and sorrow that his love for rum had occasioned, and I drew a long breath of relief as I noticed the interest of the audience. But very soon he began to detail minutely the particulars of each drunken carouse, using the vile bar-room language to express his thoughts.

Presently a powerful oath slipped out, and then another, and I with several other ladies rose and left the house. George stayed behind; but the audience began to be restless, and finally groaned and hissed the speaker down. Now, aunt, after all this public mortification I was obliged to receive him as a guest for the night, and to serve him as I would an honored friend, because ministers are expected to be examples of hospitality."

"It was very trying, my dear, I have no doubt. But such things do not often occur."

"Oftener than you suppose. We have more or less of these annoyances to fear every year."

"Are you never paid for the trouble and expense of their stay with you?"

"Paid! Who do you suppose pays us? Very often we are not thanked even; and once, a lecturer who had stopped with us a few days to recruit his strength and bring up his correspondence—using, by the way, my writing-desk and its contents, including postage stamps—told me the morning he left that my cooking was more suited to hogs than to the human race! Paid, indeed! At such times I am like the head-waiter at a hotel, with this difference—

he gets wages, I do not. What are you laughing at, Aunt Phebe?"

"At your warmth of expression, I think. What was your next experience?"

"Very much like the first, excepting the public shame. It would take a great while to particularize every case. I think that the good lady who was trying so earnestly last summer to dive into the design of Providence in creating fleas, mosquitoes, and bed-bugs, would confer a favor on science in general if she would extend her investigations till she ascertains for what purpose these strolling orators were invented."

"Stop, stop, Emily, you are going too far."

"Wait till I give you another item of my experience before you judge. It was Monday morning, not a year ago, and in common with other people we were washing and otherwise tidying matters about the house. Our work progressed encouragingly; and George having consented to a cold lunch instead of a dinner, we began, at eleven o'clock, to get very encouraging glimpses of the end of the necessary disorder, and of the consequent leisure for rest. I forgot to tell you that an agent for some benevolent object, not connected with our Church,

but under the control of his own, had passed the Sabbath with us, and presented the claims of the society to our people, and his own claim upon our hospitality to us. Jessie, our hired girl, had just been expressing the satisfaction she had felt in his departure, or, as she phrased it, in 'seeing the back seam o' his stockings,' and I was dusting the parlor, which had as usual been turned out of doors, when, without ringing the bell, or even rapping, in walked a tall, gaunt, threadbare specimen of humanity, and unasked took off his hat and overcoat and placed them on the hat-tree. He then proceeded leisurely to seat himself in my best rocking-chair. I stood still a moment, duster in hand, mute with astonishment. Was *I* at home, or was *he*? He soon commenced a rapid introduction of himself and his mission. He was a lecturer, and his mission was to annihilate choir singing in churches, and to put musical instruments out of existence. He was not mercenary. His labors were all gratuitous, given freely out of love for the cause. He only required in turn that his few wants should be supplied, and such collections taken after his lectures as would secure him from need and

keep his mind free from care. More than this he had never asked during thirty long years that he had spent, like one of old, in 'going up and down the earth, and walking to and fro in it.' He did not now propose to lecture, some future time must do for that, for he had exhausted himself in the work of his mission, and his poor old bones needed rest. He had suffered much from the world in general and from clergymen in particular. They had not always appreciated him. Their wives—here he gave me a searching glance—had not always rendered him the attentions that his feeble age required.

"George now came in, and I descended to the kitchen to confer with Jessie about the dinner. I caught her listening at the back parlor door. She had heard the old man's harangue, and her face was a study then. I couldn't reprove her for eaves-dropping, for I rightly conjectured that her motive had been to ascertain the probability of having to cook a dinner.

"Can you go to the market, Jessie?"

"The market, indade! An me in the suds! An it's the cold baked baans, shure, that's good for the like o' him."

"I am afraid he is particular. He says he is ill, Jessie."

"Shure for ye! An its mate that's too hearty for the wake stomach. He's wantin' some wather broth, misthress. O, darlin', lave the dinner to me!"

"Do you think you can manage it?"

"Intirely."

"Pleased by her confident manner, I returned to assist George in the entertainment of our guest. He was extremely talkative, and now that I had leisure to observe him I thought him very disagreeable. No matter what theme George happened to introduce, he invariably talked of himself and his lectures. Cicero himself never had so high an opinion of his own oratory.

"He soon let us know that he had an especial antipathy to children, and to the children of clergymen in particular. He had been in many ministers' families, he told us, sometimes for weeks at a time, and he had been uniformly disgusted with the children. He began to specify cases, some of them among our acquaintances, and was just expressing a charitable hope that our house at least was free from the nuisance,

when our noisy boys, just let loose from school, came laughing and clattering up the stairs. They hushed their voices instantly on seeing a stranger, but went directly to him and offered to shake hands. He pushed his chair back suddenly as far as he could.

"Go away!" he said sternly; "I don't like noisy children."

"Fred and Clarence shrunk out of the room quite abashed and silent; but a twinkle of mirth in the provoked expression of Fred's eye showed that they required no condolence; so I remained in the room. Just then I saw Jessie go through the sitting-room.

"You may put plates on the table for six," I called to her; "it will make your work lighter if you and the children dine with us."

"George nearly laughed out at what he afterward called my spicy spite.

"At the table our guest took it upon himself to correct the boys' behavior. I confess that I never before saw them behave so awkwardly. They made blunder after blunder. The unwonted sense of being watched by censorious eyes took all the ease and natural grace that they possessed from their manners, and Fred, I

think, was several times purposely boorish. He overset a large pitcher of water, plentifully showering Jessie's 'coold baans,' and nearly drowning the pudding. George took no notice, and Jessie was evidently delighted.

"Niver you mind," she said, reaching across the table to assist them; "here's the nice bread and butter for ye. Help yerselves, darlin's."

"Mr. Howard," said the lecturer a moment later, "I shall be obliged to leave the table if that boy is allowed to lick his knife and then put it into the butter."

"Use the butter-knife, Frederick," said George, without looking up.

"It will be needless to tell you any thing more about that meal, or the succeeding ones; but it is certain that by the time our visitor had got thoroughly recruited, our boys had become so disorderly that they might well have furnished him with a new and not very flattering story to relate at his next halting-place.

"He has visited us once since that time; but I hardly think he will come again; for, knowing the sort of person I had to deal with, I treated him with such freezing civility as made him rather uncomfortable, and he only remained two

days with us. I hope at any rate that we have seen the last of him. Now, Aunt Phebe, what right has he to stroll around the country and sponge his living out of clergymen, and people generally?"

"Well, my dear, he is an old man."

"He did it when he was young, aunt; he has spent the prime of life in this manner, and repaid kindness with abuse. There are young men too that get their living in the same business. The cool impertinence with which they present themselves, and make their exorbitant demands upon our time and money, is the most vexatious of all. Of course we cannot bear to turn a person directly out of doors. And if George does not heartily co-operate with them in their designs, he is misrepresented and abused as if he were opposed to all that is good."

"All lecturers do not surely belong to this class, Emily."

"No; O no! But the respectable lecturer does not intrude his services unasked. We know the difference very well."

"The whole class should not be condemned for the sins of a few. We must have charity, Emily."

Good Aunt Phebe was a peacemaker in the best sense; she couldn't bear to *think* evil of any one.

"I am only speaking of cases where charity is out of the question. Do you remember that shabbily dressed colored man who came to our house last week?"

"Yes."

"He is a lecturer upon the subject of slavery, of the Garrison school, I believe. George gave him a good coat and a pair of boots; but he couldn't in conscience introduce him into his pulpit, and allow him to rail in public at all who believe in the rights of the white man as well as in those of the slave. So he became angry; and yesterday he went from house to house in our parish, wearing the coat and boots, and trying to raise a breeze against the minister. Now, you know, aunt, that George is a thorough-going antislavery man."

"It is too bad, I will own; but you know, my dear, that no one will be prejudiced by him. Besides, the poor fellow is very ignorant, and probably attributes Mr. Howard's refusal to his color."

"Very likely. But when you came in, aunt,

you spoke of a lady who is lecturing in Snowton. She is not unknown to me. I met her in Rhode Island two years ago, at the house of a friend. I will tell you how it happened. She came there, unexpectedly, to lecture. Mr. Ellington, who is my friend's husband, is a clergyman. He had several times heard of the intention of some lectresses to honor him with a visit, and had sent short but decisive notes to them declining the honor. He had even hinted to particular friends his resolution to turn those strolling oratoresses from his door if they presumed to come without consulting his wishes. But on that particular Saturday was the great March gale of 1854. Many buildings in the neighborhood were blown down, and the railway station-house was unroofed. In the midst of it all we saw a lady struggling with the wind in her endeavors to reach our door. Of course the door was thrown open and she was assisted to enter; but what was the consternation of our friend when she introduced herself as a temperance lectress. She proposed giving a course of lectures if suitable encouragement were offered, and had intended to have commenced operations that very night, but had been so

delayed by the gale that she had decided to defer it till Sunday evening. Mr. Ellington listened in silence; and when she at last paused to take breath, he coolly directed her to apply to the trustees of the church for liberty to use it.

"I wish to make an engagement with you, sir. I have nothing to do with the trustees of the house. You can, of course, arrange such matters with them. I think very few trustees would object to any use of the church that was approved by their pastor."

"But I do not approve of your lecturing."

"She was not unprepared for this, and I saw by a sidelong glance that she gave him that she was aware of his opinions upon the subject of feminine decorum and modesty, and also that she was determined to carry her point.

"I have a variety of testimonials written by clergymen, some of them particularly recommending me to *you*, sir; I shall be obliged if you will look them over."

"It is wholly unnecessary, madam."

"Here are notices of the press," she continued, producing from her reticule a number of little slips, cut from newspapers, extolling her merits as a speaker, and describing the crowds

who had listened entranced to her persuasive eloquence.

"Here is proof, if you require it, of my ability to speak."

"I have expressed no doubt on that subject, I believe," he replied; "the propriety of your so publicly exercising your talent is what I consider questionable. I can give you no assistance in the matter."

"But if I see your trustees," she said, "and they do not object, you will at least introduce me to the audience?"

"Mr. Ellington hesitated; but feeling sure that the good sense of his brethren would exclude her from his pulpit, and being desirous to end the matter as courteously as possible, he replied in the affirmative.

"All this time she had been awaiting an invitation to remain as a guest in the family during her stay in the place. She threw out various hints to that effect, none of which were noticed; but the increasing severity of the gale accomplished what all her management was unequal to. So an invitation to tea was at length given, not very cordially, perhaps, for the experience of my friends had long before taught them, that

when once the professed stroller's hat and cloak are off, it is impossible to tell when they will be resumed."

"Did she stay; and pray, did she lecture after all?"

"Yes, Aunt Phebe, she stayed and she lectured. She obtained the consent of the trustees, and poor Mr. Ellington introduced her to the audience."

"What sort of a woman is she, Emily? Attractive?"

"Quite the reverse. She has a low, narrow forehead, with very abundant yellow hair. She has lost her front teeth, and squints fearfully."

"How old is she?"

"Forty-two."

"Married, or single?"

"A widow with seven children."

"Goodness! Who supports them?"

"She gets large collections wherever she goes. The novelty of *public* female eloquence helps her, and then she tells a really pitiful story. Lecturing was her only resource, she said, for she had always disliked manual labor. 'You know, my dear Mrs. Howard,' she said to me, 'that when a person thoroughly dislikes

any occupation, it is not likely to prove remunerative.'

"'But a more womanly occupation would be less perplexing,' I replied. 'It would at least save you from many a cool reception in families upon whose hospitality you have no claim.'"

"'O! we do not mind such things in the least. We know them to be incident to our profession, and take them easily. Habit does a great deal, and unflinching firmness is a great leveler of obstacles.' The indifferent air with which she said this cannot be described."

"How did Mr. Ellington take all this?"

"He was greatly perplexed; not, however, by the disagreeable necessity of entertaining her, but by the prospect of her lecturing. She was both dirty and shabby. Her whole appearance was so much against her as to wholly destroy his faith in the newspaper accounts of her eloquence. I think he believed that she wrote those puffs herself."

"Well, she lectured."

"Yes. We kept her from church during the day, and having over night mended and brushed her apparel, we washed her ourselves in strong soap-suds, and dressed her hair, so that in the

evening she looked more presentable. Besides, Mr. Ellington managed to have her stand in the altar, where the light did not fall directly upon her, to the manifest discomfiture of some gentlemen near me, who tried in vain to find out if she were beautiful."

"But the lecture, Emily."

"Yes, it was very good indeed, and was memorized perfectly. Those who had not been behind the scenes pronounced her a talented woman, and many shed tears as she portrayed the domestic trials she had experienced. The collection was a liberal one, and the whole affair passed off admirably."

"Were the lectures her own?"

"No. She let me into some of the secrets of the trade. She had been trained to declaim them. 'Ah!' said a good old lady to me at the close of that lecture, 'she feels every word she says.' She should have heard her, after our return home, when she declared that she was heartily sick of her theme, and was only waiting to get round once more, to commence the advocacy of women's rights. My dear aunt, I have not selected the most trying or the most ridiculous of our experiences in this line. So

long as good kind souls like yourself cheerfully hold open their purses for their benefit, so long will those unauthorized speech-makers go prowling about, and so long shall we be annoyed by their intrusion into our houses. And till clergymen peril their reputation for hospitality by turning them out of doors, we may be sure that they will assert a heavy claim upon the ministerial larder. From such 'squatter sovereignty,' good Lord, deliver us!"

"PROVOKING ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS."

SHE was eighty years old. She sat by the only window that lighted her small room, and watched the last short sunset of the old year. A heavy fall of snow covered the ground and the roofs of the houses, and whiteened the pine forest on the other side of the miniature lake. All night and all day it had been snowing steadily, but at last the sky looked out blue and clear just in time to let the sinking sun once more brighten the face of the departing year.

Here and there were seen stout men and frolicksome boys shoveling the snow from the paths about their homes, or making a way for the thirsty cattle to some adjacent spring. But the old lady scarcely noticed these renewed signs of life. Her thoughts were with the past, away back to those happy New Years' eves when she was a careless child, and only thought

of the toys and pleasures of the holidays. Seventy years is a long time to look back; but she well remembered the coral necklace clasped with gold, that her father had placed upon her neck on the morning of her tenth New-Year's day!

She was married on New-Year's eve. Sixty-two years ago she came, a fair young wife, to be the mistress of the large gray-stone house now falling to decay on that gentle eminence at the south. In the summer it is hidden by the trees, but we can see it now that the willows and birches have lost their foliage. Fair sons and daughters grew up around her, till eleven youthful faces smiled around the hearth, and the music of childish voices filled the wide rooms. But only one of all the household band lived to be twenty years old. Whether the fatal family malady, consumption, spared this one was never known, for she was thrown from a carriage and killed while riding with her father, who was driving a young horse not accustomed to the harness. All the rest sickened and died, one after another, just as life spread its brightest prospects before them. Fair, beautiful blossoms they were, but too delicate for their loveliness to endure.

It was a sad change in the great house when those clear young voices were hushed forever. The old lady shuddered as she remembered the deserted rooms and the desolate winding paths among the shrubbery outside. Still her husband was spared, and for a few years they mourned together and sustained each other. But at last she was left alone. How well she could recall those first hours of anguish when she saw in her husband's diminished strength and hollow cough the sure presage of his coming doom! The unnaturally bright eye had a fearful meaning for her as she met his gaze. There was no skill to stay the progress of the destroyer, and the sad end soon came.

Poverty came also. The splendid family property passed at his death into the hands of a distant connection, and but a mere pittance, raised from the sale of furniture and other valuables, remained for the bereaved widow.

In all their trouble they had never sought after God. He was not in all their thoughts. So far as it was possible they forgot him entirely, and when his chastening hand was laid upon them they rebelled and murmured, and seemed by their continued carelessness and worldliness

to defy his power. I remember, as if it were but yesterday, seeing the two youngest daughters, less than a year before they died, enter their richly-cushioned pew in the church attired in deep mourning, but with mocking smiles upon their lips. There were tears in many eyes that saw them, for with the memory of the fair faces forever gone from that pew still fresh in their hearts, it was not difficult to recognize the fatal beauty of the hectic flush on each delicate cheek.

There were two young men in the pew with them, and they smiled and chatted together, wholly unmindful of the sacred services of the house of God. It was not till the preacher, unable to pursue his solemn theme with such a spectacle of irreverent mirth before him, severely reproved them, that they seemed to be aware that any deference was expected from them. It was the last time they came to church. Laura died in the autumn, and Annie, unable to endure the solitude of home, went to spend the winter amid the gayeties of the city. In May she was brought home in her coffin to be buried. She had ruptured a blood-vessel while dancing at a ball, and lived but four hours afterward. Even

in those last fearful hours vanity triumphed, and all her remaining strength was spent in directing how her body should be attired for the grave.

I remember very well how she looked in the rich open coffin, which was lined, as she had ordered, with crimson satin. Her own dress was white satin, richly trimmed with lace, and cut low in the neck. There were pearls on her arms and neck, white flowers were wreathed in her curls, and her cheeks and lips were painted; but no art could restore the sunken, half-open eyes, or soften the rigidity of the features. Death, unsightly death, was there, made tenfold more repulsive by the efforts to disguise its presence.

But memory brings fairer pictures to the old lady as she sits by the window now that the shadows of night creep into the little room. She is poor and decrepit with age, but she thinks of the time—it is twenty years ago now—when, humbled by long suffering, she kneeled in that same room and found Jesus Christ at last to be “the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely.”

For twenty years her soul has been at rest, and the peace of God has filled her heart, and

it is a look of joyous trust and love that she raises to the evening sky as she says, "It is true that I have now no earthly means of support; I have fuel and food for a day only; but God is my refuge and strength, and not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his knowledge."

Go down the street a few rods, then a short turn to the right, and at the end of a narrow lane you will see a low, brown cottage. A man and a boy of twelve years are busily clearing away the snow in front of the door, and a fat-faced little girl is watching them from the window. As the red tints of the sunset deepen, she turns quickly to a pleasant-looking woman who is sewing by the fire.

"One night more, mamma, and then—"

"Well, what then, child?"

"It will be New-Year's day, mamma. O, *aint* you glad?"

"A little."

"I am very, *very* glad, mamma; and so is Benny."

"Glad of what?" asked her father, now coming in and sitting down by the fire—"glad of what, Nelly?"

"Why, it's New-Year's day to-morrow. Don't you know, papa?"

"Yes, I know so much. But what is it to you, pet, more than any other day?"

"Ask mamma. She knows, and so does Benny."

"And so does papa," said her mother, holding up her work just completed for his inspection. It was a cloak for herself that had already been worn four winters, but now, turned and refitted by her skillful fingers, and brightened by a little new trimming, could scarcely be recognized.

"Well, John, how does it look?"

"Very well," he slowly answered. "Not just like a new one, though."

"But very nice and comfortable for all that. Don't you think so?"

"And so the money that you have saved for a new one is really going to buy Madam Bretton's winter fuel."

"So we agreed, John, if I could make this one do. See how nicely it fits across the shoulders! And the trimming matches it exactly."

"But ten dollars, Ellen, is a large sum for us to give away. A great many comforts could be

bought for ten dollars. You need new dresses ; and this shell of a house, which is a hovel compared to that where the old lady lives, needs a great deal done to it. Besides, there is Benny's jacket already looking threadbare at the elbows—"

"Don't, John, don't talk in that way. If I had spent the money for a cloak it would have bought nothing else, and surely all the luxuries in the world would not make us happy if we knew that madam was suffering."

"But I don't think she would suffer. The town would see to that."

"Do you remember, John," said his wife as she turned away to hide the starting tears—"do you remember when she nursed me through that dreadful fever when Benny was a baby ? Not a neighbor dared to enter the house, and you were quite worn out with waiting on me. She did not wait to think of contagion, but all through those miserable weeks she was an angel of mercy to us all. O, John, what is ten dollars compared—"

"There, there, Ellen, don't say another word. She is welcome to the money a thousand times. I only felt a little worried and poor, because

when the rent is paid to-morrow there will be little left to make the house tight and comfortable for you and the children.'

"We shall manage to get along somehow," returned Ellen, cheerily. "Never fear for that. We have good health now, plenty of work, and no debts. That is what I call being rich. Then, only think, we've a whole pig salted in the cellar, and such a heap of delicious potatoes—real Dovers. Why, the Queen of England never tasted better ones. Then there's our wood for winter all cut and stowed away. We can snap our fingers at want. Poverty may look in at the door if he likes, but he can't come in."

The cloud of care passed from the husband's brow, and he smiled as he patted Nelly's red cheek.

"We'll caulk the doors and windows, John, and paper the cracks in the walls till old winter is quite shut out. Bless me ! what a merry tune that tea-kettle is singing ! See if you can beat it, Nelly, while you help me set the table. Listen ! It sounds like sleigh-bells. Ting a ling, ling."

"It says, 'A happy new year !' mamma," said the child, who had listened intently.

"It says that to you no doubt, darling, for you can think of nothing else. A very sensible wish, too, even for a tea-kettle to utter, and I don't know who is more likely to realize it than ourselves. Steady with those plates, little one. Now, whose merry voice will call brother while I toast the bread?"

"You are a perfect sunbeam, Ellen," said her husband. "I came in with a mountain of care and anxiety on my shoulders, and it has disappeared."

"Is it quite gone?"

"Yes. Not a shadow is left. I can't help often wondering at you. Your burden is heavier than mine, for these little irritating housekeeping perplexities do not fall upon me at all. I believe I should give up at once if they did, but you bear up as cheerfully as if we were secure against misfortune. You are always hopeful, and full of bright anticipations. You are a mystery, Ellen."

"Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' That is God's word, John, and I believe it."

Early in the morning Benny went to the vil-

lage to take home some work that his mother had finished the previous evening. It was a pleasant sight to watch the little fellow as he made his way through the snow. He whistled and sung by turns; he danced, and ran, and whirled round on one foot, and laughed aloud in his exquisite enjoyment of the frosty air. He looked so bright and rosy when he at last delivered his bundle, that the lady of the house called him into the parlor just to have the pleasure of looking at him. It does one good to see a face so full of sunshine.

There were two gentlemen and several ladies in the room, and the boy tried to put on a sedate look, but he couldn't.

"This snow makes fine fun for you lads," said one of the gentlemen. "You enjoy it pretty well, I suppose."

"Yes, sir. But—" Benny's bright, dark eyes glanced round at the strangers present, and he hesitated.

"But what, my boy? Speak out, don't be afraid."

"Why, it's New-Year's day. I wish you a happy new year, sir."

"Bravo!" said the other gentleman, coming

forward, laughing, from the window. "You wish me the same, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. And"—with another shy glance at the ladies—"and every body."

"Indeed. And how much is it to cost?"

The gentleman rattled some loose change in his pocket.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," replied Benny, a little bewildered.

"Why, you expect to be paid for your good wishes, don't you?"

"No, sir," said Benny, emphatically, "I do *not*. Mamma says," he added in a lofty manner, "that good-will is not bought or sold."

"Well done. Bravissimo!"

"Don't tease him, Ned," said the other gentleman. "Come here, my boy, and tell me what it is that makes this such a great and happy day for you."

Benny had often seen this gentleman in his visits to the house with his mother's work. He had seen him also in the Sabbath-school, where he was one of the teachers. His kindly manner and pleasant words had won his boyish regard long ago, and he was quite ready to open his whole heart to him.

"Perhaps you don't know Madam Bretton, who lives up stairs in that house by the big pond where we skate in the evenings—we boys, I mean," Benny explained; "and we build a great fire in the middle of the pond, and we skate backward, and play tag, and draw the girls on our sleds like—like every thing."

"To be sure."

Every body smiled at the child's enthusiasm.

"And Madam Bretton comes out and skates with you," said Ned.

"Don't mind his teasing, Benny," said his friend, almost laughing at the amazed look that spread over the child's face at the bare idea of the old lady on skates. "I have seen Madam Bretton. She lives in one of your houses, Ned, the one that has such a long, sloping roof. Have you forgotten how you used to roll pebbles up and down on the roof on purpose to tease her? A mere boyish *freak*," he added kindly as he saw his friend's face flush at the remembrance.

"But inexcusable even in a boy," was the reply. "I have felt ashamed of such boyish freaks, and wish I could recall them many a time when I have been thousands of miles

away. Is Madam Bretton the tenant that you mentioned as being unable to pay her rent longer?"

"The same."

"You said she would probably come upon the town."

"But she wont go to the town, sir," interposed Benny very decidedly.

"She wont?"

"No, sir, because we are all helping her. I was going to tell you. That is why it is so pleasant and bright to-day," said Benny, looking out to assure himself that the sun did shine brighter than usual.

The gentlemen both cast a puzzled and rather unbelieving look over the boy's patched clothes; but his earnest manner had greatly excited their curiosity.

"Suppose you tell us all about it," said Ned.

"Well, sir, you see, she is very old, eighty years old, mamma says, and we heard last week that she had only wood enough to last a few days and very little to eat. It made us all feel very bad, for you don't know how good she always was to every body when she was strong. Mamma had sold eggs and had done odd jobs at

different houses till she had earned enough to buy a new cloak for herself, besides doing as much as ever for all. It was ten dollars. Do you understand, sir?" asked Benny, who seemed to think his auditors were not so much impressed as they should be at the mention of such an enormous sum.

"Yes, quite well. Go on."

"I saw it all with my own eyes," said Benny. "Ten silver dollars! Well, mamma thought about the old lady, and planned and contrived for her, but nothing came of it till a day or two ago, when she happened to think that she could make over her old cloak and buy wood for Madam Bretton with the money. And she did, sir, and it is a real beauty, and mamma looked prettier with it on this morning than"—the boy cast a shy, curious look at the ladies, who were listening with breathless interest—"than any lady I ever saw."

"What, Benny, prettier than Miss Alice here?"

"O, yes, sir, a great deal." Benny's manner was quite decided. "But that is not all, Mr. Ned. My sister Nellie and I opened *our* savings bank this morning, and we have bought

some tea, and sugar, and bread, and meat enough to last the old lady a week. O, is not New-Year's day a happy day?"

The boy's artless story had moistened every eye in the room with tears. Even Ned, fun-loving Ned, just returned to his native town after ten years' foreign travel, was obliged to turn to the window to conceal his emotions.

"So you see," said Benny in conclusion, "that Madam Bretton wont go to the town."

"That is evident. Well, you are a happy little fellow. Here is the pay for your mother's work, and a dollar for yourself."

"Thank you, sir. I will get butter with it to put in the basket for the old lady."

They all stood at the window to watch the boy as, with renewed antics and whistling, he retraced his path toward home.

"That little lad and his parents shame us all," said Ned at last.

"Not if their example provokes us to love and good works," said one of the ladies. "Suppose we make up a sum sufficient to buy 'mamma' a cloak. What do you think of it, Henry?"

"It would spoil all, in my opinion. They

have made a sacrifice. Let them enjoy the luxury of doing good. But we can assist them in making the old lady comfortable. What are you thinking of, Ned?"

"Of a plan that just occurred to me like an inspiration. Hurrah! It's just the thing if, as I suspect, the lad's parents live in that brown hut up the lane where aunt and I stopped to leave that very bundle of work on Monday."

"That is the place. What is the plan?" asked one of the ladies.

"A secret, Alice. You know, coz, that such things are never intrusted to the care of your sex."

The clear, cold day passed on, and another sunset, as fair as the last, was brightening the western sky. Benny had fed the chickens, as he persisted in calling the matronly hens; he had filled the wood-box by the stove, and brought in the basket of kindling-wood for morning; he had held the pincushion while Nellie undressed her big rag dolly, and was now whistling a low accompaniment to the lullaby that the little girl was singing as she rocked the said dolly to sleep.

His father had not yet come to tea, and his

mother had not returned from Madam Bretton's, where she had been all the afternoon. Benny was used to staying with his sister, and never found it dull work to amuse her, but to-night he did wish that mamma would hurry home. He wanted to know what the old lady thought of her New-Year's gifts, especially the eatables bought with the money he and Nelly had saved.

"Tickled half to death, I'll bet," said he aloud; "and I don't blame her. She don't get such a haul every day. But there comes papa, and I haven't made the tea. Well, here it goes. A good strong cup for New-Year's day."

"No, Benny, make it just as usual."

"You here, mamma? How did you come? "I have watched an hour and didn't see you. Did the old lady like the tea, and the rolls, and the bacon, and the butter, and—"

"Stop, stop, my son. One question at a time. And, first, I am here. Next, I walked down the street as usual. Take care, Benny, you will drop those cups."

"Mamma, what *did* she say of the wood? Did you tell her that Mason had offered to saw it, and that I and Bob Peters are going to bring it up-stairs and pile it up for her? *Didn't* she

think that pat of butter looked nice, mamma? Do tell me every thing."

"How can I? You wont let me speak. Nellie, love, place papa's chair at the table, and when we are all seated I will answer Benny's questions. Papa would like to hear about it too."

"Yes, to be sure I should," answered a hearty voice from the little back room, where John was washing his hands at the sink.

"Will you make haste, papa, please?" urged the impatient boy, who could hardly wait till the blessing of God was invoked upon their humble meal before he broke out afresh.

"Now, mamma, please tell us. What did the old lady say when—"

"Be quiet, Benny," said his father. "Now, Ellen, begin at the beginning and tell us the whole story. Perhaps you would like to rest first."

"I am not tired, thank you. When I went in I thought madam had, for her, a rather anxious look. She didn't look exactly worried, only a little sad. So I asked what was the matter.

"'Nothing very bad,' she replied, 'but I heard to-day that Edward Abbott has come home.

He owns this house, you know, and he will be anxious to rent it. The lower rooms have been empty for a year now.'

"That is strange,' I answered, 'for they are such convenient, nice rooms, I never come in here without wishing we could afford to hire them.'

"I wish you could, my dear. Two of the chambers go with that tenement. I have only this room and that place under the eaves where I keep my wood. I have been thinking that Mr. Abbott will not like to have the rooms empty.'

"But if a family should move in you would be better off. It isn't safe for you to live here alone. I feel very anxious about you when we have such storms as this last. What if you should be taken suddenly ill?'

"I was not thinking of that, Ellen. A strange family might want the whole house, and I can no longer pay the rent even of this little room. Don't look so troubled, my dear. It will all work together for my good; and surely I, who have so often proved the goodness of my Father in heaven, should not distrust him now. He will provide.'

"That is true,' said I, suddenly recollecting my errand. 'Why, only think, I came over this afternoon to tell you that a person, who don't wish to be known, is going to send you dry wood enough to last all winter. And Mason is to cut it, he offered to do it, and the children will pack it under the eaves for you. It will be here directly. And here is a trifle from my little ones, just to show that we don't forget your goodness to us. They saved their pennies instead of buying candy. John and I encouraged them to do so, for candy spoils the teeth, you know.'

"The old lady gave one amazed look at the contents of the basket, and then turned directly round and kneeled down by her chair in the corner. I knew she was thanking God, and I hurried to put all the things in the cupboard out of sight, for I didn't want her to thank me.'

"Why not, mamma? She ought to, I am sure.'

"Ah, Benny, her silent tears of gratitude said more than any words.'

"But what did she say after all, mamma?'

"She had no time to say any thing, for directly a sled loaded with bags, and barrels, and

boxes stopped at the door, and a clear, loud voice asked if Madam Bretton lived there. I ran down stairs to reply, and met a tall, smiling-looking gentleman in the entry.

"I want to speak to Madam Bretton."

"She lives up stairs, sir."

"I have a load of groceries here. Where shall I put them?"

"A new tenant coming in, I suppose?" I said.

"Well, yes, I hope so. Are you Benny Strong's mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so. The same eyes and smile. Here, Tom, put all those things into this room for the present. Now, ma'am, if you please, let us see the old lady."

"He was up the stairs introducing himself before I had crossed the entry, for my heart failed me as I thought that his probable errand was to warn the old lady out. But I followed as soon as I could."

"My name is Edward Abbott," I heard him say. "Do you remember me? You used to call me Neddy when I was a boy and teased you. You have not forgotten me, I hope."

"No, sir. Your features are too like your father's for me to forget them. He was my husband's chum in college, and afterward they were dear friends. It was a long time ago, sir, too long ago for you to remember, but you look now as he did then."

"My father died just a month before I was born, which makes my recollections of him rather indistinct, you see."

"I wish, John, that I could give you an idea of the fun that twinkled all over his face as he spoke."

"No need, Ellen, no need; I knew him when he was a lad."

"He told madam that he came in on an errand."

"I understand," she replied. "You own this house, and I've wanted to see you about it ever since I heard of your return. I have no money to pay the rent longer, and I ought to move out directly. Still I have thought that perhaps I might stay here and pay for it by being useful to the family below if one should move in. I could mend for them, or wash dishes, or do most any of the lighter chores about the house. Don't you think I could, sir?"

"Mr. Abbott had walked to the window, and pretended to be watching the unloading of the sled. It was empty now, and he turned suddenly round.

"'No, ma'am,' said he, 'I don't think you could. You are too old and too good for a household drudge. Bother the rent,' he continued, speaking up very loud, though I'm sure his eyes were full of tears, 'I don't want any rent. Do you take me for a heathen? You can stay here till the day after forever if you want to. Mrs. Strong, those things below are for her. Mr. Henry Clark and the ladies at his house sent them. At least they provided the most of them. You will know how to dispose them conveniently for her use.'

"'All this time he had been backing toward the door, through which he vanished with a hasty 'good day to you both,' before we could collect our wits to utter a word of thanks. There we stood, staring at each other, and laughing and crying like little children."

"I believe you," said John, drawing his coat sleeve across his eyes.

"Well, the wood came, and Mason came to cut it; so I got him to help me arrange the

things. I wish I had brought home a list of them to show you. Flour, and salt pork, and two fine hams, butter, and cheese, and potatoes—O, I can't think of half—but the old lady is provided for till spring, and I am so glad, so thankful! That Mr. Abbott is a true nobleman, John. He has such a bright, cheerful look, it does one good to look at him, and—well, bless me!"

"What is it, Ellen? What do you see?"

"Why, there he is himself, and he is coming straight up the lane to our door."

Benny ran to open the door before the gentleman had time to rap.

"Ah, it is little Ben-evolence, is it?" said Ned.

"No, sir. It's Benny Strong."

"Well, how goes the New Year? Are you tired of it yet?"

"No, indeed. I think," said Benny, hesitating for a word to express his full appreciation of the day, "I think it's tip-top."

"Do you? I agree with you. Is your father in?"

"Yes, sir. And mamma, too. And she says, sir, that the old lady is going it prime. Aint you glad you helped?"

"*Aint* I! You see, my boy, that it takes you and me to finish up things properly; so whenever you need help in such a case you must call on me."

"So I will. I should be *glad* to," said Benny with much earnestness. "And I guess it won't be *our* fault, sir, if folks are not pretty comfortable after this."

Here John, wondering at the child's tardiness, came out to invite his visitor in.

"I can stop but a moment, Mr. Strong. I came to ask a favor of you."

"I shall be glad to oblige you, sir, if I can."

John looked with admiration into the kindly face, which, though browned and roughened by exposure to different climates, was still manly and handsome.

"You have grown old, Mr. Strong, since I saw you last. Ten years have wrought many changes, but you are not much older than myself, I think."

"Two years older. I am thirty-three. We are both older than we were when I helped build the west wing of Squire Clark's house, with you and Miss Alice to oversee the work."

Ned colored and laughed. "I don't realize it.

I don't feel a day older. But you, Mr. Strong, are really getting old too fast."

"I have had to work hard, sir, and what with sickness in my family and the hard times, I have had anxiety enough to wrinkle my forehead a little. But we are all well now, and business is looking up; so we think the future looks quite promising. Perhaps I shall grow young again."

"I hope so. Now for my errand. I have had several chances to-day to rent the house where Madam Bretton lives, but I don't like to put strangers in with her. How would the house suit you? I should like you for a tenant very much. I want some one there who will look after the old lady a little. She tells me that her husband and my father were intimate friends. It was a long time ago, to be sure—you know my father was an old man when he married—but I feel as if she had a claim on my affection and care. Now, if you could go in there I should feel quite easy. I could shift the responsibility to your shoulders. If she happened to get out of pepper or saleratus you could let me know, and save me the trouble of investigating her affairs. Don't say no, Mrs.

Strong. I know it is cold weather, but I could send persons to assist you about moving."

"Ellen is not thinking of the trouble of moving," replied John. "We have not so much to move as to make it a burden. Besides, she has always desired to live in that house. But we have found it difficult to pay the rent of this, and I am afraid we should not be able to pay more. Your house rents for twice the sum we pay."

"What of that? I meant you to understand that Mrs. Strong would pay the rent by looking after the old lady. John Strong, you are not above giving or receiving a kindness. You will really oblige me by agreeing to my terms and moving into the house at once. When will you be ready to move, Mrs. Strong?"

"To-morrow."

"That is right. Shall I send some help?"

"No, sir. But you must let us thank you, for indeed we appreciate—"

"Yes, yes, I know. Excuse me for hurrying away."

"Indeed, sir," persisted Ellen, following him to the door, "I must say one word. We shall be quite rich and—"

"Good evening. A happy New Year to you both. Come, little Benny. The moon is coming up clear and bright. Let us take your sled here, and coast a little on the hill-side yonder. See how it sparkles! It makes me a boy again. I would ask you all to join in our sport, but Benny and I don't want any old folks with us, do we, Benny?"

"He was not in a hurry after all," said Ellen as she stood at the window watching them. "Do come, John, and see them slide. The sled shoots down the hill like an arrow. Don't you hear them laugh and shout?"

"Yes."

"He is only two years younger than you are, John. I wonder how you would look in a frolic like that."

"I would soon show you, Ellen," he replied, his eyes lighting up as he watched the sport, "but if we are to move to-morrow there are many things that I must arrange to-night."

"No, no, John. Sit down here and take Nellie on your knee and let us talk of God's goodness."

For a long hour they sat in the moonlight recalling with grateful hearts their past experi-

ences of God's care and loving-kindness toward them. They made many resolutions for the future, humbly trusting in divine grace for strength to keep them. When all was at last still, and Benny and Nellie were snugly tucked into the low trundle bed for the night, the little girl raised herself on her elbow and inquired,

"What will Madam Bretton say when she knows we are coming, Benny?"

"Say? I don't know. O, I guess," said the boy after a pause, "she'll do as she did to-day—kneel down and thank God."

"A PATCH ON THE KNEE AND GLOVES ON."

BOSTON, Dec. 20, 1856.

DEAR AUNT MARY,—You need not urge me so earnestly to remember my promise to write often to you, for I have only been waiting to get fairly established in my Aunt Augusta's household, so as to test my first impressions before giving them to you. You ask how I like life in this city. Life in the city, as it might be with such facilities for intellectual culture and gratification as appear on every hand, should be delightful; but fashionable city life—at least the poverty-stricken phase of it that I behold—is, of all earthly existence the most unbearable.

It seems that we are genteel people, live on a fashionable street, and in genteel style. I seem to see you open your eyes and ask how it is possible to do this with the limited income of my aunt. That it is not impossible you will acknowledge before you have finished this letter.

It was on a dismal wet evening that I arrived here, not very cold for the last of November, but one of those drizzling, shivering days that make us appreciate the bright glow of a good fire. I had traveled two days and nights without stopping to rest, only catching an occasional cat-nap when overcome with fatigue; and when I bade farewell to the cars and entered the carriage which was to convey me to my aunt's house, I was childish enough to weep for joy in anticipation of the warm welcome that awaited me. I forgot the coldly civil letter that gave me permission to obey my father's dying wish, that, if unmarried, I should spend my eighteenth year under her care, and also the funny hope that she had expressed, that I would, for her daughters' sake, conceal the fact of my being an heiress. I only remembered that she was a dear sister to my father, as you, aunty, were to my mother, and my heart throbbed with delight as I impatiently waited to be folded to her heart.

But of all evenings in the year I had arrived on one sacred to the interests of a fashionable party, and both my aunt and cousins being dressed to go out, you see at once that any

thing like a cordial, heart-cheering hug was out of the question. One glance assured me that it would be an impossible achievement.

"I am glad to see you, Margaret," said my aunt, reaching the tips of her gloved fingers to me, over an amplitude of skirt that reminded me of those enormous pumpkins that decorate our store-room at home, whose stems they all seemed striving to represent by a display of the smallest waists I ever saw.

"I am glad to see you, Margaret," repeated both cousins in exactly the same tone and careless, languid manner of my aunt.

"We did not expect you till to-morrow," pursued my aunt; "you must have traveled very rapidly. I am sorry that we have an engagement this evening, but as you are to stay with us it will make little difference. You will excuse us."

"You will excuse us," repeated the two echoes; to which I replied, in my most accommodating manner, "I shall be very happy to do so."

"Hannah will make you comfortable. There is the bell-cord when you wish to summon her. Come, my dears, the carriage is waiting."

With another formal apology and three fare-

well bows, all made after one pattern, they swept out of the room, and by some inexplicable process were all stowed into one common-sized carriage.

Then I took a long breath and surveyed the apartment. It was handsomely furnished—the mantels, tables, niches, and corner-cabinets each displaying their own appropriate trifles and shining in the gas-light. There were several handsome paintings on the walls, and beneath one of them stood a large piano covered with crimson cloth. But to me there was an indescribable, straitened, uncomfortable expression that seemed to characterize every article of furniture, and endow it with a living, sorrowful identity. I could not help laughing at the absurd fancy then, but have not yet been able to divest myself of the strange impression, or to turn a blind eye to the dumb remonstrances of the immovable chairs, whose helpless rockers seemed doomed to point forever toward the north-east.

Did you know, aunt, that when a fashionable upholsterer places a piece of furniture in a particular place, it is sacrilegious to remove it to another? It doesn't matter how much your

own taste may rebel against the arrangement, or how persistently your innate desire for comfort may suggest an alteration, your drawing-room must be an accurate copy of the fashionable Mrs. Vacuum's or you lose caste in genteel society. Fitness and ease are both *tabooed*.

I had just completed my survey, and was wondering whether I too was becoming a fixture of the room, when the door opened and my Cousin Frederick, a lad of twelve years, entered with his school-books in his hand. He started slightly on seeing me, but came forward directly, saying, in a pleasant, cordial voice, "My Cousin Margaret, I suppose?"

I saw at once that he had not yet outgrown the natural openness of boyhood, and I wondered if city boys were obliged to go through the same refining, or, rather, ironing, process that their sisters were subject to.

"My mother and sisters have just gone out," said Frederick, who seemed to think that I had just entered the house. "They will regret your late arrival, and there being no one at home to receive you but myself. Have you had tea?"

"Not since the day before yesterday."

His gleeful, boyish laugh made me feel quite

at home. "I will call Hannah," he said. "She will show you to your room and make tea for you while you are changing your dress."

I had been standing all this time, wrapped in my cloak and furs. Hannah came directly and soon ushered me into a large chamber, which she said was to be mine during my visit. She has no idea that I come as a boarder, or that I am to stay here more than a week. My room is one of the chambers of state, and is, or was, elegantly furnished, but its whole aspect gave me the same feeling that had been inspired by the parlor below. The same confined, imploring look met me on all sides. I did not dare to touch the curtains, or to alter the position of the dressing-glass, which stood inconveniently near the bed; and as for the half-hour's rest that I had contemplated, I gave it up at once, for the bed seemed to speak from its lowest mattress and refuse to be tumbled. There was no fire in the grate, and rather than expose myself to the chilly temperature of the room, I went down to tea in my traveling dress.

Now please to remember, dear aunt, that I had not enjoyed a regular meal since I left, and that I had been saving my appetite all day, so

as to fully do justice to my first supper with my expectant relatives. In this connection, also, oblige me by recalling to memory the gastro-nomic exploits of which you have seen me capable after a fasting washing-day, and you will understand my feelings as I surveyed the supper spread for me in the dining-room. I was a little dazzled at first by the delicate china service and silver tea-urn, cake-basket, and forks of the same metal as broad as my gardening-fork, and I might have spent some time in admiring them had it not been for the remonstrances of my tantalized stomach.

There were three biscuits on the table about the size of a Mexican dollar, and two slices of sponge cake, so transparently light that I have no doubt that in lieu of spectacles I might have read common-sized print through them. There was some jelly in a cut-glass dish, which had admirably preserved the natural acidity of the crab-apples of which it was made, and consequently defied all attempts made to reduce its bulk. It might have been an heir-loom in the family, being secure in itself from all destructive influences.

When I rose from the table I saw that Han-

nah was astonished to find every crumb eaten, and I have since learned that it is not well-bred to leave nothing on the table but the dishes.

I have filled my sheet already without beginning to give you all of my first evening's experience, but I will write again by to-morrow's mail, hoping to get at the same time an encouraging line from you. Don't let Bessy forget my birds, and see that Blackey is properly rubbed down and exercised. How I long for home and its common-sense delights!

Your affectionate

MAGGIE.

BOSTON, December 21.

DEAR AUNT,—Between you and me I would have paid handsomely, at the close of my first meal here, for the privilege of extemporizing a few buckwheat griddle-cakes in your back kitchen. I did not return to the parlor; I was too sleepy and tired, so I went, shivering all over, back to my own room. I found that, during my short absence, the splendid counterpane and embroidered pillow-cases had, by some pleasant magic, been changed for coarser and less defiant ones, and that several other mustn't-touchables had been removed. The change

insensibly cheered me, and I was contriving various ways to give a more home-like aspect to the room, not forgetting an eligible place for your blue pin-cushion, when Hannah came to ask if I wanted any thing.

"Yes, Hannah, I should like a good fire. This room is damp and chilly."

"Mistress don't allow fires in the sleeping-rooms. She says it is unhealthy."

"But I have been traveling all day and I am cold."

"You had better go down to the parlor, then."

Hannah's manner was obliging, but she was evidently afraid to break any rule of the house.

"What is that stove here for?" I asked.

"Can't say. Never saw a fire in it. Will you please to go down to the parlor?"

"No, but I will come down to the kitchen if you will let me."

"I am afraid, Miss, that the kitchen fire is out. Mistress is very particular, and likes to have the kitchen shut up early."

"Never mind. If the fire is out we'll build another. I know how to make a fire. Come, Hannah, I belong in the country, where folks

believe in being cosy and comfortable. My going shivering to bed is out of the question. I am going to warm my feet and have a dish of hot ginger tea with toasted bread in it. It is nice, Hannah, and you shall have some if you will help me to make it."

Hannah's mouth fairly watered, in spite of her eyes dilating with astonishment and fear; but she only said, "I'm afraid mistress won't like it."

"Like it!" I repeated. "Suppose she don't. Now, Hannah, you are not so foolish as to believe that I am going to bed in my aunt's house, after a long journey, both cold and hungry. You see it isn't reasonable."

"But my mistress is so particular," still urged poor Hannah. "I might lose my place."

"Well, then," said I, a little moved by her deprecatory looks and words, "you keep quiet. Risk nothing, endanger nothing. That is your proverb. Mine is, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.' I have no place to lose; but if I had forty I'd have my ginger tea first."

In a few minutes I had a rousing fire, and the little tea-kettle was singing as merry a tune as could be desired, I humming in concert with it.

It really refreshed me to hustle about among the dishes of the pantry in my old free manner.

"Now for the ginger." I was talking to myself now. "Sugar. Here it is. Cream. O, I forgot that city cows do not give cream! Milk, then."

Hannah caught my arm, looking positively frightened. Don't, Miss; please don't.

It was too late. I had poured it all into my bowl, and a scanty portion it was.

"It was saved for the breakfast coffee," whimpered Hannah disconsolately; "O me! O me! what shall I do?"

"Do? Why, buy more. The milkman comes in the morning, does he not?"

"O yes! But we only engage a particular quantity. Mistress will—"

"Just taste, Hannah; it is good enough for a queen. Where is your bread?"

"There is only enough for breakfast."

"Pooh!" said I, beginning to quote Scripture rather irreverently. "'Take no thought for the morrow.' You're a second Martha, 'careful and troubled about many things.' I wonder if Cousin Fred likes ginger tea. Suppose you ask him, Hannah, while I toast this bread. Tell him we have a plenty."

"I shouldn't dare to. Why, mistress will—"

"Here he comes," I interrupted her; "I hear his step on the stairs."

Hannah again caught my arm, and this time clung to me desperately. "Don't open the door, please. He'll be sure to tell mistress."

"Well, let him. I hope I ain't stealing. There is nobody at home to see to my comfort, and so I see to myself. Where is the sin, I should like to know?"

Fred went on, and Hannah became more composed. I think she began to calculate how much of her own pocket money it would take to replenish the pantry. "If you were visiting me, miss," she said at last, finishing, as she spoke, a tumbler of the refreshing beverage which I had generously handed to her, "I'm sure you'd be welcome to the best, but my mistress calculates so closely that she leaves no room for extras."

"Indeed! Well, Hannah, I wasn't brought up on moonshine, and I can't live on it."

"How long will you stay here?"

"A year."

"Bless me! Then I'm afraid you'll have to get used to our ways."

"Perhaps. But as there is no grace for bor-

rowed troubles, and I am once more tolerably comfortable, I will go to bed."

As I closed the door I looked round and saw Hannah swallow the dregs of my ginger tea and then spread her hands completely over the warm stove. "Ah!" said I, with a pleasant appreciation of self, "I have comforted a fellow-creature as well as myself. I have been doing good unawares."

Hoping that you too will believe in my benevolence, and promising to write again as soon as I hear from you, I remain your own

MAGGIE.

BOSTON, *December 27, 1856.*

MY DEAR GOOD AUNT: You don't happen to know, do you, whether or not my father was delirious when he desired that I should spend my eighteenth year with Aunt Augusta? because, if he was, I am coming home. You ask what aunt said about the ginger tea. Not a word to me, but poor Hannah's eyes were swollen with crying all the next day. I felt so sorry for her that I inwardly vowed that nothing short of absolute starvation should induce me to enter the kitchen again.

I have been obliged to make all my dresses smaller, and, as Aunt Augusta encouragingly says, begin to look gracefully languid and delicate. Four weeks more of dieting—or, rather, *not dieting*—and there will be nothing of me left but my dresses.

It will be rather difficult, aunty, to gratify you with a correct picture of our daily life, because, with all your thrift, you don't begin to know the value of a biscuit. Bread is our staple; and though the Bible expressly declares that man cannot live by bread alone, my aunt persists in refusing to apply this principle to our sex, and insists that it shows a perverted taste to hanker, as I do, after the flesh-pots of Egypt. There is always cake stored in some unknown corner of the house in readiness for unexpected company; but our common fare, in spite of its garnishing of cut-glass and silver, is very much like Dennis M'Pherson's "shouldher o' nothin' widout vegetables."

I get along better than the rest, for Hannah, in consideration of being allowed a share of the same, is always ready to smuggle a supply of contraband crackers and gingerbread into my chamber. These, of necessity, are rather dry,

and I am obliged to eat them just before retiring to rest in order to be secure from interruption, and the unseasonable meal does not promote health or sleep.

You must know that I obtained permission to have a fire in my room on condition that I paid for the coal. The fact of my paying an exorbitant price for board is wholly ignored. I am always spoken of as a visitor, it being ungenteel to take boarders.

I forgot to tell you that my aunt and cousins, with coarse check aprons to cover their elegant silk morning wrappers, and with half-gloves to protect their hands, have been in the habit of spending the forenoon in a little back sitting-room occupied in sewing for the slop-shops. Hannah takes the work in her own name, and is usually supposed to be a miracle of industry. A fire is always ready to be lighted in the parlor, and whenever any of their fashionable associates come in for a morning call, it is the work of a moment to throw off apron and gloves and to assume all the grace of elegant leisure. Hannah is instructed to light the parlor fire on her way to the door.

Well, Aunt Mary, I had no sooner found

myself comfortable in my own room, by my own fire, than the back sitting-room was abandoned, and my dear relatives came, slop-work and all, to help me enjoy myself.

"You see," said Aunt Augusta, "there is plenty of room here, and it is so much better than littering the room below."

Even when they are engaged with company in the evening, Master Fred is sent here to get his lessons.

"Mother," said Harriet this morning, "have you seen Susy Brigham's new brocade? I am dying for one like it."

"Well, dear, don't fret," replied my aunt, with a significant glance at my cozy fire, "perhaps we shall save enough money this winter to get one."

I will not forget to tell you a little circumstance that happened yesterday morning, and which vexed me considerably. Harriet came into the room shivering with the cold, and crouched down on the carpet before the grate while I dressed. Hannah makes my fire as soon as she gets up, and the room was quite warm. Harriet sat still awhile watching me, and I had almost forgotten her presence when

she suddenly exclaimed, "Goodness, cousin, do you wear flannels?"

"I hope so. Don't you?"

"No. I haven't any thing of the sort. Are they comfortable?"

"Very. I thought that in this variable climate flannel was a necessity."

"If it was we could not afford it."

"The Italian corsets that you and Jane are daily squeezed into cost more."

"But those are necessary. Madame Dumont says we should have no form without them."

"Nonsense. I never wore a thing of the sort in my life, and my figure is better than yours."

"Better? You are much larger."

"Because I have had room to breathe."

"Well, I couldn't live without them; they brace me, and I feel better snugly dressed."

"On the principle of the Esquimaux, who wear a light belt to relieve, in some degree, the agonies of starvation."

"Of whom are you speaking, cousin?"

"Of the Esquimaux."

"I don't know them. Country people, are they not?"

"Yes. But speaking of flannel, Harriet, I

will give you money enough to buy it, if you will make it up and wear it."

She took the bill that I offered her, and was thanking me in her languid way when my aunt came in.

"Not dressed, Margaret? Breakfast is nearly ready."

"I will be down directly."

"See, mother," said Harriet, "Cousin Margaret has given me this to purchase flannel."

"Flannel! for what purpose, child?"

"To wear, mother. She wears it, and she does not suffer from the cold as I do."

"She is less fragile and delicate, my dear. But since she has generously given you the money it shall be expended for you. Let me see; it is five dollars. Hannah got twenty for those awkward-looking bracelets that your grandmother gave you, and when this week's work is carried home we can get a set of cameos like Emma Newell's. Your new dress of white satin only needs cameos to perfect it. I am sure we are greatly obliged to you, Margaret."

They went down stairs exulting, and left me mentally vowing that on no pretense should

another penny of mine help to sustain such hollow and really shabby gentility. In my next I will explain to you why I see so little society, and why I suffer myself to pass for a country blunderhead. In the mean time I am your affectionate

MAGGIE.

BOSTON, January 1.

MY DEAR AUNT: A happy New Year to you! For once I have a morning to myself, for my cousins are going through the usual farce of receiving calls and compliments from any one who chooses to claim the privilege. My aunt graciously gave me permission to stay in my room instead of occupying my usual corner, where I generally pass unnoticed. It is my aunt's wish that I attract as little attention as possible till Harriet is settled in life. I do not approach the piano unless Harriet needs my assistance in practicing her lessons; and as to drawing, I have not yet unpacked my pencils and brushes. I have leisure, but no quiet. You will shake your head, I fear, and prophesy that Harry's instructions will be wholly lost; but I am sure I could not sketch a post-and-rail fence among all this slop-work.

Yesterday's mail brought a long letter from Harry, who has at last got his diploma and is a veritable M. D. He complains, in his whimsical manner, of the general healthiness of the season, which prevents an exhibition of his skill.

You ask if my Aunt Augusta has not yet attempted to subdue the free speech and independent manner about which you have so often lectured. Harry mischievously inquires if she has tamed me. As if I were a wild beast. Well, to satisfy you both, I will confess that I attend morning lectures, afternoon lectures, and evening lectures all on the same theme—propriety. And I have not yet acquired the prescribed width of a fashionable yawn, or the true compass of a sneeze.

I was passing the front door this morning on my way to my room, when my attention was attracted by the screams of a little girl who was crossing the street from the opposite walk. She was bonnetless and shoeless, and her little pinched feet looked blue and cold through the holes of her stockings. Hannah, who was polishing the door-knob, stopped short in her work, and after gazing a moment at the child exclaimed, "Why, it is Milly!"

"Who is Milly?" I asked.

"A little girl that Pete Shaw has taken from the almshouse. He uses her dreadfully."

Just then the said Pete came in sight armed with a huge whip, and striding wrathfully along with the whip half raised in anticipation of the torture it was ready to inflict. Whether the child saw sympathy in my looks I am unable to say; but she sprang up the steps and clung to my dress, begging me in the most imploring tones to protect her and send her to her mammy at the almshouse. Her childish cries only served to encourage the man still farther, but my presence operated as a transient restraint upon him, and he bowed surlily as he ordered the child to come down into the street. "Come down here, you young imp! I'll pay you for this. You wont kick up all this row for nothing, you'd better believe."

He saw that the passers-by were pausing to observe him, and he was evidently in a hurry to retreat from his unenviable position.

"Don't hinder her, Miss." I had stooped down and put my arms round the child. "You do it at your peril, I tell ye. I'll have the law on ye."

"The law!" I repeated contemptuously. "It is brutes like you who should fear the law."

"Margaret! Margaret!" called my aunt from the breakfast room, "you will please to close that door!"

I looked down upon the crowd below, and in many an eye I read sympathy for the poor unfortunate child, and an evident loathing of her persecutor.

"Margaret! Margaret!" still called my aunt.

"Hand over that brat or you'll rue it," fairly bellowed Pete Shaw.

"Is there no one here," I asked, "who will take this poor child back to the almshouse and give the overseers a true account of its barbarous treatment?"

My aunt was at the door now, pulling my dress with one hand and pushing the child back with the other. "For shame, Margaret!" she said angrily,

"I will give this bill—it is three dollars—to any two men who will carry back the child."

"What nonsense, Margaret!" said my aunt, still pulling and pushing.

Two noble men, in mason's attire, sprang up the steps and took the child.

"No, Miss," said the foremost one; "keep your money. Come, little one, you're as safe as if ye were in the top of the old South Church."

I no longer resisted the efforts of my aunt, who drew a sigh of exceeding relief when the crowd was shut out. I only got a glimpse of Pete Shaw as he shook his brawny fist at me and walked off. I resignedly obeyed my aunt's gesture and followed her into the breakfast-room, as sure of a lecture as if I had taken it.

"Sit down, Margaret," she began. "Let me know what occasioned this disgraceful uproar at my door."

I told her the story in a few words. My cousins exchanged looks of astonishment, and Fred laughed, as if it were a very comical affair indeed. I suppose I looked very indignant, for he began an apology. "I am sorry—"

"Be silent, Frederick," interrupted his mother. "Will you be so kind, Margaret, as to tell me if you have been educated without any regard to decorum?"

"If you mean to ask, aunt, whether I have been taught to be wholly unmindful of the sorrows of others, I must confess that that is a branch of study of which my Aunt Mary is

ignorant, and, as a matter of course, her niece is no wiser."

"Because," continued Aunt Augusta, "it is a very unfortunate circumstance for a young lady to grow up without any sense of propriety—a young lady of fortune, too, and not deficient in natural talent."

"I thought, aunt," I answered demurely, "that my wealth was not to be mentioned here, lest it should mar the matrimonial prospects of my cousins."

If this little hit did not "bring down the house," it produced a perceptible sensation, and had the immediate effect of softening my aunt's magisterial deportment.

"I suppose," I said, when I had sufficiently enjoyed the annoyance of my monitress, "that you have something more to say to me. You did not call me back merely to inquire about my education."

"No, Margaret. I wished to tell you that you are too impulsive, and that this morning's event must not occur again. You must curb that morbid sympathy that leads you beyond the bounds of decorum. Do you suppose that a truly-refined and delicate lady would have been caught in the

awkward place that you occupied this morning, gazed at by the rabble and hugging a dirty pauper from the almshouse? Be candid, Margaret, and own that you would have been amazed if your cousins or myself had been found in such circumstances."

"That is true."

"You see, Margaret, that you are apt to overstep the limits prescribed by genteel society. It is in part owing to your early training, but it is also constitutional. Your mother had the same trait. I have seen her leave a refined circle of friends to rescue a kitten that some boys were amusing themselves with. Fie, Margaret! In tears!"

"I can't help it. My darling mother!"

"Well, well, I am sorry I mentioned her. But while we are on this subject I want to tell you that your behavior last night tried me exceedingly."

"How, aunt?" I dried my tears and summoned my recreant wits to defend myself.

"You were expressly told that a select company would be here, and that, to avoid remarks upon our treatment of so near a relative, I wished you to dress suitably and come into the

parlor. Instead of this you stayed in your room till a late hour, and then burst in upon us in a plain morning wrapper, and after a very slight recognition of the company excused yourself from joining us because you wished to heel and toe Fred's stockings."

"Well, aunt, I thought you would expect some apology and so I came to bring it."

"But did you not think of the strange impression that you would make on the minds of the gentlemen present?"

"No. What does it matter? I did nothing criminal."

"Then your employment, Margaret. Why, Harriet here would be ashamed if any one suspected her of knowing how to knit stockings. But there you stood, with your hand on the door-knob, saying, 'Please excuse me, aunt, I must toe off Fred's stocking.' O Margaret!"

I laughed, for it *was* rather droll, now I come to recall it.

"What else, Aunt Augusta?"

"Why, you are out walking on the common two hours before fashionable people get up."

"They do not see me if they are in bed, so I disgrace no one. I can't live without pure air.

I was brought up to breathe it. I should look as puny and sallow as Harriet and Jane if I did not walk."

"Sallow! puny!" repeated both the young ladies angrily, and I saw that in self-defense I had blundered again.

"It is useless to talk," said my aunt resignedly.

"I should think, Margaret," she added presently, "that mere selfishness would make you more particular. How, with your hoydenish manners, will you ever get a husband?"

"Ah, you do not know! Why, I am already engaged to be married, aunt."

I don't know who expressed the most astonishment at this open avowal, but my aunt was manifestly relieved, and declared that had she been aware of it she would not have introduced me to her set under false colors, but it was too late now to amend. They urged me in vain to tell them the name of my future spouse—an oyster could not have been more reticent. It was not because there is a prospect of Harry's commencing his practice here, under the patronage of Dr. B.; but I felt, aunty, that far down beneath all these impulsive exhibitions

of feeling that they so quarrel with, there was a fountain of joy that a stranger must not intermeddle with. I have written to Harry that for some reasons satisfactory to myself I occupy a humble position in my aunt's circle, and begging him, if he comes here, to conceal our previous acquaintance for a time. Do you think he will? He is so straightforward and truthful that I fear he will not consent to the appearance of deceit, and I often feel that I am acting an unworthy part. What do you think?

Your own

MAGGIE.

BOSTON, *January 20.*

DEAR AUNT MARY: Harry is here; that is, he is in the city. My aunt and cousins have met him twice in society, and he has called here once. Before he came, however, I received sundry little notes full of protestations against the deception, of which we should both be guilty if we met as strangers; to which I unvaryingly replied that if he felt so seriously about it he had better quiet his conscience by staying away altogether.

My aunt is in raptures. She can find no words sufficiently expressive of her admiration

whenever his name is mentioned, which is about four times an hour. It appears that the circle in which he might move as a *protégé* of Dr. B.'s is a peg higher than ours, and his coming among us is therefore a condescension, and only to be accounted for on the ground of some irresistible attraction.

"Of course, Margaret," said my aunt, "you are not a judge of elegant society, but I think his appearance must have impressed even you. What did you think of him?"

"I thought I was—I—that is, I like him very much." Recovering myself from the transient confusion that had seized me on being thus appealed to, I added, "Very likely he is as poor as a church mouse."

"He has position, Margaret," said my aunt in a rather displeased tone, "and a few years of practice will make him wealthy if he is not so already. To be sure," she added reflectively, and quite unconsciously too, "an early day for the wedding would relieve us of some straits; but it would be better to commence in good style even if—"

"Mamma! Mamma!" interrupted Harriet, "you are thinking aloud."

"You are speaking of Dr. Hazeltine, aunt. Is he to be married soon?" I asked, with very considerable promptness.

"How you color, Margaret! If you had not told me of your engagement I should be suspicious of you."

My aunt went on with her day-dream as if she had not been interrupted, and it was settled that as nothing but some special attraction could have drawn Harry into our set, and as no other young lady could boast of the accomplishments and grace of my cousin Harriet, it was as clear as sunlight that a more intimate acquaintance would result in a settlement for my cousin, and a breathing spell for us all.

I felt positively wicked while this delightful picture was being drawn; it seemed so like acting a lie to remain silent; but what right have they to a knowledge of my affairs? Should I get up and say, "If you please, aunt, I shall claim Harry myself?" I only occupy the position in which they placed me, and, as Dr. Hazeltine will never bestow a serious thought upon Harriet, I do not see that I am wronging them by keeping my own counsel. Good-night, dear aunt, I shall write again soon. MAGGIE.

BOSTON, *January 23.*

DEAR AUNT: You have hardly got my last letter, but I have something to tell you, so I write again, I don't know whether I have ever mentioned to you that, in order to have an object for which to walk often, I followed your advice, and sought out a number of poor families. In the course of my calls among them I have several times met Harry, who officiates gratuitously among the same destitute classes, and is often beforehand with me in relieving their wants. I wear a little close hood and a double vail, and have managed, as I supposed, to pass him without being known till this morning.

Once or twice, however, some casual remark of his at my aunt's, where he still visits regularly, had led me to doubt his ignorance of my movements, and to suspect that our frequent meetings could not be wholly accidental.

This morning, as I entered the door of a small attic chamber, I was startled by the cry, "O, Miss, the baby's had a fit!"

I hurried to the straw couch on which the baby lay asleep, and, throwing back my vail, asked the mother if it was out of danger.

"Yes, Miss. But it was a powerful hard one."

"Have you had a doctor?"

"Yes, Miss, he saved its life. It was just dying like when he came in. He is only now gone home to fetch some drops for it. Ah, here he comes!"

Before I could drop my vail, Harry stood by my side. He did not look at all surprised to see me there, but, slightly bowing to me, he began to drop the mixture he had brought into a teacup.

My first impulse was to run, and as soon as he turned to the child I tried to pass him noiselessly, but he heard me and faced me directly. You should have seen the amused expression of his countenance as his eye rapidly glanced over my strange attire. "You look like a gipsy, Maggie," was his first flattering remark.

"Suppose you attend to your patient," I responded in a vexed tone.

"I will if you will promise to remain till I leave. I want to speak to you."

"I sha'n't promise."

"Then I'll call at your aunt's and ask for a private interview."

"O, Harry," I said in alarm, "I'm sure you wont do that!"

"Wait for me, then."

Seeing that he was determined, I submitted, resolved, however, to vex him heartily as soon as an opportunity presented. When we were fairly in the street he began: "Now, Maggie, tell me why I am to visit at your aunt's as a stranger to you."

"I wrote the reason to you."

"It was no reason at all. It does not satisfy me. I feel as if I were acting a part beneath me, and I shall not continue my visits unless I can come in my true character as your betrothed."

"As you please," I answered, for I was vexed with his dictatorial manner. You remember how he made me come in the house when I wanted to watch the heavy shower from the hill. He had the same manner now as if I were a spoiled child. But it changed instantly when he saw how it annoyed me; and though I do like to be governed sometimes, I was glad to see his glance become more gentle.

"Listen to me, Maggie. It is natural that, after being so long absent from you, I should

wish for a little of your society. I have a thousand plans for the future in which you are concerned, and some professional trials that I could almost forget in your presence; but because of some absurd whim, unworthy of us both, I am denied access to you, and only get stray glimpses of you when I call at your home. Now, you must give me some reasonable motive for continuing this course or I shall rebel."

A ludicrous perception of the only reason that could be given here completely upset my vexation and gravity together, and I laughed till the tears covered my cheeks. He did not join in my mirth, but his stern look of surprise did not serve to abridge it in the least, and I think he was considering, as a physician, whether I was not a fit subject for a straight-jacket when I recovered my composure.

"I beg your pardon, Harry. I am very sorry."

"You trifle with me, Maggie. Is my attachment to you so very ridiculous that—"

"No, no, I was thinking of something else. Indeed, Harry, I could not help laughing," said I penitently, swallowing as I spoke a huge giggle, "and if you insist on knowing every thing—"

"I insist on knowing whether this blind game in which I am your partner is worth the trouble of playing. I am tired of being a mere puppet."

"Well," I answered, "if I must be a tattler and gossip in order to please you, I think you need not look so cross about it. I always have to yield my will to yours, and I suppose if I were a few years younger you would shut me in a dark room for disobedience."

"But this is not the reason for our meeting on such strange terms." He was smiling again, but I saw he would not be put off, so I began: "Listen, then. In the first place, my aunt is extremely desirous to marry Harriet well. I favor the plan because it will improve our short commons at home, and a 'goneness' at the stomach is nearly as trying as a vacuum in the brain. You understand? There will be one mouth less to fill."

Dear Aunt Mary, you should have seen his wondering glance.

"In the second place," I continued, "my aunt, though disgusted with my free ways, has taken it into her head that my passable form and face and eligible fortune, together with sundry accomplishments that you wot of, would take the

wind out of the sails of my fair cousin, and has kindly advised me to hide my light under a bushel for a season."

"And that is why you never play or sing. How ridiculous!"

"Don't interrupt me, if you please. Furthermore, my aunt has just fixed on a certain young M. D., who has just begun to enjoy the delights of our circle, as the future—"

"Nonsense, Maggie. Look here, I wonder if you are still trifling with me."

I suppose his long study of my face convinced him that there was more truth than poetry in what I had told him. "And so you are not pining for your country pleasures, but are growing pale and thin for want of—of—"

"Victuals."

He laughed in spite of his vexation.

"But then, Harry, we have so many refined associations. Ah, you should see the elegance of our tea equipage! I declare," I added, suddenly breaking out into my free, natural manner, "if I ever get back to Hubbardsville, where I can order a dinner, it will not be made of stewed shadows. What are you laughing at? I mean to have a farmer's boiled dinner daguerreotyped

and hung in my room if I stay here much longer."

He was still laughing, and without the least reason, so I snatched my arm away and—we were in the park—running a few steps took a long slide on a strip of ice which was nearly worn out by the boys. The amazed looks of the numerous promenaders completed Harry's fun, and it was with a voice fairly choking with merriment that he begged me to be quiet and listen to him.

"In the first place, to adopt your own methodical manner, you must have a little more regard for the usages of society, and not run wild, as you did just now, at the mere sight of a bit of ice."

"A lecture. You are going to scold. I won't stay with you to be scolded." But he held my hand fast.

"I shall keep you," he said, "and lecture you too. I'm sure you need it."

"Need it!" I repeated scornfully. "As if I didn't breakfast, dine, and sup on lectures. I dream of them nights, and there isn't a breath of wind that whistles down our exclusive chimney but repeats over and over, 'Don't, Margaret, O! why *will* you?'"

"Incorrigible! But I have something else to say. Suppose you leave those fractious colts to be subdued by their driver and attend to me."

"My ears are at your service," I replied saucily, for the horses referred to did so resemble our pretty grays at home that I could not bear to lose sight of them. How they made me long for a free gallop over the open country!

"Now, Maggie," said Harry when the colts were out of sight, "I am going to take you home next week, to Aunt Mary's. I am not going to see you lose your health and spirits for such absurd reasons."

"You forget papa's wish."

"No I do not. He wished you to spend your eighteenth year here unless you were married."

"Well?"

"Don't you understand?"

I wasn't such a puss but that I had frequently planned the same way of shortening my exile; but, of course, I did not let him know it, and he must have thought me unusually dull, it took so long to make me comprehend him.

"Do you object to my plan, Maggie?"

"No. I shall be very glad. At least," I added on second thought, "I shall be delighted to see Aunt Mary."

"Shall I speak to your Aunt Augusta?"

"No, indeed! Do you want to see me annihilated? She will find out soon enough all that she needs to know. Aint you ashamed of yourself for making me divulge her plans?"

"Not at all."

"Nor sorry for Harriet's disappointment?"

"No. I think she will survive it."

Just then whom should we meet, walking rapidly toward us, but Aunt Augusta herself, who was out shopping. You can imagine her surprise and anger at meeting me so accompanied. But she only bowed and passed on. I turned in dismay to Harry. His face was radiant with delight. Selfish fellow! I believe he was heartily glad of the inopportune meeting.

"Murder will out," was his first consolatory speech.

"Well, you needn't look so happy. It is nothing to you."

"Indeed! You make me think of an Irish woman that I met this morning. She was carrying a huge turkey, and just before I came up

with her she met a negro, who made quite a display of ivory as his eyes fell on her burden. 'It aint *your* turkey. *You* needn't grin,' said the woman. You are saying the same thing to me, Maggie. Only, you see, it isn't quite true, because I have an interest in the turkey."

"Tell me, then, what shall I do?"

"What does your own heart tell you?"

"It bids me speak the truth, and to ask my aunt's pardon for allowing her to be deceived."

"It whispers good advice and points out the only honorable course. I will go with you to the door. But, first, when will you leave Boston with me?"

"I don't know. I must consult Aunt Mary before I decide," I replied with sudden prudence.

"I will spend this evening with you, and we will both write to her."

I did not object; my hardihood had quite deserted me. I was alive to only one idea, that at last my aunt had a just reason for lecturing me. Had I known how little my transgression of moral principle would affect her, I should have felt less anxiety.

I was not kept long in suspense, for I had scarcely put my cloak and furs away before

Hannah brought a summons for me to come down to the dining-room. Notwithstanding the blame that I was conscious belonged to me, I could hardly forbear laughing aloud at the lugubrious faces that were turned toward the door as I entered. I sat down in silence.

"Margaret," said my aunt, "I think you must have guessed my object in sending for you."

"Yes, aunt." I was resolved to be truthful now.

"How long had you been walking with Dr. Hazeltine when we met?"

"About an hour."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At Mrs. Crosby's. She is the poor seamstress who made up my Thibet."

"How came the doctor there?"

"Her baby had a fit, and he was called in."

My aunt's bent brows relaxed a little, but a new thought occurred to her.

"Have you ever walked with him before?"

"Yes, many times." The frown deepened again.

"When and where?" she asked sternly.

"His father's place joins mine in Hubbards-

ville. He took care of me when I first went to school, and—and—we were always acquainted."

"And he knows your intended husband," interrupted Harriet eagerly; "that accounts for his intimacy with you."

"He ought to know the person you mention, Harriet, for it is to himself that I am engaged."

Harriet's face was scarlet, but she remained silent.

"May I ask, Margaret," said her mother, "why you have deceived us about this acquaintance?"

"I only obeyed your wishes. Do you suppose that Dr. Hazeltine would have allowed people to think that I was the rude, uncultivated girl that you represent me if our engagement had been known?"

"And so while I thought him wholly engrossed by Harriet's charms, he was here in reality to—"

"Contemplate mine. I am sorry, aunt, that I so foolishly submitted to your plan at first, but I had then no idea that Dr. Hazeltine would commence his practice here, and I did not care for society."

"But as the cousin of the rich Miss Arnold, the betrothed of Dr. Hazeltine, my Harriet might so easily have gained admittance into the exclusive society at Dr. B.'s."

"It is too late, aunt. Dr. Hazeltine is coming this evening to arrange the time for my return to Hubbardsville."

"I thought, Margaret, that you were under some obligation to remain here a year. It is not two months, and I have calculated on your board payment for Harriet's spring hat."

Her intense selfishness restored my old mischievous propensity, so I replied: "The obligation ceases with my marriage. Besides, don't you see that if I remain the truth must come out? To be sure, my country manners will be beautiful eccentricities as soon as it is known that I am rich, but that will not blind people to the cheat."

"That is all easily managed," said my aunt. "People will soon understand that, wishing to avoid the attentions that beset an heiress, you chose to be considered poor. It will sound romantic, too, because your devotion to your affianced husband will be a charming reason for

your seclusion, and his visits here will only be attributed to the right cause."

"How much better to be always truthful!" I said.

"There will still be an advantage, girls," continued Aunt Augusta cheerfully; "they will reside in the city, of course, that he may continue his practice, and under the auspices of your cousin, my dears, you can improve your present prospects materially."

I inwardly resolved that neither Harry nor myself should serve as stepping-stones for the young misses before me, and, as a foundation for future action, I declined their offers to serve as bridesmaids, and also my aunt's wish to spend a month at Hubbardsville and oversee the wedding preparations. I am sure that we need no advice, and as to being married in "genteel style," as my aunt phrases it, I would sooner live single forever.

Harry came in the evening, and we had the back parlor to ourselves. He was the same merry fellow who used to help me pop corn in your kitchen, Aunt Mary, and we agreed that our first act after reaching home should be the finishing of the game at snow-balling that we

began before he went to college. I shall not write again before I come home. Indeed, this letter is long enough for three. Harry's letter will tell you when to expect us, and till then I remain your affectionate

MAGGIE.

MISS PHILLISSA'S LETTERS.

MERTOWN, *June 10.*

YOU were right, my dear Kate. If years of patient effort and compliance with every whim of my brother's are powerless to subdue his spirit of domination and contradiction, other methods must be tried or the man will be unendurable.

It is true that I have become somewhat habituated to his contrary spirit, and if the dear girls were to be always here to divide the care of him with me I should find it easier to submit to his dictation than to assert my rights; but there are glimpses of a matrimonial future opening before each of them, and I tremble when I think of being left alone to "beard the lion in his den." Another reason for attempting his reform is that my disposition is losing its natural serenity, as any temper short of a glorified saint's must do here.

His irritable temperament is acquired. It is

not constitutional. From whom could he inherit it? Our mother was an angel of sweetness, and our father was a kind-hearted, agreeable man, with the manners of the old polite school, which, if a little ceremonious, were at least provocative only of good feeling. I am a branch of the family tree, and of all things in this world, I do abominate contention and quarreling.

My brother has been most pleasantly situated all the days of his life. Till his marriage he was never suspected of possessing those arbitrary, intolerant traits, and to his wife belongs the credit of developing them. If she had not been the weakest of all women I could find it in my heart to reproach her even in her grave. What right had she to degrade the dignity of a wife to the position of a menial?

All day long she made it her chief business to find out his likings and dislikings, and to humor the same. Very likely she lay awake half the night that she might contrive means of giving him pleasure. It is to me an inscrutable mystery how such women become wedded to *such* men. Of course, it did not take long to bring out the selfish helplessness

of his nature and to develop the full-fledged domestic tyrant.

I remember my amazement on one of my visits here when, on going down stairs one night at a late hour to fill my water-pitcher, I found him reclining in an easy-chair reading a newspaper, smoking a big, dirty pipe, and she, poor, tired wife, who had groveled in spirit before him all day, was refreshing herself by washing his feet. They had been married three years then. You can picture for yourself her after martyrdom.

What was peculiarly aggravating in the case was the fact that neither of them ever doubted that he was a pattern husband. If I should go down to his room this morning after all the past and say to him, "Clem, you were a heartless tyrant to poor little Paulina," he would think I had lost my senses.

As the children came, one after another, to add to her cares and labors, it never occurred to her or to him that any one of her unreasonable attentions to him could be dropped. If it had she would never, with her yielding temper, have been able to emancipate herself. People used to think it strange that she was not

oftener seen in church, and that she never went into society, and my brother used to tell her that she ought to go out more, especially to church, for the sake of the example; but I spent two Sundays at their house when Clarence and Josiah were babies, and I only wondered that she ever went out at all. When the scarlet fever took the twin boys away she was too heartbroken to go out, and then Cora was born not long after.

But about those Sundays. In the first place, my brother is very particular about his Sunday dinners, and, although they were never then, and are never now, cooked to suit him, he eats as reverently as if it were a part of the religious observance of the day. Paulina used to get up very early in order to superintend the preparations for this devout meal, and the twins used to insist on early rising too. The breakfast must be personally attended to, the deluded woman fancying that she understood his tastes and preferences better than the kitchen-girl. Perhaps she did, but I suspect that they were past finding out, even by himself. It was a late breakfast, because the 'Squire must have his morning nap on Sunday, the day being

appointed for man to rest in. It was church time when the meal was over, and then she had to get the 'Squire ready.

"Here, wife, while I am reading a chapter in the Bible you may put a clean collar on me and brush my hair. Tie the cravat loose. You always forget that unless I remind you."

"Yes, dear."

"And take these slippers up stairs and bring my boots. But first fetch my pipe. I can smoke while I am reading."

"What a curious way to 'tend prayer!" I said involuntarily, but in an undertone fortunately. Both babies beginning to cry, my speech was unheard.

"Paulina, how often must I tell you that nothing annoys me so much as the crying of babies. Can't you keep them still? The tobacco, if you please."

"In a minute, dear. There is a pin pricking Clarence."

"Do you not see that it is nearly time for the bell?"

"Yes, love, I am hurrying. There, baby darling, let mamma go."

"My overcoat needs brushing; you will find

it in the hall. And one of the buttons is nearly off. You can just fasten it with a stitch if it is Sunday."

Do you wonder Paulina died? Even upon her death-bed her chief care seemed to be to extract a promise from somebody to wait upon him. I am glad I was not here. To soothe her I should have promised all she wished, and so have bound myself over, soul and body, to slavery.

Yet, knowing all this, I have tried what consolation and a yielding spirit might do; but I have not submitted to wash and dress a great, fat man, who has muscular power enough to groom forty horses daily. Why should I?

God has fashioned me slenderly, delicately, but not weakly enough in body or mind. Intellectually I am my brother's superior, though he is ignorant of that fact. I was not created just to minister to his gratification, to humor his whims, but to render to him all true, sisterly, womanly service.

How well I remember the morning after my arrival here! My parting with you, dearest Kate, seemed like cutting myself off from all that was enjoyable in life. To whom should I

go for daily, nay, hourly sympathy in all my joys or sorrows! I scarcely looked out of the car window all the way, but gave myself up to the pleasure of making myself miserable. After taking so much pains to become dissatisfied I rather astonished myself by having a good night's sleep and awaking in the best of spirits the next morning. My opinion of the extent of my sacrifice changed considerably as I opened my window and looked out upon one of the most delightful views in the world. You know how entirely it differs from our tame inland town. I thought then, and I have learned since that I was not mistaken, that one could not be wholly without happiness in such a country.

I had forgotten myself and my anticipated troubles when I was roused from my reverie by a voice beneath the window.

"I say! Don't you know her, Fred? I do. That is, I know her name. She has been craning her long neck out of the window by spells ever since sunrise. She belongs down east somewhere, and she is an old maid. What she finds to look at so much I really don't know."

"The bay, perhaps. It is worth looking at. And if she comes from any inland place, Bob, the shipping off the harbor must be a novel sight. I like people who take notice of things."

"Then you will like her. She has got the bump for observing. She wouldn't be the 'Squire's sister otherwise. The faculty runs in the family, I expect."

"Well, Bob, I fancy she will not prohibit your visits to little Miss Maggie till the child is several years older. So you need not hate her in advance."

"That is nonsense, Fred. But I do wish the old maid had kept away. Her name is Phillissa. Nigger name, anyhow."

I started from my seat by the window and leaned to look out at the speakers. They were, as I learned soon afterward, the son and nephew of a near neighbor of my brother's. Both of them were great, awkward boys, somewhere about twenty years of age. In a city they would have been young men already used to society, perhaps tired of it; but they were country boys here.

The youngest one, Bob, had described me very well. I did belong down east, and my

name was Phillissa. I was an old maid, and I had a habit of "craning my long neck" to observe whatever was passing around me. But I thought that a married woman, *not* from down east, with a short neck and a pretty name, might be well excused for particularly noticing the prospect before me.

The beautiful village was laid out in the form of a crescent fronting the sea. Behind it there were hundreds of soft green hills or bluffs rising one above another and fairly shutting it in from the rest of the world. There were houses scattered here and there upon the tops of these lovely eminences. On one of these stood my brother's dwelling, and it was so situated as to command a view of the whole. The "attic of the village," I had christened it, remembering Sidney Smith's quaint cognomen for Edinburgh: "The Garret of the World."

I laughed outright at the embarrassment of my youthful critics as I "craned my long neck" out of the window to observe *them*. The oldest blushed like a girl, and the youngest stammered, by way of apology, "I thought you had gone down-stairs to your breakfast. I heard the bell."

"Did you? Well, *I* didn't hear it. Thank you for telling me."

I was about to close the window when the boy spoke again.

"I say!"

"Well."

"I didn't mean any thing wrong you know."

I laughingly accepted the implied apology and bade him good morning. That was six years ago.

Six years! What a tiny lapse of time to look back upon! and yet six years to come seems to stretch far into the future. Six years since my brother sent for me to be his housekeeper and help him educate his motherless girls. Help him, indeed! I have had to do it all.

Bob is Lieutenant Robert Newleigh now. He has been in the army, and has a scar on his face which it is difficult to see with the naked eye, and another on his arm which looks to me like the place where he was vaccinated. As I write I hear his voice in lively conversation with my pet, Maggie, who is at work in the parlor below me. He is pretending to help her, but I am quite sure that unless Leonore, my pattern niece, shall be inspired by their united

shiftlessness to take the brush into her own hands, the carpet will remain unswept and the furniture undusted.

Hark! It is my brother's voice calling me. There is something or somebody at fault when he calls like that.

"Yes, I am coming," I answer, adding as an admonition to myself to avoid unnecessary hurry, "I shall come when I get ready."

I laid down my pen rather peevishly at the close of the last sentence. But my brother did not detain me long.

"Phillissa," said he the moment I appeared, "I want to know who makes my bed."

"One of the girls, I don't know which. Cora made it yesterday."

"Then I desire you to instruct my daughters in bed-making. Just look at this," throwing open his bedroom door. "Here's a hollow, and there's a hump, and nobody knows how long there has been a slit in that pillow-case. It is perfectly scandalous. There are five women in the house, and such a bed as that! I never slept a wink last night."

"That is not strange, Clement. Your snoring disturbed *me* a good deal, and there is this

wide corridor between our rooms. How could you expect to sleep with such terrific noises coming out of your own head?"

This was quite a new style of reply from me, and my brother dropped his spectacles from his forehead to his nose to look at me.

"Phillissa"—I can give you no idea of his solemn air and tone—"Phillissa, do you not know that the chief ornament of a woman is humility?"

"There is a difference," I said, "between humility and humiliation—humility, that sweet and gracious feeling, the twin sister of peace, and humiliation, the essence of undeserved shame, and wrong, and helplessness."

Before he had time to reply I backed into my room and shut the door. I should like to see the bed that he would not find fault with. Every woman in the house has tried in vain to suit him. There is nothing in *my* Bible against his making it himself.

Cora is in the kitchen learning to make puddings and pies. She is my oldest niece, and is engaged to a clergyman who has not yet commanded a salary sufficient for his own support. This fact puts the wedding-day far in the fu-

ture, but as "distance lends enchantment to the view," she is very happy. She is singing hymns over her work. What a sweet voice it is! She will be the light of the minister's dwelling—when he gets her.

Whew! what a dust! Bob is beating the door-mats against the piazza pillars in spite of Maggie's laughing remonstrances, and the wind just blows the dust back into the house. So, remembering the "long ago" and Bob's unflattering comments, I proceed to "crane my long neck out of the window" and bear a testimony.

"Bob!"

"Ma'am."

"Miss Phillissa is here, sir—the Squire's sister—from down east. She is an old maid, and has the faculty of observing."

Though so long a time had passed since he had thus described me, and the dear boy had served three years in the army, and had been in I don't know how many battles, he remembered it all instantly, and astonished Maggie by coloring rosily and offering the old apology, "I didn't mean any thing wrong, Aunt 'Lissa."

"No, I suppose not. But what has become

of your cousin, Robert? Do you get no tidings of him?"

"Nothing reliable; only contradictory rumors which are got up no one knows how, and are circulated by no one knows whom. I can't tell you how much time and money I have spent since the war closed in chasing these shadows with the vain hope of tracing him."

"Papa says there can be little doubt that he died at Andersonville," said Maggie. "I think he is right. The wonder is that any body lived to get out of that horrid pen. Do you remember, Bob, when we read of the black hole at Calcutta and I fainted away? I was a little girl then, but I should faint now at the thought of Andersonville, only the idea of it makes me so indignant I can't. It is lucky that the abominable rebels have not got to be sentenced by me. Nothing short of the positive annihilation of the whole set would relieve me in the least. Poor Fred! he must have been tempted to believe there was no God, or that he had forgotten them."

Maggie did not look at all like fainting away as she spoke, but her eyes flashed and her cheek crimsoned. Robert dropped the mats,

and began to walk rapidly up and down the short path to the front gate.

"Aunt 'Lissa"—he had learned to call me aunt from Maggie—"I would give every thing I possess for any reliable news of Fred. I went all over that miserable burying-place, but if he sleeps there there is nothing to trace him by. Do you ever see Jack Cushing?"

"I do," said Maggie. "He is first mate of the Isabella now. Why, Bob, didn't you know that when he was at home the year you went away he was here ever so often?"

"No, I did not."

Robert looked slightly aggrieved that he should have been kept in ignorance of any of the family doings. Maggie noticed it and continued:

"He was here last evening. Aunt 'Lissa did not see him. She was writing in her room. O, he is a splendid fellow! I wish you could hear him describe the countries he has visited. And he brought me the *prettiest* India scarf!" added the little coquette.

"I was going to tell Aunt 'Lissa," pursued Robert, gravely, "that I saw Jack Cushing, and he told me that he saw in New York last week

a soldier who was a fellow-prisoner of Fred's. He told him that my cousin escaped from Andersonville nearly two months before he was released, but in so weak a condition that it is doubtful whether he reached any place of safety."

"He may be living yet, Robert," I answered, hopefully.

"I have been so often disappointed that I dare not hope. I wish I could find that soldier. Jack did not ask for his address."

"Are you going away again, Bob?" asked Maggie in a low voice. She was already repenting of her attempt to excite his jealousy.

"Yes. I shall try to follow up this clew."

"How long will you be away?"

"I cannot tell."

"Bob!"

"Yes, Maggie."

"I want to tell you something."

"Yes; what is it?"

The color came and went in her cheek, and he was obliged to repeat his question.

"It is only that Jack comes here to see Leonore."

Did you ever know an old maid who had not

a lively interest in the love affairs of their nieces? I am no exception to the general rule.

But I must stop writing and go down to superintend the dinner. I do not expect to suit the 'Squire, but I begin to feel hungry myself. Let me hear from you as soon as possible or I shall be tempted to reply to my own letter, just to open the way for another.

Affectionately, PHILLISSA BROWN.

MERTOWN, June 28.

I consider it particularly kind of you, my dear friend, to assure me that my letters afford you real pleasure. I know that nothing could induce you to utter an untruth, and so I am suitably encouraged by your sympathy in my perplexities, and your approbation of my feeble attempts to tame the 'Squire.

I have had a new source of anxiety lately. It has been in regard to the evident loves of Margie and Robert. His political opinions differ entirely from my brother's, and he does not hesitate to state and defend them. There has been a good deal of warm talk on both sides.

Do not understand that my brother is decid-

edly opposed to the Government, but that he shows a wonderful acuteness in picking flaws in its administration. Indeed, he seems to agree with its principles as well as with any thing, and would doubtless defend it with all of Robert's enthusiasm if the young fellow was on the side of the opposition.

Maggie has seconded my efforts to keep them apart, and whenever Robert comes in to spend the evening she surprises him by remembering some engagement which necessitates a long walk and his attendance. I mention his name as seldom as possible, and will you believe that this reticence on my part is likely to help on the course of true love? It is even so, for it has put into my wise brother's head that I dislike the boy, and the dear man has spent half his leisure for a week in recounting for my benefit all the good traits that Robert ever exhibited.

To keep him in this state of mind, I, on my part, rack my memory and cross-question the neighbors to gather such particulars of his mischievous childhood, and the short-comings of his youth as shall enable me to take the negative. Between us a pretty memoir of the lad's life is

got up, and every day gives birth to a new edition, improved and enlarged.

Last evening I was in danger of spoiling it all by showing the amusement I could not help feeling. To avert this I introduced a neighbor upon the scene, not bodily, but by representation. It was a rainy evening, and, what is uncommon, only our family were in the sitting-room, and every thing was favorable for a little neighborly backbiting.

Our neighbor is a good woman that the 'Squire cordially dislikes in spite of her worth, and really I don't see how he can help it. It is simply owing to one trait of character, but that one trait makes up the woman. It is what phrenologists call secretiveness. Now, we should not quarrel with this trait if it were not forever thrust in our faces. She takes the utmost pains to conceal from us little unimportant trifles which we should consider it a decided bore to be obliged to know, such as the cost of her Samuel's trousers, or what Felix went to Boston for, or how much her husband made on that last trade.

If it were not for the guard that she sets around these absurd matters we should never

bestow a thought on them; but one cannot see her without knowing that she has something in charge which she will die sooner than reveal.

"Mrs. Lander came in just now to borrow some milk," said Leonore, coming in from the kitchen. "Their cow has strayed away, and it is too rainy to go in search of her."

"Did she tell you all that?" inquired Cora.

"No, indeed; but Ann heard Samuel tell his father."

"I don't like people who are so private about nothing," remarked Maggie.

"Nor I," added Cora. "I feel all in a tremble for fear that I shall find them out."

"If they only had something worth finding; if, for instance, the family had done something that it was ashamed of it would seem more sensible. If Felix were a thief, and Samuel a murderer, and the old man had burnt somebody's house down, they would have something worth concealing. Don't you think so, Aunt 'Lissa?"

My brother laid down his newspaper to hear my reply.

"There is another aspect," I said, "in which this foolish secrecy presents itself to my mind. It destroys confidence. You cannot feel a cor-

dial friendship for a person who thinks it necessary to keep such simple affairs from your knowledge. It shows a want of trust in you."

"Every body has a right to keep their own secrets, I should hope," remarked the 'Squire.

"Yes, an undoubted right. But have you never noticed that in keeping their secrets they lose their friends? Little neighborly inquiries in regard to a person's health and prosperity come up as naturally to our lips as our breath, and when we get snubbed on these we back out of the field."

"I have no patience with female curiosity," said my brother, beginning to warm up.

"Men being destitute of that quality," I put in as a parenthesis. "I wonder who to-day declared himself willing to give ten dollars to find out what Dr. Tingley gave for his horse."

"That is different. The doctor don't mean to let any one know, and —"

"Every body has a right to keep their own secrets. That is your doctrine, remember."

"But you women are impatient if the smallest affairs are hidden from your prying."

"Because it is their insignificance which makes the grievance. *Little* things force them-

selves upon our notice when they are made important enough to be kept from our knowledge. There is not a person in Mertown who cares to know any thing about the family in question, but Mrs. Lander is never off guard for a minute."

"Better so," rejoined my brother, "better so than to be like a sieve which contains nothing."

"Secrecy, my dear girls," I continued, without replying to him, "secrecy is at best a suspicious virtue. A pure life does not need to shun examination. It requires no effort to trust in the open, frank nature whose utterances seem to spring spontaneously from the heart. Frankness has its inconveniences, and there are many base enough to abuse it; but it has the merit of honesty, and it is better to live in a glass house than to be skulking round in dark corners, like mice in a pantry."

"Ah, that reminds me," said the 'Squire, who seemed to experience immense relief as he saw his way clear to a legitimate subject of fault-finding, "that reminds me of the mouse-trap in the store-room. Nobody takes care of it. It is either improperly set or it is not set at all. If a mouse *should* chance to get caught

—which never happens—it might dry up at its leisure, for no one would trouble themselves to take it out. The consequence is that mice have the run of the house. What other vermin we are harboring I don't pretend to know."

I was embroidering a cover for his easy chair, and, instead of replying, began to count the stitches of the pattern aloud.

"One, two, three, yes, three of purple, six of green; and, let me see, this brown has so many shades that it is nearly impossible to count it correctly."

"Phillissa," cried my brother in a voice which reminded me of his own youthful declamations of Cicero's orations, "Phillissa, will you attend to that trap?"

"I don't understand it. Yes, nine of dark-brown, and —"

"I wish you would attend to me."

"I heard what you said."

"There is nothing easier than to set a mouse-trap. It would scarcely occupy five minutes in a day."

"If it is such a trifle and you understand it, you had better take the charge of it. You have more leisure than any of us."

"Hem! It is not my business, I hope, to have the care of such things."

"But you do have the care, it seems, and the trifling labor will be a small addition. I am afraid of mice."

Having now brought him to a theme in which he delights—namely, the weakness and cowardice of my sex—I withdrew from the field, and let him have it all his own way for the rest of the evening. He would have been better pleased with a little contradiction, because it would have given to his tirade the semblance of arguing, which is more dignified than scolding; but it is the hardest work in the world for me to contend. I suppose it would be more sinful to lie, but it would be more agreeable.

It is nearly midnight, and my pen begins to lag, so I will bid you good-night, and wait till to-morrow evening to finish my letter.

June 29.—This has been a lovely day, though a little too warm to be enjoyable. One could not look out upon the fresh green of the meadows and hills, and behold the blue sky serenely smiling over the bluer sea without adoring the Infinite Wisdom which "hath made every thing beautiful in his time." And yet I came very

near spoiling the whole day by allowing myself to get unduly excited over a trifle of as little real consequence as a dry leaf floating by on the wind. Besides, it is a grievance of daily occurrence, and I ought to be accustomed to it. But it seemed so hard, when the birds were singing and the day shining so gloriously, to listen to my brother's growling comments on his breakfast, and to behold his vigorous appropriation of its dainties.

I am thankful that I had the sense to attempt no reply, though any number of stinging rejoinders were quivering on the end of my tongue. When he tasted the fragrant Mocha and declared that water was infinitely preferable to such slops, I only answered by pouring out a goblet of cold water and handing it to him. This did not prevent his drinking four large cups of the coffee.

Robert was here all the afternoon. He leaves home to-morrow to make one more tour in search of his cousin. He has waited a fortnight hoping to discover Fred's fellow-prisoner; but, although he has advertised in all the principal New York papers, and made inquiries by letter, he has heard nothing from him. He is not very

hopeful, but he cannot rest while any means are left untried. And Jack Cushing has gone again. He has spent so short a time here that I have scarcely seen him. He has changed his ship but not his employers, and is now bound for China. Leonore and her father went to New York to see him off. He will be gone a long time; at least, two years seems a long time to look forward to, and when he comes home again there will be a wedding.

As I think over the changes of life and the possible events of the two years of waiting, I wonder at Leonore's cheerful words and manners. It is the good God who has given to youth and health its sanguine hopes and rainbow prospects, and I will not, by the wisdom of experience, dim one color in the bright camera.

After tea Maggie and Robert went off together in the carriage for a drive on the Long Beach. There is nothing pleasanter in fine weather when the tide is down, and the long blue waves, crested with snowy foam, break at a safe distance upon the shore. But as the evening came on the weather changed. The wind blew strongly from the east, and the light

fogs, which had been gathering unnoticed, assumed the forms of clouds, and scudded hither and thither, gradually concentrating their power. I became nervously anxious for their return as the twilight shadows deepened. I sat a long time by the open window listening to the heavy thud of the surf upon the beach as the tide came in, and tormenting myself with conjectures in regard to their absence. I imagined every possible evil, and some that my reason told me were quite impossible. It is only when the tide is down to a certain point that the further end of the beach can be crossed in safety; there is no use in attempting a passage after the water has risen over the sand-bar. I think my brother felt considerable anxiety, for I heard him go several times to the little observatory at the top of the house, but he would only have laughed at me if I had gone to him for sympathy.

They came at last when it was quite dark, and, though I trembled all over with the excitement I had undergone, I hurried down stairs to question them.

My brother stood in the doorway talking to Robert, who, as well as Maggie, was drip-

ping wet. Maggie was without her hat, and her hair, which is long and thick, had become unfastened, and hung over her shoulders like a veil.

"For pity's sake! what has happened to you? Maggie, where's your bonnet?"

"Gone to sea, I expect. Don't be frightened, Aunt 'Lissa. Nothing terrible has taken place."

"Robert, go straight home and get some dry clothes. Don't wait to give us any particulars. If you are not both sick after this then I am mistaken. What *have* you been up to?"

"I shall leave Maggie to tell you, Aunt 'Lissa," said Robert. "I shall take your advice. Good-night."

"But not till she has changed her dress," said her father, turning to Maggie.

"It is salt water, papa. It wont hurt me. I am not cold."

"Don't stop to argue 'about it. Do as I wish without controversy."

"Yes, papa. It is too late to dress again, and I am tired, so I will go to bed, if you please. Good-night, papa."

My brother's face exhibited a ludicrous con-

tention between parental authority and baffled curiosity. A glance from the window showed him that Robert was quite beyond recall. There was never a son of Adam with a more inquisitive nature, and the idea of waiting till morning for the particulars of Maggie's adventure was not to be thought of.

"Phillissa, I suppose you are full of curiosity—women always are—to hear what these children have been doing. It is a silly trait, and ought to be checked; but if Maggie chooses to slip on her dressing-gown and come down just long enough to gratify you, I—I wont object."

"Not on *my* account, thank you. I can stop into her room when I go up stairs and get the details. I shall be going up directly."

My brother arose and walked uneasily up and down the room till I lighted my candle. Then he spoke with his back toward me.

"Phillissa, I think—hem—I believe—in fact, I should like to hear about the affair myself."

"Indeed! Well, there is nothing easier."

I went to the foot of the stairs and called "Maggie."

"Ma'am!"

"Your father wishes you to come down and tell him about your adventure."

"Yes, ma'am."

Maggie came directly, followed by her sisters, and with her usual boldness seated herself upon her father's knees. Neither of the other girls dare do that.

"We were crossing the beach on our return," she began, "and were about half a mile this side of that narrow part, when the carriage suddenly sank in a soft place which must have been got up for the occasion, for we never saw it before. It is higher than the regular track, but the tide came in so fast that I did not like to drive nearer. You know that fence by the salt meadows, papa?"

"Yes."

"Well, it was close by that, and quite safe, unless the waves are uncommon. We got out of the carriage and Robert pushed, and the horse pulled, and I helped them both, but we could not start it. So Robert was obliged to leave us and go in search of help. The nearest house was Quinny Taylor's, a mile off, at least. Robert tied Zoe to the fence and mounted me

upon a post near by out of the reach of the waves. Imagine my situation, Aunt 'Lissa. Left to myself in the middle of that desolate beach, the great waves rushing up so near as almost to touch my feet, the wind twitching at every part of my dress, and pulling my hair out straight, and the darkness coming on faster than it ever did before. How should you have liked it?"

"Not very well, I think."

"Robert had got but a little way past that old hulk that lies on the beach, though he was quite out of hearing, when Zoe began to kick and plunge. She got her feet entangled in the fence, and I expected every minute to see her fall and break her legs or her neck. I tried to coax her, but she would not let me come near her. Just then I saw Robert returning with a man who happened to be crossing the beach on foot. At that distance they scarcely seemed to move at all, and I screamed as loud as I could to hurry them, but the noise of the surf drowned my voice. I made signals of distress with my handkerchief, but the wind took it out of my hands, and I saw it no more. Then I took off my hat and swung it round and round by

the strings till they were near enough to see it, when that too blew away. I thought I could not afford to lose it, so I got off my post and began to chase it. You should have seen my hair spread itself out on the breeze."

"I can fancy how it looked from present appearances."

"But the hat was the most provoking. It would lie as still as possible on the wet sand till I stooped to pick it up, and then it would whirl over and over, as if it had a malicious pleasure in keeping just out of my reach. I have no doubt it had, but I guess it has repented by this time. I was glad to see Robert trying to head the thing off, for it was hopeless to try to overtake it. But we had each in the pursuit unconsciously approached nearer and nearer to the sea, and just as we met and both stooped to seize the truant, a big wave broke directly over us and left us seated flat upon the sand. That is how we got so wet. The retiring wave took the hat out to sea. Robert tied his handkerchief over my head as soon as we got out of the reach of the waves and could stop laughing. In the mean time

the man had extricated the horse, and the carriage being once more brought to the surface of things, we got in and struck a bee line for home."

"Quite an adventure," said the squire. "I suppose you enjoyed it, though."

"Well, I *did* rather like it."

I have written all this since the rest of the household retired to bed. I hope the account will interest you as much as it does me. I suppose the young folks were in real danger, but my heart swells with gratitude to the heavenly Providence which kept them in safety. It rains heavily, and the night is a gloomy one to be abroad. There is such a melancholy monotony in the sound of the waves. Good-night.

In love, as ever, PHILLISSA BROWN.

MERTOWN, July 12.

DEAREST KATE,—It is some time since Robert went away, but I must not forget to tell you about his leave-taking. He stopped on his way to the station to bid us good-bye, and promised me, with his eyes on Miss Margaret, to write often. She, little hypocrite, tried with all her might to look unconcerned, and suc-

ceeded so well that I was quite provoked with her. No one would have thought her at all interested in his departure till he turned to leave the house. Then, unable to keep up the deceit a moment longer, she astonished us all by bursting into tears and running away.

Robert's face brightened. Her well-acted indifference had been any thing but satisfactory to him. I think he had not reached the street when I saw the blue ribbons of her new hat fluttering over the top of the hill back of our house. There was a little grove through which he must pass on his way to the depot, and by crossing the field beyond the hill she could easily intercept him.

It was two full hours before she returned, and then she came from quite another direction, with her hands full of mosses and wild flowers. I would not let her think that my old eyes could be so easily blinded.

"Well, my pet, did you meet Robert?"

Her face flushed crimson in a moment, making her prettier than usual, which, in my opinion, is quite needless.

"O, aunty! did you see me?"

"Of course I did. And I shouldn't wonder if

some of the neighbors were looking too. What will Mrs. Lander say? I believe she does not object to a knowledge of other people's affairs, though she keeps her own under lock and key."

"I don't care a straw what she thinks. I wanted to see Robert particularly."

"There is no doubt of that, I should say."

"Aunt 'Lissa, do you think I have acted wrong?"

"No. You acted naturally, that is all. Robert thought it was right, I dare say."

"Yes, he was glad I came. He said, aunt, that he should go away a great deal happier because—because—"

"Ah, do not try to tell me, Maggie. It is all right if Robert approves."

"But you mustn't tell papa and the girls."

"There is nothing to tell, my dear child. None of us have been blind."

"Ah, but nothing was certain till—till this morning."

"No? And yet I could have predicted it all any time during the last five years."

"O, Aunt 'Lissa! Five years ago I was only thirteen."

"But Robert was twenty-two. I knew he would wait for you."

"It was a long time to wait," said Maggie, thoughtfully. "Aunty, wasn't I a rather mischievous child? a tease, you know?"

"You were very much what you are now in those respects."

The conscious shyness of Maggie's manner was something new. "I hope I shall make him happy," she said, "but I do so like to plague him."

As she went slowly through the hall and up the stairs to her room, I thought there was little to fear from a spirit of teasing that was too affectionate to suffer any one to remain uncomfortable more than five minutes together. "They will be a happy couple," I said softly to myself, "but I must not let my brother know that I think so."

There is no need to tell you now that the 'Squire is "peculiar." His particular oddities probably seem very trivial to you, but they make up a great part of our world here. It is impossible to ignore them or get round them; one must either meet them boldly or yield to them passively.

I have mentioned his love of controversy. There is scarcely a subject on which he thinks with other people, and he adheres to his views and notions as stubbornly as a mule. With him disputation is argument, and the most trifling events and subjects are caught up and turned over, and split to pieces, and analyzed, till one is tempted to wish that events would never occur at all, or subjects of converse present themselves. As if the old adversary of peace-loving Christians had a particular spite against our household, there are in convenient neighborhood to us four other controversialists worse than the 'Squire, and scarcely a pleasant evening passes without a call from one or two of them, which lengthens into a visit as the evening progresses, and becomes a *visitation* on the approach of midnight. They come in on purpose to argue and split hairs with the 'Squire. Sometimes, but not often, we have them altogether. Maggie has named them the "Quintet Quarreling Club."

Last winter I tried all manner of expedients to lessen the time spent in these windy encounters. The wood fire, in which my brother delights, was suffered to die out upon the hearth;

I put somber green shades over the lamp and made the room look like a tolerably cheerful sepulcher, and suffered all sorts of personal discomfort in the vain hope of making the visitors uncomfortable. They seemed to enjoy being dismal, and stayed later than ever. There was a dishonesty in their actions which was very trying, to say the least. They would get up and put on their hats and overcoats, as if they were going directly, and then, right in the face of this implied promise to take themselves off, they would talk an extra hour with their hands upon the door-knob, or with the door itself slightly ajar, and the chill air of the long hall drawing through the crevice.

By way of a gentle reminder, I would ask if our clock agreed with the visitor's watch, or at what hour the moon rose, or when it would be full tide, and sometimes inquire with real interest if the wives of these gentlemen sat up till their return. It was all of no use; it made not the slightest difference; the discussion would go on and on, the voices wax louder and higher, and, by midnight, a stranger passing by would suppose that a full-sized theological abscess had come to a head and burst; for it was always

upon devotional and doctrinal points that the debates were hottest.

The girls invariably gathered up their work and left the room as soon as they could do so unobserved. You will ask why I did not follow their example. I did so when I first came to live here, and twice the house was set on fire through my brother's carelessness. I am afraid of fire. It terrifies me to think of being burned out at night, and at home, where every body was so careful, I was always smelling something burning, and prowling about the house to find it. So I always sit up here to put out the lights and fasten the doors of the house myself.

In the summer it is a little better. I sit in my room during the debates, and when the house is still go down to make sure that no stray candles are left burning near the muslin curtains of the sitting-room or among the pine shavings in the wood-house. But I have already begun to dread next winter. It is months ahead, I may not live to see it, the 'Squire or his neighbors may be past disputing, there may be a revival of religion, indeed, there are many possibilities in my favor, but the probability is

a bugbear that shadows every thing. I foresee the evil, but I see no way to hide myself.

"What shall I do, girls?" I ask for the fiftieth time, I dare say.

"Do?" says Cora. "Why, do as we do."

"But I can't, my dear."

"But I would," says Maggie. "Clear out and let them go it. We have grand times in the kitchen."

"What would your father say?"

"He wouldn't care," says Leonore. "Do you suppose he ever thinks where we are after the quarrel has fairly set in?"

"Discussion, my dear," I correct her. "They do not really quarrel."

"It's the same thing," said Cora, and she evidently thought so.

"I wish your father would permit you to have a fire by yourselves. The kitchen is hardly a proper place for you. Besides, it is rather crowding Ann. She has her own company sometimes, you know."

"Yes, but we have got acquainted with all her Irish aunts and cousins, and they don't mind our being present. I expect," says Maggie demurely, "that they all know how we are situ-

ated. Now, Aunt 'Lissa, dear, don't look so horrified! I am sure I am sorry for you, for I suppose papa would make a fuss if you should do as we do and leave him quite to himself. But I am surprised that you don't invite company of your own to spend the evenings. There is the Widow Lawton and her Sister Phœbe, and Angelina Cross and the Widow Peyton."

If you had been here, dear Kate, you would not have understood the chorus of laughter that followed Maggie's speech. She went on as soberly as if we were all crying, "Now, blessed be the power which gave to man his share of follies! Don't you see the way clear before you? You need society. We young madcaps are of no account—"

"My pet!" I remonstrated.

"Yes, you need society. There is plenty of it close at hand. Good society, too. Intellectual; just your sort. Why shouldn't you have it? I am sure papa would not hinder you."

I did not answer, but I went up to my room to think it over. I have never told you that the 'Squire has a nervous fear of all single women, especially widows. He seems to labor under the impression that they all wish to ap-

propriate him matrimonially, and that they will somehow contrive to do it without his knowledge or consent. I suppose he never meets a single woman, even in church, without a feeling of insecurity, and any polite or neighborly inquiry on their part, a chance meeting in the street, or a smile of recognition, are each directly construed into courtship of himself, and rank in his mind with other crimes, such as assault and battery.

But I will leave this subject and tell you of something that happened yesterday. After dinner I went to call on a sick neighbor, Mr. Haze. He had been ill a fortnight, but not seriously, and we supposed he was recovering till his wife sent for me this morning. I found him dangerously sick, but wholly unaware of his danger.

For many years he has been a warm defender of, and apparently earnest believer in, the doctrine of universal salvation, and some of my brother's stoutest arguments have been addressed to him. His theory is one which is very easily upset, and I have been often surprised to see him cling to it with an easy, satisfied way after its frail props have been knocked aside.

The doctor was with him when I arrived, and he came into the hall to meet me with so grave a face that I was alarmed at once. He is not our family physician, for among my brother's disbeliefs is an utter distrust of all doctors; but I had met him several times in the house of a sick neighbor, and I knew him to be held in great esteem in all the region, and to be as eminent for piety as for skill in medicine. So when he came forward and shook hands, with that sad look of anxiety on his face, I knew how to interpret it.

"So you think he is very ill," I said in a low voice.

"He is, indeed, Miss Phillissa. I am very glad to meet you here. I have a very painful commission to intrust to you. I have tried to execute it myself; but he is too stupid now to realize what I say. But he will rally from this dozing state, and then you must tell him; make him understand if you can that a few hours of life is all that he can look forward to. Do not be afraid to arouse him or to speak plainly. No," said the doctor, answering my looks, "there is no hope for him—none."

"Let his wife speak to him, doctor, I cannot."

"She will not. I have been urging her to do so. 'If he must die,' she says, 'let him die in peace.' But to me there is something very awful in the idea of appearing so suddenly in the presence of our Judge without one moment given to serious preparation. If Mr. Haze has a short interval of reason and ease from bodily pain, as I think he will, who shall dare to wrest from him the precious privilege of sincerely offering the prayer of the publican, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

"I have little faith," I said, "in death-bed conversions."

"And yet, Miss Phillissa, God accepts those who come at the eleventh hour."

"Have you conversed with him?"

"I have attempted to do so, but I did not succeed in making him realize the truth. Till this morning I had a strong hope that he would recover, and it was important not to agitate him. But there is no chance for him now. You will tell him so, Miss Phillissa?"

"I will try."

As soon as the doctor was gone I went into the sick-room, hoping to persuade poor Mrs. Haze to allow me to take her place, but I could

not persuade her to leave him for a moment. Poor woman! she had stood by him or sat on the bedside for three days and nights, and was so exhausted that she dozed even as she bent over his pillow; but no entreaties could induce her to leave her trust in my hands long enough to seek the repose she needed so much.

I drew an easy chair close to the bedside. "See," I said, "you can do nothing for him now. Let me place you so that you can lean back on these pillows. You can still hold his hand. It will not be leaving him."

"There is so little time to see him now," she urged piteously.

"I know. But if you sleep while he is dozing you will be able to speak to him when he awakes. He may have some wish to express, and you are too worn out to listen. There, shut your eyes; it will rest them. I will speak to you if he stirs."

She yielded at last, and fell into a heavy sleep which lasted an hour. Was it wrong in me as I watched them both if I wished that the spirit so near to its last journey might quietly depart without again awaking to human life? But a higher wisdom than mine determines the issues

of life and death, and in a little time he began to stir uneasily, gradually shaking off the stupor of sleep and opening his eyes oftener till he was quite awake and recognized me.

"It was kind of you to come, Miss Phillissa."

"How do you feel?"

"I am better."

"You have been very sick, the doctor says."

"Yes, I suppose I have. Barbara, give me some water—some ice-water."

His wife brought the water, but he only tasted it. He seemed to be uneasy, and looked from her to me, and then around the room, as if trying to remember something.

"What was it the doctor said, Barbara? Was I dreaming? or did he really say that I must die? Barbara, what did he say?"

She drew back from the bed without replying, and he turned his eyes upon me. "What did he say, Miss Phillissa? I feel better. Does the doctor think there is any danger?"

"Yes," I answered slowly, for it seemed to me like reading his death-warrant. "The doctor thinks you cannot recover. He expected this easy interval, but it is not a change in your favor."

He covered his face with his hands and asked, "How soon?"

"You have a few hours only."

I shall never forget the look of agony that passed over his face.

"A few hours?" he repeated. "Can this be true? Only a few hours to prepare for an eternity that will be endless? I cannot do it. I need a life-time. My head is too weak to think now. O, Miss Phillissa, what shall I do?"

"Seek for God's mercy," I answered. "It is never too late to appeal to that."

"It is too late for me. I have wasted all these years; a life-time of precious moments like these that are slipping by. I can do nothing now."

"Yet Jesus will receive you if you come to him in penitence."

"I cannot. I am groping in darkness. There is no way out of it."

"Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He will help you. He can change your heart and fit you for his kingdom. Think of the penitent thief, saved in death's extremity."

"No, no, do not talk to me of change now."

But what have I done, after all, that I need to be afraid? It is because I am so weak. What wickedness have I committed?"

"None, my own husband," said his wife earnestly. "Take comfort. You have done no wrong."

"There is no crime of which men can accuse me," he continued eagerly. "I have been as upright in all my dealings as any man in the town. Haven't I helped the poor and been a good citizen, a kind husband and father? Surely God does not require impossibilities. He will accept me."

But even while trying thus to quiet his awakening conscience a strong dread seized upon him, and he finished his laudation of self by groaning out, "I am afraid to die. I am not ready. Send for the doctor. If he could but prolong my life for a day and give me time! Send for him, Barbara. Tell him I can't die yet. How could I let the whole of life slip by without getting ready to die! It is too late now, Barbara, be warned by me. Attend to your eternal interests at once. There is time for you, but I am lost forever."

Again he strove to recall his good deeds, and

offer them as a reason for claiming God's mercy in his behalf.

"I am surely better than most men," he pleaded. "And God is just. Ah, that is a terrible thought. If he were only merciful I might hope, but who can stand before his justice?"

In vain I strove to lead his thoughts to the compassionate Saviour of sinners. He could only think of him as the unerring Judge of the wicked. He was not still a moment, and as his strength gradually declined and he ceased to speak, his wistful, imploring looks were terrible to see.

I stayed with poor Mrs. Haze till it was all over. She is stunned by her trouble now, and goes about the house like one walking in a dream. She does not yet think of her own widowhood. One horrible thought possesses her—that her husband is not saved.

"We must leave him with God," I said to her. "We know he will do right."

"Ah, that does not comfort me if my husband is lost,"

I could not administer consolation. I could only weep with her and pray for her. And this, I reflected, is all that Universalism does for its

disciples in the hour of their extremity. In health our friend had rested contentedly upon its pleasing lying doctrines; but he did not once mention them when he was face to face with death. To his sharpened spiritual senses they showed in their false colors, and were thrown aside as useless.

My brother was greatly agitated when I told him that Mr. Haze was dead. It was only the other night that he was here, and sat with him on the piazza till a late hour discussing some theological question. O those empty, bitter disputations! Could my brother remember them without thinking how much better it would have been to have shown the sweet spirit of charity, the loving meekness and humility of a true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Our whole circle is mournfully affected by this sudden death, and Maggie went shivering from the table when I described that sad death-bed. Cora and Leonore are both, as I trust, Christians; but Maggie has learned from her father to cavil at truth however it is presented, and to doubt all professions of goodness. Yet there are times when I think she is not far from the kingdom of God.

"I would not marry Robert if he were not a Christian, Aunt 'Lissa," she said this morning. "I should lose my senses if he were to die like Mr. Haze."

"What if he should make the same resolution in regard to choosing a wife? What then, my pet?"

"He would show his wisdom, I think."

But I noticed the slight trembling in her voice as she answered thus lightly.

My sheet is full and I must close. Let me get a letter from you next week. It seems a great while since I heard from you.

Affectionately, PHILLISSA BROWN.

MERTOWN, *October 23.*

It is true, dearest Kate, that you have some reason to complain of me. It has been no want of time, or even inclination, that has kept me silent; but just the uncertainty of Robert Newland's movements, and the hope of soon being able to write you some news of Fred.

It will be scarcely possible now for me to obey your injunction and begin this letter just where the last one left off, but I can give you a general idea of what we have been doing.

There has been a change observable in the 'Squire since poor Mr. Haze died. Not a lasting, radical change, but a change that comes and goes by fits and starts, and shows the old nature unchanged after all. The evening controversies at our house are not given up, but they are cooler, and the combatants keep better hours. The theme of universal salvation is wholly let alone. I truly regret the poor man's death, but if he *must* die I hope it is not wrong to rejoice that one bone of contention is buried with him.

But there are many other bones for which I should be glad to find a sepulcher—one very old bone, of which I have just had a glimpse. Shall I show it to you?

At the tea-table my brother undertook to convince me that hot buttered toast, of which he is extravagantly fond, ought never to be eaten.

"An indigestible mess, full of nightmare and incipient dyspepsia, only fit for the gizzard of an ostrich," was his flattering comment on its appearance. I knew that he said this from sheer love of 'fault-finding, and that he would directly help himself to the lion's portion, so

I touched the bell. "Ann," said I quietly, "you may take this toast away, and bring some cold bread." My brother started. I believe he would have countermanded my order, but a smothered laugh from the girls drew his attention to them and they were forthwith dismissed from the table. Of course they went directly to the kitchen and made a hearty meal from the rejected toast.

It was with the greatest difficulty that I preserved my gravity as we sat opposite to each other silently munching our cold bread. It will be some time before another favorite dish is argued off the table. Political and religious and scientific disputations are bad enough to endure without having one's victuals quarreled over.

"Phyllissa," said my brother solemnly as he moved his chair back from the table, "what do you think of the reasoning powers of women as compared with men?"

I saw that a long tirade against the intellectuality of my sex was in prospect, so I answered coolly, "Compared with men? I did not know that men had any reasoning powers?"

Not another word was said; but as soon as I

could leave without the appearance of running away, I ran up to my room, locked my door, and laughed myself helpless over the whole affair.

But I must let my mind run back several weeks if I answer all your questions. At first we heard from Robert often, but the whole month of September passed without a word from him. Several times he had supposed himself on the eve of success, but invariably had found himself looking up somebody else's relations. But instead of getting discouraged he grew more and more confident that his cousin was alive and would be found at last. Late in August he wrote that he had ascertained that a soldier who had escaped in company with Fred was living in La Grange, Texas, and he was preparing to leave New Orleans directly to find this man.

"He'll never come back," said my brother testily after hearing the letter read. "There is no sense in his wasting his time and money in this way. The people of Texas are half savages. It is the last place that Fred would think of visiting. If he is alive he has wit enough to come home now that the war is over."

"You forget, papa, what Robert says about the effect of the horrible treatment upon the minds of the prisoners. And—and Fred's mother was insane. It is constitutional in her family. There is no telling where the poor fellow may have wandered if his intellect is disordered."

"Pooh! it is easy enough to imagine such things. There is no evidence to my mind that Fred is alive. The fact is, that Robert likes to travel, and this affair of Fred's gives him an excuse for doing so. A soldier's life unsettles a person and gives him a roving disposition."

Maggie bit her lips to keep back her indignant thoughts.

We had the pleasure of listening to remarks like these all through September. They grew more and more bitter as the time passed without any tidings, and at last the 'Squire decided that Robert had no intention of returning himself, even if living, which was doubtful.

Maggie is not easily disheartened. She held up bravely, and was always sure there was a good reason for her daily disappointment in regard to a letter. But the color left her cheek,

and her merry laugh quite deserted her as the weary days of waiting went on. To divert her mind one afternoon when she was unusually thoughtful and silent I proposed a long walk in the woods. She made no objection, though I could see that she was indisposed to make any exertion. But Cora tied on her hat while Leonore brought her parasol, and we were soon on our way. It was a beautiful day. The early frosts had just touched the trees, and the different colors were most lovely. Still it was difficult to interest Maggie. She was evidently borrowing trouble.

"What can be the occasion of Robert's long silence, Aunt 'Lissa?"

"He has doubtless written, my dear. Letters get mislaid often on shorter routes. Do you remember that letter of Cousin Kate's, which started only twelve miles from us and traveled nearly all over the United States before it reached us? I expect that Robert is wondering why you do not answer this letter that you have not received, and, like you, he is tormenting himself to account for your neglect. When he gets safely home I shall laugh at you both."

"You may, Aunt 'Lissa, if he ever gets home."

"Now, Maggie, you must not dwell on that dismal thought. The chances are that he is all right, and if he is not, there will be time for lamentation and mourning after you find it out. Ugh! here's a wasp on my sleeve; brush it off, please."

I have a terror of wasps and hornets and all stinging insects, and my wise brother's arguments and the amusement of my nieces are all thrown away when attempting to reassure me. I know from experience what a wasp's sting is. So as soon as I saw this one, with his long wind-mill wings spread, awkwardly balancing himself for a walk up my sleeve, I began to jump about and make such an ado that Maggie forgot her trouble in laughing at me.

"It is a white-faced one, Aunt 'Lissa; it wont sting."

"O dear! Well, I do despise a white-faced wasp. It is regular low-church. The hypocrite! It has no business to personate a wasp. It ought to be turned out of the synagogue."

"Why, Aunt 'Lissa, you did not want it to sting you, I suppose?"

"No; but it shouldn't pretend to be a wasp. Those black-faced, fiery ones, ready to stab you without a moment's notice, have the real doctrine in them. They are wasps. I respect them."

"I am glad of it," said Maggie, laughing, "for there is one of them on your bonnet. And see," she continued as she bent a little birch toward me, "here's a nest of them."

"You don't! O dear! Get out!" I gave but one look at the nest as I snatched my bonnet from my head, threw it away, and ran for dear life. The low-church wasp rose in my estimation at every step, and its peaceable qualities put on a certain dignity. Maggie followed me as fast as she could for laughing, bringing my bonnet with her and thoroughly enjoying my fright. I will not deny that I exhibited quite as much of this as I felt; it was so charming to see her look like her old self again. So I kept on till I was clear of the wood and safe in the high road. Then I sat down to recover my breath and wait for Maggie to come up.

"Well done, Aunt 'Lissa! I knew you were the quickest little woman in the world, but I

had no idea you could run like that. Do you know that you have cleared two stone walls and a tolerably high fence without once stopping to measure them? As the boys say, 'I'll bet on you after this.'"

"Nonsense, my dear. You know there are very convenient steps at each of these barriers. It is the regular path across the fields, isn't it?"

"Yes." Maggie answered with a bright blush, for which I could not account till I remembered the morning of Robert's departure.

"Well, aunt, where shall we go now?"

"Anywhere you please."

"Let us go to the post-office."

"Yes, but do not expect a letter."

It was nearly a mile to the post-office, but the day was so lovely that it was a pleasure to be out of doors. And there was a letter.

Maggie could hardly believe her eyes when the large envelope, which she knew contained so much, was handed to her.

"Let us find a quiet place, Aunt 'Lissa, and read what Robert says before we go home."

"Where is the letter mailed?"

"At New Orleans."

Maggie was soon lost in her letter, while I

sat waiting patiently to hear if there was any news of Fred.

"In a minute," was her response to my repeated inquiries. At last I laid violent hands on the letter itself.

"I will take it away, Maggie, if you do not tell me if he has heard from Fred."

"Yes, yes, he has found him at last. He is in New Orleans, and has never been in Texas at all."

"Then Robert had his journey for nothing."

"No, for it was at Austin that he first got any reliable intelligence."

"But how is Fred? Why didn't he come home? Is he sick? Why has he kept his whereabouts so private? If he couldn't write to us himself, I suppose there is some one in the city who could. What does he say for himself? Maggie, why don't you tell me?"

"You gave me no chance, Aunt 'Lissa. Fred is very much altered, Robert says—in mind more than in person. The horrors of Andersonville were too much for him. You know how tender-hearted he is. He is rational at times, and since he has recognized his cousin seems to feel easy. All the time he has suffered

from a fear of being recaptured, and would neither tell his name nor where he belonged. He is in a hospital, well cared for, and Robert thinks he will be able to start for home next week. That is all there is about Fred," said Maggie, coloring rosily as she saw me glance at the closely-written sheets which she was folding. How happy she looked!

"I think Andersonville must make many infidels," was her next remark as we walked thoughtfully homeward.

"Why, my pet?"

"Because it does not seem as if a merciful and powerful Being could suffer such wrong to his creatures. To Christian patriots, too."

"What we know not now we shall know hereafter. We cannot comprehend the infinite plans of the Almighty. It is useless to speculate upon such subjects. There has probably been no circumstance of the war which has so well unmasked the diabolical cruelty of the South as its exhibition at Andersonville. The European sympathizers with the rebellion can now understand and appreciate its chivalry."

"As if it were worth while, auntie, for all this misery to be endured just to enlighten

France and England when it is not of the least consequence what either nation thinks of us!"

"Well, well, my dear, we will not argue. Your father can do that for us all."

As soon as we got home I sent Maggie to her room to read her letter, while I spread the good news it contained. My brother tried hard to disguise his joy, but he did not succeed. Even while his lips grumbled, his eyes shone with thankful gladness. There is a warm, good heart under his rough outside, and he has been so sensible and considerate for a week that I am afraid he is going to die.

Mrs. Peyton came over to spend the evening with me. She is a widow, about forty years old, and one of the most attractive women I ever saw. You will understand that I improved Maggie's hint in seeking her acquaintance, and that the Quintet Quarreling Club—Q. Q. C.—will not have it all their own way during the approaching winter. The 'Squire was in great dread all the evening, though he could not help admiring her. Her conversational powers are superior to those of most women, for she has read a great deal, and is an independent thinker.

Once or twice, when the conversation happened to turn upon the events of the war and the present policy of the Government, I think my brother quite forgot that she was a woman and a widow, for he contradicted her without ceremony, commencing his remarks with, "Now, *sir*, let me show you that you know nothing about it." But generally his sense of danger from her presence kept him quiet.

Maggie was in the room, with her cheerfulness quite restored, ready to quarrel with her father or to do any thing else for the general good. Altogether we had a delightful time, and it shall not be the last of the kind if I can help it.

Mrs. Peyton gave us an amusing account of a young niece of hers. She belongs to a family who have not favored the war or given a cent to aid the country in its need, but whose patriotism has been confined to finding fault with all that has been done to maintain the Union cause. The young lady had a lover, and they were expecting to be married soon when the war began. The lover was a good, respectable, but rather ordinary young man, with no positive opinions or principles on any subject. He was not cour-

ageous enough to enlist as a soldier, and both he and his betrothed lived in constant fear of his being drafted into the service. The scornful contempt of the young men around him who were bravely responding to the call of the country, and even the mirthful ridicule of the fairer sex, were unheeded; it were small consolation to be applauded by these after being killed in battle. His head, small and empty as it was, was all the head he had, and he was naturally tender of it; so, to avoid the draft, he left home and went to Canada. No one, excepting his mother and his affianced wife, knew what had become of him, though many suspected the truth. Of course the marriage was delayed, and the wedding outfit packed away till more auspicious times. There were no letters written during the war, the young lady having an impression that if his abode were known the United States would straightway require the British authorities to hand the little fellow over to be tried and shot for desertion. But when the war was over she naturally began to look after him and marvel at his non-appearance. "You, Miss Maggie," said Mrs. Peyton, "will know how to pity her when I tell you that she

has just learned that he has been two years married to a pretty Scotch girl, has a bright boy about fifteen months old, and has settled down into a loyal subject of good Queen Victoria."

"Served her right," said Maggie. "She don't deserve a husband, though the love of such a poltroon is scarcely worth mentioning."

"He seems to have prospered," said my brother.

"Yes. I suppose he was not to blame if he had no manliness in him. He couldn't exhibit a noble spirit or an unselfish love of his country because he hadn't either. He was honest at least, poor fellow."

"I wish she had been engaged to David Malloys, and had transplanted him to the British Provinces," said Maggie suddenly.

"Why, my dear?" asked her father in an amused tone.

"You know, papa. Just listen," said Maggie, throwing up the window. We all smiled, for, crooning along upon the air, as if every note was bursting with agony, came the wailing sounds of a fiddle.

"He is a lazy, shiftless fellow, papa. He

makes the whole neighborhood hideous. Aren't you one of the select men? I complain of him as a public nuisance. His wife told me that he had seven fiddles, one for every day in the week, and she isn't sure whether she has her senses left or not. He repairs fiddles and tunes them, and gets them under such headway that they can't stop going if they would. Why wasn't he drafted and put in the front of the battle? Think of the thousands of useful men who have fallen, and here he has been fiddling the neighbors into fits all the time. He ought to live on an island with all his fiddles in full screech."

"Well, well, my dear," said the 'Squire, "you will have the remedy in your own hands. Robert owns the cottage where Malloys lives. You can turn him out."

"But his poor wife, papa."

My brother grew nervously restless as the evening wore on. He knew that common civility would require him to escort Mrs. Peyton to her home, and, alas! there was no Canada near wherein he could seek refuge. He had odd fits of silence, and he changed his seat continually. At last, when he was ingeniously counterfeiting

a sudden attack of ague in his face, and querying whether he hadn't better go directly to bed and drink hot tea to induce perspiration, Mrs. Peyton's brother arrived, and it appeared that she had been expecting him to come for her. The 'Squire recovered so rapidly on learning this that it seemed a pity to insist on nursing his sudden cold; but "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and I resolved to do my duty. I began to heat soap-stones. "Bother!" exclaimed the 'Squire. "I tell you I am as well as ever I was. The pain has quite left me."

"It will return. It never leaves so suddenly when it means to stay away. A slight cold is often the insidious herald of graver diseases. The foot-bath will be ready directly. Put mustard in it, Maggie, and have it as hot as he can bear it."

"O, bother!" growled the 'Squire.

Maggie assisted me most zealously. By the time her father was in bed and I had arranged the soap-stones and bottles of hot water about him, she was ready with a steaming bowl of thoroughwort tea. This he was determined not to taste, and our united efforts were not

sufficient to induce him to swallow it. And, indeed, we had scarcely left his room, after tucking the bed-clothes snugly around him, before we heard the soap-stones rolled out upon the floor, and the loud "whish" of the water-bottles as they broke against the wall. You will imagine that I had little hope of breaking up his cold after this.

This was a fortnight ago, and I must not close my letter without telling you that Robert and Fred are at home. Fred will never be well again. His constitution is quite broken up. He is rational, as a general thing, and his restoration to his home has done much to quiet him; but the disease contracted in that horrid pen at Andersonville will soon lay him in his grave. When his mind wanders he is perfectly harmless, and then his chief delight is in washing his hands over and over again to remove the prison filth which he fancies still adheres to them.

Robert watches him constantly, and Maggie goes to visit him now.

"I am glad they have taken a liking to each other, Phillissa," says the 'Squire.

"So am I," I answer.

My dearest Kate, I have hopes of my brother. Unless he is being prepared to die he is getting ready to live. He is growing gentle. He does not argue, that is, scold, half so much as he did, and he does not contradict us above two thirds of the time. So while all our prospects are so inviting and encouraging, I will take the opportunity to bid you a cheerful good-by.

In love as ever, PHILLISSA BROWN.

MERTOWN, Jan. 2.

DEAR KATE,—Your last letter came to me the evening after Fred died. I have felt little inclination to write to any one since, and have put off all correspondence, even yours, till the fear of offending past forgiveness impels me to take up my pen. And yet, now that the first effort is made, the pleasure of being in communication with you gives a spur to my pen which will speedily fill these blank sheets. This premonitory glow of delight, heralding the rush of sweet memories—memories of *our* past—makes me as eager to speak as I was just now reluctant.

You say I must begin where I left off and tell you every thing.

Poor Fred! As his strength declined his intellect brightened, but it never regained its old power. He lay on a sofa day after day, wasting and sinking, not suffering pain apparently, but gradually growing weaker till the last. And all the time, in spite of the opinion of a score of doctors and the evidence of his own eyes, Robert clung to the hope of his recovery. He scarcely left him by day or night. "If Fred only gets well," was his reply to all who urged him to take care of himself. But Fred did not get well. He died very peacefully, very happily, a month ago, just at sunrise. One more martyr for his country—one more redeemed saint in heaven.

It has been clear, cold weather for a fortnight, and there is just snow enough for good sleighing. But skating has been the principal pastime of our young people. The great pond is frozen over, and its three miles of smooth surface offer wonderful attractions to the young. Among my nieces Maggie is the only one who cares for the sport, and last week there was a terrible accident which will be a life-long lesson to her.

The weather had been moderating for two days, and there were suspicious-looking cracks

in the ice, though it was considered safe. The young people were in the height of their enjoyment, when suddenly a sharp cry of terror rang out above the laughter and merry voices, and a rush of the crowd backward from the center of the pond revealed quite an extent of broken ice, and human forms struggling in the black waters.

In a moment more the young men were skating back to the rescue of their companions. Through the good providence of God five were saved, among them our own pet Maggie, who was taken out insensible. I shall never forget the horrible dread that nearly paralyzed me when she was brought into the house. Robert was with her. It was the first time he had been on the ice since Fred died, and he had only left Maggie for a moment when the ice gave way under her feet. He had saved her, but was unable to give us any particulars except that he had been able to swim with her in his arms to the thick ice, where they were both lifted out by their companions. How he had found her in the water he could not tell, but he remembered that he had to choose between saving Maggie and a slender

boy who was sinking for the last time close by her side.

The little fellow knew that he must die, but in that awful moment he remembered his mother. Alas! he was her only son and she is a widow.

"My mother! give my love to my mother," was his last cry as the waters closed over him. The rest were all saved.

My brother has positively forbidden all future skating by Maggie. She does not need the prohibition; she is too thoroughly frightened to venture again on the ice.

For my part, I think it an unsuitable, indecorous amusement for young ladies. But, as I remind Robert, I am an old maid, with a long neck, from Down East—name of Miss Phillissa.

I must not forget to answer your inquiries in regard to the 'Squire. He does admirably. He is growing in politeness and good-nature, as well as in grace. A really execrable beef-steak, which no mortal power could masticate, made the tour of our breakfast-table this morning without exciting remark; though I may as well confess that the 'Squire's looks were sufficiently eloquent without words. He and Mrs. Peyton are the best of friends. I must tell you how it

happened. She had observed with considerable vexation that he looked with doubt and suspicion upon her repeated visits to me, and, being a woman, she was not long in fathoming the cause. She has courage as well as refinement, and she has likewise the straightforward speech and manner of your humble correspondent. So she did not wait for long years of social intercourse to annihilate the 'Squire's bugbear, but attacked it at once.

"I do not come here to see you," she said to him. "I come always to see your sister. I like you very well, but I like her much better. I know that you cannot see me here without remembering that I am a widow and that you are a widower. Now, I could come here any number of times without thinking of this if your manner did not remind me. Let us understand the position. You may be in the market, but I am not. If I wished to marry again you would not be my choice."

For once in his life the 'Squire seemed to be at a loss for words. His confusion was so comical that I had to rummage all through a cupboard in pretended search for something lost in order to conceal the amusement I felt.

"Have you no fear of gossip, ma'am?" he said at last.

"Not a fear. No one who knows us both would dream of associating us together, and strangers will not interest themselves in the matter. Be at rest; there is no danger."

"Why have you told me this?"

"From pure compassion, a womanly virtue. I could not bear that you should suffer any disquiet that could be so easily remedied. It is better to understand the truth."

"Yes," he answered, and then sat silent a long time playing with an ivory paper-knife which lay on the table. But there was a secret discontent that showed itself upon his face, and he did not, as usual, join in our conversation.

"You seem scarcely satisfied with my attempt to make our relations frank and easy," observed Mrs. Peyton to him as she rose to take leave of us.

"Well, to tell you the truth," he answered honestly, "I thought your way of stating the case implied that I was a sort of good-for-nothing fellow. Is that your real opinion of me?"

"Ah, I see. I wounded your self-love. No, that is not my opinion of you. I respect you

for the strong points of your character, for your natural ability and extensive information. Your real goodness of heart, even more than your acknowledged mental power, commands my esteem as it does the respect of all who know you. But," she continued, smiling as she saw his face brighten, "but your egotism spoils you."

"Thank you."

He was not offended; he rarely is downright angry. He even joined her in laughing over the rather odd subject of their conversation, but he was unusually thoughtful for several days. And they are the best of friends. She comes in and out with the freedom of a sister, and is a favorite with us all.

She was here nearly all this morning playing duets on the piano with Maggie. Her musical taste is fine, and so is her style, which is plaintive rather than brilliant. The liveliest waltz breathes a certain pathos under her touch. I went down stairs when I heard them begin Mendelssohn's Overture to the Midsummer Night's Dream. They played together admirably. As the music went on an expression of deep sadness came over Mrs. Peyton's face, and I was struck, as I had been many times before,

with the depth of feeling which characterizes her playing. I have heard those same tones rendered with so little expression as to change the whole scope of the composition.

"I never play this piece," she said, "without recalling a dear young friend, of whom you, Maggie, often remind me."

"Not unpleasantly, I hope."

"She was a gay, thoughtless young girl, liking society and its amusements, very fond of dancing, but more passionately fond of music than of any thing else. The death of her mother gave her the first serious thoughts of her life, and for a few months she attended Church regularly and sought the society of pious people. But the seriousness soon wore off and left her gayer than ever. I often talked with her, and did my best to win her to better things; but she would put me off with a kiss or a jesting word, and tell me that I must wait for age to bring her wisdom."

"Tell me more about her," said Maggie. "What became of her? Is she living?"

"No, my dear, it is ten years since she died. It was a pleasant, wintry day like this. She was preparing to leave home to spend a month

among the gay pleasures of the city. Her trunks were partly packed when I went in, but she left them to run over this overture with me. She was so gay that I used to wonder at her taste for classical music. We went over the music twice, and then she hurried up stairs to resume her packing, I still lingering at the piano. Scarcely a minute had elapsed before I was startled by a loud scream and a heavy fall. I ran up stairs, followed by her father, who happened to be in the house. She lay on the floor with both hands clasped tightly upon her forehead.

"Her father raised her in his arms, supposing at first that her fall was accidental. But one glance at her face, which was almost purple from the pressure of blood to her head, showed us her real danger. He laid her on the bed and I ran for help, but we soon saw that it was in vain. She knew it too.

"'Eliza, dear Eliza, do you know that you are dying?' I cried in such agony of mind as I never before experienced.

"'Yes.' I could just hear the whispered answer."

"'Are you afraid?'

"'O, yes!' These words were spoken aloud, but she breathed her last in uttering them."

"Dreadful!" said Maggie, shuddering. "I shall never care to play this piece again."

"My dear girl," said Mrs. Peyton, "the music is none the less beautiful because of this sad association. Shall I tell you why I have told you this? It is because I so earnestly desire to have you feel how unsafe it is to delay one moment in seeking a preparation for death."

Maggie colored, hesitated, looked at me, and then said in a low voice, "Aunt 'Lissa, I sometimes think I am a Christian. I want to be one. Not just a professor of religion, like many careless Church-members, for that would be worse than nothing; but a real, thorough Bible Christian. That night when I was so nearly drowned was a dreadful night to me. I kept thinking what a mercy it was that Robert was there. But what if he had not recognized me, and had saved that poor boy instead? What would have become of me? It was impossible to sleep with all those awful thoughts rushing into my mind. I have many times prayed for a new heart, but never so earnestly as then. And I think," said Maggie, looking down and

coloring with embarrassment as she made her profession, "I think that God heard my prayers at last. I felt so peaceful, so happy! I cannot tell you how sweet it was, and I have felt it ever since. Robert thinks my heart has been really changed, but then he cannot see into it as God does. But I am sure of one thing, I want to serve God and to enjoy his love. And I shall not stop trying to do this so long as I live."

I need not tell you, dearest Kate, how truly I rejoice over this, my pet lamb of the flock. Cora and Leonore seem to be of a different nature; they are meek and gentle, like their mother.

Maggie resembles my brother. She has a resolute will of her own, which would often make her disagreeable were it not for her affectionate heart.

Our kitchen maid, Ann, is in a state of great anxiety about the 'Squire. She has lived in the family fifteen years, and is much attached to him. She thinks he is "ripening for heaven surely," because he has ceased to find fault. The coffee suits, beefsteak ditto, muffins ditto, etc. The humps have all disappeared from his

mattress, and the counterpane is beautifully straight.

You have seen in the papers an account of the revival in our Church. It was ended in the usual way. Some of the sisters began to plan a Church fair. There has been a debt on the church for a dozen years, and it was proposed to take advantage of the general interest in religious matters to get up a big fair, pay the debt, and make a handsome present to the minister. The pastor and the more spiritually-minded Church-members objected strongly. They thought it would divert the public mind from its most important interest, and our minister declared that he wished for no gift that must be gained at such a price.

Dear Kate, did you ever know a fair to be given up when two or three women had once laid their heads together and determined on one? The approbation of the pastor and the leading Church-members is very good if it can be had, but it is not necessary.

Well, the ladies had their fair, and a grand occasion it was. "It was tip-top," said Bessy Layton, one of the rudest girls in the parish. "Tip-top—as good as a ball or the theater."

It was held in the vestry of the church, which had been once dedicated to the service of God. There were tableaux, comic songs, theatrical acting, a post-office, and grab-box. But the chief interest was divided between the refreshment-tables and a variety of lotteries, which last, being forbidden by the laws of our State, had very appropriately taken refuge in the Church.

The debt is paid, the minister has received his present and been blessed in spite of himself, and, instead of the fervent prayer-meetings of the early winter, we are having a series of surprise parties, which take exceedingly well among the young people.

Cora is to be married very soon. My brother has ceased to object to the young minister's poverty, and we are all busy with the preparations for the itinerant housekeeping.

I went with the young couple to a meeting held in a forlorn-looking school-house in a forlorn-looking neighborhood about five miles down the shore. I had never heard my intended nephew preach, and indeed had scarcely become acquainted with him at all. He is very quiet and diffident in his manner, and seldom speaks

in company unless he is spoken to. I have often rallied Cora upon his silence, and asked her how it was possible for a dumb man to preach.

She always laughed contentedly and answered, "Come and see."

I will confess that I have seldom been more astonished than I was when he commenced the service. Every trace of bashful embarrassment had vanished. An inexpressible dignity of manner gave authority to the gracious words he uttered, and there was a musical fullness and power in his voice which bore no resemblance to the weak, hesitating utterance that characterized him in society.

"He is cut out for a preacher, there is no doubt of that," I admitted to Cora when we were discussing the sermon at home, "but how will he manage about pastoral visiting?"

"I must visit with him, Aunt 'Lissa," she answered quietly, "and make it as easy as I can."

The school-house where he preached was an old-style affair, with seats running all round the room, and sharp-edged shelves at the back for the convenience of writing. These last served

as seats for the people, and the little room was crowded.

Just after the opening exercises, when we were settling ourselves into the easiest attitudes for listening to the sermon, I saw through the window a woman running toward the house. She had a blanket pinned over her head, but, although it was a cold day, I saw that she wore no stockings.

As she entered the room she just glanced round for an unoccupied seat, but seeing none she seated herself on the low platform by the speaker's desk. Not another look did she bestow upon the audience, but with her head thrown a little back to enable her to see the preacher, she listened to him as if every word were a sentence of life or death.

I could scarcely keep my eyes from her face. It was very plain, but as the sermon went on and her eyes softened with tears, or brightened with hopeful smiles, she became beautiful with spiritual loveliness. She hurried away as soon as the audience was dismissed, not stopping to speak to any one.

"Who is she?" I asked of a woman near me.
"What is her name?"

"Lovel—Martha Lovel—Tim Lovel's wife."

"Where does she live?"

"Just round the point. Her husband drinks awfully, and abuses her for coming to meeting. She'll catch it when she gets home."

"Has she any children?"

"Seven of them; one is a baby. She has to support them all. Something of a job, ma'am, with the prices where they are now."

"I should think so, indeed. Do you ever visit her?"

"I? Why, they live in a little hut no bigger than a pig-pen. I wouldn't stay there half an hour for ten dollars."

"But she lives there, you say," I urged.

"Well, she is used to it, I suppose."

"Has she no neighbors?"

"No. She will have nothing to do with the low set her husband mates with, and, of course, better people look down upon her. It is a pity," said the woman, "for the children are always well-behaved, and they look tidy though they wear patches of all colors. Little Jemmy is a real smart boy, and he'd be called a beauty anywhere else. And Martha herself always looks clean. I should give right up if I was in

her place, but there is nothing like being used to a thing."

"Is she a Church-member?"

"O, yes!"

"Are you?"

She colored, but answered readily, "Yes."

"And she is one of Christ's poor—one of the little ones committed to his people in sacred trust. In the day of judgment somebody will be held responsible for her false position among his followers. Somebody will be told before the assembled universe, 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to this woman, one of the least of my disciples, ye did it not unto me.'"

"My husband is waiting for me, ma'am. Good-day."

I had only to tell this to our home-circle to awaken an active interest in the poor woman and her family. Cora and Leonore drove over to see her the next morning, and my brother gave a liberal sum to be expended for her benefit. Robert and Maggie spent a whole day in driving about from house to house collecting flour, meal, butter, and the various things which go to stock a pantry. They went in the great farm wagon, and Maggie said that they begged

at every door. Some contributed clothing, and some gave money, and several farmers offered to employ the drunken husband if he could be persuaded to give up drinking.

"Now," said Maggie, "it would be a real pleasure to take all this to her if we could be sure the old toper would never get a bite of it at all."

"He may reform," said Robert encouragingly.

Maggie's face expressed her doubts. "It is only in stories that such things happen. And this is real life, you know."

"Yes; and so was Dan Bent's case in real life. He reformed."

"'Blessed are they who expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed,'" quoted Maggie gravely.

I look at the bright young face, and then catching the sweetness of Cora's smile, I sadly ask myself what will the home-place be when its young bloom is removed to grace other dwellings? My brother seems to read my thoughts, and says, with a gentleness which is becoming habitual,

"It must be so, Phillissa. The young birds will seek out nests for themselves. But we

will grow old here together and make a home for each other."

I ought to be thankful, Kate, and I think I am. Maggie and Leonore will be near us, and Cora, wherever she may wander, will call this place her home. The argumentative neighbors still come in of an evening, but it does not annoy me as of old. A gentler spirit seems to rule, and confident assertions of opinion and contradiction often yield to loving truth and reason. So good-by, my dear friend. God ever bless and keep you! PHILLISSA.

S Y M P A T H Y.

A REMARKABLE woman was Miss Dorothy Webb. Every body acknowledged that. She had been a remarkable child, a remarkable young damsel, and had ripened naturally and without effort into the remarkable woman. She was remarkable in more ways than one, as most sensible women are; but she had her forte, her hobby, her particular remarkability. Miss Dorothy's specialty was sympathy.

In this cold world, where personal interests and individual cares or aches seem to shut most people into themselves, what power so sweet, what gift so delightful, as the ability to enter into the feelings of the sad-hearted, or overtaken wayfarers along life's journey, and so bear another's burden as to fulfill the law of Christ!

"Are you going out, Dorothy?"

It was a sweet voice, indeed, that asked this

question; but Miss Dorothy turned from the looking-glass, where she was arranging her collar, with an expression on her face that would have been unamiable, to say the least, if she had not been a remarkable woman.

"Yes, I am going out. Why do you ask?"

"Only because I thought I would go over and try on little Nannie's dress if you were going to be at home. You do not like to have the house left to itself, you know. Perhaps I could slip over there now and get back before you leave; in half an hour, any way."

"No, I am going directly. And if any one calls while I am out I want to know it. I shall be back early, so you need not look so disappointed."

"I was thinking of Nannie's disappointment. She is depending on having the dress done this week."

"Beggars musn't be choosers, Sister Ruth."

"No, but the little thing has set her heart on going to the Sabbath-school next Sunday, and she has so few pleasures. But perhaps I can finish it if I work on it this evening instead of going to class-meeting."

"I wonder, Ruth," said Miss Dorothy, angrily,

"that you will tie yourself down to this kind of work. You are never free from it. You don't give yourself the least leisure to go out among people and find out their troubles, and give them a helping word in season. You tire yourself till even our light housekeeping is a burden to you. You haven't time even to dress yourself properly. I was quite mortified when Mrs. Fielding called on us."

"Susie Fielding?" Aunt Ruthy brightened at the name in spite of her sister's lecture. "She is one of my dearest friends, Dorothy."

"So it seems. I can't understand it, though. Do you hear what she said when you came into the parlor in that loose wrapper, and your face as red as fire?"

"I was ironing, Dorothy. But what did she say? Nothing unkind, I know."

"She said, 'Your sister is altered since I saw her. But her husband was alive then, and he would not permit her to be a household drudge.' Those were her very words, and she looked as if she thought somebody was to blame about it. Of course, I didn't tell her that you were hurrying the ironing to get time to go over and dress old Paul Dunbar's blisters."

"Poor old man!" said Aunt Ruthy softly, her eyes filling with tears, "he is almost home. He won't live through this week. His troubles are almost over. I must go in there this evening. It is like standing at the gate of heaven. Such a good, happy old Christian!" Aunt Ruthy added dreamily. "May my last end be like his!"

She left the room as she spoke, and Miss Dorothy turned again to the glass.

"Poor Ruthy!" she sighed. "How different we are! We were never alike as children. And now she is too old to change. Two years older than I am. She looks ten years older," said Miss Dorothy, with a gratified glance into the mirror. "She is not to blame, poor thing," she went on, "if she cannot enter into my feelings or understand my work. I think she does appreciate my talents, and she never hinders me in any way."

Miss Dorothy was really a fine-looking woman; that is, she became one as her toilet progressed. Take out her false teeth, and remove those dark, glossy braids of hair; forbid the use of the pearl powders that whitened her skin, and you would see a somewhat surprising

change in her appearance. If her house had taken fire at night, and she had been rescued from the flames in her unadorned loveliness, it is a question whether her most familiar friends could have recognized her; but now, in her street costume, with a brand new chignon, Miss Dorothy was decidedly well "got up," and well looking too.

She knew it, and it made her mission more agreeable. She was going out on purpose to sympathize with her fellow-creatures, and it was pleasant to make a good impression as to looks.

"Ah, these people who confine themselves so closely to what they call home duties little realize the good they could do if they would go out and condole with their fellow-creatures. It wouldn't be such a cold, dreary world to live in," said Miss Dorothy with a gush of sentiment, "if selfishness could be overcome or even occasionally set aside. Every body has more or less of trouble, and every body needs sympathy. Now, if every body would do their share, what a lightening of heavy burdens, what a cheering of drooping spirits would result!"

Miss Dorothy had never had any particular

experience of sorrow or disappointment. Excepting the strange blindness of the stronger sex which had kept her in a state of forced celibacy, just as if she had been a Roman Catholic priest, she had managed to have her own way in life. She and her widowed sister lived alone in a pretty cottage which they had inherited from their parents, and their income was sufficient for their support in a plain, comfortable way ; not large enough for both sisters to live fashionably idle, and so the kitchen work fell naturally into the hands of Aunt Ruth, who, having had and lost a family of her own, was supposed to be posted in all the mysteries of housekeeping. Miss Dorothy often said, with truth, that she had never been sick in her life. Even the indispensable ailments of childhood, such as the measles and hooping-cough, had touched her so lightly as to leave no remembrance of them. Her parents had dropped off in a good old age, like shocks of corn fully ripe.

"That, of course, was to be expected of old people," was Miss Dorothy's rejoinder to her pastor's attempt to comfort her after the last funeral was over.

But Miss Dorothy's lack of sorrowful experi-

ence only made her assumption of the office of general comforter more meritorious. She was not governed by feeling but by principle.

"If I were swayed by impulses, as Ruth is, I could accomplish nothing. I don't wait for the selfish leadings of the natural heart. Ruth," she called from the hall as she opened the front door to go out, "I am going as far as Betsey Craig's if I have time. If you get tea ready by six o'clock it will do. Do you hear, Ruth?"

"Yes, I hear. I will see to it."

Ruth had put by little Nannie's frock, and was now knitting on some warm socks for a family of poor little children up in Irish Row. She was, as Miss Dorothy had complained, always busy with something of the kind.

"You see," she would say apologetically, "I haven't Sister Dorothy's talents, and I like to knit and sew. It puts me out to call on people, and—and I couldn't on any account advise them about their affairs, but I can slip into one of those poor cabins and leave a little flannel shirt or a pair of warm stockings, and run home again before any body knows a thing about it. Ah, what a number of half-clothed people live in that one wretched alley!"

Those poor neglected people were on her mind all the afternoon after her sister left. How could they be effectually helped?

"God pity them!" she said sadly. "The winter is coming fast now. I must look over my poplin dress. If the skirt can be turned upside down it will do for another season, and then I can manage to send a load of coal to poor Widow Thompson. What a hard life she has, poor thing! with her six children and that lame boy. Yes, the poplin must do somehow. I wonder how she has any courage to live. If I had Sister Dorothy's talent I could sympathize with her. Still, talking does not seem to be just what she needs. I couldn't speak a word when I found them so poor. I just put a little money in her hand, and ran home and cried. I must do better than that the next time. Ah, well," continued Aunt Ruth, resignedly, though she was crying again as she remembered the scene, "I must not be discouraged. Harry used to say I did nicely. Nicely. How he used to praise all my efforts to use my one little talent! Well, well, I will do what I can. The Master knows all about it."

A peaceful look came over her face, and she

began to sing softly an old tune learned in childhood:

"What I do Thou knowest well;
What I have not skill to do
Glad I leave to stronger hands,
Satisfied if thy commands
I obey with spirit true."

In the mean time Miss Dorothy was slowly pacing down the pleasant street enjoying the warm October sunshine, comfortably intent upon the fulfillment of her mission, and on the lookout for chance objects of interest. She half paused before a house that stood directly across the street without any pretense of a door, and then passed on shaking her head decidedly.

"There is no use in calling there. Charity Pearce's tongue runs from morning till night. I can never finish a sentence without being interrupted. She doesn't seem to have the least idea of what I am saying, but strikes in with something entirely foreign to the subject. She will always be a cripple, and any body would think she would feel interested about it; but the very last time I tried to express my pity for her she broke right in with a question about the prices of cotton cloth. And when I told her about Captain Blank, who has just such

a foot as hers, and suffers unheard-of tortures night and day, I declare I had to raise my voice so high to bring it above hers that it made me hoarse. I suppose that we together made considerable noise, and I am sure her sister was laughing when she went out of the room so suddenly. No, I'll not go in there. Charity Pearce may do her own comforting."

Still smarting with the sense of personal injury caused by this remembrance of the cripple's indifference and bad manners, Miss Dorothy crossed the street and came to a stand opposite Dr. Ludlow's office. That young physician was just starting off on a round of professional calls, but he waited politely when she accosted him. He looked exceedingly bright and happy, as a prosperous physician should. There were two special causes for his bright looks now. One of his patients, who had for several days been balancing between life and death, had passed the crisis of his disease, and was out of danger.

The other cause for rejoicing was not a public matter at all. The doctor would not have thought of mentioning it to Miss Dorothy, but it made his heart just as warm as a toast for all

that. He kept thinking it over, how only last evening that prettiest, daintiest, sweetest of all earth's charming daughters, fair Alice Howard, had promised to be his wife when the new year came in. In spite of his natural courtesy, his new happiness made him somewhat absent-minded, and Miss Dorothy had a little trouble to bring him back to prosy, matter-of-fact life.

"Good morning, doctor," she said. "I need not ask if you are well. You look as cheerful and free from care as a June morning."

"I am always well, thank you."

"There are not many doctors who can say as much. A physician's position is so responsible that it necessarily wears upon him—that is, if he is at all sensitive."

"I am not sensitive," said the doctor, his forehead flushing in direct contradiction to his words.

"It is a good thing if a doctor can feel cheerful. It is all for the best, I dare say, if you haven't much feeling; though, as Betsey Craig says—she is one of your patients, isn't she?—she *should* like to have a doctor who really cared whether she lived or died. She says she needs sympathy more than medicine."

"Very likely. But doctors seldom have time to pet their patients. Miss Craig's illness is chronic, and naturally discourages her. But she will get well. Time and patience will cure. And, if you will allow me to say so to you who visit her so often, cheerful society is what she needs rather than the mistaken sympathy that keeps her disease in mind."

It was Miss Dorothy's turn to color now.

"I wonder," she said, evading the point raised, "I wonder often how you can feel so gay, coming as you do from the very presence of death every day. You drive about as careless and easy as if there were not a sorrowful heart in the world. You were actually whistling when I stopped. Not that whistling is wicked, but it is strange that you can feel like it. Did you ever have any trials?" she asked curiously.

"Not more than were good for me." The doctor's face was now considerably clouded by the sympathy he was receiving, and he answered shortly. His horse pawed the ground impatiently. "Stand still, Bayard. Be quiet, sir. We'll be off directly. You are in a hurry as well as your master," said the doctor,

Miss Dorothy paid no attention to this hint.

"Some folks, doctor, can throw their trials one side and go on as if nothing were the matter. They really don't seem to be able to feel even for themselves. But if I were you I would get into the habit of feeling for others. It would help you as a doctor more than any thing else. There is old Doctor Rose. You know him?"

"I have met him once or twice."

"He is the favorite doctor in this region."

"Is he?" Doctor Ludlow had good reason to doubt this, but he didn't say so.

"Yes. He has so much sympathy. He always prays with his parents. Do you ever try that?"

"No, ma'am."

The doctor was a Christian; but, like many others, was reticent in regard to his own experience, and, therefore, reluctant to inquire into the religious feelings of others. It was backwardness that he lamented daily. He was striving to overcome it, for no one was more sensible than himself of the peculiar opportunities to do good to the souls of men that open to a pious physician. Still, Miss Dorothy's catechising grated upon his feelings. Her curious

scrutiny of his actions seemed indelicate. It irritated him.

"Doctor," said Miss Dorothy, "I never see you without feeling sorry for you. You are young, and you want practice, of course, and you can't help that cheerful look. You can't look like Dr. Rose if you try."

The old doctor's solemn phiz came up so vividly before the young man's mind that he laughed heartily in spite of his vexation.

"You are quite right, Miss Dorothy," he said presently. Then, observing her shocked look, he added good-naturedly, "Dr. Rose is an excellent man and a skillful doctor, but he is thirty years older than I am, so I cannot hope to look like him very soon. Thank you for your interest in me all the same."

"Yes," said Miss Dorothy complacently, "it is well for you that I do feel an interest in you. When Abby Nelson died, and the folks said it was your medicine that killed her, I stood up for you. I said that when you had mixed drugs a few years longer you would understand the nature of them better. 'He's young,' I said."

"Why, Miss Dorothy!"—the young doctor's

face was quite solemn enough now—"I did not give Miss Nelson any medicine. She died before I saw her. She broke a blood-vessel."

"Well, I declare! how folks will lie!" Miss Dorothy's indignation was genuine. Whatever may be thought of her way of expressing sympathy, she was no backbiter. She never slandered people. In the language of one of her intimate friends, "she had her good failings."

"You mustn't mind what folks say," she went on in a tone of real interest. "You must learn to live above it. Now every body is talking because Nancy Clenman don't try some other doctor. You have attended her so long, you see. And the poor girl does not get better. Now, do you think she does?"

"She will never be any better," said the young doctor sadly. His face was any thing but cheerful now. Nannie Clenman had injured her spine by a fall two years ago, and she would lie helplessly on her couch and suffer great pain until it should please God, the pitying Father, to take her to his rest.

"I would have a council of doctors if I were you," advised Miss Dorothy.

"It would do no good, and they are too poor to bear the expense."

"It would take the responsibility off your shoulders. Don't you see? People will talk, you know."

"Yes; I suppose they will. But, Miss Dorothy, I would rather not know what is said about me or my practice. You mean well, but it is very discouraging. I must bid you good-day now or some of my sick ones will be impatient."

"The mercy!" ejaculated Miss Dorothy as she watched him cantering down the street. "How touchy he is! He might at least have thanked me for my sympathy. Why, I have stood here condoling with him a full half hour if I have a minute. Well, well, I don't expect to be appreciated in this world. I'm glad for one there is a future state."

Being now in a pious and elevated frame of mind, she decided to call on a sick lady who had been ill so long that people were used to the idea of it, and, as a matter of course, thought very little about it.

"Yes, I'll go in and see Mrs. Elder. Poor woman! she'll be glad enough to see any body

who will sympathize with her. Why didn't I think to ask Dr. Ludlow if there were any new cases of sickness, so that I could tell her about them. I do believe," said Miss Dorothy, "that she wouldn't hear of half the deaths in the place if it were not for me."

Mrs. Elder was an invalid without any definite ailment. She was exceedingly frail and delicate-looking, and suffered greatly from nervous weakness and general debility. She could not bear excitement, and often became so sensitive to noises that the sudden slamming of a door made her hysterical. She was subject to long and severe attacks of headache, during which the slightest jar in the room, or a whispered word, occasioned her exquisite torture. She was young, not yet twenty-five, and, in spite of the ravages of illness, a very beautiful woman.

Miss Dorothy's pity for her was very sincere. She made it a point to call on her as often as once a week. It was Mr. Elder's opinion, sometimes very strongly expressed, that his wife was invariably worse after one of these visits, and the invalid herself began to be conscious of a shuddering dread whenever her sharpened

sense of hearing recognized Miss Dorothy's soft knock at the door. There was a sense of relief at the close of each visit, that the invalid would not have been willing to acknowledge to herself; and a "fearful looking forward," as if a dentist were coming to extract her eye-teeth, whenever the advent of an unusually fine day seemed especially calculated to allure people out of doors.

"She will come to-day, I think," she said, glancing out of the window at the pleasant October sunshine and unconsciously sighing.

"O yes, you are so much better, my dear," said Mr. Elder, "that it is high time for her to come and overset you. I should like to give her a piece of my mind—a good, generous slice. I shall do it yet."

"O no," remonstrated his wife; "you must not forget, Tom, that she was one of my mother's friends."

"Bother the friends! Shows bad taste in your mother. She is no friend of my wife, or of myself, I am happy to say. A queer sort of friendship that tries to kill its object."

"Why, Tom!"

"Ah, Bessie, you can shake your head if you

like, but I must say that, for a good woman, she has a wonderful power of making other folks feel wicked. Why, I never see her coming into the house without feeling my dander rise. She comes in so pompously, as if she were appointed our inspector-general, and looks about with an air that says, 'Just trot out your family skeleton, for I'm bound to get a good look at it.' Tell you what it is, Bessie, I should like to take her by the nape of her neck and turn her inquisitive nose decidedly toward home."

Bessie laughed merrily. Her husband had such an overplus of life and good spirits that it really refreshed her weaker nature to hear him laugh and scold together like a good-humored giant. There was no suggestion of illness or suffering in his healthy face and tall, portly figure, and Bessie often forgot her bad feelings while listening to him.

"You will frighten me, Tom," she said at last "You are positively ferocious. I didn't think you could show such a spirit. Poor Miss Dorothy!" Bessie continued, "she means well. It is her way of expressing sympathy."

"Sympathy! It is her way of meddling with other folks' business. And there she comes.

The old saying is true, 'The devil is nearest when we are talking about him.' What will you do? Take ether?"

"Don't keep me laughing, I beg. What will she think of me?" Bessie tried hard to straighten her face to a decorous length.

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear, she will soon sober you. She frightened you into hysterics the last time she was here."

"Well, I won't mind what she says now. Why don't Bridget open the street door? She has rung twice. Do, Tom, let her in," urged Bessie nervously, still using her best endeavors to smother a giggle.

"She should ring a week before I would let her in of my own accord."

But he went to the door, nevertheless. Miss Dorothy was not particularly glad to find him at home. She felt instinctively that Mr. Elder did not appreciate her. She had several times thought his half-defiant manner might be interpreted as a desire for her to keep away. She had usually contrived to call when he was absent, it was so much pleasanter to have his wife all to herself. But if a man chose to stay in his own house, with his own wife, she could

not help it, so she followed him into the house after inquiring after his wife.

"She is nicely, I thank you—improving fast," said Mr. Elder. "She is in very good spirits, too, and we are careful to avoid all gloomy subjects in conversation. If any body brings in a lot of blues we just bundle them out of doors, blues and all. There is no use in being ceremonious in such matters," he added as Miss Dorothy swept by him into his wife's room.

"Don't get up, my dear child," she said as Bessie rose to receive her. "Why, what have you been doing to yourself. You are as pale as a ghost. Are you faint?"

"No, I—I believe not," replied Bessie, glancing into a mirror opposite with a frightened look.

"Well, you look faint. There isn't a particle of color in your lips. When I was in here last week I thought you had no flesh to lose, but I can see that you have grown thin."

"On the contrary, she has gained a pound in that time. I weighed her myself this morning. I never saw any one improve more rapidly."

"Perhaps she had on some extra clothing. Still, when people are ill their weight is apt to

be variable, and a pound more or less does not prove any thing. Have you any appetite?"

"I should think she had," said Mr. Elder, still answering for his wife. "I am afraid to say how much beefsteak she ate for dinner."

Miss Dorothy sighed—a benevolent sort of sigh, as if it went to her heart to dissipate the hopes of her listeners, but it must be done.

"Voracity is often a bad symptom; always so toward the last. My dear child, it makes me very sad to see you wasting away so."

Bessie felt a chilly, nervous tremor stealing over her, and again she glanced involuntarily into the glass to find out by her own observation whether she were alive or dead. It was a pale, scared face that she saw, and she shivered visibly. Her husband sat down by her side and put his arm around her.

"I didn't want to hug Bessie right before her," he said afterward, "because I knew the old humbug never had a genuine hug in her life, and so might die of envy; but I drew her up pretty snug and whispered, 'Shall I shoot her?' This set Bessie to laughing again; or, rather, it was a mixture of hysterical laughing and crying."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Dorothy, looking at her compassionately, "how weak your poor nerves are! There is Annie Wheeler—she was just so at first."

"Annie Wheeler!" Bessie repeated in surprise. "I have not heard any thing about Annie."

"I did not mean you to hear it at present," said her husband, "because you are weak, and I knew it would shock you. But I must tell you now, I suppose. Annie is in the insane asylum."

"After murdering her child," put in Miss Dorothy solemnly.

Bessie hid her face on her husband's shoulder and clung to him convulsively. "O, Tom, if I ever should be like that!"

"You never will, my darling. You are no more like Annie than I am."

"Mr. Elder," asked Miss Dorothy impressively, "do you think it does any good to deceive people who are ill?"

"No, ma'am, I do not. I never did it in my life," he answered. Bessie smiled trustfully as she looked up into his clear, honest eyes. "I should like to ask you a question, Miss Dorothy."

What earthly good can it do a nervous invalid to be excited by gloomy forebodings or frightened by accounts of murder? I know that is your way of showing sympathy, but I object to Bessie's being tormented in that way. In fact, I won't permit it. Now, if you can come in like a cheerful Christian, as you ought to be at your time of life, and bring only cheerful influences with you, why, come and welcome. But if you must turn our parlor into a grave-yard, stay away, for mercy's sake, and oblige yours, respectfully, Thomas Elder."

Bessie laughed again. It was so funny to hear him gravely conclude his speech as if he were finishing a letter. Miss Dorothy looked at her pityingly.

"I will go. I meant to tell you about the fever in Warrington, and about your Uncle Charles being so unfortunately drowned, but I will go. Send for me if you need me. I stood by the death-beds of your mother and your grandmother, and I shall not refuse to stand by yours."

Bessie shuddered again and turned very pale.

"We are not dying yet," said Mr. Elder angrily; "and if we were, I dare say we could

manage it without your help. Shall I have the pleasure of opening the front door for you? If she had only been a man," he said to Bessie on his return to the parlor, "I would have helped her down the steps with the toe of my boot. However, I guess she will keep away in future."

As for Miss Dorothy, standing bewildered in the street, it would be difficult to describe her state of feeling. It was very evident that her sympathy for others was not appreciated. Was it worth while to continue her efforts? "I think," said the good lady, "that I will go no farther this afternoon. I will go home and meditate."

Miss Dorothy meditated a good deal in the course of the evening. It was an unusual exercise and rather puzzled Aunt Ruthie, who was accustomed to listen with admiring humility to her sister's accounts of her visits. It is true that, as she listened, strong doubts would often suggest themselves as to whether Miss Dorothy always hit upon the best methods of comforting those who needed consolation; and once she went so far as to think that sympathy must be harder to bear than actual trials. You see

Aunt Ruth was such a quiet, gentle little woman, with such a shy sense of delicacy in regard to other people's affairs, and such a shrinking timidity as to being herself known as a helper, that she could not be expected to understand the broader field that her sister occupied. She rather liked the meditative mood of the evening. Sometimes it was pleasanter to think than to listen. And this evening, while her fingers worked nimbly to finish little Nannie's dress, all sorts of pleasant fancies were filling her head.

In the morning Miss Dorothy arose armed with new strength. The plain remarks of Doctor Ludlow and Mr. Elder still rankled in her mind like a set of unpleasant thorns; but she was not to be turned from the noble mission of her life by the rude rebuffs of two men. "What could they know of the power of sympathy?" she asked indignantly, brushing out her hair with such energy that nothing but a timely fear of not leaving enough to fasten her chignon kept her from becoming suddenly bald in spots.

"Men," she went on with an inspiration that made her akin to the strongest women's rights

women of the day, "men have strength, animal strength, but no hearts. I am glad—ahem! well, I ought to be glad I am not tied to one of them."

Now Miss Dorothy, even while sturdily asserting her rights to comfort people in spite of themselves, had an undercurrent of conviction in her mind, or, rather, an instinctive sense that she was not so much actuated by compassionate interest as by a desire to meddle with and control the affairs of others. A woman's instinct is nearly always reliable, and is often a safer guide than the slower process of reasoning.

Miss Dorothy's instinct was a true one. It was so clearly in the right that it was sometimes impossible to stifle it by the most eloquent setting forth of the happy influence of sympathy. On this particular morning there was such a struggle in her mind between common sense on the one hand and a desire to magnify her "mission" on the other, that she sat down to the tempting breakfast prepared by her sister without once remembering to appropriate for her own eating the crispest buckwheat or the juiciest part of the steak. Noticing this, Aunt Ruthie anxiously inquired if she were ill.

"No. Why do you ask?"

"I thought you did not seem like yourself."

No response was made to this remark, and both sisters ate in silence till the sudden ringing of the door-bell startled them.

"Who can it be at this time of the morning?" said Aunt Ruthie, going to the window and peering down into the yard in the vain effort to obtain a view of their visitor.

"You will be more likely to find out by going to the door," said Miss Dorothy.

Aunt Ruth meekly obeyed the hint. It was a little red-headed boy, and he wanted Miss Dorothy.

"My mother wants her to come straight over to our house as quick as she can."

"Your mother is Mrs. Cornell, is she not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Is any thing the matter? Is she sick?"

Aunt Ruth's kindly thoughts were off in a twinkling in an excursion among the dried herbs in the attic.

"I don't know," said the boy, taking off his cap to scratch his head. "She told me to come over here quicker'n lightning and fetch Miss Dorothy. That is all I know."

"Well, I'll tell her," said Aunt Ruth doubtfully as she slowly closed the door after him. "If it is a case of real sickness now, Mrs. Cornell may need a cup of gruel or broth more than sympathy."

It is impossible to describe Miss Dorothy's sudden elation of spirits when the boy's message was repeated to her. It would, without doubt, give her a chance to work in her own way. It settled the question whether she was needed or not. And it was truly providential that when she was just yielding to her discouraging fears, there should come to her very door a stroke of business in her own line.

As soon as she could put on her bonnet and shawl, without even waiting to finish her breakfast, only delaying long enough to tell Aunt Ruth to keep the dishes hot till her return, she started for Mrs. Cornell's. The red-headed boy was watching for her by the door, and he ushered her at once into his mother's sitting-room.

A middle-aged woman sat in a large arm-chair, rocking herself backward and forward, and groaning fearfully. "O, Miss Dorothy," she exclaimed, "I am so glad to see you! Bill,

go out and shut the door after you. Boys," said Mrs. Cornell, getting up herself to see if the doors were shut—"Boys are forever in the way. It is a puzzle what they were made for. Now I will tell you something. I have been in a worry for two or three days, and my husband only laughs at me. I am sure you will not do that."

"No," replied Miss Dorothy solemnly, "I never laugh at trouble. It is very unfeeling for any one to do so."

"So I think. I told my husband so almost in your very words. But he said he'd had dozens of them and never thought they were worth mentioning."

"Yes," said Miss Dorothy, not quite understanding whether "dozens" referred to children or cabbages.

"And Martha says they are as common as huckleberries, and are good for one's health, too. Of course she isn't frightened if her father makes light of it."

"No," said Miss Dorothy, still feeling her way through the mist, "I suppose not."

"O, dear!" Mrs. Cornell was again rocking herself furiously. "I suppose there is a great

deal in taking it in time, though I've always said if I ever had one I would give right up and die without doing a thing. Mrs. Woodward has had three, but she took them in the beginning. I heard last week that she had another, and that is what worries me. Once started, it is impossible to be entirely clear of them. O, dear!"

"Can I help you about it?" Miss Dorothy hesitated, not certain to what she might commit herself.

"I don't know. I will show it to you."

Miss Dorothy started and looked keenly into all the corners of the room and under the tables with a vague idea that some animal was to be exhibited.

It was nothing of the kind. Mrs. Cornell hurriedly unfastened the neck of her dress, and, slipping it down, displayed on the tip of her shoulder one of those troublesome swellings commonly called "pussy-boils." "Did you ever see any thing like it? It has been swelling and swelling for three days."

If that were true it had been extremely lazy about it, for now it was not as large as a walnut.

"What do you suppose it is? Don't touch it, for pity's sake. What is it?"

"Not a felon?" suggested Miss Dorothy, whose knowledge of tumors was limited to their names.

"A felon? No. Felons don't come on the neck. They start from the bone, too. Steve had a felon. I know what a felon is."

"What have you done for it?"

"Not much. I am afraid of driving it back into my blood, or bringing it to an open sore. Steve says I had better poultice it, but what do men know?"

"Very little indeed," assented Miss Dorothy with an emphasis only to be explained by her yesterday's encounter with Mr. Elder. "Scarcely any thing, in fact. But, my dear Mrs. Cornell," she went on with a wise look, "I do not wish to frighten you, but have any of your relations ever died of cancer?"

"Why, my mother did. And that is just what I've been telling Steve. I thought of it as soon as I heard about Mrs. Woodward."

"What did your husband say?"

"He said I could not scare my wits out with borrowed trouble. And 'besides,' said he, 'the

thing will come to a head and burst before you have time to get crazy.' That's all the sympathy he gave me."

"How unfeeling! Positively brutal!"

"You don't think it is really a cancer?" queried the poor woman, ready to catch at any thing hopeful in spite of her own persistence in foreboding.

"Does it burn and sting?"

"Yes."

"And itch?"

"Yes. O, dear!"

"Well, if I were you," said Miss Dorothy impressively, "if I were you I would show it to the doctor. It might be cut out, you know."

"My sakes!"

"It is true, as you say, that cancers are apt to come again after they are cut out. In fact, they are pretty sure to do so. But there was Mary Ann Day—she lived a year longer for having hers taken out. And life is sweet."

"I don't know about that if one has to be dying all the time. But I'll see the doctor. That can't do any hurt. Perhaps," said the poor woman, "we may be mistaken. And there's one thing about it," she added stoutly,

"I am not going to suffer death with a cancer if I haven't got one. I'll go straight down to Dr. Ludlow's office."

"Not to the young doctor?"

"Yes. Why not? He is our family doctor. I guess he can tell a cancer if he sees one."

"But old Dr. Rose is so sympathetic."

"If I have really got a cancer I don't want any sympathy. I will just bear it. If it is not a cancer I don't need any."

Without further parley or a word of apology, Mrs. Cornell tied on her bonnet and started briskly down the street, leaving her visitor alone in the house.

"There's manners for you, at any rate," said Miss Dorothy as she followed at a slower pace. "The next time I leave a good warm breakfast to investigate a goose-pimple on a spleeny woman's shoulder I shall be several years older than I am now. I should just like to know what Dr. Ludlow says to her."

Her curiosity was gratified in a short time. Mrs. Cornell, who supposed Miss Dorothy to be seriously alarmed on her account, no sooner had her own fears set at rest than she bethought herself of her duty to quiet her visitor's anxie-

ties. Miss Dorothy had not quite finished her second attempt at eating her breakfast before the door-bell rang, and the red-headed lad appeared again. This time he had a note for her. It ran thus:

"Deer Miss dorothy, steve was rite. It is a bile. The kore is cum out. the doctor put on a plaster. the pane is stopt.

"MARTHA CORNELL."

A whole week now passed by without any attempts on the part of Miss Dorothy to lighten the burdens of her suffering fellow-creatures. It was a stroke of policy on her part. Just let people try what they could do without her sympathy and then see. Blessings are never valued as they should be until they are taken away.

"If there is one class of people who need sympathy more than others it is the ministers and their families."

Miss Dorothy looked across the little work-stand between her and her sister with the air of one who has just made and is announcing a grand discovery.

"You see, Ruthie, that not only their business, but all their associations, are different from the common worldly people around them.

Their work is a spiritual work, and this fact is never to be lost sight of. It is a solemn work, a responsible work, the care of immortal souls."

"Yes," answered Aunt Ruth absently, her mind running on the propriety of offering a glass of her clear apple-jelly to an invalid lady who had just moved into the place, and consequently had few acquaintances there. "They are rich, to be sure," she said aloud, "but still it might be pleasant for her to know that we thought of her comfort."

"Rich!" repeated her sister. "How did you find that out? His salary is not large. I was not aware that he had any thing else."

"I don't know any thing about his salary. I only judged from their way of living. They would not keep two servants if they were very poor."

"Two servants! Have you lost your senses, Ruth? You know as well as I do what his salary is, and that Mrs. Mason does her own work."

"Excuse me, Dorothy. I was speaking of the lady who has moved into Woodbine Cottage."

"I was talking about the minister's folks,"

responded Miss Dorothy loftily. "I do believe, Ruth, that you grow absent-minded every day. It is not a very polite habit. I would break it up if I were you."

"Yes," replied Aunt Ruth, meekly, "it is a bad habit, as you say. I suppose I have fallen into it from staying so much alone. I must correct it."

Still, the almost transparent apple-jelly would not be dismissed from her thoughts. It would be such an unpretending way of showing a neighborly interest; not a bit like offering charity; only saying, as gently as possible, "We know you are ill. Let us help you if we can."

I wish I could tell you just how Aunt Ruth looked. She was not so very old—not more than sixty, but her hair was all white like silver. She had hazel-brown eyes with the pleasantest expression, and yet with a look in them that told you she had suffered. There was a soft peachy bloom on her cheek, and her forehead was only a little wrinkled. Little Jimmie Lake, who would come so shyly into the back door to receive one of her turnovers, always told his mother at night that Aunt Ruth's face was a

picture. It was such a sweet, lovely old face, with a peace in it that made you think of the angels—a face that rested and quieted the looker-on; that unconsciously preached the gospel of love. The softly smiling lips were never heard to utter a slander or an unkind word. One would as soon expect to find a well of corruption in the heart of a white lily as to catch a bit of unchristian gossip proceeding from her mouth.

Aunt Ruth thought very little of herself. The unconscious grace of her sweet humility was very charming now, and it must have been exceedingly attractive in those long-ago days when handsome Harry Dayton won her for his bride. Although his choice made her very happy, she could not help being surprised that it had not fallen on her sister, who “had so much more talent.” How Harry laughed when she told him so! It was no wonder that she was sometimes absent-minded, or that her thoughts loved to linger among the memories of her earlier life; that the twin babies and almost idolized husband should still seem a part of her own being, though the Father had so long ago taken them to his rest above.

Little children came as naturally to her as to their own mothers. But they never troubled her sister. Miss Dorothy's well of sympathy was altogether too deep for children to sound.

“I guess,” said little Fannie Lake, Jimmie's sister, “I guess if you were a little girl, and had the earache, you wouldn't want her to tuck you into bed.”

Still it was indisputable that Miss Dorothy was a fine-looking woman, and a woman of considerable intellectual power. Aunt Ruth watched her in the afternoon as she walked down the street toward the minister's house, and wondered anew why her own life had been so full of love and tender ties, and her sister's comparatively so barren.

“She is so talented,” she said admiringly. “Now, I never should think of going down to offer sympathy to our minister. He seemed so good and so strong, so far above me somehow. I could not help him if I were to try.”

Aunt Ruth little knew the minister's estimate of her lovely character, or how her sweet Christian graces sent a warm glow to his heart when it sank down discouraged with its unavoidable conflict with selfish and worldly Christians.

"She restores my confidence in the power of a really religious life," he would often say to his wife. "I never see her without thinking of Lowell's beautiful lines :

'She doeth little kindnesses
Which most leave undone or despise ;
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace,
Is low esteemed in her eyes.'

Aunt Ruth would have opened her eyes in astonishment if she had heard this. As she stood by the window watching her sister, and thinking over the self-denying labors of the pastor and the hinderances to his work, she never once thought that she was one of the few who kept him from utter despondency.

"It is just as Dorothy says," she said humbly. "I need more sense and tact. When the baby died at the parsonage last winter I felt perfectly helpless. It was such a dear little boy, and I had lost two at the same age. I knew just how the poor mother's heart ached, but I could not say a word. I cried like a baby myself when she clung to my neck, the poor mother !" said Aunt Ruth, crying again at the recollection. "I don't think either of us heard a word that

Sister Dorothy said, and I have no doubt that it was—it was just as appropriate as it could be. I just hugged her tighter and tighter, and we cried harder and harder. Somehow or other, since that night Mrs. Mason and I have seemed very near to each other, very near."

The minister, sitting by his study window, saw Miss Dorothy approaching. He was feeling low-spirited, decidedly so. Ministers will have blue days. They are, of course, unreasonable in this ; there are so many pleasant things connected with their work, and so many reasons why they should rise entirely above worldly cares or selfish feelings, that looking on the dark side is perfectly inexcusable in them. With a memory full of sweet Bible promises, and a sure title to a heavenly inheritance, any depressed feelings or carefulness by the way is simply ridiculous.

Still, Mr. Mason, sitting in his study alone, was sensible of a general feeling of discontent, and the pastor's work, including preaching as well as general visiting, was very distasteful in his eyes."

"It is of no use trying. I accomplish nothing," he said again and again.

His brows were knit into as much of a scowl as they could bear, but a darker cloud overshadowed his face as his eyes fell on Miss Dorothy.

"Well," he said, "I thought a minute ago that my prospects were as gloomy as they could be, but I had forgotten the possibility of a call from Miss Dorothy. I can bear any thing better than her sympathy. I could endure very well a visit from the Church treasurer," he continued, smiling grimly, "provided he brought a portion of my unpaid salary. Afterward I could look the tailor and grocery dealer in the face. I could also preach a plain Gospel sermon without expecting to receive a pile of unpaid bills if the said sermons happened to fit any body. Yes, I could bear a little money. And if this lazy woman was coming to help my wife with her ironing I could bear that. I would iron the clothes myself if I knew how. But it is an imposition," said the minister, looking out of the window as the bell rang, "it is an imposition to have to go down stairs just to be sympathized with."

He went down, nevertheless. He knew that his wife was too busy to receive her visitor, and

he knew also that Miss Dorothy would prolong her stay till she had a chance to sympathize with him. So he went down. Miss Dorothy had often remarked to her sister that the minister had a cross look, and a curt, uncourteous manner, but Ruth could never see it. He certainly looked cross now—so cross that his wife, who was busily ironing a starched shirt, looked up into his churlish face with dismay, which was nearly changed into a burst of laughter when she saw its cause in the person of Miss Dorothy, who entered the room directly after him. He was too cross to be polite, but his wife greeted her unwelcome guest cordially. She always made the best of every thing, even of sympathy.

"Take this cushioned chair by the window," she said. "I shall have this work out of the way directly. I didn't hear the door-bell, Edward, or I should have answered it. I dare say that Miss Dorothy will excuse you if you return to your study. A minister's time is always precious, you know," she added, turning with a bright smile to her guest.

"Yes, I suppose so. A man cannot preach without studying. But it is not always the

study of books that is necessary. A minister needs to study his people, to mingle with them familiarly if he would do them good. Don't you think so, Brother Mason?"

The minister, whose especial trial was pastoral visiting, gave a somewhat grudging assent to this question.

"There is Mr. Allen, the preacher in Lakeville. He isn't much of a preacher, but he is successful in his work. He goes among the people and interests himself in their affairs, and they feel as if he was one of themselves. He don't freeze people to death," said Miss Dorothy, having the reception that Mr. Mason had given her still fresh in her mind. "Nobody would ever mistake him for an iceberg in human form. His parishioners are sure of a welcome when they take the trouble to call at his house."

"He is a particular friend of ours," responded Mrs. Mason quickly, afraid that her husband would speak. His ungracious mood was not usual with him, and the visitor did not know that, while suffering with a nervous headache himself, he had spent the whole of the previous night by the couch of a dying child, soothing

its agonies and speaking words of comfort to the sorrowing parents.

"Is he?" said Miss Dorothy. "I suppose he is a friend to every body, as a minister ought to be. There is old Mrs. Draper. She is a member of his Church. She told me that she believed he was as anxious that her butter should get the prize at the fair as if he had made it himself. He can lead his people anywhere. They follow him just as sheep follow their shepherd. They prosper, as a matter of course. There is no trouble in raising his salary. When people like their minister the money comes easy."

Mr. Mason saw the beseeching look on his wife's face, and answered civilly, "I am glad to hear of their prosperity."

"What is the name of the preacher with whom you exchanged last Sunday?"

"Hitchcock—William Hitchcock."

"Now he is what I call a preacher. Our folks were all delighted with him. The church was crowded. I don't know when I've seen such a congregation out. It was a treat to hear him."

"Yes, Brother Hitchcock is an excellent preacher."

"I wonder how folks feel who hear such preaching all the time. I was speaking about it to Mrs. Taylor on our way home from meeting, and she said we should be too proud as a society if he were our preacher."

"I don't know about that. Brother Hitchcock is a humble, devoted man. I don't think he would lead you far astray."

"The evening prayer-meeting was very spiritual. Brother Smith spoke. You know he hardly ever takes any part. He said that he was thankful to hear once more some real Gospel sermons. He had been hungering for the Word a long time, but now his soul had been fed."

"I am rejoiced to hear that you were all pleased and benefited."

"I knew you would be. I told Ruthie I would run down and tell you about it. It is pleasant to bring a word of comfort. But I must bid you good afternoon now, for I want to call at several places. Mrs. Butler's Jimmie is sick. The doctor don't tell what the matter is, but the child has been exposed to the small-pox, and I think his mother ought to know it."

"Jimmie died this morning of scarlatina. His

poor parents are in sad affliction. This is the third child that they have lost, you know."

"O, dear! is the child dead? How very sudden! I must go down there as fast as I can."

The minister looked bluer than ever as Miss Dorothy departed on her mission of comfort, but his wife laughed cheerily.

"I wonder, May, that you can smile," he said in a vexed tone. "I am sure there is nothing to laugh at."

"No? Sit down here a minute, I want to tell you something. I met a member of Brother Hitchcock's Church at Sister Gray's last evening. She told me that his people were so charmed with your sermons last Sunday that they will make an effort to secure you for their pastor when Brother Hitchcock moves next spring."

"Next spring! why, May, he has only been there a year."

"But he is unpopular, it seems. Now as we shall move at the same time, it might be possible to secure him for this place. It seems that he is appreciated here."

The minister smiled in spite of himself. "You have a genius for planning, May."

"There are many ridiculous things in this world," said his wife, watching him to note the effect of her words, "but I know of none more so than to see my husband, who is conscientiously doing his best in the sublimest work ever intrusted to man, looking as if the whole world was shipwrecked and he were accountable for the ruin to Miss Dorothy rather than to his Master. Confess, Edward, that you are ashamed of it."

He looked up more brightly. Her sunny temper had often dispelled his gloomy feelings. "I think, May, I will go back to the study. You will reconcile me to myself, and I don't think I want to be reconciled."

"No, don't go; you won't study if you do. You will just sit down and compose sentences of condemnation against yourself. Besides, I want you to help me."

"May, I wish you would give me the secret of your cheerfulness."

"Willingly. I just do the best I can and then *let it alone*. You do the best you can and then worry over it. Now as God does not require any more than our best, I have concluded to be satisfied if he is. If he required any

thing more, he would give me the ability to perform it. I am willing to exert all my powers, so are you. But I shall not creep away by myself and get as blue as indigo because I haven't any more powers."

"But," persisted the husband, though his face was rapidly clearing up, "I see so little success."

"Well, my dear, that is God's part. You know what your work is, and you do it—that is your part. Now please let it alone and help me put this ironing apparatus away, and I will make some biscuit for tea as light as—well, as light as Miss Dorothy's sympathy."

The blues vanished; they could not hold their ground a moment longer when opposed by sweet home appreciation and common sense.

We will make one more call with Miss Dorothy and then leave her to the accomplishment of her "mission." We will tread softly as we enter the abode of sorrow where death is reigning now. The mother sits almost hopelessly by the side of her dead boy. A year ago she rejoiced over four healthy, interesting children. Only one remains, and that one is lying in the adjoining room dangerously ill with the

same disease which has taken her sister and two brothers. It is not strange that the poor mother's brain is confused, and that she is nearly distracted with grief. It is not strange that the crushed spirit, crushed but not yet subdued, should rebel at first against the unerring wisdom that so heavily afflicts her. It nearly crazes her to see the neighbors' children carelessly playing in the streets. Pitying friends attempt to soothe, but she turns away from them all. No one but God can comfort her. So they leave her alone with her dead and gather in a distant room to pray for her.

"Ah, this will never do," said Miss Dorothy briskly, coming into the shaded room as if she had a commission to arrest its mourning inmate and convey her straightway to prison. "No, indeed, you must not give way so. Think of your many blessings."

The sufferer gave one quick glance into the composed face above her, and then buried her own face in the pillow by the side of her dead boy.

"You must rouse yourself," Miss Dorothy continued. "Think how much worse it might have been. Suppose it had been your husband

or your mother," said Miss Dorothy encouragingly, but checking herself as she remembered that Mrs. Butler's mother had been dead about a dozen years. "Or suppose they had all lived to grow up and had then been taken—don't you see?"

Apparently the mourner did not see, for she made no attempt to answer.

"It is no worse for you than for thousands of other people," pursued Miss Dorothy. "Children are always dying somewhere, and, no doubt, the most of them are better off. Yours might have run into all kinds of sin if they had lived. And this was always a sickly child. He might have been a great care for years. Now, my dear woman, just try to look at it in a proper light. Don't it look reasonable that God knows what is best better than you do?" concluded Miss Dorothy decidedly.

"O, dear!" sighed the poor woman, "please go away. O, why did they let you in!"

"Is there nothing I can do for you?" asked Miss Dorothy in a stately manner that showed her vanity to be a little hurt by Mrs. Butler's rejection of her sympathy. "I am willing to do any thing in my power for you."

"You can do nothing except to go away. O, please go at once!"

Thus urged, Miss Dorothy left directly. Later in the evening Aunt Ruthie stole noiselessly to the poor mother's side and drew the weary, aching head to rest upon her own bosom. She said not a word, but gradually the heavy sighs grew less frequent, the convulsive sobs less violent and protracted, until at last a gentle slumber crept over her and wrapped her sorrow in forgetfulness.

God pity her! God help her by his own sweet consolations when she awakens!

THE REVEREND DIDYMUS EGO, M. D.

THE Rev. Didymus Ego, M. D., was once a small boy. Incredible as it may seem, he was once the occupant of a cradle, and delighted himself with the musical clamor of a sixpenny rattle. Various incidents of his early life are yet extant which not only confirm this, but served in their day to foreshadow his future greatness.

For instance, it is remembered that when he first opened his mouth in baby lamentation it was discovered by his admiring attendants that he had been born with his *I* teeth cut. This may explain the absence in after life of wisdom teeth, the material for which had doubtless been used up by these adventurous first-comers. But it was not our happiness to know him till the genius then in the bud had become fully matured, and, therefore, we will leave to abler pens the pleasure of doing justice to his precocious

youth, while we look with becoming reverence upon his portrait as a man.

He was rather above the middle size, or, rather, he seemed so from a peculiarity habitual to many little men of stretching the neck and holding back the head like a Bantam rooster when about to crow. At a short distance his general aspect was dignified and imposing. His forehead was low, and, if left to a state of nature, would have been covered with a bushy growth of hair, but being closely shaven every morning, resembled, in its gradual narrow slope from the covered part of the scalp to the bridge of the nose, and also in its persistent display of hair roots, a miniature walk up a gentle declivity thickly graveled with black pepper. He wore spectacles, blue ones, not from any need of their aid, but to hide an obliquity of vision that was somewhat embarrassing in general society, every one supposing himself particularly addressed, and all replying at once, and thus nearly deafening each other.

The hirsute growth, defeated in its design of sheltering the brow, avenged itself by shooting out gigantic bores from cheeks and chin, that, in their varying tints of red and brownish

yellow, reminded one of a gorgeous autumn sunset. His mouth can best be described by calling it a smile; not the amused expression that occasionally illumine the features of our acquaintances, but a continuous smile of no particular meaning, and of no particular use unless its width and length aided respiration. The slightly-hooked nose that leaned tenderly over it, the eyes that engaged in business of their own, held no communion with it; even the magisterial depth and solemnity of voice that rolled through its very midst had no effect whatever in the way of disturbing that wonderful smile.

Do you know him? Of course you do. Every body knows him, and every body is indignant if you hint that you never heard of him before.

"Not know him!" fairly shrieked an old lady, a connection of his, when, before I saw him, I vainly tried to recall him to my memory, "not know the Reverend Ego! Why you *must* be green! Where have you lived? Did you not hear of him when he was Professor of—of—of Verdigris in Muddle University? Not know him indeed!"

The Rev. Didymus Ego, M. D., was not one of those careless laborers who, after sowing their seed on the Sabbath, leave it to its own sweet will; neither did he calculate to wait many days for the appearance of the bread cast upon the waters. Speedy results were looked for. It was his usual practice to spend Monday in looking up those who might have been impressed under his ministrations of the previous day.

"My friend," he would say, stopping some spruce youth on the sidewalk, "did I not see you in my congregation yesterday?" If answered in the negative, bursting sighs relieved the heart of the preacher as he silently turned away to lament the benighted condition of his companion. An affirmative reply was sure to be followed by the question: "Will you be so good, my dear sir, as to specify what part of the sermon was most interesting to you?"

Now, it often unfortunately happened that the simple youth had been more intent upon deciding the exact shade of the sparkling brown eyes so perversely hid under Miss Lucy's silk eyelashes, or in noting the charming effect of Miss Mary's new bonnet, than in following the thread of the pulpit argument. It was curious,

then, to observe the ingenuity with which he would persuade the pastor that he was so delighted with the entire sermon that it would be sacrilege in his eyes to distinguish one part above the rest.

The man of business when closely interrogated did not, of course, mention those schemes for attaining wealth that the quietude of his Sabbath devotions presented in so clear an aspect, neither was he disposed to depreciate any part of the sermon by an undue exaltation of the rest. Like the younger hearer, he readily admitted the perfection of the whole.

Encouraged by these and other kindred tributes to his genius, and feeling that he ought to overcome his characteristic modesty and believe more fully in his own talents, on Tuesday the Reverend Ego was seen calling at the doors of his ministerial brethren in the neighboring towns.

"Ah, brother," he would say as soon as the usual compliments were passed, "I hope you had a good time in preaching last Sabbath. I had unusual liberty and enlargement. I suppose you have heard about the afternoon sermon? What do the people here say about it?"

The person thus questioned knew very well that his townsmen were quite in the dark as to his brother's sermons or talents, but did not like to insinuate so unwelcome a truth.

Evading the question he would reply: "I go out very little, and much of the news so interesting to most people fails to reach my study. I presume that your sermon was an excellent one, but I, shut up here with my books, have not heard it mentioned."

"You lose a great deal, brother, by such seclusion. How can you tell whether your labors are appreciated while you hold yourself aloof from the people during the week?"

"That is of small consequence to me if I feel the approving smile of God. Such knowledge might be dangerous for me. If my congregation were dissatisfied, I could hardly fail of becoming discouraged; if they were pleased, I fear I should not be proof against the whispers of vanity. But you are mistaken in supposing that I keep aloof from them. My afternoons are devoted to pastoral labor, and are spent in going from house to house, for the purpose of having religious conversation and prayer with my people."

"But you study too much," the Reverend Ego would urge, glad to leave the subject of pastoral labor; "it is a weariness to both soul and body."

"True, but I cannot preach without it."

"Well, there are some who can't. I fear I am not thankful enough for the ability to rely on myself. Why, instead of coming before my people worn out with study, I am as fresh as the morning. I feel as the eagle may when he spreads his strong pinions for an upward flight. It is astonishing what can be done if full play be given to a man's mental powers. But it would not do, I suppose, for every one to attempt it."

"I think not."

"I used to fear, brother," said Didymus in a confidential tone, "that if I neglected books I should somehow fall behind the times. I suppose some one told me so, and I foolishly believed it. As if the study of any book could compare with the workings of the immortal mind that my Maker gave me! But for the last ten years I have hardly studied at all, and I find no lack, as yet, of power or knowledge. On the contrary, brother, when I stand up to preach I am

as keen as a brier. Mind, I don't say that every one could pursue my course and retain their hold upon their congregation. I am inclined to think they could not."

"I quite agree with you."

"Yes. And there are times when you would pity me. When I see a multitude hanging upon my lips for the bread of life, and picking up, as it were, every crumb of truth, I realize the responsibility that rests upon me. The sight of my eyes affects my heart. Strong men, six feet high, weep like little children under my exhortations. Ah, Brother H., what am I, or what is my father's house, that such talents should have been committed to my charge? Wonder not that sometimes I am led to envy my ministerial brethren. If they have but one talent, they have only to account for one."

Brother H. drew a sigh of exceeding relief when his visitor departed, and began turning over the despised books with unusual rapidity, soliloquizing the while in a strain that might have convinced his late visitor of his ability to talk extemporaneously. He looked as he felt, both tired and vexed.

A light step was heard on the stairs, and a

smiling face was directly beaming in at the study door. It wore a roguish look; for its owner, the minister's wife, knew exactly how far his patience had been tried. So with a smile she said, "Ned." There was no reply, but she smiled again, and the dim room lighted a little perforce. He knew it, but he chose to nurse his disgust and vexation, so he did not speak.

"Ah, Ned, it's of no use." The speaker was at his side now, and still bent on exorcising the evil spirit that had crept into the snug room unawares. He looked up involuntarily; their eyes met, and both laughed long and heartily.

"Ah, Ned," said his wife, "you need not think to exclude me from your sanctum. Why, you would have moped all day if I had not hastened to the rescue."

"You are welcome at any time, Susy," he replied, "but I do wish there was a law to exclude jackasses."

An exchange of pulpits with some neighboring clergyman was an event of consequence to the Reverend Ego. His satisfaction in holding forth to a new audience had but one drawback. He felt sad that for one short Sab-

bath his own flock should be deprived of his ministrations.

"For it is impossible," he often remarked to his wife, "for a people who have become accustomed to luxurious food to content themselves with coarse, plain fare, be it ever so wholesome."

His wife, a weak little nonentity, one of those women especially designed for the companionship of the Ego race, never failed to sympathize with him or to agree with him.

It was only a few weeks after his installment in his eighth parish that he was invited to exchange with a minister whose church was located in a farming district two miles distant. At first he hesitated. He had hardly had time to fully acquaint his own people with the extent of his gifts and graces; for, impelled by a sense of duty, he had spent the last fortnight in the parish from which he had lately been dismissed, visiting the people, and learning from their own lips that they had passed without injury from his supervision to that of his successor.

The most gratifying evidences of resignation were shown in every quarter, and to his most minute and searching inquiries but one cheering reply was given, and that expressive of

intense satisfaction. Greatly edified by the knowledge thus carefully gleaned, he had returned to his new charge with redoubled resolution to exert all his talents in its service.

At the very outset he was met with this invitation, to throw away an entire Sabbath on an obscure country congregation. He was on the point of declining at once, when the thought of the admiration his oratory would command in so retired a section made him hesitate anew. He walked the room and argued the question *pro* and *con*. Gradually his look and step regained their wonted decision, and it was with his mind fully made up that he approached the table to pen an affirmative note.

"I will go!" he said; "I am sure it will pay. It will refresh me to behold the artless, unsophisticated delight of an audience so seldom favored. The old proverb is a true one, 'It is better to be the head of a hog than the tail of a lion.' Besides, my own flock will learn to appreciate me sooner if I leave them occasionally. Now, I wonder what sort of a preacher Brother Whipple is. If he had much talent he would fill a more conspicuous place. That is certain."

Now it so happened that the preacher in question was a liberally-educated man, distinguished above his fellows by his fine intellectual powers. Though scarcely thirty-two years of age, he had won an enviable reputation as an author, as the Reverend Ego would have known had he been under the necessity of reading much. His powers as a speaker made him a most acceptable exchange in any of the neighboring pulpits, and his hearers were only at a loss which to admire the most, the sublimity and beauty of his thoughts and language, or the graceful and unaffected modesty of his deportment. Many wealthy parishes had tried to tempt him from his retired field of labor, offering him large salaries and unbounded opportunities to secure fame and influence; but his affections were bound to the people of his first charge, and he would not leave them.

As a matter of course the congregation to which he preached was intelligent. They could not help being instructed by his sermons. Many of them were wealthy farmers, who, possessing a competence, had appropriated a goodly share of their income to the education of their families. Very few city congregations

could boast of an equal number of refined and appreciative hearers.

It was to *such* persons, accustomed to *such* preaching, that the Reverend Ego consented to speak for one Sabbath only. He rode over during the previous week to request Mr. Whipple to announce the exchange, so that none might afterward regret having been absent from church. But Mr. Whipple unfortunately forgot to make the announcement till it was too late; and, as it did not strike him as being very important, he made no unusual efforts to circulate information in regard to it. His wife, more thoughtful than himself in such matters, was careful to mention it in the sewing society, so that before the Sabbath the proposed exchange had been duly proclaimed in the remotest corners of the parish.

The Sabbath came, fair and lovely, as cloudless and beautiful as if it had been made for exchanges. The Reverend Ego arrived early. Mr. Whipple, preferring a walk to the care of his horse, had already left home, but Mrs. Whipple was ready to receive him.

"This is rather a thinly settled region, ma'am," he said as soon as he was seated comfortably. "I suppose your congregation is rather small."

"We think it quite respectable as to numbers, considering the distance many have to come."

"How large is it?"

"On pleasant days we have about a hundred in the morning, in the afternoon twice that number."

"Quite a difference. But then people will not go all day unless they are particularly interested. I have always been able to keep up the interest of my hearers. After my first sermon I have no difficulty. I make no special effort, but somehow I succeed. You know, ma'am, that some preachers have the faculty of attracting the old and young. They don't seek popularity, but they are always popular. Why, I never find the slightest difficulty in filling a house with attentive hearers."

"You are fortunate, indeed."

"But I am not elated. Far be it from me to overvalue myself, or to sound my own praises. I am naturally humble. By the way, allow me to ask if our exchange was publicly given out?"

"No, sir. Mr. Whipple forgot to mention it. But it will make no difference," said the lady, trying to soothe his evident discomfiture; "for,

of course, the people will know it as soon as they see you."

"Ma'am, it was to draw them out to fill up the vacant pews that I desired them to be informed of my coming."

Mrs. Whipple's amused look was a puzzle to him, and so was the quiet manner in which she replied: "I mentioned it in the sewing circle, and I dare say it is generally known. But if you have depended on a large morning congregation I am afraid you will be disappointed. If the angel Gabriel was expected our thrifty farmers would attend to their chores before hearing him. Mr. Whipple's forgetfulness will really make no difference, sir."

He did not reply, and Mrs. Whipple ventured to change the subject of conversation. "Have you ever resided in this part of the country before coming to Newington?"

"No. I have lived in Massachusetts; I am a traveler, however, and have visited most of the New England States."

"You find beautiful scenery in this region, I suppose. We are charmed with the lovely and varied views that are seen from every hill around us. Indeed, every window of our house com-

mands a fine prospect. We never tire of it. My husband often says that, like a faithful friend, the landscape grows more delightful the more he becomes acquainted with it. He prizes every tree, and I think would mourn over the removal of the smallest clump of rough bushes that grows on the hill-side."

"You think the people generally understand the arrangement for to-day?" he asked anxiously.

"O, yes! If they think about it at all, they do."

"Ah, well, we will try to make the best of it!"

He again relapsed into silence, from which Mrs. Whipple made no effort to arouse him. She had expected to accompany him to church, but finding, on inquiry, that he was used to hot Sunday dinners, and could not preach in the afternoon without one, she concluded to stay at home and prepare one with as little labor as possible.

"I hope Henry will find out before he exchanges again whether I am to have the privilege of keeping the Sabbath or not." This was her first thought on being left to herself. Then she thought of the probable size of the audience,

with a nervous anxiety, as if herself accountable for tardy comers. It was haying time, when the out-door labors of the farmer are most exhausting, and his inclination to rest on the Sabbath is often too strong to permit his attendance upon the ministry of the word. "It is wrong, to be sure," mused Mrs. Whipple, "for religion should be the primary interest; but who can help it? Then—O, dear!" she suddenly exclaimed aloud, "there is old Mrs. Mason's funeral this morning. They are all spiritualists, and the novelty will draw away half of our usual audience." She would have been quite dismayed by the discouraging prospect, but she had no time to contemplate it. The dinner was to be cooked. By a little hurrying she soon had every thing in the kitchen progressing favorably, and had quietly seated herself with a book in her hand, when the door opened and an invalid sister entered.

"Why, Linda!" said Mrs. Whipple, "is it you? What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Yes, and bored to death. I have not been able to come to church for six weeks, you know;" and, made a little childish by long continued suffering, the poor girl burst into tears.

"I wish I had stayed at home," she added; "why didn't you tell me who was coming to preach?"

"There, there," said Mrs. Whipple, soothingly, "be quiet, Linda. You are too weak and nervous to venture out. I wonder that mother permitted it. Lie down on the sofa. Here is some of mother's famous cordial. You will feel better directly."

"I do already, I can breathe again. Tell me, Eliza, who is this incubus that fills Henry's place to-day?"

"Hush, hush, little sister. You shall speak with more reverence or I will not talk with you."

"I can read your looks, Mrs. Decorum, you like him as well as I do."

"I do not dislike him; and, Linda, I hope it was no silly prejudice that drove you out of church."

"No. Don't look so grave. I was really ill. And—and he was unendurable too. He thinks we are a set of fools. He was defining the word navigation when I came out. Didn't I wish that he was studying the science practically in mid ocean!"

"Now do stop talking, Linda. I am going

down into the kitchen to see to the dinner. Try to catch a nap while I am busy. Stop thinking if you can, and shut your eyes. You are too excitable."

"Excitable!" repeated Linda, but her sister had vanished down the stairs. Obligated to be silent, she lay still, and soon a light slumber, the effect of the cordial, stole over her senses. She would soon have slept profoundly, but the morning service was over, and the entrance of the minister awakened her.

"Don't get up, Miss," he said as Linda started to a sitting posture. "Don't get up on my account. I am not particular about a seat. Did I not see you leave the church?"

"I was not well, and was obliged to come out."

"So I supposed. Are you better?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"I hope you will be able to remain during the sermon this afternoon. I have a subject that will be interesting, and, I think, a novelty here."

"I think I shall not be able to hear it."

"You find sickness a great cross, doubtless. It must have been a trial to you to-day to inter-

rupt a train of thought newly started. I think you were obliged to leave in the middle of the discourse. If you will tell me at what point of the sermon you went out I will complete the argument for you."

"O, no," said Linda, earnestly, "I could not think of giving you the trouble."

"It is no trouble, Miss. It is a pleasure to minister to the comfort of an invalid. I spend my happiest hours by the bedsides of the sick, repeating to them the sermons that they could not otherwise hear, and often being able to add to the results of their public delivery."

"Are there not a good many deaths in your parish?" asked Linda.

"Linda! Linda!" called her sister from the foot of the stairs.

"I am coming," she answered, springing up with alacrity.

"You heard enough of my sermon, Miss," said the Reverend Ego, "to judge of my seafaring illustrations. A little remarkable, you will call them, when I inform you that I was never out of sight of land in my life."

"Possible? Why, one would have thought that your life had been spent on the ocean,

and that this morning saw your first landing."

"Linda! Linda!" again called her sister, with a voice expressive of both mirth and vexation. Thus urged, Linda left the minister to his own thoughts.

The number of carriages that drove into the church inclosure during the noon recess convinced the Reverend Ego that his fame was already spreading. Forgetting Mrs. Whipple's account of the afternoon worshipers, he almost convulsed Linda at the table by saying, "A goodly number seem to be on their way to the sanctuary. I presume the few who were present this morning have now made it known that I am here."

More amused still was the nervous girl when, after the close of the service in church, he remarked to her sister, "Tell your husband to take courage, I have doubled the congregation. A decided success! He must try now to keep up the interest. I will direct him, or I will ride over myself and give an impulse to the work at any time. A decided success, ma'am."

In spite of the Reverend Ego's unbounded popularity, as evidenced by the Monday confes-

sions of his audience, it so happened that before he was fairly established in one parish he was by some means ousted out of it into another, and this before he had half exhibited his oratorical powers. No man ever inveighed more stoutly or earnestly against an itinerant ministry; yet, helpless as a fly in a cobweb, he was perpetually itinerating. There were always some unreasonable deacons or chief men who insisted on a change of preachers in defiance of the tearful remonstrances which, he was sure, were uttered by the mass of his parishioners.

He was in the market nearly half of his time, and expended incredible sums in the purchase of daguerreotypes, to be distributed among his disconsolate admirers in the various places where he had labored. A sense of the heavy losses sustained by these societies on account of his removal at length so affected his mind and depressed his spirits that he at last resolved, with tears, that if he was ejected from Newington he would give up preaching rather than subject another people to such grievous trials.

Acting on this resolution, it was scarcely three months after the exchange before, by a

natural transition, he ceased his ministrations to the souls of his fellow-men and bethought himself of the welfare of their perishing bodies. He attended a course of medical lectures, procured a great quantity of bottles, boxes, and drugs, and began at once to roll up pills and concoct pukes with all the dignity of an experienced physician.

As a doctor he did not give up the Rev. prefix to his name; but, by the imposing addition of M.D., secured a handle at both ends of it. He was still ready to fill up the vacant days incident to a new calling by occasional flights into the ideal regions of the old. But in the new profession he seemed to have found the place for which nature designed him. In no other way could he do so large a business with so small a capital of knowledge. The ability to decry other practitioners and to set forth his own merits came as naturally to him as if he had been born a doctor, and the wonderful cures that he now recollected as having been wrought by him when a mere child aided him essentially in securing a place to commence his practice. It was in a populous village, and was favored with only one physician, an old

man of long-established reputation for skill and knowledge. Dr. Ego laughed at the idea of this old man's maintaining a rivalry with *him*. He mentally contrasted the reserved and somewhat haughty manner of the old doctor with his own continuous smile and prominent I—teeth, and the old man dwindled to a mere mote in the sunbeam.

Yet, as weeks and months rolled on, he was obliged to confess to himself that the days spent in riding to visit imaginary patients came oftener than was agreeable, and that it was wearisome thus to keep up a show of an extensive practice. Very few cases of real sickness came under his care. Those who believed in him, and listened with interest to his accounts of his former successes, seemed to be endowed with iron constitutions and were never ill. Even those that he met in the village stores, and kindly alarmed by feeling their pulse and examining their tongues, went straight to the office of the old doctor and had their fears dispelled immediately.

There were a few dear, considerate souls, martyrs to the interests of science, who seemed to be created for no other purpose than to test

the value of every new medicine. None of the various kinds advertised in the newspapers escaped their notice, but each, as it appeared, was faithfully tried and believed in. To such a new doctor was a perfect godsend. No need now of sending to distant cities for the newest style of emetics, but drugs enough to nauseate the rest of their existence were brought to their very doors.

As a means of attracting attention to himself, and thereby increasing his practice, Dr. Ego began to accompany his wife to the sewing circles of the charitable societies of the village, and to speak occasionally in the Lyceum meetings of the young men. In the first, by a little managing, he contrived to monopolize the conversation, and to confine it to the subject of medical practice. Wonderful were the powers of memory that he displayed on these occasions, and wonderful also were the reminiscences of the surgical skill of his youth that he repeated for the entertainment of the ladies.

Early in the autumn it was proposed that a course of lectures should be given at the Lyceum hall. The clergymen, lawyers, and physicians each received an invitation to give one lecture of the course.

Dr. Ego hesitated. "I should be glad to oblige you," he said to the young committee who waited on him, "but I should have to give you an extempore speech. I have now many patients, most of them desperately sick, and I cannot command a moment's leisure. I have thought of getting an assistant, for my health really suffers under the constant demands of the public, but I fear my patients are too much attached to me to receive another in my place. Nevertheless, it may be that a season of health will soon be granted, and in that case I shall be happy to give the last lecture of the course."

As none of the young men could call to mind a single instance of illness among his acquaintance, they were very little impressed by the doctor's statement.

"Now, said he, after their departure, "*now* I have got a chance to shine. I'll write a lecture that will open their eyes. I have got three months to do it. Oratory is my forte, and these worshipers of the old doctor shall find it out."

"It is nothing but mortal sickness and remarkable cures," said a young minister's wife to a friend as they wended their way to the sewing

circle. "I am sick of hearing the details of the sick-room, and of his operations as a surgeon. It was a positive relief to me last week when old Jonas Ballou interrupted him with a description of his method of cutting up and salting a hog."

"Well, we can't help it. We must bear it patiently."

"Patiently! I think your looks, Mrs. Grant, usually express any thing but patience. And in my creed patience is not an idiotic grace; so, for one, I intend to ignore its existence in this case. If you will second me, there shall be subjects discussed this evening that have no connection with broken bones or colic."

"Agreed. But he will be in full blast before we arrive. There is no chance if he begins first. It is a pity that you were detained by that poor woman, for I really believe, Mrs. Elliot, that you would out-general him on a fair field."

"I will do it now. Pray don't laugh at me. I will interrupt him as he does us. I will talk in concert with him if no other way will do. I will break up his monopoly of our talking rights, if I make him angry in downright earnest. Hark!"

The friends had reached the vestry door,

where the society held their meeting. They exchanged intelligent glances, and both laughed as they recognized the nasal utterance of Dr. Ego. He was reading aloud.

"Already intrenched," said Mrs. Grant, "and fortified against a siege."

"Hush! They will hear us. Let us enter with becoming gravity."

Dr. Ego laid down his book as the ladies entered. "You see, my dear Mrs. Elliot," he said, "that I forget none of our rules. It was voted at our last meeting that an hour of our time should be spent in listening to the reading of some valuable work, and I have brought in a treatise on Anatomy for that purpose. If you please, I will go on with it."

"Excuse me, sir. I was requested, you will recollect, to select the book for this occasion. Netty Lane, you are a fine reader, and it will give us all pleasure if you will read to us."

Mrs. Elliot was the president of the society; and little Netty Lane, in her reverence for the minister's lady, did not dream of offering any opposition to her wishes. So she readily came forward and took the book, and the ladies, with a look of gratitude to Mrs. Elliot, turned with

alacrity to listen to Lieutenant Lynch's account of his visit to the Dead Sea. Not a whisper interrupted the reading, and nothing but the clipping of scissors, the snapping of sewing silk or thread, was heard, save the sweet voice of the young reader, till the allotted hour had expired.

"A very interesting account," said Dr. Ego, speaking before the book was fairly closed, "and it treats of an interesting part of the world. To be sure there is not so full a description of the inhabitants of those regions as we could desire, but if you please, ladies, I will add the necessary information to this fine narrative. We will begin with what is of vital importance to any people; namely, the diseases to which those nations are subject. Now, in the first place, we must take into consideration—"

"Mrs. Clarke," said Mrs. Elliot, in a loud, clear voice, "will you oblige me by matching this striped gingham. You are a genius in such matters."

"That in form, as well as color," pursued the doctor, "the Orientals—"

"Look, Mrs. Grant!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot. "Do come here, ladies."

All crowded hastily around the table where she stood, each one, with the quick perception of her sex, beginning to understand the reason of these frequent interruptions, and to enjoy them. It was only a bit of ordinary embroidery on a baby-sleeve that the lady exhibited, but its pattern and finish elicited a long discussion.

Mrs. Grant purposely opposed her friend, and refused to see either beauty or fitness in the article examined. It was a long time before either lady would give up the contest of words, and a full half hour elapsed before quietude took the place of the apparent confusion. Then an old lady, who had been knitting and taking snuff, unmindful of the discord, inquired if Dr. Ego attended little Johnny Loud, who had broken his leg.

"I was in to see him this morning," he replied, evading her question.

"Well, doctor, how is the boy?"

"It's a bad case, ma'am. A very bad case."

"Why, you don't think he'll die, do you?"

"Perhaps not. He has youth on his side. But he will lose the limb. It was not properly set at first."

"Who set it?"

"Old Dr. B. I was out of town unfortunately, and no doubt the old doctor did the best he could. Surgery is too little understood by the old school, and I fear that many operations are performed at a venture. Now I have been told that Dr. B. once actually set a woman's leg the wrong side before, and that she has been obliged to use it so ever since. It is a great pity, ma'am, because an old doctor cannot afford to lose his reputation for skill. I fear that Dr. B. will find it difficult now to compete with younger and better educated surgeons."

"I can relieve your fears in regard to him," said Mrs. Grant. "Dr. B.'s surgical abilities are too well known to be doubted. And it seems to me that it must have been a miracle of skill that enabled the poor woman to walk in two opposite directions at the same time."

A chorus of laughter repaid Mrs. Grant for her little attempt at sharpshooting; but Dr. Ego did not join in it. Turning to his first questioner, he continued: "The little Loud boy, ma'am, is in a critical state. The injury was a simple fracture at first, but it has become inflamed by improper dressings, and will, doubt-

less, mortify. I will explain to you all the nature of the injury and the proper treatment of such a case."

"O please don't," almost screamed a young lady. "I had the horrors all night after our last meeting. I dreamed of skeletons and small-pox, and was really ill the next day. I am too nervous to hear such things."

"You remind me," said the doctor, giving up reluctantly his promised explanation, "you remind me, Miss Caroline, of my wife's Cousin Phebe. She stayed with us during the cholera season, and I could hardly give Mrs. Ego a description of a patient, but Phebe would be directly attacked with corresponding symptoms. Speaking of cholera, I had one case that was almost too much for my skill. When I first saw the patient I thought it a hopeless case. He was in the last stage of the fatal malady. But we physicians never despair while there is life, and I began at once to take the proper measures to restore him. I will tell you, Miss Caroline, just how he was taken. On Monday—let me think—yes, it was on Monday—"

A loud rap on the table, Mrs. Elliot's signal for silence, made him pause. "Several of our

young ladies," she said, "have volunteered to give us some music, which I am sure will be agreeable to all. Mrs. Grant, your place is at the melodeon."

A small melodeon had been purchased by the society to relieve the tedium of their meetings, and Mrs. Grant readily took her seat before the instrument.

"Now, if you please," continued Mrs. Elliot, as she saw the doctor opening his mouth to proceed with his story, "we will not annoy our kind musicians by the too common incivility of talking while they are endeavoring to give us pleasure."

The singing lasted a long time. The gentlemen, who usually came to tea, began to drop in one by one as the daylight faded, but many of them were singers, and their coming only added length as well as strength to the musical treat. Only once did they pause, and then it was to decide which of several pieces, solicited by the company, should be first sung. Dr. Ego hastily availed himself of the short breathing spell. "Have you seen the 'Daily News' for to-day, Mr. Peyton?" he asked.

"No, sir. The mail has not arrived."

"Yesterday's paper had a sad account of a murder, a poisoning case."

"I did not notice it."

"Strange how common such cases have become. When I commenced my practice, not one physician in a hundred was called to prescribe for a case of real poisoning. Many of the antidotes now in use were unknown, except to a few fortunate ones. I was called once to visit a woman who had been on bad terms with her husband for some months, and who was taken ill very suddenly. The moment I saw her I suspected the truth."

"Did she die?" asked several voices.

"No, indeed. She must have died, though, if they had called in an inexperienced doctor. It was as much as *I* could do to save her. Her husband may thank me that he escaped a halter. The way I treated her case was this: I—"

"Excuse me for interrupting you, Dr. Ego," said Mrs. Elliot, "but our tea is ready, and some of the ladies wish to go home early. Will you oblige us by taking a seat at the table?"

Mrs. Elliot felt sure now that the known voracity of the doctor would effectually silence

his tongue for a season. She drew a long sigh of relief, and abandoned herself to the enjoyment of social intercourse. Her husband was absent, attending the college commencement of Brown University, and she anticipated the grave looks with which he would strive to hide his relish of her description of the afternoon's warfare. "I am glad he was not here," she said to herself. "With his exquisite sense of what is due to courtesy, he would suffer tortures rather than meet Dr. Ego on his own ground. 'Ah! Mary,' he will say to me, 'how could you be so impolite?' But he will like it in his heart, I am sure. There! my doctor has finished his supper at last. He has kept us waiting only ten minutes. See, Mrs. Grant," she said as that lady approached, "our ogre has picked his teeth with his penknife, and sucked the knife as usual, a sure prelude to an avalanche of discourse. What shall I do?"

"As Mr. Elliot is absent, why don't you dismiss the society from the table? Let the girls attend to the dishes and room, and you and I will go to the Lyceum."

"A capital plan, Mrs. Grant; I will do so."

There was quite a bustle attendant upon the

breaking up of the party. Some were searching for stray shawls and overshoes, and some just then remembered various messages to different individuals with which they had been especially charged, and hurried hither and thither on their various errands, in every stage of confusion.

"Look at poor Mr. Peyton, Mrs. Elliot," said Mrs. Grant as they left the vestry together. "He is an old man, but it seems that age is no security."

The poor old man stood on the sidewalk, looking longingly in the direction of his home, but tightly held by the buttonhole, and listening perforce to one of Dr. Ego's wonderful cures.

"Mr. Peyton," said Mrs. Elliot, "are you going directly home? I want to send a message by you to Louisa."

"I shall be happy to oblige you, ma'am."

"Just a moment, Mr. Peyton, if you please," said Dr. Ego, still holding him tightly; "I was saying that the difference between a chronic and—"

"I am obliged to hurry, Mr. Peyton," said Mrs. Elliot, "and think, on the whole, that I will run in a moment and see Louisa if you will go with me. I am not used to the turnings

and corners of your street, you know. Come, Dr. Ego will be willing to excuse you when a lady requires your services."

So saying she hurried him away, leaving Dr. Ego standing alone on the sidewalk.

"I wonder whether those ladies are friendly to me or not," he mused as he stood watching them. "I congratulated myself on having a fair field this afternoon. I knew that Mr. Elliot and the old doctor were both out of town, and that no one would be present who could begin to compete with me in conversational powers. But somehow I have a feeling as if I had been overreached—as if I had been outwitted. What with the work, and the music, and the quarreling of those two ladies, the time has been nearly lost to me. But I gave the old doctor a hit, if I did nothing else. There were some present who did not laugh at Mrs. Grant's impudent speech. And all that he loses I gain."

It was with unfeigned delight that the Reverend Didymus Ego, M. D., accepted a call to act with the other professional men of the village as a visiting school committee. It is a question whether the people "away out West" know what constitutes the duty of such a com-

mittee in many of our New England towns. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise;" and yet the writer of this veracious sketch has a great desire to enlighten the world on this very matter.

In the first place, the committee are expected to overhaul those presuming persons who imagine themselves qualified to teach school, and to lower them a peg or two in their own estimation. For this purpose they are taken to some by-place, secure from interruption, where the chairman of the committee, acting as judge, and the rest as a jury, the trial commences. Diving deep into various books unknown to either party, there are questions asked and answers elicited that astonish the whole company. For hours this intelligent catechising goes on till the most conscientious of the committee is perfectly satisfied, and also till the most learned of the young aspirants is utterly confounded. Yet, in credit to the good nature of both judge and jury, it must be conceded that when the season of mystification is fairly over, they are usually ready to bestow upon each of the would-be pedagogues the paper credentials authorizing him to teach.

The teachers being disposed of, it next becomes the duty of the committee to aggravate the parents of the district scholars to the greatest possible extent, by forbidding the use of the text-books that were introduced during the last quarter and insisting on the purchase of new ones. The first, having just been procured at great expense and inconvenience by many of the parents, and being uninjured, do seem to those old fogies to be just as good as new. For a few days the district is in a state of rebellion, but the committee do not flinch. The teacher is forbidden to use any book save those now recommended; and, as the idea of rearing their children without the advantages of a school education is not to be thought of, the innovation is at last submitted to, other necessary family expenses are retrenched in order to buy the new books, and peace is restored to the district till the beginning of the next term renews the grievance.

All these duties seemed to be a sort of second nature to Dr. Ego. Viewed in a medical light, in their true aspect as chronic plagues, the committee were useful as counter-irritants in quieting the inflammatory dispositions and obstinate

wills of the district. But the especial glory of the doctor was in visiting the schools, and, for a dollar a visit, confounding the pupils and discouraging the teacher. No gentleman of the committee was so faithful in this respect to the interests of education.

It was his custom at every visit to propound some question to a particular class, to be answered at his next coming. Sometimes the whole school were allowed to exercise their wits in the discovery of the right answer.

On one occasion he promised a reward to a class of six little boys, about four years of age, if they would learn from their parents the signification of M. D.

There was a class of young men in the school who occupied a corner by themselves, and whose studies were not connected with the rest. One of these, a droll, waggish fellow, no sooner heard the prize offered than he began to turn over in his own mind a plan to prevent those innocent children from becoming the doctor's walking advertisements. During the school recess he was seen in a remote corner of the playground, with the six little boys grouped around him, each with his hands full of nuts and candy, and

with his eyes fixed on the serious face of the young man.

"What are you up to now, Ned?" asked one of his class-mates, approaching them curiously.

"I? O, I'm treating these younkers. You see I hav'n't forgotten the days when I loved the goodies."

"Those days were quite recent, Ned, if we can judge by the usual stuffed condition of your pockets. But you have some scheme afoot now. What is it? Say, Benny, what has he been telling you?"

Benny did not speak, but drew his lips together as if afraid he should. "They are sworn to secresy. You see," said Ned, gravely, "I am helping them to get the prize."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Look here, little boys. Attention all! Come here again to-morrow, and we'll go over the lesson till you can say it. But mind, now, don't ask your parents. I'll be a father to every one of you till you get the prize, and if the doctor backs out I'll buy you something handsome."

Each day, till the day of the doctor's regular visit, was Ned's recess devoted to treating and

helping the little fellows; but, like all genuine merit, his had the grace of diffidence, and he exacted from each of his little *protégés* a promise to conceal his agency in the matter.

"Let him think your parents helped you," he said.

"I don't believe my mammy would know if I asked her," said one bright little fellow.

"Very likely. Our fathers and mothers went to school before a great many things were found out. Now, if the doctor comes—"

"I seed him go into school just now," interrupted Benny.

"Did you? Well, then, remember that when he calls your class and puts the question, you mustn't wait for him to speak to each of you, but Benny must speak first, then Tom, and so on through the class without waiting a minute. My! wont he say you're the smartest boys in school?"

Cheered by their young teacher's manifest delight in their performance, the little boys hurried in at the sound of the bell, impatient to display their knowledge. An opportunity was soon given them, for only two classes in geography recited before Dr. Ego called them forward.

They obeyed, with radiant smiles and sparkling eyes, stealing sly glances of anticipated triumph at Ned, who was too much absorbed in a difficult problem to notice them.

"Now, my fine fellows," said the doctor, smiling encouragingly, "I judge from your looks that you have not forgotten to learn the meaning of the abbreviation I gave you."

"No, sir," eagerly answered Benny; "we knows them all."

"You all know it, you mean. Well, my boy, you can answer first, and then the next, unless your teacher has accustomed you to answer in concert. How is it, Mr. Morton?"

The teacher colored and hesitated. "I hope you will excuse me, but really, sir, I have not once thought of the question you gave them."

A frown contracted the doctor's forehead, but a glance at the happy expectant little faces before him relieved him. "I am glad," he said, in his loftiest manner, "that their parents were more thoughtful than their teacher. Listen, children. What do the letters M. D. signify?"

"Much Dirt," said Benny.

"Musical Donkey," said Tom instantly.

"Mud Diluted," "Monkey Dear," "Mule Doc-

tor," "Mighty Dromedary," repeated the rest in quick succession, each response being given in a louder tone than its predecessor. It would be quite useless to attempt to depict the doctor's looks as he listened to the ready answers of the children. The teacher and the older pupils burst into hysterical laughter. Ned had dropped his pencil, and was searching for it on the floor under his desk, but his face was as grave as the doctor's when he arose. The children who were too young to understand the cause of the merriment joined loudly in the laughter, and the six little boys who had acquitted themselves so handsomely chuckled outright at what they took for the spontaneous applause of the whole school.

"Silence!" commanded the doctor, in a voice of thunder. At a loss how to vent his angry embarrassment, he turned to the teacher. "This is a pretty proof of your ability to teach, sir. It will be remembered."

"Believe me, sir," said the teacher respectfully, "I knew nothing of this."

"A likely story. It will be remembered, sir."

Mr. Morton strove hard to speak with his usual seriousness as he tried to justify himself.

"It was really as unexpected to me as to yourself. I am very sorry."

"You look sorry," said the exasperated doctor as he saw the rebellious smiles still playing about the teacher's mouth. "It will be remembered, sir."

"Please to question the little boys. You will find I had nothing to do with it."

"I shall do no such thing," said the visitor, angrily drawing on his gloves and taking his hat to leave.

"Benny," said Mr. Morton, "did I teach you to answer the doctor's question?"

"No, sir."

"Who did?"

"We promised not to tell, because—"

"Because what?" roared the doctor as the boy hesitated. "Speak, you young rascal."

"Because," said Benny, "he was afraid you'd hire him for a teacher if you found out how much he knew."

Smothered laughter in all directions now threatened another outbreak.

"You'll get no prizes," said the doctor, shortly. He held up six little paper-covered picture books.

"Please, sir," said little Benny, boldly, "he's got some for us bigger than them, and full of pictures."

"Be silent, boy. How dare you answer back? Mr. Morton, I recommend a little attention to the manners of your pupils. I shall leave this school to be visited by the other gentlemen of the committee. If the children make less progress it will be no fault of mine. Good day."

Hiding his annoyance under a look of pompous dignity, he bowed himself out, only regaining his complacency on receiving an unusually low and respectful bow from Ned, who opened the door for him. "The only well-behaved lad in the school," he said to himself as he walked away.

It was a long time before any thing like order was restored to the school. The restrained mirth burst forth before the visitor was fairly out of sight, and now Ned joined in it heartily. The sly looks of his companions and the occasional glances of the teacher toward his desk showed that his agency in the matter was suspected, but no reproving eyes were turned upon him. The scene had been too thoroughly enjoyed to admit of censure.

An unusually large crowd filled the Lyceum Hall on the evening appointed for Dr. Ego's lecture. There may have been various reasons for the gathering of so large an audience, but from the whisperings and smothered laughter that, for half an hour previous to the lecturer's appearance, filled the apartment, it may be inferred that a love of fun had its share in drawing the people together.

A sudden hush fell upon the entire assembly, however, as the doctor entered by a side door and very slowly walked to the speaker's platform. Although it was a warm evening he wore a long, loose cloak, which added much to the imposing dignity of his appearance. With becoming deliberation he sat down, and for ten or fifteen minutes surveyed the audience with the indifferent air that distinguishes the accustomed speaker.

At last he signified to the president his readiness to begin, and was by him introduced in due form to his hearers. His theme was "Progression." It was evident, before he had finished his introductory remarks, that if his lecture were not the crowning effort of the season it was not because of any paucity in the English

language. Middle-aged men and women opened their mouths in unfeigned astonishment as unintelligible adjectives and nouns fell upon their ears, and a young man who was studying law left the hall in despair, only venturing to return after securing a copy of Webster's Unabridged.

Mischievous boys, gathering courage from the expressive countenances of their seniors, mimicked his pompous manner and familiar smile, and cheered with enthusiasm whenever an unusually heavy word was uttered. A stranger would have supposed, from the interest they manifested, that the entire youth of the village were embryo Ciceros.

It was a long lecture, lasting nearly two hours, and wearying the patience of the "oldest inhabitant." But at last, when the most long-suffering persons in the hall were contemplating the propriety of "going out during meeting," the doctor announced the peroration, and each one settled himself hopefully to endure the final effort.

"In conclusion," remarked the orator, "let me refer to the different humanitarian institutions of the day. I am not speaking incogitantly when I affirm that these are the legitimate

fruits of Progression. It has always been held as an inconcussible argument that Progression includes civilized benevolence. In vain may the proud opposer strive to infuscate the subject; it gleams in defiance of his efforts. Look at the Bible cause! Is there one in this audience whose heart has not been fringed with the plumes of this fair bird of paradise? Behold the tract enterprise, scattering its leaves of truth throughout the world! Like a molting angel, it flies through mid-heaven shedding its feathers upon the nations. Ah, my dear hearers, it is such Progression that levigates the rough edges of our carnal nature and transforms us into profound mysteriarchs. I might mention our lunatic asylums; palatial homes, where the intellect may recover from its painful aberrations—homes sacred to superior minds alone. To such a home does your speaker often look forward with painful emotions, with natural dread. Turn we from the thrilling picture to our institutions of learning. There the human mind, after long wandering in the mazes of ignorance, is at last reintegrated. Years ago, a boy, distinguished even then for precocious genius, entered the classic halls of a distant

University. I was about to give you a practical illustration of the benefits of education even in such a case, but you might consider me egotistical. Modesty forbids that I should dwell upon his progress in ancient and modern lore. Of his merits as a profound metaphysician and orator you may well judge for yourselves, for he stands before you.

"I need not ask that this subject may fall with due ponderosity upon every heart. Let the weak and timid take courage. Let the strong increase in strength. Let Progression be our watchword, till this Lyceum, the germ of whose progress has been so anxiously watched by your speaker, shall become the encyclopedia of the universe."

THE END.

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