

AGNÉS HILTON:

OR,

PRACTICAL VIEWS OF CATHOLICITY.

A TALE OF

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS.

By MARY I. HOFFMAN.

NEW YORK:

P. O'SHEA, 104 BLEECKER STREET.

1864.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863,

By P. O'SHEA,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

C. A. ALVORD, STEREOTYPED AND PRINTER.

CHAPTER I.

AGNES HILTON's home was situated in a fashionable part of the city of A—. Her parents were wealthy, and she moved in society with a proud, lofty bearing that told of conscious superiority. Whether it belonged to her nature, or was the effect of the flattery and homage paid to her as a wealthy and beautiful heiress, it was impossible to say; but there was an imperiousness about her that strangely contrasted with her mother's gentle bearing, and her father's pleasant, unassuming manners. In the presence of mere acquaintances she took but little pains to render herself agreeable, treating them with a coldness that forbade their too often intruding themselves upon her. She numbered but few in her list of intimate friends, but, with all her pride, these few were chosen, not because they offered adulation at her shrine, but because she saw in them qualities really commendable. Her mind was of a reflective cast; she cared not for the gay routine of pleasure. While others were toiling and wearing themselves out in the dissipations of fashionable life, she would be in her own room, poring over some favorite volume, engaged with her tapestry, practising some difficult piece, or, crayon in hand, trying to reproduce on paper some of the fanciful visions that flitted through her brain, or copying some of the gems she had carefully gathered together. Her portfolio was filled with

these drawings, while the pencilling in her books proved her library was not for mere show. Her character would have been irreproachable had it not been for pride, which cast a shade over all the finer qualities of her heart, and made her tenacious of her own will, haughty, and exacting. Glancing round her elegantly furnished room, you saw hung on the walls pictures which spoke in eloquent language to the soul of the humble duties of a Christian. Turning to her books, you read the names of the works intended to raise the mind from the fleeting vanities of the world, and impress upon it the *great truth*, that without humility none can be pleasing to God.

I have said that she numbered but few in her list of intimate friends, but in this list was one to whom, more than the rest, she was deeply attached: it was Becky Starr. Together had they received their education; placed at the same time at St. Teresa's, their academical course finished, at the same time they entered society. Having mentioned her as Agnes's particular friend, I may as well here slightly sketch her character. She was grave, thoughtful, and pious,—just such a companion as one in sorrow would long to have; her gentle care, still, quiet ways, and sensible conversation could not but have a soothing effect upon the most despondent. On the morning on which our story opens she had called to see Agnes, to bid her "good-by," previous to starting for her uncle's, in the country.

"I thought," said Agnes, in a slightly reproachful tone, "that you would surely spend a day with me before going."

"And so I intended, but grandfather and grandmother are so anxious to see me that I cannot wait."

"Pardon me, Becky, if I speak too plain, but I don't see

how you can enjoy yourself in their society. That grandfather of yours has always seemed to me stern and disagreeable."

"His heart has been for many years embittered."

"By the conversion of his children?"

"Yes, Agnes; grandfather is not what he was before."

She reached forth her hand to take up her bonnet, and Agnes said:

"Don't think of going yet; wait till mother comes in."

"How long will she be out?"

"Only for a short time. I expect her every minute."

"I will wait," she said, replacing her bonnet on the table. "I would not like to leave the city without seeing her."

"And while waiting," rejoined Agnes, "tell me how your grandparents' children became converted, when they were so prejudiced."

"I never told you?"

"No, you never did; and you have always been so silent on the subject that I have never had courage to ask you."

"Grandfather and grandmother, Agnes, are of the stern, Puritanical class, and have always entertained for the Catholic religion the utmost abhorrence; their children embraced it, and from that they looked upon them as marked for perdition. In proportion to their love, so was their grief; but I will not dwell upon it. You wished to hear how their children became converted, when their parents were so inveterate. I never told you, for I thought it useless to be dwelling on such a subject. It was better to talk of other things, passing that over; but now, as brother Walter has confided to me that you are soon to become a member of

our family, soon to be numbered among their grandchildren, I think it as well that you should know it."

A crimson hue dyed Agnes's cheek, but, making no remark, Becky went on:

"At the age of seventeen uncle was placed in a school about eighty miles from home. Father and mother residing in the same place, he boarded with them. He had attended the academy but three years, when, at a protracted meeting, his curiosity was excited to know if all alleged against the Catholic religion was true, and what it had to say in its own defence. A few Catholics had moved in, and as usual, under the guidance of their priest, they were erecting a little church. He saw these children of toil cheerfully foregoing many a comfort, generously giving their mite, and, where they could obtain a day's respite from their employers, devoting it to labor on their church, and he felt a pity for them. What sneers, what taunts they bore! Ever ready to obey in all things else, how unswerving in their affection to their faith! From the priest he borrowed several volumes, and in the evenings, after attending to the lessons for the next day, repairing to the sitting-room, he would read aloud from them to mother and father. Soon pity and idle curiosity merged in one intense desire for the welfare of their souls, to know the truth. Volume after volume was eagerly read, several conversations they had with the priest, and, to be brief, seven months from the time uncle attended the protracted meeting, father, mother, and he were baptized and received into the Church."

"And your grandparents, how did they receive the news?"

"Just as you might expect they would. Grandfather

wrote at once, ordering uncle's immediate return home. With a heavy heart he obeyed the summons. Grandfather met him with stern reproaches; but grandmother, more gentle in her nature, pressed him to her heart, and wept over him, as a fond mother would weep over a loved but lost child. I need not dwell on the first few years that followed; suffice it to say, possessing much of his father's passionate nature, uncle found it difficult to repress the indignant replies that would rise to his lips upon hearing some peculiarly taunting remark about his adopted faith. As to reason, grandfather would hear nothing of that; he must have all the talk to himself. Did he not know perfectly well that the Catholic Church was a sink of utter abominations? Who would dare to contradict him? or rather, who could convince him to the contrary? Could Walter, a mere child? Grandfather always looked upon his children as children. He could not realize that a few short years had changed his little boy and girl into a man and woman—sensible beings, capable of knowing and judging for themselves, and capable, too, from the light which had been granted them, of guiding and directing him into a path leading to peace and rest."

"Was your uncle's wife converted before or after her marriage?"

"Aunt Fanny! oh, she was always a pious Catholic; uncle became acquainted with her while on a visit to our house. In a few months they were married, and he brought her to his home. At first, grandfather paid her only the coldest attention; but her respectful bearing and soothing kindness soon won him to look more kindly upon her, while grandmother learned to love her as she had once loved mother."

"Once, Becky, once? That sounds as if that feeling towards your mother had grown cold, was dead!"

A great gravity rested on Becky's face. "Cold, Agnes," she said, "but not dead. From the time of mother's conversion grandfather and grandmother never visited her, and when she went out to the old homestead, which she did once or twice a year, grandfather was cold and distant and grandmother silent and sorrowful. But dear aunt Fanny, what an angel of peace she proved to be! She taught uncle to bear more patiently the asperity of his father. 'Don't mind it;' she would say; 'Don't retort; he is your father, and you must bear with him.' 'But he goads me so,' uncle would answer, 'he is so tyrannical, and speaks so bitterly of what he knows nothing about.' 'But, Walter,' then she would reply, 'be patient; words here are out of place. When you feel like retorting sharply, say a little prayer. Prayer will do every thing; words will only make the breach wider.' And so dear aunt taught him to bear patiently; to have recourse to prayer in all his troubles. Imperceptibly, a change came over grandfather and grandmother; with the old kindness they received mother on her visits, and at the end of one returned home with her. Since then they have spent two or three months every year at our house. On their last visit they seemed more gloomy and restless than ever; they stayed most of the time in their room, poring over the books they had brought with them." Becky suddenly paused, and a deep shade rested on her thoughtful face.

"But," said Agnes, greatly interested, "did they seem in no way relenting in their dislike to our religion?"

"I don't know," replied Becky, her eyes filling; "don't ask me. More than ever they now stand in need of prayer.

I am going to be with them this winter, and, oh, Agnes, by the sacred tie that is soon to bind you to our family, I beg you to remember them in your prayers."

"In my poor prayers they shall not be forgotten," said Agnes, in a low voice, bowing her head, and letting the dark ringlets fall over her face to hide her blushes. A step was heard ascending the stairs.

"That is mother!" she exclaimed, rising and walking to the door. "Mother, Becky Starr is in, and has waited to see you."

"Ah! indeed, dear Becky," said Mrs. Hilton, entering the room, and warmly shaking her hand, "I am sorry I stayed out so long."

"And I am glad, mother. By your delay I have had all the longer call."

"But, Becky," asked Mrs. Hilton, seating herself beside her, and still retaining her hand, "is it really true that you are so soon going to your uncle's?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hilton; I start to-morrow."

"Why not stay with us till after Christmas?"

"Oh, grandfather and grandmother could not think of my waiting till then; they are very lonely, and I must hasten to them."

"Well, Becky," rejoined Mrs. Hilton, "I have heard the pious hope that prompts your going, and may God bless you, and grant it may be realized."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hilton," she replied, her voice quite tremulous, "and you, too, will pray for them."

"I will, Becky, I will—but you are not going so soon?" she asked, seeing her draw up her cloak from the back of the chair.

"Yes, Mrs. Hilton; I have stayed so long that some of my

other calls will have to be very short, if not entirely put off; but have you seen Edith Carter since her return?"

"Yes, I was there this morning."

"How does she seem?"

"Quite feeble, but better than when she first reached home."

"Ah, poor Edith! I fear she has reached home only to die."

"I fear the same," said Agnes; "she has all the appearance of one in a decline."

Becky had now drawn on her gloves, and Agnes and Mrs. Hilton accompanied her to the door.

"Agnes," she said, kissing her cheek, "remember your promise."

"I will, dear Becky, I will," she replied, pressing her to her heart.

A warm embrace from Mrs. Hilton, a God-speed-you on your pious mission, and, seated in her carriage, she was borne rapidly away.

Mrs. Hilton and Agnes had returned to the room of the latter, and were engaged in conversation, when the door opened and a pale, interesting-looking girl, dressed in black, entered. An instant change came over Agnes; the genial expression faded from her face; raising her eyes, she surveyed the intruder with a cold, disdainful glance.

"Well, Martha!" said Mrs. Hilton, kindly.

"Yesterday, Mrs. Hilton, you spoke of a pattern for a pair of slippers you wished me to work."

"Yes, Martha, I recollect, and you will find it on the table."

She pointed to where Agnes was sitting. With a light, timid, and withal graceful step, the girl approached the

table. Agnes's elbow rested upon it and partially covered the pattern; for awhile she stood silently waiting for her to raise her arm, and then in a low, sweet voice said:

"Miss Agnes, the pattern is under your arm." Slowly the arm was raised, Martha took up the pattern, and in her agitation let fall a book. A crimson glow swept over her pale face; hastily stooping, she picked it up, and replaced it on the table. Agnes favored her with another cold, disdainful glance, and with that glance chilling her very heart, she turned and walked out of the room. In our next chapter we will go to the home of the sewing-girl.

CHAPTER II.

It was a poor, dilapidated house in a narrow lane; no curtains shaded the small windows through which the cold, glaring sun came mockingly in. A table stood in the middle of the room, with—we cannot say the remains of the last meal, for the meal had been too scant to have any remains—but with the soiled cups and plates still unremoved; the cold stove looked as if it had never known what it was to have a good fire blazing and burning within it; back by the wall was an old scuttle, in which were a few coals, evidently placed there away from the stove, lest too close proximity might tempt to using them before the time to heat the teakettle for the next meal came round. On a little bench sat a pale, thin-faced child of seven or eight years. An old, threadbare coat, very much too large, was wrapped around him, completely covering, or rather burying him in its ample folds. After one or two ineffectual attempts he succeeded in disengaging his little hands, and then smoothed back the golden locks from his broad, handsome brow. On the floor were two little girls, one five, the other three. They were playing with bits of cloth and shreds of ribbons, ever and anon pausing to look up in the face of a middle-aged woman sitting by the window, sewing on a jacket as fast as her hand could fly. She had on a faded dress of mourning, and her countenance looked sor-

row-stricken and worn. On a bed in one corner was lying a boy of fifteen or sixteen years. He was very pale, and with the sunken eyes closed, the chin slightly fallen, the ashen lips parted, displaying the large even teeth, a looker-on might have congratulated himself that the vital spark had fled—that the spirit had found a happier home. But his languid eyes opened, and a groan escaped his lips. His mother started and exclaimed:

“Oh, Alfred, that pain has again awakened you!”

“No, mother, no, I was not asleep,” he sorrowfully replied.

“Not asleep, Alfred! I thought you were, you lay so quiet.”

“I know it, but I only had my eyes closed, thinking of the time we lived in Stanton, and it all came back so plain, that I thought this poor, cold room was only a dream, but I opened my eyes, and oh, mother, it wasn’t, it wasn’t!” Claspings his hands, he cried: “What a change since father died, what a change!” and sobs choked the further utterance of the poor, sick boy.

“Oh, Alfred, dear Alfred,” said his mother, while unbidden tears came into her eyes; “your father was too good to be left here to suffer. He was called home to heaven—to heaven,” she slowly repeated, dropping her needle and pressing her hand upon her heart to keep down its tumultuous throbbings. Then, after a moment’s pause, she added:

“But, Alfred, be patient; God will not forget us.”

“Forget us!” he exclaimed, starting up and looking wildly around, “why, mother, it seems we are already forgotten.”

“No, Alfred, don’t say that; God is so good and merciful, he sends us these trials to disengage our minds from the

world, and prepare us for heaven; his beautiful heaven, child. You remember when, in Stanton, we used to read of it, and think we could even suffer martyrdom to show our love and gratitude to our dear Lord, who came on earth and died that we might enjoy it. And now, when pain and suffering come upon us, shall we murmur and repine?"

"Oh, mother, I don't want to murmur, but—oh, it is so much easier to talk of pain than it is to suffer it."

"But, Alfred, dear, any pain or trial sent by God, if we only bear it with patience and resignation, will be showing the same love as if we died for him."

"Why, mother!" he exclaimed, forgetting, in his surprise, the great weakness that a moment before had gathered round his heart; "your words seem so strange, I will not say irreverent—but, mother, to compare our trials to martyrdom seems—seems so presumptuous."

Pausing an instant in her sewing, she fixed a steadfast gaze upon him; perceiving the conversation was not wearying him, she said:

"Alfred, I have often wished in this sickness to tell you my thoughts on this subject, for it seems they were suggested by my good angel, to strengthen and comfort me. You have been so weak, that I have not dared to dwell on any subject, or use more words than were absolutely necessary. But now I see you are able to hear me, and I will speak."

"Yes, do, mother, do tell me something that will comfort me too; for, oh, how sad, how stricken, I feel!" His large eye looked haggard and wild. The little boy on the bench moved nearer, and, bending over, with his elbows on his knees and his chin resting on his tiny palms, fixed his blue eyes wonderingly upon her, listening intently to what she

was about to say. Newly threading her needle, she commenced:

"Alfred, a martyr suffers death through love of God, and rather than consent to an act displeasing to him; in other words, rather than do any thing that would offend him."

"Yes, mother, but—"

"Wait, my child, wait. If now, through the same love of God, and through fear of offending him, we suffer our trials and afflictions with patience and resignation, is it not the same spirit which leads one to martyrdom? is it not, my child, the same?"

He paused a moment before replying, and then slowly said: "In the way in which you present it to my view, it really does seem so, mother; but—" placing his hand upon his heart, "I wish I could make it seem so here." He raised himself on his elbow and gazed round the desolate room; a wintry smile lit up his wan countenance.

"Oh, mother," he bitterly exclaimed, "to talk of glorious martyrdom and joyous heaven in this wretched, wretched home of poverty!"

"Why not, my child?" she asked, in her kindest and most soothing tones. "Is it not the very place to talk of them? Has Alfred forgotten the cold little stable of Bethlehem, and the poor, comfortless home of Egypt? No, no, Alfred, poverty itself can never exclude us from heaven. One single sin may forever close its gates, but, let us be ever so poor and wretched, we still have just as great a claim to heaven as the richest; perhaps even greater; remember Lazarus."

Clasping her thin hands, while a smile played over her worn features, she continued:

"It may come upon us—poverty may—with such crushing force that we will have to lie down and die; but then it will be *our* path to heaven, *our* road home. Home! Oh, Alfred, what comfort in that word! There we will meet father, mother, sisters, brothers, and all will be joy and happiness. Every tear will be wiped away, and all the sorrow and wretchedness of the way-side forgotten. Yes, Alfred, from this very room, so poor and cold, we may go to a home all beautiful and bright." With a hurried hand she resumed her sewing. Alfred was silent, but the cloud had passed from his brow. After awhile he spoke:

"Mother, how much good your words have done me! They remind me of what Father Joseph said to father when he was sick."

"What was it, my child?"

"Father had had one of his bad turns, and when he got able to speak he said, 'Oh, father, what have I ever done that I should suffer so?' and Father Joseph, without a bit of that severity he puts on when he thinks one is saying or doing anything wrong, told him it was not a question of what he had or had not done, but that he was in that narrow path where the briers overhead, underneath, and on each side were reaching out their arms to block up the way, but that he must not give up and be conquered, but urge right on, and, by and by, the road would lead to so beautiful and happy a home, that he would forget all about the briers and thorns of the way-side, and only rejoice that by any means at all he was able to reach so blessed and soul-resting a place. Father smiled, and the smile was like a ray of sunshine breaking through a bleak November day. Father Joseph sat by his bed and talked on. By and by, father smiled again, and, kissing his crucifix, said, 'Very true, father, I

can't suffer too much to gain that blessed home.' And, mother, I feel so too."

Resolutely putting back the tears, and forcing herself to calmness of voice, she replied:

"And this feeling, Alfred, brings with it a great peace, and banishes that feeling of wicked sore rebellion?"

"Yes, mother, yes."

"Thank God, my child, thank God! And now, with your heart soothed and rested, don't talk any more, lest you get too wearied, but let me arrange your pillow so that you can lie back and rest." She arose, and shaking up the small pillow, placed it under his head, smoothed the scanty bed-clothes, and resumed her sewing. She had taken but a few stitches when little Mark directed her attention to the younger of the two children, who was lying fast asleep on the floor, her head resting on her tiny arm. Tenderly lifting her up, she carried her to a cot-bed, sunk in a recess, and placed her upon it. As she gazed on its sweet, innocent face, nature for a moment gained the ascendancy, and a pang shot through her heart, that she had not the time to tend and fondle it as of old. A tear filled her eye and fell upon its cheek; quickly repressing the vain regret, she carefully wiped it off, kissed the place where it had been, and, hastening to her seat by the window, resumed her sewing.

Little Ellen came up, and, leaning heavily against her knee, with touching earnestness asked:

"Oh, mother, have we nothing, nothing to eat?"

"Wait, my love, wait. Mother will soon have this done, and then she'll go out and get something for her little dears. Yes," she continued, rather speaking aloud her thoughts than addressing herself to the understanding of the child, "Mr. Simonds will pay me three shillings for this, and that

will buy a chicken for Alfred and a loaf of bread; and I have some salt and a bit of butter left to season it with, while the coals there in the scuttle will cook it. Ah yes," she said, looking down smilingly on the child, "little Ellen shall have a fine dinner," glancing at the shadow on the wall; "rather late, but then little Ellen shall have her bread wet in the chicken broth, and that will be so nice."

"Oh, mother," she exclaimed, with childish impatience, "I wish I had it now."

"Well, let me see; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven buttons, and then it will be done." And, though her countenance grew paler, her hand went faster.

At last it was finished. Rising, she hastily folded it, bade little Mark if Alfred, who had fallen asleep, should waken before her return, tell him she had taken home the vest; and she added, a triumphant smile playing over her pale face, "tell him, too, I shall bring him back a chicken."

She then wrapped around her a mourning shawl, much too thin for the inclement season, and, putting on a poor-looking bonnet, walked into the alley, soon reached the street, and in a few minutes was standing by the counter in Mr. Simonds's store. He unrolled the garment, carefully examined it, and handed her another bundle to make up; then going to his drawer, counted out eighteen pence and laid it on the counter before her.

What did he mean? Did he not owe her three shillings? But before she had time to put these questions into word form he had turned and was waiting on a customer. She waited till he got through, and when he glanced at her, as much as to say: "Why do you loiter? what more do you want?" she timidly said: "Sir, I believe there is eighteen pence more coming. It was three shillings."

Wheeling round abruptly, he replied, "Three shillings! I know very well it was three shillings, but I paid you half in advance."

Ah, sure he had; and it went towards paying rent for her little room, which debt being off her mind, in her great anxiety to get something nourishing for her poor sick child, she had quite forgotten. After a moment's hesitation, she asked:

"But could you not pay me half in advance again?"

"Madam, we can't afford to pay twice for one garment," he replied, turning coldly from her.

With a crushed, heavy feeling at her heart, she took up her bundle and walked sorrowfully out of the store. Her first impulse was to call on Martha, her eldest daughter, who was seamstress in Mr. Hilton's family; but not only the recollection that her wages were taken up to the last cent, but the memory of other days deterred her from it.

"To think I should have to go to *him* for aid," she groaned, "no, no, I cannot; he has forgotten me. So let it be."

She clasped her rigid hands, and with bowed head and compressed lips walked on. A passer-by might have started at the ashen hue and utter wretchedness of her countenance.

She turned to a bakery near by; she had at least enough to buy bread to last them that day and the next, and how many had not even that; but, then, poor Alfred, so weak, so emaciated, how could she bear the disappointment of his longing eyes? How deep is a mother's love! for herself she felt she could brave every thing—cold, hunger, and death. But that he, her poor sick child, should want the little comforts so necessary for his restoration to health while thousands around her were rioting in wasteful luxuries, filled her

with the most intense anguish. A feeling of despair thrilled her soul, her limbs trembled, she could scarce proceed; pausing, she wiped the profuse perspiration from her forehead, and, glancing upward, murmured in her agony, "Mother of sorrows, pray for me!" In a moment her calmness was restored, and with renewed courage she exclaimed, "No, I must not lose my only chance of getting poor Alfred what he stands so much in need of. What if I am forgotten; so much the better." She turned, and a few moments' rapid walking brought her to the elegant mansion of Mr. Hilton. Without one glance at the name on the hall-door, resolutely forcing back a whole tide of thronging memories, she descended the steps and rapped at the kitchen-door. It was almost immediately opened by Nora Neal, the presiding genius of the culinary department. On seeing the pale, haggard face before her, with the wild impulsiveness of her nature, she threw up both her hands, and exclaimed, "The Lord save us!"

"I would like to see Miss Clement," said the poor widow, and, feeling a great weakness coming over her, she leaned heavily against the door-case.

"Oh, come in, come in," replied Nora, setting her a chair and quickly handing her a glass of water. Eagerly swallowing it, she revived up and repeated her wish to see her daughter. "Yes, ma'am, and in a minute she'll be here." The kind-hearted Nora left the room, wiping with the corner of her apron a large tear from her eye.

"Ah sure," she said to herself, "they are in great trouble; the Lord help them, poor things; it's themselves that arn't used to such poverty, and it breaks their hearts entirely!" She slowly shook her head, expressive of the great sympathy she felt for them. Reaching the room in which

Martha sewed, she hastily threw open the door and exclaimed:

"Miss Clement, go down below, your mother is there and wishes to see you."

Martha wildly started up, and the last faint trace of color left her face. "My mother!" she exclaimed, and, throwing aside her work, had reached the door when, suddenly turning, she grasped Nora's hand and hoarsely whispered:

"Did she say he was dead? Alfred was dead?"

"Oh no, no, she didn't say a word about it; and if he was sure you know she would, so comfort your poor heart."

The sympathizing Nora, though she did not feel quite so sure of it herself, said this in so confident a tone that the warm blood rushed back to Martha's heart; with reassured feelings, and a grateful pressure of Nora's hand, she hastily descended to the kitchen. Her mother soon informed her of her disappointment at Mr. Simonds's, and how she could not go back to Alfred without the delicacy she had promised him. For a moment Martha hesitated; then recollecting how kindly Mrs. Hilton had always inquired for her sick brother, she gained courage and immediately repaired to her room. Once in her presence, although she found her alone, her resolution faltered. How could she leave herself liable to a harsh, perhaps insulting, refusal? It was only a trifle she was about to ask, but would not that very fact make its refusal all the more galling? Mrs. Hilton had cheerfully paid her her week's wages every Saturday night, but might she not, like Mr. Simonds, refuse to pay her in advance? With these thoughts passing through her mind she stood before her, weak and irresolute. Mrs. Hilton at once perceived her embarrassment; having heard from Nora how pale and haggard her mother looked when

she came in, she rightly conjectured the poor girl had come for some favor. Thinking her embarrassment would sooner wear away if she appeared unconscious of it, she kept her eyes fixed on a piece of embroidery she held in her hand; but, instead of becoming more calm, her agitation rather increased, till, deeming it necessary herself to broach the subject, she looked up from her employment, and, in a feeling tone, remarked:

"Nora has been in, and she tells me your mother is in the kitchen."

"Yes, she is there,"—the blood mantled her cheeks,—
"Mrs. Hilton, if you would—would—if you would not think it too much—!" The poor girl stopped, utterly unable to proceed.

"Speak, Martha, speak. Whatever I can do for you I will," rejoined Mrs. Hilton, kindly.

A deeper flush suffused her cheeks, and she hurriedly said—for it seemed, unless she spoke quickly, she could not speak at all—"I would like a week's wages in advance. Mother wants it to get some things for Alfred." She hung her head, not now fearful of a refusal, for Mrs. Hilton's countenance showed too great a sympathy to fear that; but that their extreme poverty should be exposed to the eyes of a stranger. "For what else," she said to herself, "would bring me here on such an errand?"

Mrs. Hilton arose, and going to her *escritoire*, took out a delicate *porte-monnaie*, opened it, and placed a bill in her hand. She glanced at it, and, quickly handing it back, exclaimed,

"Oh, Mrs. Hilton, you have made a mistake. This is five dollars." But the kind Mrs. Hilton only closed her hand upon it, and bade her take it to her mother.

Poor Martha! She paused a moment, hoping to get composed enough to speak; but finding the tears coming, she hastily turned, and had reached the door, when Mrs. Hilton again addressed her:

"Go, Martha, and tell your mother I would like to see her."

She thought, by hearing a connected account of their difficulties, she might devise some way permanently to relieve them; "and, in the mean time," she added, "do you go out and get the things your brother needs, that he may not be kept too long waiting."

Martha did as directed, and when the poor widow made her appearance, with the delicacy of a true Christian, Mrs. Hilton drew from her her tale of suffering. We will not pretend to follow the conversation, which was frequently interrupted by tears and sobs, but give below our own version.

For many years Mr. Clement had resided in the beautiful and retired village of Stanton, where, as teacher of a select school, he had comfortably supported his family; but, two years before, owing to the erection of a public academy, his school began to dwindle away. A few families, out of respect and gratitude for the care and fidelity with which he had discharged his duties, still patronized him. A year passed; his diminished salary unable to keep them in the style in which they had been accustomed to live, he gave up the school and moved to the city of A—. Here he hoped in his vocation to be able to support his family, and maintain a respectable position in society. After being in the city several weeks, and finding it impossible to obtain a situation as teacher, he sought a place as book-keeper or clerk in some of the large mercantile establishments. For-

tune frowned on all his efforts; every vacancy was filled. At last, when almost worn out with suspense, disappointments, and the harassing fear that his family would be reduced to actual want without his being able to put forth a hand to help them, he, together with his eldest son, obtained a situation as clerk in a large clothing store. He had been in his new employment but a short time when his health, enfeebled with the former confinement of his school and the subsequent anxiety of his mind, completely gave way, and he sank prostrate on a bed of sickness never to rise again. For a few months he lingered and was then called away, leaving his wife and children lone and desolate in a strange place. To pay the physician's bill and meet the funeral expenses, the widow sold off part of their furniture and moved to humbler lodgings.

The support of the family depending entirely on the slender wages of Alfred, although greatly exhausted with constant attendance at the bedside of her husband, she bethought herself of her early calling, that of tailoress, and entreated Mr. Simonds to give her work. He submitted a trial piece to her, and this she finished with so much satisfaction that he furnished her with constant employment. About the same time Father Joseph obtained for Martha a situation as seamstress in Mr. Hilton's family. But yet their trials were not at an end. Alfred, unaccustomed to the close confinement of the store, was taken violently ill with a fever. For the first few days she strove to attend him without neglecting her sewing.

They were now at the commencement of a long and tedious winter, and want stared them in the face, but the poor child's ravings became so violent that she could hardly hold him on the bed; he wished, all sick as he was, to

rush into the street, to go back to Stanton, where he insisted his father was waiting to receive him. Poor Mrs. Clement, her cup of sorrow seemed filled to overflowing! With an anguished heart, she returned, unmade, the garment she had taken home, and looked about her to see what she could sell, to meet their pressing wants. First the bureau went, then the looking-glass, the stand, the curtains, the clock; and so on, till only such articles as the strictest necessity required were left. She then descended to their wardrobe—they must have something to eat—and those dresses which she had carefully put away, as unbecoming their reduced circumstances—why should they be left to mock them in their misery? Indeed, they would not have been spared till now, if they had known that in the proud city they could dispose of them; but experience, though a painful, is a very thorough teacher. They found a ready market for them, and, like the other mementoes of better days, they went to supply for a few days longer the necessities of life to the widow and her children.

Happily, before the means arising from them were all gone, Alfred's fever turned, and once more was she able to resume her sewing. But still the little she earned, together with Martha's wages, was scarcely sufficient to keep want from their door. Poor Alfred, so very weak and exhausted, how much he required not only the strict necessities, but a few of the comforts, of life! With all the patient endurance of a mother's love, she worked day and night to rise above their most pressing wants, so as to be able to get him some little delicacy that might tempt his feeble palate, or some nourishing food that might strengthen his exhausted frame. But just as she would be on the eve of accomplishing her object, some unexpected but imperative

demand would come to snatch away her means. At one time it was the rent for their miserable little room; at another, the change from moderate to extreme cold weather, making it necessary to get a fresh supply of coal to keep herself and children from freezing; thus it was.

"What can I do? What can I do?" she exclaimed, wringing her hands. Then, in a calmer voice, she added: "It's wrong, very wrong for me to repine, I know it is. I told Alfred to-day that cold and hunger might be *our* path to heaven, but oh! Mrs. Hilton, heaven is so rich an inheritance that I must not murmur at the price! Once in that blessed home, all the sorrows of the way-side will be forgotten!"

Her pale face wore so earnest an expression, and her voice was so touchingly sweet in its low, thrilling tones, that tears, all unheeded, rolled over Mrs. Hilton's cheeks. Hers was not a nature easily moved to tears; her eyes would look pityingly, but seldom fill; her bearing was calm and collected; her voice gentle, but never hilarious; she frequently smiled, but seldom or never laughed. The world called her apathetic; it even accused her of being hard-hearted; but it only showed how little the world, with all its pretensions to superior wisdom, knows. The poor, the unfortunate, the distressed—and who are judges if not they?—pronounced her kind and charitable, in every sense of the word, a true Christian; and such she really was. With a quiet movement of her hand she wiped away the tears, spoke a few soothing words to the poor widow, then touching the bell, and walking to the door, waited the servant's appearance. She soon came; receiving her mistress's orders, given in a low voice, she left, and presently returned, bearing on one arm a small market-basket, on the

other a comfortable woollen shawl. Taking the latter, Mrs. Hilton approached the widow, and insisted on her accepting it.

"And that," she said, pointing to the basket, and speaking in her quiet way, "is for Alfred and the children. The cakes and apples, I dare say, will be agreeable to them. And now, Mrs. Clement," she continued, "I will mention you to Mr. Hilton, and I have no doubt we can do something to help you."

Poor Mrs. Clement! little did the kind lady think how those words stung her to the heart. Again a throng of memories rushed upon her. She bowed her head upon her hands, and a tremor shook her whole frame. Mrs. Hilton, with great delicacy, to divert her mind from the thought that there was any thing humiliating in one Christian helping another in distress, put to her several questions. The widow raised her head; the agony had passed away, and with calmness she answered them. At length, rising, she grasped Mrs. Hilton's hand, gazed earnestly into her face, and with great fervor exclaimed:

"My heart is easier now that I have seen you. Thank God I came here to-day. Little did I expect this kindness. Little—" she suddenly paused.

Mrs. Hilton replied: "I, too, am glad you called. I only regret that you waited so long."

"May the Father of the fatherless bless you, but I will go now."

She hurriedly took her departure. On her return home, she found every thing wearing a different aspect; a cheerful fire spread a genial warmth throughout the room; a comfortable meal stood on the table; Alfred's eyes beamed with renewed hope, and her little ones thronged frantically

around her to tell of the good things God had sent them. She felt a great weakness coming over her at the sight of all this; hurriedly kissing the little wondering faces that were dearer to her than her own life, she knelt at the side of her cot-bed and returned thanks to God for his fatherly care and protection.

That evening, seated by the lamp, sewing in hand, she thought of the events of the day, and from them went back to scenes of her early life. On her way through the passage, when leaving Mrs. Hilton, she caught a glimpse of Agnes, and what painful memories that glimpse recalled.

Alfred, refreshed with his meal, was conversing with Martha; Ellen and Clara, after saying their prayers, had been put to bed; little Mark, with both elbows on the table, and his cheeks resting on his palms, was intently poring over a book, the kind Father Joseph had given him—some of those beautiful stories translated from the German of C. Von Schmidt. None noticed the pained expression of her countenance; they did not even hear the heavy sighs that now and then escaped her lips.

"I must not think of those days," she said, communing with herself; "I must not think of them."

Resolutely compressing her lips, she sewed on. At last, dropping her needle, she approached her bed, and kneeling down, strove with all her might to keep down the rising sobs. Her whole frame quivered.

"Mother," inquired Martha, bending kindly over her, "why do you cry so?"

"She can't help it," rejoined Alfred; "our relief is so unexpected, that it quite overpowers her. But come away, Martha, and let her have her cry out; it will do her good; she will feel a great deal better after."

"Dear, dear mother," said Martha, kissing her cheek, "Alfred is right. I know, when the heart is full, how crying relieves its pressure; I will not disturb you." Returning to Alfred, she read to him from the life of St. Aloysius till he dropped asleep.

And alone the widow combated with painful memories; alone her silent prayer went up for pardon and mercy. Ah, little did she know, as she knelt there, that the past, so torturing to her, was to have a marked influence on Agnes Hilton's after-life.

CHAPTER III.

A FORTNIGHT after Becky Starr's departure, Agnes sat in her room, looking over a collection of drawings Edith Carter had brought home for her. The plains and hills northeast of Rome, as viewed from the Belvidere Garden of the Vatican, pleased her greatly; but there were others to be seen, and, eager to get a glimpse of all, determined afterwards carefully to study each, she laid it aside for the present and passed on to others. Silently she gazed on several, when, coming to a youthful head of St. John the Evangelist, a small copy in oil from one of the old masters, her admiration could no longer be restrained.

"Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, her eyes riveted upon it, "how beautiful, how singularly beautiful!"

"Which one, Agnes?" asked Mrs. Hilton, laying down a book she had been reading, and wheeling up her arm-chair to the table.

"St. John, mother. Well might he be called 'The Beloved Disciple.' Look! Did you ever behold so sweet a countenance?"

"It is certainly very beautiful."

"Beautiful! oh, mother, it is angelic. See the short, thick curls of sunny hair clustering around the ample forehead, the delicate nose, with its slightly expanded nostrils, and the lips just parted, with a heavenly smile playing around

them—but the eyes, mother, the large blue eyes, are what I would call your attention to. What a deep, unfathomed expression is in them. They seem even now to be looking beyond the present into the dark, mysterious future." Agnes ceased speaking, and silently mother and daughter gazed upon the lovely face. At length, while a glow of enthusiasm lit up her cheek, Agnes exclaimed:

"Oh, mother, I would that I were a genius, like Guido!"

"Although not a genius, Agnes, you draw very well."

"Very well! It seems I am the greatest bungler that ever took up a pencil. I think them well enough till I see such as these, then their beauty's gone, they are only daubs."

"You would not like to hear me say it, Agnes."

"Say it or not, I know you must feel it."

"No, no, Agnes, not so. You are only discouraged now, but—" her remark was interrupted by a servant opening the door and announcing a morning visitor.

"Who did you say it was?" impatiently asked Agnes.

"Miss Pauline Simpson."

"Just tell Miss Pauline Simpson I am engaged," she said, with a very perceptible curl of her delicate upper lip. Miss Simpson happened to be one of those Agnes frequently met in society, but cared nothing for. She had not that solidity of character that Agnes admired so much, and consequently could not hope to make any favorable impression on her; as a casual acquaintance she might do well enough; as an intimate friend, that was quite another question.

But her mother countermanded the order she gave the servant.

"By no means, Julia, you will deliver to her no such message."

"Why not?" asked Agnes; "am I to leave this delightful company," pointing to the drawings, "just to entertain Miss Pauline Simpson, and listen to her affected nothings?"

"Agnes, dear, go down. It would pain Miss Pauline to have you so pointedly neglect her. She has called to see you; treat her, my child, with Christian politeness."

"And be a martyr to my good-nature."

"There is not the least danger of that."

"Oh dear, if it's not too bad!" she exclaimed, looking quite uncertain whether it were better to yield to her mother's wishes or not; "if I stay, I am doomed to hear a lecture; if I go, I am doomed to be bored to death—but I will go. I will have this off my hands as soon as possible."

"Agnes, be gentle, be humble."

"Oh, I will be gentle, mother; meek, humble, and all that." And with this mocking assurance she left the room.

As might be expected, with the coldest courtesy was Miss Simpson received. Agnes just touched the tips of her gloved fingers, and then, seating herself by the window, drew aside the curtains and gazed into the street. After dwelling on the brilliant party at the Nicholsons', the superb dresses of the Misses Daver, and how exceedingly disappointed they were at not seeing Miss Hilton, Miss Simpson suddenly paused. She found it extremely difficult to carry on a conversation where only a cold nod, an occasional elevation of the eyebrows, a formal smile, and now and then a lone solitary word was all the assistance she received. At last she touched on Edith Carter's return and Becky Starr's going to her uncle's.

"It must be a great grief to you, Miss Hilton, to see Edith return so feeble, and to lose the society of Becky."

"I am deeply pained at the great change in Edith; and

as to Becky, I may well miss her when, instead of sensible conversation, I am doomed to listen to frivolous remarks and idle gossip."

Miss Simpson winced a little under this, but maintaining her composure observed, "I think it strange she did not remain at home till after Christmas."

"To her it was quite immaterial."

"Her grandparents, I hear, are greatly attached to her."

"Yes, with them she is a decided favorite."

"And I suppose they will not allow her to return for some time?"

"She will remain with them till after Easter."

"Till after Easter! Upon my word, it is too bad to keep her in the country all winter. It's selfishness, downright selfishness."

"To many it might seem so; but you forget, with Becky, it was her own voluntary offer. Wherefore, we may spare her our sympathies; I for one feel there are those who need them more."

Pauline made no reply, and after an embarrassing silence, consulting her watch, she rose to go.

"When may we look for Miss Hilton at our house?" she asked.

"It is impossible to say when," replied Agnes, leading the way to the door.

"But you must come soon. You must not make such a recluse of yourself."

"I shall be with Edith a great deal, so I can make no promise."

With much satisfaction Agnes saw her depart, and immediately returned to her drawings.

Another day has passed, and again we turn to the widow's

family. Alfred Clement is no longer an occupant of the low bed in the corner; with a warm blanket wrapped round him, he sits in a rocking-chair before a cheerful fire. His feet are resting on a stool; his pale hands, thrust out from the blanket, are lying listlessly on the arms of the chair. Although still very pale and thin, his eyes begin to beam with the light of returning health, and his whole aspect speaks a mind at ease. His little sisters, Ellen and Clara, in plain, comfortable dresses, suited to the season, are quietly playing on the floor beside him. Little Mark is sitting by the window, watching the large flakes of snow so thickly coming down, that he does not doubt but the old woman he has heard of, up in the sky, is surely picking her geese; and as he rubs his eyes with his tiny palms, and looks and looks again, he comes to the conclusion there must be a company of old women, for not one alone could possibly send down such vast quantities. Mrs. Clement is sitting by another window, not watching the fast-descending snow, but with eyes fixed on her sewing, and fingers plying swiftly up and down. Her countenance wears not the weary, harassed expression it wore before, but a peaceful smile plays round her features, and a grateful light beams from her mild blue eyes. The floor is neatly swept, and the unpainted table is placed back by the wall; the coal-scuttle is not only full, but quite a quantity is stored away in a box on one side of the stove; on a shelf near the bed a clock is ticking away, seeming to say, "Hope on, hope on." This last was supplied by the thoughtful kindness of Mr. Hilton. He remembered away back, when a little boy, of being sick, and how the friendly ticking of a clock had helped him to pass the tedious hours of the night. Alfred had said nothing about missing one, but when Mr. Hilton

brought it in and set it up, his heart gave one great throb and then stopped, as if it would never start again. Yes, kind Mr. Hilton was right; the sick boy had sorely missed it; and now, in the long weary nights, its friendly ticking falls so soothingly on his ears, always seeming to say, "Hope on, hope on." Simple white curtains, partially drawn aside, shade the windows, and break the disagreeable glare of light. Altogether the humble room wears a cheerful, comfortable appearance. A great weight has been taken off the widow's heart; she has plenty of nourishing food, not only for Alfred, but for her little ones, and Alfred is so much better—why, in a few weeks he will be able to resume his place in Mr. Simonds's store; and then, by the time the provisions Mr. Hilton thoughtfully sent in are exhausted, she will be able herself to get a fresh supply, pay up her house-rent, and get a comfortable suit round for the children, and another summer little Mark can go to school. He is yet pale and thin, and so barely recovered from the cold he caught in the spring, and which settled with inflammation on the lungs, that she dares not think of his going till the warm weather comes on.

Here, in the midst of her busy calculations, a shade passed over her brow. Little Mark had been feeble from his birth, and his parents, as he increased in years, finding him possessed of unusual capacities for learning, determined to educate him for one of the learned professions. But we have seen how sorrows gathered fast around them: first sickness, poverty, and death; then again sickness, and poverty deeper still, till Mrs. Clement looked upon the project of educating little Mark as one of the grand extinguished hopes of her life. Extinguished—did I say? No, not quite extinguished; for, under the ashes of past hopes, a

few faint coals still glimmered with a pale, uncertain light. Alfred's salary in a few years would be increased, and then, with strict economy, they might be able to place him in some institution of learning; in the mean time, she would constantly keep him in school. But—a doubt came up—would Alfred be willing to part with the greater share of his salary for his brother's sake? He was impulsive and generous, but would his generosity hold out for two, three, or four years? Could she rely on it? Would not his own increased wants demand the whole of his increased wages? Would he not think educating little Mark, and giving him a profession, would be raising him above the rest of the family? She paused, and looked up. One glance at his open countenance, and these fears rushed back. "No, no," she mentally exclaimed, again fixing her eyes on her sewing, "Alfred possesses no such grudging spirit; other boys as they grow up may turn ungrateful to their parents, and feel almost an envy and hatred to their brothers and sisters, but Alfred will not be like them. He will know that, in helping his feeble brother to get in a way to support himself, he will not be raising him above, but only making him an equal with, the rest; for Martha has a good trade, that of seamstress, and as soon as Ellen and Clara are old enough, they shall be apprenticed to a dressmaker and milliner." Then she went on to judge what Alfred's salary might be, and how much from it would have to go for Mark, and how much would be left for himself. Ah! it would be but a small pittance—so small, indeed, that she scarcely dare hope he would be satisfied with it. And then a great many doubts and fears arose, till, like stones thrown into a limpid stream, they so roiled her thoughts that she found it impossible to go on. Suddenly dropping her needle, she

glanced at the clock, and found the hand pointing to the hour in which she prepared their frugal dinner; she arose, and looking out of the window exclaimed:

"Why, Alfred, I did not know it was snowing; and all the lane is covered with snow."

"Did not know it was snowing!" exclaimed little Mark, getting down from his chair and going up to the stove, "why, mother, the old woman that lives in the clouds has sent down all her frozen feathers to-day."

"All, Mark?" said Alfred, reaching out his hand and smoothing the yellow locks on the dear child's head.

"Yes," he replied, with a winning smile. Then, turning to his mother, exclaimed: "Oh, mother, it made me think, they are so pure and white, as they lie upon the ground, that they cover up all the dirty spots, just like—." He suddenly checked himself, fearing his thoughts might be wild and out of place.

"Just like what, Marky?" said Alfred, encouragingly, passing his arm around him and drawing him closer to his side; "tell us like what?"

"Just like contrition. You know, mother, in my last catechism lesson it says true contrition would make the soul ever so black with sin pure and white—that it would cover up all its wickedness, Alfred," he added, looking solemnly into his brother's face, "just as the snow covers up all the dirty spots in the world."

"But, Mark, contrition, true contrition, does not merely cover them up—it does more—it washes them all away."

"Washes them all away. Washes them all away," he slowly repeated, fixing his eyes thoughtfully on the floor; then suddenly raising them, he exclaimed, "Ah! now I have it. It's like charity, the snow is, it covers up all the

dirty spots, as charity covers a multitude of sins—that's it—that's it." He looked so pleased that he had now found a correct simile, that, tenderly stroking his fair curls, Alfred said:

"Let Mark's thoughts start from where they will, they always take some pious turn. Dear, dear little Mark." He stooped and kissed his cheek.

"Yes, and the poor child remembers his lessons so well. Oh, Alfred, would that we could educate him as your father and I intended. I have been thinking of it all the evening."

"And you fear, because he is so feeble, that he will never be able to learn a trade?"

"I do, Alfred."

"But, mother, he may grow stronger as he grows older."

"Where are the grounds to hope for it? Your father was just like him, and you know how feeble he always was."

"Yes, mother; but some of the trades may not be as wearing on the constitution as teaching. Father always said it was the hardest work in the world."

"But we did not intend Mark for a teacher; that is too confining."

"You intended him, then, for one of the professions, whichever he might choose?"

"Yes, Alfred, we did."

"But, mother, I have always heard the labor of any of the professions is very exhausting. You know the clergyman and physician's services are required day and night. How often, when father was sick, did Doctor Kenna stay up with him all night; and sometimes, when he would leave him quite comfortable at ten or eleven o'clock, would we have to send for him again before morning!"

"Yes, Alfred, I do know it. I do remember it." She paused in the preparation of her meal, and wiped away a tear. Little Mark, the subject of their conversation, took down from the clock-shelf a large book of prints, a present from Mrs. Hilton, and seating himself on the floor, with the open volume on his lap, began explaining its pictures to his little sisters, who seated themselves one on each side of him.

"The professions," resumed Mrs. Clement, "may be exhausting, as you say. But, Alfred, let me tell you, that calling for which one is intended is to him the easiest way of getting a living. Mark has a natural inclination for study, and it would be hard for him to turn from that to something else for which he has little or no liking."

"But others before him have had to do the same."

"Yes, Alfred, but how has it ended? After struggling and laboring, and striving in vain to keep up with their companions, at middle age, with broken spirits and hopes all crushed, they have sunk into the grave, leaving behind them a sorrowful verification of the old proverb, that 'what is one man's food is another man's poison.'"

With the conceit which sometimes troubles boys of his age, Alfred doubted not his ability to make a sensible reply; it made no difference if he shot a little far of the mark, he would be sure to hit something, and after a slight pause, with a suddenly assumed dignity, he remarked:

"Mother, you have taken a strange view of life; or to speak learnedly, like that philosopher of father's school, Hugh Donaldson, you look upon learning for Mark through the perspective of ambition, and all appears near at hand and easy of attainment; you then turn the glass, and through the convex lens of disappointed hopes view for him the

trades; and, as might be expected, every thing about them appears small and miserably distorted."

The widow's lips trembled, and tears gathered in her eyes.

"Alfred," she said, in a mildly reproachful tone, "this is not a comparison to make to me. Remember, I have for the poor child the feelings of a mother, and cannot bear to see his whole life blighted."

"Yes, mother, but you should not allow these feelings to overcome your better judgment. Have you not, often and often, heard of feeble constitutions being irreparably injured by hard study? and has it never occurred to you, that, if they had been put to something else, it would have been much better for them?"

"Alfred, I must answer your questions one at a time. Yes, I have often heard of feeble constitutions being irreparably injured by hard study; but, then, it was where they had no natural turn for such labor, and their friends, blind to this, and regardless of any feebleness, urged them on. Your second question I will answer by asking myself, would it not have been better if they had been put to something else—something for which they really had a talent?"

"Then, mother, you believe every one is endowed with some particular gift?"

"I do, Alfred, and every day's experience, confirms that belief."

Alfred thought for some time; at length he spoke.

"We are poor now, and I don't know as we shall ever be better off, so Mark, I fear, will have to take his chance with the rest of us."

The widow made no reply. She felt he did not in the least sympathize with her. In all the conversation he had

expressed no desire to have Mark educated; on the contrary, seemed rather averse to it. She had not yet directly asked his assistance, but, womanlike, had tried first to sound his feelings on the subject; the doubt she had quelled as to his generous co-operation in educating his feeble brother arose before her, and would not be put down. Ah, if she could only get the means herself, how hard would she work: she would not ask his aid; having no father to help him forward in the world, she would feel he needed all for himself. But alas, woman's labor is so poorly remunerated, she would have to ask him—not now, but by and by.

Sad and disheartened, she glanced at little Mark; he was still sitting on the floor with the volume spread out on his lap; one little arm was thrown protectingly around Clara, whose eyes were raised to his as if not fully comprehending all he was saying, while Ellen, in a partially reclining position, leaned forward on one hand and arm, and placing the other on the open page, gazed earnestly into his face. The widow saw them, but so engrossed in her own thoughts she heeded not what they were saying till little Mark, in a very clear, distinct, and somewhat louder tone, exclaimed:

"Yes, Ellen, the flowers must have storm and sunshine, or they would never grow."

"No, no, Mark; it is the sun, and not the black clouds and naughty rain, which makes the dear little flowers so beautiful."

"No, Ellen, no; the seeds once in the ground, the storms *must* come, or the flowers would never grow; too much sunshine would dry them all up."

Immediately the words, "the seeds once in the ground,

the storms must come, or the flowers would never grow," rang in her ears.

"Yes, yes," she mentally exclaimed, "too much sunshine would surely dry them all up; and may it not be the same with human talents? have not the storms of adversity unfolded many a brilliant genius, that under the enervating sun of prosperity would have withered and died away? May not the very poverty I deplore be the means of expanding little Mark's talents? May it not strengthen him to contend bravely with every opposing difficulty, till, rising triumphant above them all, he will be able in after years to look back upon these very trials, these very struggles, as the friendly aids to his happiness and success?"

With a glad, joyous smile, she glanced at him. His book was closed, and, weary with showing and explaining its pictures to his sisters, he had leaned back with his head against the wall; his eyes were closed, and so deadly a pallor had settled on his countenance that he looked like sculptured marble. A tear filled her eye, and the hopeful thoughts rushed back.

"Poor child! poor child! weak and feeble as he is, how will he be able to contend with poverty? Sturdy frames may bear and even be strengthened by the storms of adversity, but fragile forms, like delicate plants, need more careful rearing, fully to expand, and bring them to maturity." Turning from Mark, she gazed on Alfred. His cheek was resting on his hand, and he seemed lost in revery. Surely he had greatly mended; God did not forget them in their darkest hours, and, remembering the past, could she fear the future? No, the Father of the fatherless would raise up means by which her feeble child might yet be educated. And she was right; the God whom in sorrow

and affliction she served so faithfully, looked down upon her, and already was a way opening for little Mark—a way she dreamed not of.

The meal ready, she wheeled Alfred's chair to the table, seated her little ones around it, and, enlivened with cheerful conversation, they partook of their humble repast.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER a short call on Mrs. Starr, Agnes Hilton returned home, and laying aside her smiles and gracious airs with her cloak and bonnet, with a stately step she repaired to the room of the sewing-girl. Martha heard the door open, knew who was entering, but, from an undefinable dread of encountering a pair of freezing eyes, she could not prevail upon herself to raise her head. With a chilled feeling at her heart, she sewed on. Beautiful as a marble statue—a statue from Phidias's hand, with life breathed into it—Agnes stood before her, watching the rapid movements of her slender fingers. "Will she speak," thought Martha, "and if so, will it be to commend, or find fault? What does she, the favored child of fortune, know of the headaches, sideaches, and heartaches of the suffering poor? Did she ever commend or speak one soothing word to them? Does she not fancy herself raised infinitely above them, belonging to quite a different order of beings in the great scale of creation?" When Christ resolved the ten commandments into two, he showed the whole duty of man consisted in loving the Lord his God with his whole heart, and his neighbor as himself. Martha felt the first part was easy enough to follow. How could she help loving with all her heart the God from whom she received every good—who was her father and her protector? But could she love her neighbor as herself? Could

she love Agnes—Agnes, who treated her with contempt, merely because her lot was cast among the poor—did she not already, in her heart, feel for her an antipathy which was nearly akin to hate? Martha had been reared piously, and such self-communings deeply pained her. Agnes spoke, and her words seemed to fall frozen on her ears:

"I expected you would have that robe finished before now."

"It will be done in a very short time."

"How soon?"

"In three or four hours."

"In three or four hours! Pray, how much more have you to do to it?"

"That rose and all these leaves to work." The poor girl's hand trembled violently as she pointed to them, and a faint tinge overspread her face.

"And will it take you three or four hours to do that?"

There was doubt and mockery in Agnes's voice. The hue deepened on Martha's cheek, as in a low, almost inaudible tone she replied:

"Miss Hilton, I cannot possibly do it sooner."

"Very well, I shall expect to see it in my room by that time; let me not be disappointed," and with a majestic step she passed from the apartment.

"Could she love her?" again Martha asked herself. She newly threaded her needle, carefully took the first stitch, and went on filling up with heavy work the traced leaves; no, she could not; she must dislike her; she could not help it. Father Joseph might say what he would; it was very easy to preach, it was quite a different thing to practise. Martha sewed on. From Agnes her thoughts reverted to Mr. and Mrs. Hilton. How kind they had been

to her; how much they had done for her family. Oh! they were so good, she could easily love them. Faster flew her hand, and more troubled became her brow; the words of the blessed Saviour occurred to her: "If you love them who love you, what thanks have you? for sinners love those that love them. If you do good to them that do good to you, what thanks have you? for sinners do this. But I say, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you; and pray for them that calumniate you . . . and your reward shall be very great, and you shall be the sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye also merciful as your Father is merciful."* Father Joseph had often repeated these words to her, and she had read from "The Reflections for Every Day in the Month," translated from the French of F. Bonhours, "That we must either love our enemies or hate ourselves . . . that hatred is allowed but to devils; that it belongs to them alone; and that there is not a more formal sign of reprobation." The leaves were now all finished, and she turned to the rose. As there was no shading, the delicate petals were to be nicely marked off. Moving her seat nearer the window, and folding back the blind, she worked and thought on. If she could not love Agnes, she would, at least, not hate her; as Father Joseph had kindly advised her, she would strive to act just as if she did love her, and by-and-by that feeling might come into her heart. She would never say the least disparaging word against her; she would ever speak respectfully of her; she would even do more—she would pray for her. These truly Christian resolutions quieted her conscience; the robe

* Luke, c. vi.: v. 32, 33, 27, 28, 35, and 36.

was finished at the appointed time, and, with a serene countenance, she carried it to Agnes's room. A glow of satisfaction passed over Agnes's face as she raised her eyes from her drawing, and glanced over the garment.

"You may lay it on the table," she said.

"Do you wish me to commence your scarf now?" Martha asked.

"No, not to-day; it is Saturday, and you intend going home?"

"Yes."

"Very well; if mother has nothing for you to do, you might as well go now as in the evening. I suppose you are anxious to see your sick brother."

Martha did not expect so much consideration from her, and she thought of her resolution. Yes, she might get to love her. She was so very beautiful, that, if she would only be a little more gracious, it would not be so hard after all. Her thoughts seemed to show forth in her countenance, for, with the first good-natured smile she had ever regarded her with, Agnes remarked:

"I am not quite so terrible as you think me. I am glad your brother is so much better, and I hope he may soon be entirely well."

"Thank you, thank you, Miss Hilton."

Agnes again placed her eyes on her drawing, and Martha at once proceeded to Mrs. Hilton's room.

"Well, Martha," said Mrs. Hilton, in her kind, friendly way, "I suppose you rejoice that it is Saturday?"

"I shall be glad to see mother and Alfred."

"And the little ones?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hilton; I have come to see if you have any thing for me to do."

"You have finished the robe?"

"Yes, it is done."

"Then I have nothing just at present. Monday you can commence Agnes's scarf, or rearrange the trimming on her dress."

"The purple silk?"

"Yes, she does not like the ruching to run horizontal."

"How does she want it put on?"

"That she will tell you herself on Monday. I hardly know. I think she said something about its being set on at the waist, and coming down in a graceful fall to the bottom of the skirt. But you have not been to lunch, Martha!"

"I do not care for it, Mrs. Hilton."

"But you must have it before starting, so go back to your room, and it shall be immediately sent you."

Martha, knowing it would pain the kind Mrs. Hilton to refuse it, returned to her room. The lunch over, as she was putting on her shawl and bonnet, Mrs. Hilton came in, carrying a basket in her hand.

"Here, Martha," she said, "you must take this to the children; and of the apples, I think, one of them roasted would not hurt Alfred. The cordial he is to take as he took the other."

"Oh, Mrs. Hilton, how kind, how thoughtful, you are!"

"Think nothing of it, Martha. It is a great pleasure for me to send them." Mrs. Hilton followed her to the door and extended her hand to her. Martha hesitated a moment, then, laying her basket on the floor, she threw her arms around her neck, and kissed her cheek.

"I can't help it," she sobbed, "I can't help it. You have been so good, so kind!"

"God bless you, Martha!" said Mrs. Hilton, wiping the moisture from her eyes.

Once in the street, with rapid walking she soon reached home. The family were again gathered around their mid-day meal. Laying her basket on a chair, she soon removed her out-door wrappings, and took a seat beside Alfred.

"Oh, mother! Oh, Alfred!" she exclaimed, resting her elbows on the table,

"In all the wide world there's no place like home."

"That's a good girl, Martha!" said Alfred, his eyes beaming with affection, "it shows how much you love us all."

"Love you all, Alfred, you don't know, and I can't tell, how much I love you all, and not the least my poor sick brother." She reached out her hand, smoothed back the rich chestnut locks from his pure white forehead and tenderly kissed it. A flush of happiness irradiated his face.

"Martha," he exclaimed, "kings might envy me such a sister!"

Mrs. Clement arose and walked to the cupboard.

"Mother," said Martha, "you need not bring a plate, I have been to lunch."

"But you will take a cup of tea?"

"No, I could not drink a drop."

"Do, Martha, just to be sociable," entreated Alfred.

"Well, then, mother, you may bring a cup, but I cannot eat."

Pleasant conversation enlivened the meal; Mark, Ellen, and Clara came in for their due share of notice, and much they wondered to themselves why the little room always

looked brighter and pleasanter when Martha came home. When they had finished their dinner, she gave each of them a rosy-cheeked apple from the basket. She then put away the cookies and crackers, and, unrolling a package, turned to her mother and said,

"See, some more cordial for Alfred. Mrs. Hilton said he was to take it as he took the other."

"God bless her!" fervently ejaculated the widow, her eyes filling, "how much we owe her!"

"Owe her, mother! She is the best woman in the world! How disappointed I was in her!"

"How, Martha?"

"Wait, Alfred, till I wash the dishes, and then I will tell you."

The widow seated herself at the window and resumed her sewing. Martha went to clearing away the dishes, neatly placing them on the cupboard shelves, and tidily arranging the room. Alfred watched her movements, as with a light step she glided round, her pale face looking so happy because she knew her presence made those so dear to her happy too; he could not see all this without thinking of the old home in Stanton. 'Twas just the same there, Martha was the very light of it; he remembered how lonely it looked a week that she was away visiting, and how glad they all were when the week ended, and she was at home again, laughing and talking, and having a care for every thing around her. In his heart he believed there was not such another sister in the wide world, but perhaps all brothers think the same. At last she got through, and it was really pleasing to notice the additional air of comfort and neatness she had thrown around the room. The stove looked all the brighter for her hand having been over it,

the chairs were placed tidily back, the pillows shaken up and made to look fuller and rounder, the prayer-books and other volumes on the mantelpiece were carefully dusted, and the curtains were looped back so as to fall in the most graceful folds possible, to the floor. Picking up little Clara, who had fallen asleep, and laying her on the bed, she drew up her chair to the fire, and, with Ellen on her lap, was then all ready to tell wherein she had been so greatly disappointed in Mrs. Hilton.

"You see," she said, directing her eyes to Alfred, and shading with one hand the full glare of the fire from Ellen's cheek, and with the other smoothing down her soft brown hair, "when I first went to the Hiltons', I thought Mrs. Hilton a cold, proud woman; she walked about from room to room of her elegant home, with a calm, statue-like indifference; her voice was a lifeless monotone, and her pale countenance had an inward look about it, as if, with the exception of Mr. Hilton and Miss Agnes, she never cared to converse with any one but her own thoughts. Her remarks to her friends, which I occasionally heard, were made in the same unvaried tone in which she delivered her orders to her servants. She seemed as lifeless and unsympathizing as a marble statue; I did not like her at all, and felt a chill creep over me every time she came into the room in which I sewed. Whenever I was obliged to reply to any of her few remarks, my words would all leave me, and I could only stammer out a jumble of sounds perfectly unintelligible. One day she came in, and, after giving some directions about the making of a morning robe, she looked at my black dress, and laying her hand on my arm, in a voice lower than usual, said, 'Martha, you have lost a friend?' I tried to speak, and after one or two attempts, made out

to say, 'father.' 'Poor child ! poor child !' she exclaimed, with more feeling than I thought her capable of, then taking my hand, gently pressed it, and seemed about to ask some question concerning him, when, suddenly dropping it without a word, she turned and walked out of the room. How relieved I felt when she was gone ! I could breathe free once more, and though sad thoughts of father's sickness and death came over me, they were easier to bear than her presence."

"Oh, Martha !" exclaimed her mother, pausing a moment in her work.

"Just so, mother, I felt her presence would freeze me ; it was like being in an ice-house to be near her. The day after you were taken down, Alfred, with the fever, being Sunday, I was with you ; the next day, with a heavy heart, I went back and sewed on, as if I had no brother lying in pain and anguish at home. How my heart ached ; it seemed a cord was around it, squeezing it tighter and tighter. I longed to be alone, that I might have a good cry, it would have done me so much good, but Julia Reed came early to my room."

"Who is Julia Reed, Martha ?"

"She is one that does the chamber work. Getting through with her dusting and sweeping earlier than usual, she obtained permission to spend the rest of the day with me. She brought her sewing, and congratulated herself on having a fine time. Poor girl ! I little felt like contributing to her enjoyment. I could not bring myself to talk lest my great grief should come out ; for I feared, if the family should hear of my brother's being sick of a fever, I should lose my place, and then what would have become of us all ?"

"Martha, you had more prudence than I. I should not have thought of that."

"Ah, but, Alfred, you are not as old as I." She leaned back in her chair, and allowed Ellen, whose eyes had become heavy with sleep, to pillow her head on her arm, while she glanced at her brother in a kind, patronizing manner, as if she fully realized how far superior in wisdom and experience a girl of eighteen is to a boy of sixteen. And then she thought of the time when earth seemed one great bazaar, where men and women, like grown-up children, enjoyed themselves without restraint. It was only as yesterday since she awoke from all the joyous dreams of childhood, to the sad, stern realities of life. But two years had elapsed since her father held a prominent position in the loved village of Stanton, as head teacher in the pleasant little brick academy. Not yet three years had passed since she was chosen May Queen, and on her little throne, under a flowery canopy, crowned with a floral wreath, had received the homage of her youthful subjects, joined in their choral hymn, and danced with them around the glorious May-pole. Alas, what sad changes since then ! Her father, so learned, so very learned, that it was a mystery to her how or where he had gained all his information ; so firm in his religion, so patient and forbearing to his pupils, so respected by all—had drunk the bitter cup of sorrow, and, away from friends, in a strange place, unknown and in poverty, had gone down to the silent tomb, leaving his family—his little ones—all desolate and lone. The voice of her brother recalled her from her painful musings.

"Martha, why did you stop ? Why don't you go on ?"

"Sure enough !" she exclaimed, repressing a sob, and dashing away a tear ; "where was I ?"

"You were saying you feared to have the family know I had the fever, and that Julia Reed came to pass the day with you."

"Oh yes; well, that was a long, long day. Julia introduced one subject after another, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my mind sufficiently on what she was saying to answer 'yes' or 'no' straight. Fortunately, being a great talker herself, she did not notice my abstraction. How relieved I felt when she left me in the evening! The next day was drearier still, and so of each day, till, before Saturday came round, I was about sick with fears and anxieties. Sometimes I would think, to comfort myself, that you could not be dead, for mother would have come to tell me; then the fear that you had died, and mother had been stricken down too, would almost make my brain whirl with anguish. Trying to shut out the sickening thought, I would say to myself: 'if Alfred died, and mother is sick too, little Mark is so intelligent, he knows where I am, and he would surely come for me.' At last, Saturday again came round. I hurried so with my sewing, that by three o'clock I got through, ready to come home. Before starting, I went into Mrs. Hilton's room for my week's wages. She looked at me steadily for a moment, and I was afraid she was going to ask if any thing was the matter; but no, without a word she opened her porte-monnaie and handed me the money. Once in the street, walk as fast as I would, it seemed I could never reach home; the distance appeared to stretch on before me; I longed to have wings to fly; 'are they all dead?' I asked myself, and, heedless of the wild stare of the ever-shifting throng of the street, my hurried walk deepened into a run. Breathless, I reached the door, and heard mother's voice striving to

quiet you in your wild delirium, and oh, Alfred! how wild my own heart felt! Mother, you know how I acted when I first came in?"

The widow wiped a tear from her eye, and, glancing upward, breathed a silent prayer.

"Well, I stayed over Sunday again, and on Monday went back to my sewing. Mrs. Hilton met me in the passage leading to my room; taking my hand, she looked calmly into my face, and said: 'Martha, you are in trouble; will you not tell me what it is?' I felt, in spite of all my efforts to appear undisturbed, that the tears were again coming; hastily brushing them away, I glanced at her pale calm face, and, maddened at the thought that she should be so unmoved when I was so very, very wretched, I snatched my hand from her, rushed into my room, buried my face in my apron, and wept till I thought my heart would break; for my tears did not relieve me, they only made me feel worse. When I looked up, she was sitting beside me; when she came in I know not. 'Oh, Martha, poor Martha,' she said, kindly laying her hand on my head, and smoothing down my ruffled hair, 'all your grieving will never recall the dead!' Again I glanced at her, and this time noticed that, instead of a calm, unfeeling face, there were the lines of deep suffering traced all over it; and instead of cold, freezing eyes, they were mild, faded gray, full of pity and compassion. Immediately my heart warmed to her. 'Oh, Mrs. Hilton,' I exclaimed, 'pardon my rudeness. You don't know how wretched I am!' 'My poor child,' she replied, again taking my hand, and dwelling on the thought that it was father's death caused my tears, 'my poor child, God in mercy calls our friends.' I looked up into her face, a great pallor had spread over it, and tears were

standing in her eyes. 'Look at these lines, Martha,' she said, pointing to the many wrinkles on her lofty brow; 'they were placed there, not by the hand of time, but by sinful and unhallowed grief.' Then she went on to tell me how other children, besides Agnes, had once gathered round her home, and called her 'mother'—how beautiful and fair they were—how, with Agnes, they formed a family group that any mother might be proud of—how she was proud of them, and thought of nothing else, and, then, how sickness, in the form of a malignant fever, came among them, and, before disease had time to mar their beauty, how Death set his seal upon them, and bore them away—all but Agnes. 'Yes, yes,' she exclaimed, while the warm tears from her eyes fell upon my hand, 'when I gazed on my little Rosie, the youngest of the band, dressed in her snowy robes, the golden curls brushed from off her snowy brow, her cherub face pale as the statue of innocence, and her tiny hands crossed over her little breast, I forgot every thing but my sad bereavement; my noble Arthur, and gentle Mary, and now my beautiful Rosie—all, all gone! none but Agnes left!' 'And you loved Agnes so much, and was so grateful she was spared,' I ventured to remark. Shading her eyes with her pale hand, she replied, 'No, Martha, no; strange as it may appear, I no longer *dared* to love her as I once loved her.' And then she went on to tell me, that, while she feared to pour out the wealth of her affection on this last remaining one, lest she, too, might be taken from her, a feeling of wicked sore rebellion against the wisdom and justice of God constantly filled her heart. She felt, because she loved them so dearly, that they had been called away—and should a mother be punished for the love she bears her children? was a ques-

tion that arose a thousand times before her. Stern, bitter thoughts took possession of her mind. Mr. Hilton tried to console her, but she turned a deaf ear to all his soothing words; even Agnes's little acts of endearment failed to divert her from her grief. One day she said she was sitting by a window, saw Agnes enter the garden, pass rapidly from bed to bed, cull a flower here and a flower there, forming what she well knew was intended as a bouquet for her poor, sad mother. All the affection of her heart went out to her, and she inwardly resolved that death should never separate them. Terrified at the rashness of her resolution—for it seemed to her a tempting Death to claim her last darling—she hurriedly passed into her own room, closed the door, and, kneeling down, tried to pray. From that day her mind constantly dwelt on her buried idols, not in the close, dark grave, but in their bright, beautiful home. Gradually a feeling of gratitude mingled in her grief; ere sin, or care, or sorrow had in the least clouded their spirits, they had been removed to a home all glorious and happy. 'Oh, Martha!' she exclaimed, 'the mocking question—Should a mother be punished for the love she bears her children?—was answered. Not in punishment to me, but in mercy to them, had they been called, and not love, but selfish idolatry had I borne them. Love is all disinterested, and my affection was all selfish. I preferred my own happiness to theirs; I wished them back, not because I could make them happier, but because I was lonely without them.' She paused, and as I looked into her face I wondered I had ever thought her proud and unfeeling; instead of a cold, passionless countenance, there was a sweet Madonna expression indelibly stamped upon it. I unrolled my sewing; gently taking it from me, she resumed:

'Azriel, dark and gloomy no longer, hovered round my home; I felt a heavenly Father's love shielding and protecting us, and I longed to know more of him;' and then she went on to tell me how she turned from the gloomy tenets in which she had been reared, to the reading of Catholic works; how her mind expanded; how she learned to bury the selfishness of her sorrow, and feel for those who had been spared. In fine, how she was led on to the possession of the greatest gift God can give to man—the possession of the True Faith; 'and now you see, Martha,' she added, 'the loss of my children was the way God chose to reveal himself to me. Had they been left, I would have centred my thoughts on earth, and never once raised them to heaven. In a thousand ways our Heavenly Father draws the hearts of his children to him. Sorrow is the ministering angel that leads many to God that otherwise would never know him.' And then she said she knew I was astonished that she would open a chapter of her life to me, but she saw I was in sorrow, and wished to comfort me. 'I have given you my confidence,' she said, 'will you not now give me yours?' I was taken by surprise; I wished to speak of your sickness, and yet I dared not; for I know, by sad experience, however strong we may consider ourselves, a little thing often sweeps away our good resolutions, as fall wind sweeps away the dry leaves. She had said it was a fever of which her children died; and might not the very mention of the word fever cause her heart to thrill with terror?"

"Martha, how could you feel so, after all she said?"

"I don't know, Alfred; but the one great fear that I might lose my place, and, then, what would become of us all, made me blind to every thing else. You know mother

depended entirely on my wages to get you your necessities; bearing this in mind, I preferred to have her think it was altogether father's death which caused my grief."

"Poverty has its mercies as well as its sorrows," said Mrs. Clement, looking up from her sewing; "the toils and cares arising from our poverty often made me forget for a while the great loss we had sustained, and the anguish was so great when I did think of it, that if I had had nothing else to occupy my mind I should have been crazy."

"How true your remark, mother! But, Martha, go on; what did you say to Mrs. Hilton?"

"Well, I told her of father's death; how he had been ailing for years, and how at last he died of, what the doctors call, quick consumption. But I did not say one word of our great poverty, or where we lived, or that father had ever been a teacher, or that we were strangers in the city. No, no, I could not—I could not."

"Martha, you were always proud."

"No, Alfred, it was not pride; but the same fear which prevented my telling of your sickness. If she had heard all this, she would have searched us out, and then——"

"And then," said Alfred, quickly interrupting her, "with her benevolent heart, instead of dismissing you, would have helped us all. Martha, Martha, it was pride."

"Pride, Alfred, pride! no, you are mistaken. Think you it would have been no gratification to me to have told what a great scholar father was, how much respected by all who knew him, what a happy home we had, and how little we once thought that any of us would ever have to go out to service? Oh, Alfred! Alfred! there might have been pride in telling all that, but not in the frenzied fear that kept me

silent on the subject." Tears gathered in her eyes, and her voice grew tremulous.

"Martha, I did not mean to reproach you, I did not. I am your brother; don't mind what I said! Never was a kinder, truer sister!"

"I don't, Alfred, I don't. I was not even thinking of your words when the tears came, but only of Stanton and those dark days, and the contrast was more than I could bear."

"God's holy will be done," reverently said little Mark, who had been an unobserved, but attentive listener.

"Yes, little Mark," rejoined Alfred, "and Martha must say so, too."

"I do say so, Alfred. Surely I do. When we cannot see the whys and wherefores of things transpiring around us we are not to murmur against the providence of God, and distrust the fatherly care he hath over us. Dark and threatening may be the present hour, and the next filled with the fruition of Hope's fairest promises."

Little Mark came up to her, and laying one hand lovingly on her arm, with the other brushed the sunny curls from his brow.

"Martha," he said, his large earnest eyes looking directly into hers, "do you always feel so?"

A faint flush suffused her cheek. "Mark, you are a strange child!" she said.

"But tell me, Martha, do you?"

"Alas, Mark, not always. Before I know it, many and many a time fears and cares so fill my heart, that, bowed down and oppressed, I scarcely know what to do. Then some little prayer, the remembrance of some holy picture, or the echo of some of the plaintive soul-stirring melodies

of the church will come stealing through my mind, and presently I recollect what I must do."

"What is that, Martha?"

"Seek assistance from God, and resign myself to his holy will."

A bright light broke over his face. "Oh, mother," he said, "I am so glad to hear it! And now one more question, did you ever before that day"—referring to the day on which his mother had her interview with Mrs. Hilton—"speak of Alfred's sickness?"

"Yes, once I casually mentioned that he was not well, and from that she always inquired kindly after him."

"She is good; she has a kind heart," he said emphatically, and seated himself on the little stool at Alfred's feet. "Alfred, you look weary. I am afraid you are sitting up too long?"

"Perhaps I am. I do feel a little tired."

"Well, wait till I lay this child on the bed, and then I will help you to yours."

Little Ellen was laid beside her sister, then, disengaging the blanket from him, Martha helped him to arise.

"There now, I can walk alone." He smiled; she thought his smile wore a shade of sadness.

"I was thinking," he weariedly said, in reply to her mute question, as she smoothed the bed-clothes around him, "how weak and helpless I have been. Even more weak and helpless than little Clara."

"Is that all?" she exclaimed in a cheerful tone, while she stooped and kissed his pale brow, "is that all, Alfred? Why, in a few weeks you will be as well as ever! How much stronger you are than you were last week! You are tired now, but go to sleep, and when you awake I will have

you a nice roast apple and a cup of refreshing tea." She enforced her command with another kiss, and was turning away, when he caught her hand.

"Get your chair, Martha, and sit down here. I want you to tell me all about Miss Agnes. I love to hear every thing of the family, they have been so kind."

A change came over Martha's countenance. Her pale hand went up to her forehead, as if to drive away some disagreeable thought. Miss Agnes! how little the invalid boy dreamed of her pride and haughtiness to his loved sister; but she had never spoken of it, and far be it from her to mention it now. Her brother noticed her silence.

"Don't you like her? Is she not kind to you?" he asked, in a low confidential tone. A gentle smile played over Martha's face.

"Miss Agnes," she replied, in a mild, equable voice, "could take after neither father nor mother without possessing a kind heart; and to-day she told me she was glad you were so much better, and she hoped you would soon be entirely well."

"Did she say that? Did she say she hoped I would soon be entirely well?"

"Yes, Alfred; she did."

"And now do, Martha, tell me all about her. I am more anxious than ever to know."

"No, no, Alfred. I have already talked too much, and you are tired."

"Well, just one word: is she pleasant and agreeable in her manner, like her father?"

"In person she resembles him more than her mother."

"But that don't answer me, Martha. Is she proud and disdainful, or humble and unassuming—like him?"

"She is very beautiful, Alfred, very talented, and to her friends warmly attached. She is not one of the giddy butterflies of fashion, but seems utterly to despise the hollow-heartedness of so-called fashionable life. If one is to be judged by their friends, you would surely pronounce her a very amiable, discreet, and sensible person, for such they are."

"I am glad to hear it, Martha. For your sake, I am glad to hear it."

"And now, Alfred, try to go to sleep! You are tired, and need rest."

She left his bedside, and busied herself about the house; but, perceiving the eyes of her invalid brother followed her every movement, she sat down, and, opening little Mark's book, soon had the satisfaction of seeing him in a peaceful slumber.

Reflection on the duties of her religion taught her to avoid the sin of detraction. To her mother and Alfred she might have told her grieved feelings without fear that her confidence would have been misplaced—and it cannot be denied but it would have given her great satisfaction just to have breathed to them how much she really did dislike her. But "a watch was before her mouth; and a door round about her lips."

Worldly prudence and foresight would have whispered: "You may tell them—your brother and mother—and fear no after-consequence. They are your true friends; your welfare is their welfare; your interest their interest." Listening to such counsel, she would have told them all, and the after-fate of the whole family would have been ruined by it. Not many months had passed till she herself was sensible of this, and rejoiced that she had been restrained.

CHAPTER V.

MR. HILTON was seated in his counting-room, examining and arranging papers, when the door opened, and a clerk announced Father Joseph.

"Show him in, show him in. I am all through now—but, James," he called the clerk back, "you cast up the account I handed you."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, here are some more papers. You are to look them over to-day."

Father Joseph soon made his appearance; he was rather in years, with a kind, benevolent countenance. Mr. Hilton advanced and warmly shook his hand.

"Good morning, Father Joseph, good morning! A bright sky overhead, but, nevertheless, a bitter cold day! Let me draw this arm-chair nearer the fire."

He wheeled up a large office chair. Father Joseph sank into it; the weather, and, after that, the rise and fall of stocks was fully discussed. All through, the good priest's countenance wore a puzzled expression; it seemed there was something he wished to say, but scarcely knew how to introduce it. "Come, Father," said Mr. Hilton, perceiving his embarrassment, "there's something on your mind; out with it. Is it to head another subscription list? or has some poor family been burned out or froze to death? Which?"

"Not either," replied Father Joseph, with a smile.

"My penetration is for once in fault. Then say, Father, what is it?"

"I have called, Mr. Hilton, to see you about the Clement family."

"What, the widow Clement, that lately lost her husband, and whose son has been so sick?"

"The very same."

"Did you know Mr. Clement, Father?"

"Only from the time he came to reside in the city, but he seemed always to have been a most exemplary Christian."

"I hear from Alfred that he was well educated and refined."

"Yes, Mr. Hilton, he was a thorough scholar; teaching was his vocation."

"And I have an idea, Father, that he was proud and sensitive, and but illy able to struggle with difficulties and rise above them."

"He was very feeble, Mr. Hilton, from the first time I saw him. Sorrows and disappointments crowded fast upon him, and he sank under them. But, if one blest with an iron constitution can easily ride the storms of adversity, 'tis unjust to expect one whose strength is all shattered to do the same."

"Very true, Father, very true."

After a brief pause, Father Joseph resumed: "On the death of Mr. Clement, Martha obtaining a situation in your family, and Alfred continuing in Mr. Simonds's store, I thought they might get along quite comfortably. About this time I was called to visit my sick sister; I went, stayed with her till she died, attended her funeral, and immediately returned home. The Sunday after, I noticed none of the

family attended Mass, and, as soon as I could, I called on them. Oh, how wretched they had been, and Alfred, how sick! But you had been there, Mr. Hilton, and with tears in her eyes, the widow told me all your and Mrs. Hilton's kindness to them."

"Out of the abundance with which God has blessed me, Father, it was nothing, a mere nothing."

"Would, Mr. Hilton, that all the rich felt so! then we should hear less complaining of the importunities of the poor! But you have not seen Mrs. Clement herself," he observed, rather than asked.

"No, Father; she happened to be out every time I have called."

"So she told me. She says she has wished much to see you, but felt she could not."

"Why, Father, why should she wish to see me, and yet shrink from meeting me?"

"She was right. She said you had forgotten her; but, now I will tell you." He laid his hand on Mr. Hilton's knee, and spoke in his slow, earnest manner. His words had a strange effect on his listener; at first a vague, wondering expression rested on his countenance; then, wildly starting up, he exclaimed:

"My God! my God! can it be possible? Oh, Father! Father! how has she suffered! Why didn't she come to me? Why didn't she let me know?"

"I have given you her reason," mildly replied the priest.

"Oh, the past! the past! and is it thus we meet?" He arose, and excitedly paced the room. At length, becoming more calm, he resumed his seat.

"Father," he said, "painful memories have been stirred—painful, painful."

"Not as painful to you as to her."

"I don't know, Father. That fatal step, how much wretchedness has it caused! This very day I must see her; must hear from her own lips all you yourself have told me."

"The tale wrung tears from her eyes, Mr. Hilton; do not ask her to repeat it."

"But, Father, I cannot see her without referring to it, and, referring to it, I shall have to go over it all."

"And, notwithstanding my fears, Mr. Hilton, it may relieve her poor heart. Pray God it may!" Taking his hat, he arose.

"Not so soon, Father."

"Yes, Mr. Hilton. It is only three days till Christmas, and, as you may suppose, I have a busy time of it." Father Joseph took his departure.

The afternoon of the next day, Mr. Hilton sat alone in his library; his elbow rested on the arm of his chair, and his head leaned on his open palm. He was buried deep in thought, and the knit brow and firmly compressed lips gave to his usually mild countenance a stern expression. He had been reviewing the past, and sorrows, that had once stung him to the heart, now rose phantom-like before him. He struggled to break from them, but they rushed faster upon him. Suppressing a groan, he raised his hand and swept the heavy locks from his hot brow.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "can I not even now go back to those days without feeling an unmanly weakness coming over me?" He arose, and crossing his hands behind him, with bowed head, slowly walked up and down the room. For some time he continued his walk; gradually the dark scenes passed away, and pleasant faces that had gathered

around him in the morning of life, lighting by kind voices and gentle ministrations the loneliness of a bereaved heart, rose before him. Not a wrinkle appeared on their brows, not a white hair mingled in their locks; as they appeared in the olden time, so now they smiled upon him from the picture gallery of the past.

He counted the years that had fled, and as he glanced at the garnered memories of each, tears filled his eyes. How often had he longed to hear once more the voices that had cheered and encouraged him on; but they had been strangely, suddenly hushed, and a mystery he could not unravel had hung around their silence—had hung, I say, for since his interview with Father Joseph, the mystery in part had been unveiled. 'Tis not my purpose here to tell his past; suffice it to say, that the poor widow Clement held a deep claim on the wealthy merchant—a claim he shrank not from, but conscientiously strove to meet. He ran over in his mind a thousand projects how he might, without wounding their sensitive natures, place them in circumstances which would be more suitable to the refinements of their manners, and more in unison with their former way of living. He had called on Mrs. Clement, and after a long conversation with her had delicately broached the subject. With moistened eyes she thanked him for his kindness, but, with a firmness that both pained and surprised him, refused to have Martha change her present humble station in his family, and, as soon as Alfred got able, insisted on his being allowed to resume his place in Mr. Simonds's store. As to Ellen and Clara, as long as she was blessed with health they could get along very well; but, while a faint flush suffused her pale cheeks, and even spread over her deeply lined brow, she spoke of Mark,

and the education they had intended giving him. Anxious to do something for the family, he at once offered to educate him; nay, more, the few times he had called on them, Mark had greatly interested him, and now, in the impulse of the moment he offered to adopt him. The first offer Mrs. Clement joyfully accepted, and, after a short pause, she also accepted the second. She knew, in his fine home, away from the drudgery of the schools, he could do much to advance her feeble child, and, with all a mother's fond love, she determined to resign him. Mark was the pride of them all, and to let him go, would be a bitter sacrifice; but she knew, too, that their love was greater than their pride, and, all unselfish as real love ever is, would not stand in the way of his good fortune.

Mr. Hilton, pleased with her ready acceptance of his offer, after some further conversation, left her, and returned to his counting-room. The remainder of the day, the thought that the dear child was soon to become a member of his family, filled his heart with a wondrous feeling of satisfaction. A smile played round his features, and a light rested in his eyes. But now, alone in his library, he fears that he has been precipitate. Was it right to offer to adopt a child without first consulting his wife? would she be able to take the care of him? He knew she was one that, however feeble, could never resign to hirelings the forming and moulding of his tender mind. He felt ashamed to go back of his offer; but could he not tell the widow, that, on reflection, he thought it would be better for Mark to remain at home with her, under the care of a kind and competent tutor, till he would become of an age to be placed in college? Yes, that is what he would do. He resumed his seat, and, opening his desk, took out some papers; one

sheet was partly written over; taking a pen, he quickly filled it out and then placed them all back again. A vexed and worried expression rested on his face. The widow's firmness in refusing to have Martha change her humble station in his family exceedingly annoyed him. If he strongly insisted, he knew her of old, and could easily foresee the consequence; she would take her home, and in some other family find her the same situation. If Martha must be out to service, he preferred to have her under his own roof, where he would be sure of her meeting kindness and sympathy. Poor child! how grievously might not her sensitive nature be wounded by the vain, thoughtless children of wealth, and how deeply her mother's obstinacy in this respect pained him! What would Agnes, with all her pride, say to having an adopted brother, supposing Mrs. Hilton agreed to his proposals—brother to their seamstress, she in the house at the same time? Ah! he knew it would sorely mortify her. But why should it mortify her? Why should not the fact of his sister's honorably and industriously earning her support rather excite her admiration? Martha was very intelligent; Mark not only very beautiful, but more than commonly gifted; why should she feel herself above them? Them, above all others! Them! them! "Oh, she *must* know the past, it *must* be told to her, but not now, not now!" he exclaimed, wiping the perspiration from his forehead; and hastily turning from a subject extremely painful to him, he thought of her engagement with Walter Starr. How unlike they were! Walter with his bright laughing eye, and frank open countenance—Agnes with her cold, haughty bearing, and unyielding will! How would they agree? Walter only looked upon her surpassing loveliness, and touching kindness to her few privileged

friends, and he hoped to possess that loveliness, and be the constant recipient of that kindness. Just so we have seen marriages made: only the pleasant traits in each other's characters have been studied; the darker shades have been passed over—left to be conned at leisure, after the indissoluble knot is tied, and many a sad lesson in very bitterness of heart has then been learned.

On Agnes, the last remaining one of his little household, all the wealth of a father's love was centred; and now, turning from the undimmed past, he strove to pierce for her the veiled future, and in many respects not so closely veiled either, for if one must reap as they sow, if we know when we put in the seed in the spring what the crop in the fall shall be, so, does not the present disposition of those about us foretell, in a great measure, their after happiness or misery? If Agnes's kindness, so gentle and soothing in its touching tenderness, so prized, because it was reserved only for the few and not lavished on the many, could not at all times shield her dearest friends, her parents even, from the proud, freezing taunt, and cold, disdainful glance, how would he be able to escape them? Under his genial surface was a quick, fiery temper, that was terrible when once roused. How would the cold, mocking pride of the one, and the impetuous temper of the other agree, when brought together? Agnes had been engaged to Walter three years; choosing the legal profession, he had the year before been admitted to the bar, and was now in New York, connected with an eminent practitioner. As soon as well established, Mr. Hilton was to resign to him his only child, and the heart of the father feared that if Agnes, his darling Agnes, learned not to curb her proud, haughty will—learned not to place a restraint upon her tur-

bulent passion, when once in the home of her husband, their mutual love and admiration would be changed to hatred and disgust. Far better they should never again meet; and yet he knew, to Agnes, parting with the object of her best earthly affections would be worse than death. But if death would be preferable to meeting him no more, what would be the agony of losing his love, and finding her own for him changed into hatred? With a groan, he turned from the contemplation of so fearful a picture, and, involuntarily clasping his hands, sent up an earnest prayer for his proud, wilful child; then, resting his head on his open palm, the contracted brow showed that thought was again busy. Might not the taking of little Mark be, not only the paying of a just claim, but teaching a lesson to Agnes, that would do her good her whole life? might it not, under her father's roof, away from the evil-minded remarks of a misjudging world, be the means of opening her eyes to the enormity of her besetting sin? It might! It might! The clouds once more cleared from his brow. He reached out his hand, and took up a book; opening it, he tried to read, but the letters all ran into each other, only a confused blur met his eye; closing the volume, he exclaimed:

"I may as well tell Ellen now as at any other time, for I won't be easy till it's off my mind!"

Rising, he touched the bell-rope. A servant answered his call.

"Tell Mrs. Hilton I would be pleased to see her." Seating himself, he leaned his head against the bright velvet lining of his chair, and waited his wife's coming. A quiet step was heard along the passage, and, opening the door, Mrs. Hilton came in.

"You wished to see me?" she said, in her low, calm voice.

"Yes, Ellen," he replied, drawing up a chair; "I've a plan to lay before you."

Seating herself, she asked: "Well, what is it?"

In a quick, nervous manner, he brushed the hair from his forehead, and abruptly said:

"I have been thinking of our adopting a boy."

She slightly started, but without any change of countenance, asked:

"How long have you been thinking of it?"

"Ah, that means if I have well considered it," he remarked, with one of his genial smiles.

"Yes, it does."

"Well, to tell the truth, I have not long thought of it; but since it first came into my mind, I've thought of it very hard." Again he smiled, and drawing his chair nearer hers, in an earnest voice continued:

"Ellen, I have carefully considered the subject in all its bearings, and I know, if we take a child, it is not to humor and pamper him till we get tired of him, and then cast him off; no, we must feed him, clothe him, educate him, and do for him in all things as if he were our own. We may never feel that deep affection for him that we do for Agnes, but—"

"But what?" she almost impatiently asked.

"But, Ellen, who knows but that he may so twine himself round our hearts that he will seem like our dead Arthur come back to us?"

"He possibly may, but it seems improbable. What child do you think of taking—for, of course, you have one already in your mind?"

"That is true, Ellen; I have been thinking of little Mark Clement."

"Little Mark, is it?" a bright light broke over her face. "I have seen him; he visits Martha. What a sweet mannerly child he is! Surely, I have no objection to your taking him, and Agnes will be so proud of him."

"Ah! I don't know about that. The very fact of his being brother to our seamstress will, I fear, be a source of great annoyance to her. In many instances in taking a child, it is well to have all connection with its old home broken up—where its parents and other members of its family are vicious and depraved: but in Mark's case no such necessity exists: his mother is a pious, exemplary woman; Alfred, an intelligent boy, of steady, industrious habits; and Martha, being employed in the house, you know what she is."

"She is a good, faithful girl," said Mrs. Hilton, drawing up a screen to shade her face from the full glare of the fire.

"Well, then, we cannot object to Mark's visiting his family, and they, in return, visiting him."

"Certainly not."

"But, Ellen, our keeping up this connection with his friends, will sorely try our Agnes's pride."

"Very true. I did not think of that."

"But," continued Mr. Hilton, while a stern, sad expression settled on his face, "if the case had been reversed; if our children had been spared, and on us, instead of them, the dark clouds of poverty had settled, obscuring all the brightness of our lives, and making it impossible to educate our gifted Arthur; and if through love of him, and to see him receive an education suitable to his talents, we should

intrust him to other hands, would we not wish occasionally to visit him, and have him, in return, visit us? Ellen, would it not break our hearts to be debarred seeing him, and to know the memory of us, his parents, was carefully erased from his mind; or, if remembered still, only with the painful regret that to us he owed his being?"

"Say no more! say no more!" she exclaimed, raising her hand and waving back, as it were, the dreadful vision he had called up. Better, far better for our son to be taken home to God—but," she suddenly started up, as the idea presented itself to her mind, "you surely cannot think I would wish to hinder little Mark seeing his friends. His mother I truly respect; she has borne her sorrows with all the bravery of a true Christian, and God forbid that mere poverty should appear odious to us, unworthy servants of Him who chose His disciples from among the poor!"

"I do not doubt your kindness or generosity, Ellen; but our Agnes is so foolish, so obstinate. Where, in the name of wonder, did she get her pride? Surely not from the example we have set her."

"You forget the baneful influence of the world on a young and inexperienced girl."

Impatiently brushing the hair from his brow, he exclaimed:

"I shouldn't think the influence of the world could so far counteract the influence of home. I tell you, Ellen, our Agnes is proud, deeply proud at heart."

"She is. Alas! she is," truth forced from the pale lips of the mother.

"You have spoken to her about it?"

"Yes; but I don't see as it does much good." Tears trembled in her eyes.

Looking thoughtfully into the grate, Mr. Hilton observed:

"Where words fail, prayer will succeed;" then, turning gently to his wife, he said:

"Ellen, we must not speak to her too much on the subject. It will only sour her feelings against us, without in the least benefiting her. In taking the child, her pride will be crossed; this will cause much bitterness at first, but in the end, with the blessing of God, will do more in opening her eyes to her besetting sin than all we could ever say."

"But prayer, you said, would do that."

"I say so still. Taking Mark and praying for her, not contending with her, will transform her from a cold, haughty worldling, to a meek, humble Christian."

"Pray God it may! But you do not know her as well as I, her mother. She is one, her very pride makes her such, that the more you oppose her, the more determined she becomes. In taking the child on the conditions you have named—and we could not in justice take him on any other—her wishes will be opposed, her thoughts embittered, and her will determined."

"And then what, Ellen?"

"Her heart will be turned against us, and she will learn to look upon us as her greatest enemies."

"Only for a time, Ellen! Only for a time! You surely have not lost faith in prayer?"

"No, not in prayer. But this terrible pride—it sweeps the soul with avalanchian force, carrying every gentler feeling with it. I have seen sad instances of it." She sighed and turned her face to the screen.

After a somewhat lengthened pause, Mr. Hilton said:

"You do not object to my taking the child?"

"God forbid I should! no, no; take him, by all means take him. In the mean time, a mother's daily prayer shall go up for her erring one."

Mr. Hilton leaned back in his chair, and regarded his wife with a look of unutterable affection. At length, he said:

"Well, now, Ellen, you not objecting to our taking little Mark Clement, I must tell you it is not altogether a common feeling of humanity which prompts me to this step. His family have a deep claim on me; I only lately recognized them, but now I must tell you a sad chapter of my early years."

She looked up wonderingly into his face; he drew his chair still nearer hers, and in a low voice, for it seemed a subject so sacred to him, that he could not bear a jarring sound to come near it, told her scenes of his past life he had never told her before. During the recital she at times grew very pale, and again a bright flush swept over her face. On its conclusion, she sat for some moments silent, then looking up, in a reproachful voice said:

"Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because I wished you to be unbiased in your opinion. If it had been against your wishes to have the child in the house, I could otherwise have provided for him. Oh, Ellen!" he exclaimed, taking her hand and reverently raising it to his lips, "you cannot imagine how happy you have made me. Blessings, blessings, rest on you! As to Agnes, let every thing be just as it is for the present; in due time she shall know all; and, as soon as convenient, you will please prepare her to receive Mark Clement as her adopted brother. With her foolish pride, I know she'll

object, but you concurring, her objection will be nothing."

"Heaven be praised for the gift of so inestimable a companion!" he fervently ejaculated, as Mrs. Hilton passed on to her room.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the day before Christmas, and Agnes Hilton, after putting a few finishing touches to a drawing before her, threw down her crayon, and, taking up the drawing, repaired to her mother's room. Her countenance was brilliant and animated.

"Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, sinking on an ottoman at her feet, and holding up the picture, "don't you think it beautiful? The more I gaze on that lovely face the more I admire it."

"And have you copied it so soon?" asked Mrs. Hilton, glancing down on the features of the youthful St. John.

"Yes, mother. I meant to copy that wild scene from the Alps first, but I could not wait; I must have this."

"You have caught the expression of the eyes exactly, Agnes."

"Yes, I flatter myself I have; but there is one thing I did not get."

"What is that?"

"The smile of melting tenderness about the mouth. In the original—I mean that from which I copied—it is all hope, all peace and joy, and in this, do you not perceive in the peace and hope a shade of sadness?"

"Yes, as I gaze longer on it, I think I do. But it makes it all the more resemble a child that I have seen."

"A child that you have seen!"

"Yes, Agnes. It is, in fact, so close a resemblance that it might easily pass for his likeness."

"Why, mother, who is it?" she asked, looking eagerly up.

"Little Mark Clement."

"Little Mark Clement?" she exclaimed; then once more directing her eyes to the drawing, slowly said: "I don't know but that there is some resemblance. I did not think of it before, but he is certainly a sweet-looking child."

"And have you noticed, Agnes, what a gentle voice he has?"

"Yes, mother, I have. One day I went into Martha's room, when he was visiting her. It was the first time I ever saw him; he seemed quite afraid of me, and shrank back; I looked at him a moment and then reached out my hand, 'Come here,' I said, 'and tell me what is your name.' 'Little Mark Clement,' he answered, at once coming forward, and laying his little, trembling hand in mine. His voice had so touching a sweetness, in it, that I wished to prolong the conversation. I put to him several questions about hoops, and balls, and jack-straws, something, you know, that I thought would be interesting to him, but, mother, he scarcely knew any thing about them. I then asked him, did he know Father Joseph; his countenance at once brightened. Ah! yes, he did right well. And then he told me how much he loved him; how kind Father Joseph had been, and what beautiful books he had given him. 'Did he ever give you any pictures?' I asked, thinking that, as soon as I had finished those little pieces, 'Winter Sports of St. Petersburg,' and 'The Blind Fiddler and his Pets,' I would send them to him. 'No,' he said, 'he has not yet given me any, but he has promised me some.'

I really enjoyed his society, there was such an odd mixture of the gravity of age and the artlessness of childhood about him. Ah! he is a charming child." She arose from the ottoman, and, laying the drawing on the table, sank into an arm-chair.

Mrs. Hilton thought now was the favorable moment to introduce the subject of Mark's adoption.

"And how, Agnes," she asked, "would you like him for a brother?"

"Why, mother!" she exclaimed, "like Mark for my brother?"

"Yes, Agnes; for your brother."

"If he was my brother I should love him and be proud of him. But why do you ask? You know I have no brother. 'Tis years since Arthur died, and your question is only a mockery, reminding me of the treasure Death snatched away." Tears gathered in her dark eyes.

"Agnes, the question is not asked in mockery, but do you know your father and I have concluded to adopt the sweet child, to fill Arthur's place; his mother has given her consent, and in a few days he is to become a member of our family."

"Adopt him! Going to adopt little Mark Clement!" astonishment and joy were depicted on her countenance.

"Yes, Agnes," quietly said her mother, her hand moving faster over the netting on which she was working.

"And to have a Christmas surprise for me, you did not tell me before!"

"No, it was better you should know nothing of it till all the arrangements were made."

"What arrangements, mother?"

"I don't know as I used the right word. Condition, I

think, would be better—till all the conditions had been agreed upon and settled.”

“And I suppose one of them is, that Martha is to be dismissed, and another seamstress employed in her place?”

Mrs. Hilton thought it best at once to remove any such impression, and to tell her candidly that Martha was not to be dismissed, and that the connection with his family was not to be broken up. Her calm, mild countenance wore a troubled expression, but the cloud soon passed away; quietly unrolling the silk from her spool, in a firm but gentle voice, she said:

“Agnes, your father and I see no necessity why Martha should be dismissed.”

“What! keep Martha, and yet adopt her brother?”

“Yes, Agnes.”

“And I suppose that is one of the precious conditions his mother insisted on?” her lips curled contemptuously.

“No, she had nothing to do with it. It was our opinion, your father’s and mine, that it would be cruel to send Martha home for no other reason than that she happens to be sister to the child we are about adopting; and, moreover, it would be cruel, too, not to allow his friends to visit him, and he to visit them.”

Agnes sat for some time looking steadily at her mother. “Upon my word,” she at last exclaimed, while a mocking smile wreathed her lips, “these are fine conditions indeed!”

“They are no more than just.”

“Just! While you were about it, for fear of injustice and cruelty, you ought to have concluded to adopt the whole family. It will be too bad to separate them; his mother, brother, and sisters had better be included in the adoption.”

“Agnes, stop; this is foolish. You know they are

respectable; not a stain is upon their character; they are only poor, and, my child, we should not despise them for that.”

“But have you not considered how more than foolish it will be to have Martha in the house after you have taken her brother? No, I know you have not; and as to father, you must be mistaken about his agreeing to these conditions. He knows better than to allow false notions of piety to overcome his better judgment; he knows, too, how unwise it would be to encourage such undue familiarity; he could not so far forget the dignity of his family, as to make a seamstress equal to his daughter by adopting her brother, at the same time retaining her in his service. I tell you, mother, you must be mistaken.”

“But, Agnes, I am not mistaken. These are the conditions he himself named to me.

“Mother?”

“Yes, Agnes, the very same.”

An angry flush burned on each cheek, and her eyes flashed.

“Mother,” her voice was husky with passion, “did he not know all this would be utterly repugnant to me?”

“Agnes, dear, put away these foolish notions of pride.”

“But, I say, did he not?” she imperiously asked.

“Agnes, listen to reason: how will Martha’s presence in the house, and the visit of little Mark’s friends, be hurtful to your dignity, or the dignity of any member of the family?”

“I tell you, mother, I will never receive him as brother on these conditions. You and father may cuddle him as much as you please, but never expect me to show him the least countenance.”

Why, Agnes!”

"You need not 'Why Agnes!' You know my disposition; and you know, too, now my firm determination. If you would take him as sensible parents would take a child I could love him; but to have his family continually hanging round, and his sister in the house, will quite alter the case, will make him an object of perfect aversion to me!"

"Agnes! Agnes!"

"I tell you it is so!"

"And can you so soon forget his piety and charming manners?"

"They are as nothing. Positively nothing." Her lips were white with passion. Arising, she took up her drawings, and left the room.

In the passage she met Martha; casting upon her a look of scathing scorn, she swept past her, and entered her own apartment. Once there, with pale, rigid features, she walked up and down the softly carpeted floor. She heeded not the elegancies around her; forgot that the hand of affection had carefully shielded her from every rude blast. She had risen happy that morning: Christmas and its teeming memories had thrown a cheering spell around her; but now her mind no longer dwelt on the yule-log, mistletoe-bough, gift-laden tree, and all the pleasant associations of the coming festival. How little it takes to make the proud wretched!

Why should she object to Mark, because his sister was a servant in the house? Did she fear the scorn of her friends? Did she shrink from the ill-natured remarks they might make? Was she afraid she might lose caste in society, from the plebeian connection? No, she was afraid of none of these; she knew well they were only too proud of being noticed by the beautiful and wealthy heiress; and as to

remarks, she had never cared for them before, and now she feared them not. Why, then, had she so hostile a feeling to the adoption, on these certainly just and humane conditions? She could not herself have told why. But it was because the innate pride of her heart shrank from coming in contact with the humble and the lowly. Her imperious will was crossed, and the softened feeling that had filled her heart for the fatherless boy was changed to cold, bitter aversion.

As she slowly paced her room, her eyes rested on a manuscript lying on the table; at first, it only attracted a momentary glance, but at length, pausing in her walk, she looked at it more carefully. On one side was a cross and anchor, on the other a large wreath of flowers, and in the small space in the centre, the name or title of the book. Stooping, she read: "Little Joe Harny; or, Alone, All Alone in the World." Taking it up, she turned the leaves, and carefully examined the hand. Could it be her father's? no; it was not his hurried business style. Was it her mother's? no; though easy and graceful, it lacked her exquisite finish. Nor Walter's? How her heart fluttered as she asked herself the question; but no, it was not his. Ah, whose could it be? She thought of all her friends; but it was not like any of theirs. Puzzled, she again turned to the title. "Little Joe Harny," she mentally exclaimed, "how strangely familiar that name seems to my ear, or, rather, what a strange feeling it stirs in my heart!" She was about to resume her walk, when, unable to tear herself from it, she wheeled up her arm-chair to the table, placed an ottoman before it, seated herself, and commenced its perusal:

"It was a cold, stormy night in November, in 18—.

The pale moon had concealed herself behind black, heavy clouds, and the wind, in wild and fitful gusts, swept round the lone country-house—sometimes in its mad revels pausing for a moment, then dying away in mournful, agonizing wails, making it seem, with the rain dashing against the window panes, as if the storm spirits wept for the very desolation they were making. So far as a cheering warmth and comfortable appearance, the interior of the humble dwelling presented a pleasing contrast to the gloom that reigned without. In the farther end of the room, sunk in a recess, and partially concealed by curtains, was a bed, one side of which was slightly ruffled, as if some one had but recently risen from it. To the right was a small bureau, and on it several volumes whose looks plainly indicated frequent and close perusal; by the bureau was a cherry-colored stand, kept in company by a straight row of six or eight kitchen chairs. On the opposite side was a tall, clumsy-looking clock, reaching from the floor to the low white-washed ceiling, and on each side of it a door, one leading into a bedroom, the other into a buttery. At the other end of the apartment was a large old-fashioned fireplace, with a pile of logs on one side, on the other two more doors; the first leading into a small chamber, the second into a cellar.

“A bright fire blazed on the hearth, and diffused a genial warmth through the room. Seated on a low stool, in rather close proximity to it, was a little boy of ten or eleven years; he was bending over, intently engaged in arranging narrow strips of leather and bits of cord into—it would have been impossible to say what, had it not been for the large, shaggy, good-natured-looking dog which stood near, and watched with so much interest his young master’s proceed-

ings; but Douce’s impatience to help little Joe along, first by thrusting his huge head into the noose-like appendage of the cord, then dexterously extricating himself, and taking up in his mouth a bit of the leather, at once explained the mystery—the child was making a harness for his dog.

“By the table, drawn into the middle of the floor, was a tall, slender woman, ironing. The line directly over her head, attached to four hooks, and forming an oblong square, was almost filled with smoothly ironed and neatly folded clothes. She was thirty or thirty-five years of age, and her countenance, beautiful and intellectual in the highest degree, wore a look of deep anxiety and care. At times she would pause in her work, and gaze at the attenuated form wrapped in the warm blanket, and seated in the easy arm-chair, large tears would fill her eyes, and, trembling on her lids for a moment, quickly chase each other down her pale cheeks; then, seeming to recollect herself, she would, turn aside her head, dash away the pearly drops, and resume her work with a wild haste, that expressed more plainly than words, the anguish of her heart. He who, three months before, had scarcely known one hour’s sickness in his whole life, how weak, how helpless now! That once powerful frame, how painfully contracted! That broad and lofty brow, how deathly pale and deeply marked! No wonder she was sad—she, who felt so unable to struggle with the storms of life—to lose the noble protector who had chosen her, a poor orphan girl, above all the rest of the world; had cherished her with such kindness, been so mindful of her wants, to go now, and leave her once more alone and friendless, oh! the thought was agonizing! And covering her face with her hands, she wept convulsively,

while the wind swept round the house in mournful cadences, as if chanting a requiem for all her withered hopes.

"The land in this section of the country had been only a few years under the plough of cultivation ; but a number of families moving in about the same time, Mr. Harny knew, the soil being rich, that, under the hands of these hardy pioneers, the trackless forest would soon be laid low, the land be made to yield her annual crops of golden grain, the busy hum of machinery eventually follow the re-echoing strokes of the wearied axe, and, in fine, the dark wilderness, under the enterprising industry of man, would, in a few years, teem with all the comforts and conveniences of civilization. His means were limited, but why on this account despond ? Was not this the very spot on which to build a competence for later years ? How many had commenced life with even less ! Had he not the strength and buoyancy of youth to help him along ? Yes ; here he would labor and plant the ivy and fig tree under which to repose in the peaceful decline of life. Here, then, he settled, and in a few years was able to exchange his rude log-cabin for his present comparatively comfortable dwelling. His little farm had gradually yielded acre after acre to the axe, till only one lot of seven or eight acres remained unconquered ; but, the year preceding on which our story opens, this, too, had been cleared, and now he thought of enlarging his farm. But, alas, how often sickness, when least expected, lays her prostrating hand upon us, and upsets our best-formed plans ! In piling up and burning the logs on this piece, and hurrying to prepare it for a fall crop, he brought on a severe hemorrhage from the lungs, and for weeks after hovered between life and death.

"When his neighbors heard of his affliction, they hastened

to his bedside and offered every assistance in their power. Although a staunch member of that proscribed and hated creed, the Catholic religion, Mr. Harny, by his kind, obliging disposition and irreproachable life, had overcome their prejudice, and gained their sincere respect. Besides, his education was far superior to theirs, and many times had he settled their accounts, and amicably adjusted their affairs, when, but for his friendly intervention, they would have had recourse to law, and, in the serious expenses of litigation, lost the little they had so laboriously gathered together. For these kind offices, he invariably refused any other remuneration than, when in need, as he would lightly say, they would do as much for him. And well now did they remember the oft-made promise ; several offered themselves to sit by his bedside and take charge of his medicines during the long watches of the night ; others, consulting together, came to the conclusion the doctor in their place was not to be depended on in so urgent a case, and hearing that a skilful physician resided in a village twelve miles distant, one went for him, while another carried the news of his sudden and very severe illness to a Mr. Connor, living about seven miles from them, and who, with Mr. Harny, formed the only representatives of Catholicity in these parts ; as might be expected, the greatest intimacy existed between the two families. As soon as Mr. Connor beheld the low state of his friend, he advised the immediate attendance of the priest. Maurice, his eldest son, a youth of nineteen, should, that very day, go for him. The nearest Church, indeed the only church west of New York, was in the city of A——, a distance of forty miles ; but by starting that afternoon, changing his horses midway, and not stopping to rest, he might return with the priest the next day.

'And pray God,' he mentally exclaimed, seeing the countenance of Mr. Harny wax paler and paler, 'it be not too late!'

"In the early struggles of Catholicity in this country it was not unusual for the poor Catholic to be years without an opportunity of approaching the Sacraments. If even at the hour of death they could send for a priest, who after traversing a vast area of country, over mountainous elevations, through tedious ravines, and by almost impassable roads, could arrive in time to administer the last Rites of the Church, the poor sufferer, on the one hand, would feel repaid for the long years of sorrow and privation, and on the other, the pious and indefatigable priest, regardless of all his toils, would rejoice that he had been able to carry the consolations of our holy religion to one who, though far away, had never forgotten her precepts; and as to them that, through human frailty, had fallen into a kind of spiritual lethargy, from which only the terrors of approaching death could arouse them, would not the minister of Him who said: 'There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doeth penance,' feel his heart swell with gratitude that he had been chosen to lead back the strayed sheep to the fold of his loving Master. Often, on returning from these laborious missions to his humble home, instead of obtaining that rest he so much needed, he would find others anxiously waiting to conduct him by the rough and difficult roads of those days, to some other equally remote place. Mindful only for his Master's cause, cheerfully laying aside all thoughts of personal comforts, the saint-like priest would urge on his exhausted energies, till it not unfrequently happened he sunk under the arduous duties of his widely extended mission.

"The return of Maurice, the next day, was anxiously looked for; and as the sun's last rays were gilding the horizon, his tired horse drove up to the gate. Mr. Connor immediately went out to meet him; perceiving him to be alone, an indescribable fear filled his heart. The year before, when they went to A——, they found Father Shiel looking so worn, that now, seeing Maurice unattended, he asked:

"Where is Father Shiel? Where is the priest, my son?" at the same time his heart grew sick at what he felt would be the answer.

"Oh, father," he replied, his voice quivering with emotion, 'he is dead! God has called him home!'

"On hearing the confirmation of his fears, Mr. Connor bowed his head and groaned, then, rousing himself from the stupor of grief, he turned and walked into the house. But already had the painful news preceded him; little Joe had followed him, and immediately returned, bearing the sad intelligence to his parents. Mr. Connor said nothing, but, seating himself at the bedside, took his friend's hands in his; Mrs. Harny stood near, with a fixed expression of awe and sorrow on her pale countenance. Mr. Harny was the first to speak; his eyes were directed to his wife.

"'Tis God's will, Agnes," he faintly whispered. She saw the motion of his lips, and bowed her head to catch his words. 'Don't feel bad! 'Tis the good God who has taken his faithful servant home!' Heavy drops stood on his brow, attesting how deep had been the struggle between human disappointment and divine resignation.

"For several weeks he continued very low. At length, his fine constitution, under the judicious treatment of Doctor Larner, began to rally; he sat up the greater part of the

day, rested better at night, and conversed with apparent ease. All his friends were sanguine in their expectations of his speedy recovery—all but his gentle, sorrow-stricken wife; and she, alas! was too well acquainted with the nature of that fatal and insidious disease, which at an early age had left her a lone orphan, to be thus easily deceived. It was true he was much improved, but the hollow cough still racked his feeble frame, and sounded a knell to any rising hope.

"On the night in which they are introduced to the reader a more than usual despondency had come over her. She could not help contrasting his pale emaciated countenance with what it had been three months before, then ruddy with health and glowing with animation. Conscious it would add to his pain to witness her sorrow, she strove, with all the powers of her mind, to rise above it; first, she essayed to speak of the past, but it too painfully contrasted with the present; then she turned to the future, but it arose so dark and threatening before her, that, no longer able to restrain her feelings, she sank on the nearest chair, and, burying her face in her apron, wept aloud. Little Joe, observing his mother's sadness, had some time before laid aside his occupation, and now, raising his head from Douce's shoulder, he hastened to her, threw his arms around her neck, and, in piteous tones, begged her to stop crying, or his heart would break.

"Oh, mother, don't, don't feel so bad! See father, how pale it makes him look!"

"Choking down the sobs, she glanced at her husband, and perceived through her tears that his countenance was paler—much paler, even the hectic glow had faded from his cheek. Drawing her chair up, she laid her hand upon his knee:

"Ah! Francis," she exclaimed, her voice still tremulous, 'I could not help it; my heart seemed swelled to bursting.'

"Tenderly pressing her hand, he replied, 'I do not blame you, Agnes; but oh, it would be such a consolation to me to see you more resigned to the will of God!' He would have added, whether life or death betide me, but he knew the very mention of the word death would renew all her grief.

"I know it," she said, wiping the tears from her swollen eyes; 'I know it, and I wish, for your sake, I could be more resigned, but I feel so lone—so lone!'

"So lone, while I am with you?" he asked, with a sorrowful smile.

"Oh, Francis!" was all her full heart could say.

"But, dearest, should this sickness prove the summons to another world, I beg you try and be resigned. Recollect, it will be the will of God that I should go. I know," he continued, feeling her hand grow cold in his, 'it will be a hard, hard trial. But, dearest, dearest Agnes, for the sake of our child, our little Joe, try to be resigned and live.'

"And oh, Francis! but for his sake I should be glad to go!"

"I know it, dearest; but God orders all for the best!" Seeming greatly wearied, he leaned his head against the back of his chair, and glanced at the clock; interpreting the look, she said:

"Yes, 'tis time for night prayers; but first let me give you your medicine. The doctor said you were to take it a few minutes before retiring."

"She went into the buttery, and soon returned with a glass of water in one hand, and a teaspoon and saucer in

the other. In the saucer were several powders; carefully examining the marks upon them, she emptied the contents of one into the teaspoon, put a little water into it, and gave it to him to swallow, immediately after she handed him the glass to wash down the bitter dose.

"After a few moments, feeling greatly rested, he said: 'Get the prayer-book, dearest, I feel able to make the responses now; and, as I before entreated, try and be resigned. Resigning yourself to the will of God, who tempers the storm to the shorn lamb, will infuse into your soul, even in the midst of the greatest sorrow, a portion of heaven's own peace. Know, were it not for this same resignation, Agnes, dear, I should now suffer the most poignant anguish at the thought of leaving you and little Joe; but, confident, if our blessed Lord calls me, that He who hath a care over the birds of the air and the flowers of the field will shield and protect you when I am gone, I freely submit myself to his holy will.' He ceased and looked thoughtfully into the fire; after a few moments' silence, laying his hand softly on little Joe's head, he said: 'And, Agnes, remember it will not be long that we will be separated; for, should you live out the three score and ten years allotted to man, still, so fleeting is time, compared with eternity, that it will seem only as a passing moment.'

"'True, true!' she murmured, sinking on her knees, with little Joe by her side. Mr. Harny, unable to kneel, reverently bowed his head, and from that humble home arose the voice of prayer, like incense before the face of the Lord."

As Agnes concluded the first chapter of the manuscript, she leaned her cheek upon her open palm, and mused on

what she had read. The pale, care-worn wife, struggling with her bitter grief; the saint-like husband, in his pain and weakness, speaking words of comfort to her bleeding heart; the poor little boy, feeling the joyousness of his spring-time clouded by some great indefinable dread; the intelligent house-dog nestling up close to his young master—all this, as upon canvas, arose before her; while the clock, pointing to the hour of prayer; the bureau, with its few well-read volumes; the stand and bed, formed the back ground to her picture.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, "into this humble and peaceful abode must death intrude? Why cannot he be satisfied with reaping in his harvest from the prison homes of the wretched and depraved? Why must his sable plumes be forever shrouding the most beautiful scenes of earth?" And then she thought of the time when Arthur, Rosa, and Mary, her angel brother and sisters, were borne from her presence away—of the peaceful graveyard, where the rose and eglantine clustered around, and crept over the marble monument that marked their resting-place—of the dear church near by, where often, of a Sunday evening, standing with her father in the little enclosure, she had listened to the choir practising the glorious anthems of the Church—those heaven-inspired melodies of Mozart, Handel, and Beethoven, till, in the ecstasy that enwrapped her soul, she would gaze up at the blue unfathomed dome, and feel only a light wall, a thin veil, hid from her view the glorious heaven where angels forever chant the praises of the Lord.

As all these memories thronged upon her, she crossed her arms upon the table and bowed her head upon them. She was unconscious the door opened, and heard not the

voice of the servant till her name was for the second time repeated.

"Miss Agnes," she started up; "it is the hour you told me to remind you of going to the chapel!"

She hastily arose, slipped the manuscript into the drawer of her desk, and walked into her chamber. She had already assumed her cloak and bonnet, and was taking up a richly bound prayer-book, when the remembrance of the interview with her mother that morning flashed upon her. No soft, relenting light beamed from her eyes; no feeling of compunction filled her heart. "How ridiculous," she angrily exclaimed, "some people can make themselves! I accept Mark Clement as an adopted brother, and his sister a menial in the house? No, never!"

What feelings to fill her heart, and she on the eve of approaching the Penitential Sacrament! Was she complying with the conditions by which its sanctifying graces might flow into her soul and make it pure and white, ready to receive her Saviour on the coming morrow? Instead of the humility which should adorn a Christian, the follower of Him who declared, that, unless we become as little children in meekness and lowliness of spirit, we could not enter into the kingdom of heaven, she was cherishing the darkest feelings of pride—that passion so hateful to God. She paused, and took off her gloves; never before, of a Christmas Eve, since childhood, had she failed to approach the Sacrament of Penance, and should she omit it now? She sat down, and again she thought of Arthur, Rosa, and Mary. Why were they called away, leaving her childhood lonely and sad? Why did she not go to sleep with them? Bowing her head upon her hand, the hot tears rolled over her cheeks. The little clock in her room struck the hour

of four; again she started up; she felt, in her present state of mind, she could not make the necessary preparations for confession; but then she wanted to go out, to get away from cold, bitter thoughts. She was in that sullen mood, that she did not feel like speaking to any one, or being spoken to, and where could she so well avoid this annoyance as in the church? Yes, she would go, and perhaps the very sanctity of the place would soothe and quiet her troubled feelings. She arose, carefully washed the traces of tears from her face, and left the chamber; as she entered her room, her eyes met the sad countenance of the *Mater Dolorosa*; hastily turning her head, she walked into the passage, and descended the wide stairs. Once in the street, she closely drew the veil over her face and hurried to the church. Entering the basement of St. Mary's, she found a number who had already approached the peace-giving sacrament, gathered round the altar, while a number more were kneeling near the confessionals. Almost unconscious of what she did, she moved on to one of them—it was Father Joseph's—and knelt with the other penitents. She opened her prayer-book and turned to the prayers before confession; a tear fell on the open page before her, and a feeling of compunction began to well up in her heart.

One after another went into the confessional; there were only two or three before her when the door opened, and she heard a man's step approaching her; she glanced up and met the eyes of her father bent gratefully, thankfully upon her; at the same time a sob sounded near, and the slight form of a female, dressed in deepest mourning, kneeling beside her, trembled violently. "Ah! she too is troubled," she thought, and a fellow-feeling caused her to turn her head; she started back and the prayer-book fell

from her hand. It was Martha Clement, her family's seamstress, and little Mark's sister. The cold, bitter feelings rushed back to her heart, and an iron firmness settled round her mouth. It was now her turn to enter the confessional but she could not go in; several moments passed, and Father Joseph, thinking there were no more penitents, raised the heavy curtain and came out. Mr. Hilton immediately stepped up to him: "Father, there are others still to go." He cast an imploring glance on Agnes, but with fixed stony features she arose, picked up her prayer-book, and walked out of the church. Arrived home, she at once retired to her room, laid aside her things, and, taking a seat before the grate, gave herself up to cold resentful thoughts. Leaving her, we turn to Becky Starr, at her uncle's, in the country.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GRAHAM'S residence was situated in a fine agricultural part of the country. The numerous out-buildings, well-kept fences, and general surroundings betokened it the home of an industrious and enterprising farmer. It was Christmas Eve, and, gathered together in the sitting-room, the family were listening to Becky Starr, in a clear, well-modulated voice, reading aloud a chapter from St. Bonaventure's "Life of Christ." It was a scene a Christian artist might love to convey to canvas—Becky, with her grave, thoughtful face, sitting at the table reading by the shaded lamp; Mr. Graham, with deep devotion in his countenance, leaning forward, in the attitude of an attentive listener; Mrs. Graham looking on, her calm mild eyes full of love and gratitude; Jane, a girl of fifteen or sixteen, sitting just back of her mother, listening with wrapt attention; and George and Henry, the one ten, the other eight, on low stools at her feet, turning to Becky, and hearing, with wonder depicted on their childish faces, of God's great love to man. As Becky concluded the chapter, and reverently closed the volume, the door opened and an aged couple entered. Mr. Graham rose.

"Father, it is very cold; let me draw these arm-chairs up to the fire for you and mother; and, Becky, if you please, remove the shade from the lamp. Father thinks the room looks gloomy with it on."

"Yes, Walter, it looks gloomy—gloomy, like an old man's heart—half lighted with life, half shrouded with death."

He sank into the softly cushioned chair, and Mr. Graham seated himself beside him. Although father and son, one could not but be struck with the strong resemblance between them; making room for the decrepitness of age, Mr. Graham's features were exactly like his father's, the same bold, prominent brow and dark gray eyes, the same thin nostrils and firm-set mouth.

"Walter," said his father, after gazing for some time at a picture in an old-fashioned frame over the mantelpiece, "this is Christmas Eve, and to-morrow is a great day in your Church?"

"Yes, father, a great day; and to all who believe in the Saviour it should be equally great—by them should be equally revered."

"And yet," continued the old man, "there are many calling themselves Christians—at least, they would be scandalized should you call them pagan, heathen, or infidel—who look upon Christmas as a day set aside for worldly enjoyments and selfish gratification. To them, Christmas dark and stormy is no Christmas at all; it must be bright and sunny for the thoughtless seekers of pleasure." And then, in that tone of bitterness in which he was wont to speak when a deeper current of thought was stirred, he added: "But did man come into the world to flutter for a few days, like the butterfly, in the sun of enjoyment, and then sink into the grave, leaving room for others? Was his life to have no other purpose? No; they who thus believe, thus act, miserably deceive themselves."

"Grandfather," said Becky, who had by this time seated

herself on one of the boy's stools at his feet, "shall I tell you what our Church teaches on this subject?"

The countenance of her aunt and uncle looked troubled; the stern old man had never allowed the Catholic doctrine to be broached in his presence, and now they dreaded to see his passionate nature roused, but, looking down on Becky, he replied:

"Speak, child; tell me what it teaches!"

"That man, grandfather, came into the world to prepare for heaven, and it depends on himself whether he gain it or not; that 'here he has no lasting city;' here 'in fear and trembling he must work out his salvation;' here 'lay up those treasures which the moth cannot consume, nor the violent bear away.'"

"Becky," said grandfather, laying his hand on her head, "it rather seems that preparing for the present and future wants of the body takes up his whole attention; he works, contrives, and is ever busy for the poor body, which must soon become the food of worms—but the soul, what does he do for that? To see him bustling about, ever eager and greedy for the good things of earth, it would seem, contrary to the Apostle's word, that here is really his abiding place, here his lasting city. He sees his friends, companions, associates, daily stricken down, and yet he urges on heedless of the warning—forgetful that he, too, must die."

Grandfather ceased, and black, heavy clouds gathered on his brow. Becky spoke not; she saw he was plunged deep in thought, and wished not to be disturbed. She sat watching her grandmother's fingers patiently toiling the round of a stocking; round after round she completed; at last, accidentally pulling out a needle, she handed the knitting to

Becky: "Here, child," she said, "will you pick up these stitches? my eyes are dimmer than they once were."

"But, mother," exclaimed grandfather, rousing himself from his revery, "while the eyes of the body have grown dim, the eyes of the soul have been opened."

Mr. Graham started; had he heard his father's words aright? Was the prayer of years about to be answered? Were his parents, after all their wanderings, to be gathered into the true fold?

As Becky handed back the stocking, her questioning eyes were raised to her grandfather.

"You all go to church to-morrow?" he said, turning to his son.

"Yes, father, all but Fanny; she will remain at home to keep you and mother company—that is, if you choose to remain at home."

"Where else should I remain?" he asked, the old sternness coming back.

"Grandfather, would you like to hear your favorite piece?"

"Yes, Becky, yes," he replied, in a more softened voice. Jane handed her the guitar, and, running her slender fingers over the strings, in a singularly clear and musical voice she sang "The Midnight Messenger." As she finished, he hastily rose and took the lamp from the mantelpiece.

"Father, are you going so soon?"

"Yes, Walter. I came in here to get away from heavy thought, but it follows me, and I must go back to my room. I can't rest; I must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

He had now reached the door, and, rolling up her knitting, grandmother prepared to follow.

"Mother," said Mrs. Graham, kindly, "you, at least, will stay awhile with us?"

"No, Fanny; I, too, with father, have work to do." Then, while a moisture gathered in her eyes, she added: "We go, children, to our room to read, study, and reflect!"

"And may God be with you in your labors!" fervently responded Mrs. Graham.

A few moments after their departure, Mr. Graham observed:

"Father and mother seem greatly troubled in mind."

"Yes, Walter; and we must redouble our prayers for them. I have noticed a change coming over them for some time past."

"I think I have too. They keep very close in their room, and appear abstracted when out. I have frequently asked father a question, when he has looked at me with so vacant an intensity of gaze that I know he did not see me, much less hear me, and, Fanny, my heart has been greatly lifted up; I remember, in my time of trouble, before the light dawned, it was the same with me."

"Yesterday, Walter, the Thirty-day prayer was finished, and to night we will again commence it."

"We will, Fanny; and now tell me, have you the boy's clothes all in readiness, so that we can start early?"

"Yes, they are on chairs by their bed. What time will you want breakfast?"

"As for Jane, Becky, and myself, we will be fasting, and I don't think you need get it any earlier than usual for the boys. I mentioned their clothes, because I want to start immediately after the meal. Father Williams will only be a short time in the confessional, so we must be there early."

"Does he go to Hartville to-morrow?"

"Yes, immediately after Mass. And there again he hears confessions, and says Mass."

"I am sorry Patrick went home to-day, you will have so many chores to do in the morning."

"Oh no, Fanny, the poor fellow would feel bad enough to be away from his friends on Christmas. All it will be, I will have to get up a little earlier myself."

"What time will he be back?"

"Not till after New Year's; he works hard all the year, and I thought, at the least, he ought to have a week's holiday."

"Jane," said her mother, "won't you wake up the boys; it's most time for prayers?"

The boys were roused, and, as the clock struck nine, Jane handed the prayer-book to her father, and they all knelt to evening prayers.

At dawn the next day, Becky, already dressed for her morning ride, was descending the stairs, when the door of her grandfather's room opened, and he appeared, beckoning to her. A softened expression rested on his venerable features. Taking his hand gently in hers, in an earnest voice, she exclaimed:

"Grandfather, may this be a happy Christmas to you!"

"May it be the same to you, child! — And now go tell your aunt she need not stay at home for us."

"Do you wish me to stay in her place?" she asked, allowing no disappointment to cloud her face.

"No, child; but we—mother and I—are going too. Off, off, no time for questions!" he hastily added, seeing her look of intense astonishment.

She raised his hand, pressed it to her lips, and hurried to the sitting-room. The family were ready to start; her aunt was folding a comforter round Henry's neck.

"Aunt," she said, "you have not broken your fast yet?"

"No, Becky, I have not. While George and Henry were eating, I was waiting on mother and father; they took breakfast in their room."

"I am glad to hear you are fasting, for dear grandfather and grandmother are going too. They just bade me tell you so."

"Going too! Father and mother going!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Graham in the same breath.

"Yes, aunt and uncle; I saw grandfather had on his coat and overcoat, but I did not think of this. Oh, it is unexpected, unexpected!"

"It is a joyful surprise for us all, Becky," replied her aunt; then turning to her husband, with tears in her eyes, she said: "Walter, you see my words are coming true!"

"Yes, Fanny, yes." He brushed his hand over his brow, and tried to say more, but his heart was too full. Surely a great change had come over his parents. How inveterate had been their hatred to the Catholic religion! How bitter their feelings to their children for embracing it! And now, unsolicited, they were going to attend a Catholic place of worship! To-day they would be present as listening strangers—another Christmas, might they not be present as enrolled members of the One True Church?

"Walter," said Mrs. Graham, "I shall have to detain you awhile, to get ready myself." She left the room, and, almost immediately after, grandfather and grandmother entered. Mr. Graham rose, grasped their hands, but he did not speak.

"This is a surprise to you, Walter," said grandfather, sinking into the chair which Becky had wheeled up for him.

"It is, father; from your words last night, I did not expect it."

"I spoke what I then thought. But, Walter, we know not to-day what the morrow may bring forth!"

"True, father; but we know that the mercy of the Lord endureth forever!"

"It does, Walter, it does! This assurance has been the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of light by night, that has sustained and guided me thus far, in a weary, weary search."

"And, father, as God brought his children out of the land of Egypt, so now he will bring you out of all your troubles."

"I believe it, Walter; although all around me is a blank wilderness, I believe it." His voice trembled, and tears hung on his silver lashes.

Mrs. Graham made her appearance, and, taking some warm blocks from under the stove, Mr. Graham led the way to the sleigh.

The seats being wide, Becky found ample room on the same one with her grandparents. All in, with the warm blocks under their feet, and furs wrapped snugly around them, Mr. Graham slackened the reins.

It was a cold, freezing morning, but the snow-clad fields sparkled and shone, till all Golconda's glittering wealth seemed a mere mockery to them; the smoke from every chimney ascended in graceful wreaths, as if each house was an altar on which was burning grateful incense; and the air so clear and still, that Becky leaned forward, almost persuaded she could hear the angel band singing anthems to the new-born King. Soon the village of Arden appeared in sight; the modest spire of St. Mary's Church loomed

up like a beacon light; already many, dressed in the humble garb of poverty, were hastening on before them; now they had passed through the gate, and now were entering the church as they drove up.

With tender care, Mr. Graham assisted his aged parents from the sleigh and helped them up the slippery path to the church door; by this time all had alighted, and hastening her to grandfather's side, Becky noticed a tear standing on his withered cheek.

"The snow, Becky, is dazzling, very dazzling," he said, turning and quickly brushing it off. With beaming eyes she looked up into his face, and silently pressed his hand.

Mr. Graham went to secure his horses, and the rest of the family walked on to their pew. Father Williams occupied the confessional, and after a short but fervent preparation, Jane, Becky, and Mr. and Mrs. Graham approached the peace-giving sacrament.

At length, confessions over, Mass commenced. From her childhood, Becky Starr had been accustomed to attend the fine churches of the city; but now, away from all outward grandeur, in that poor little chapel, with only the murmur of the priest's voice in her ears, she never felt so near Bethlehem in all her life. The reading of the evening before came up; she thought of the vast multitude that, obedient to the call of Augustus, thronged Bethlehem, to have their names enrolled—of the tender Virgin and venerable Joseph, weary with their long journey, seeking in the crowded city for some resting-place—of their being refused admittance even at the humblest lodging, and then, all weak and trembling, repairing to a poor stable, rejoiced to find, at last, a shelter from the sleeting rain and midnight frost. And there, away from the comforts and conveniences of life,

the Saviour of the world was born! Ah! was not the poverty of his birth intended as a great lesson—to the rich, that, in their homes of ease and comfort, bearing in mind the cold little stable of Bethlehem, they should not harden their hearts to the wants of the suffering poor—and to the poor that they should not murmur and repine under their lot, remembering their blessed Saviour, while on earth, knowing how much they are scorned and contemned by the proud, chose them as brothers, and walked with them the humble path of poverty.

At the time of the Communion, Becky walked up with the other communicants to the railing; with all fervor and humility she repeated the *Confiteor*, then quickly followed the *Absolution*, the *Agnus Dei*, the *Domine non sum dignus*, and the blessed Jesus, whom in spirit she had that morning adored with the shepherds, descended into her heart to replenish it with his all-absorbing grace. Tears washed over her cheeks; quietly wiping them away, she returned to her seat and remained in a state of ecstatic love and adoration till the sound of many feet aroused her; looking up, she saw the congregation crowding to the altar with their Christmas offering. Immediately the words of the sacred penman, speaking of the wise men, occurred to her: "And going into the house they found the child, with Mary, his mother, and falling down they adored him; and opening their treasures, they offered to him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

Mass concluded, after some time spent in grateful meditation, the family left the church. While waiting for Mr. Graham to bring round the sleigh, several gathered around them, and the warm congratulations of the season passed from lip to lip. Grandfather and grandmother retired

apart from the rest, and Becky, seeing them look sad and lonely, hastened to them.

"Grandfather," she said, "how happy they are on this blessed morning!"

"Yes, child; but their words weary me." He sighed and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder.

"How did you like the ceremonies?" she asked.

"I can hardly tell you, child; they seem strange to me."

"But the few remarks Father Williams made?"

"They were appropriate. I liked them well—there: now do not trouble me with any more questions." He bowed his head, and the thin white locks falling over his face hid to all but Becky's eyes the stern, sad look of uncomplaining sorrow.

Mr. Graham drove up. "Father and mother," he said, "you must be tired standing so long! The blocks were quite cold, and I stayed to have them warmed; let me help you in first." Carefully he guided their feeble steps, and gently lifted them in.

Becky again seated herself between them, and George and Henry, feeling now their tongues might with propriety be loosened, entertained them all the way home with innocent and childish prattle.

After dinner, while making vast discoveries, and showing to Jane and Becky all the fine toys the good Santa Claus had sent them, Becky was summoned to her grandparents' room.

"There, child," said grandfather, pointing to an ottoman, "get that; we want you to stay with us." He arose, stirred up the fire, and, resuming his seat, said:

"Becky, child, your grandmother and I have read much of late, and, instead of finding the miserable doubts which

urged us to it quieted and dispelled, they have resolved themselves into certainties. In our old age we find ourselves without a faith, without a visible guide." Becky started.

"Does it shock, surprise you, child?"

"Grandfather, it does not surprise me; I have known it for some time."

"Known it, child! how? I thought mother and I effectually concealed it from all. Certainly we have not spoken of it."

"It was not from anything you have said, grandfather; but from the books you have been reading, and your troubled looks, that I knew it."

Grandfather smiled: "Becky, child, we have been reading of late only the Scriptures and authentic history,"

"But, grandfather, there was a time when you had others besides them!"

"You are right, child, there was; mother and I read them, but their subtle sophistry did not satisfy us; we saw how utterly incompatible with man's happiness was their specious reasoning; how soon, if they should ever gain the ascendancy, they would destroy the harmony of order, and plunge the world into an irretrievable chaos. Every one would be for setting himself up as a philosopher; might would govern right; and where freedom was promised to man, the most terrible slavery would be found. Never, Becky, was such a tyrant as this boasted reason would prove. Innumerable sects would arise, the name of the living God would be swept from the earth, and again would the altars of Moloch stream with the blood of his victims."

"And to save man from all this, grandfather, you have come to the belief that God left to him a revealed faith?"

"I have, child. He created man, and placed him in a terrestrial garden filled with every thing that could delight the senses. There he might have remained, innocent and happy; one restraint, and one only, was placed upon him: he was commanded not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree; he disobeyed, he transgressed, and in his transgression showed the rebelliousness of his heart. He was driven out from his delightful home; the penalty of death was pronounced upon him and all his posterity; but the mercy of God would not see him utterly destroyed; a Saviour was promised, whose blood should atone for his sin. To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was this promise afterwards renewed; the prophets were enlightened as to the time of his coming; they so exactly foretold all the circumstances attending his birth, life, preachings, miracles, and death, that, in Jesus of Nazareth, we cannot but see the long promised, the long expected Messiah come. We see, too, from his own words, from the writings of his apostles, that before his mission was fully accomplished, he established a church wherein a pure and undefiled faith might be deposited for man. This far, child, have we got; and now, with the various churches founding their belief on Christianity, each pretending to be the repository of that precious faith, how are we to know which is the right, which the spurious one?"

"By the marks, grandfather, which he left to distinguish it from all others."

"Marks, child! Marks!" He bent eagerly forward and the cloud seemed lifting from his brow.

"Yes, grandfather; when Christ established his Church he knew that many would come in his name; 'false prophets in sheep's clothing, but inwardly ravenous wolves,'

and therefore he set marks upon it by which it might be easily known to all. Grandfather, these are the marks: the Church of Christ must be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." She paused, leaned her forehead on her hand, and remained for several moments buried in thought; at length she raised her head, and looked up into her grandfather's face.

"Well, Becky," he said; "now that you have gathered up the scattered threads of memory, will you tell us what you mean by saying the Church of Christ must be one?"

"I mean, grandfather, it must be one by the union of its members in one faith, one communion. It stands to reason, if dissensions and contradictions about faith or worship were allowed to enter, it would be split into a thousand fragments and lost in a multiplicity of creeds; but the Church of Christ is built upon a rock, and is to last forever; hence it must be one, strong and unweakened, capable of resisting the 'rains, floods, and winds which beat against it.' Christ says, '*one fold, one shepherd*,' to express emphatically its indissoluble unity. We cannot reject one single article without rejecting the whole; we must be either for it, or against it, for 'whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.'"^{*}

"But, Becky," said grandmother, laying her hand on her arm, "pause here a moment. The Church which is Christ's must be one. Very well; now tell which, among the existing churches, has this boasted unity. Father and I have examined them well, and have failed to find it."

"It is, grandmother, because you have not examined the Catholic Church. There, and there only, will you be able to

^{*} St. James, ii. 10.

find unity. Among others you find nothing but wrangling and discord. They are not to-day what they were yesterday, and to-morrow they will not be what they are to-day. Constantly changing—constantly blown about by every wind of doctrine, what claim can they have to this first of essential marks. St. Paul points them out and bids us beware of them; he says: 'I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who cause dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them.'^{*} And in still another place, he exhorts us to be 'careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body, and one spirit; as you are called in one hope of your vocation. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.'[†] The Catholic Church alone has preserved this unity; she is the same throughout the world, the same creed, the same worship. Even the sacrifice of her altar is everywhere offered up in the one language, the same used in all her sacred offices throughout all the western parts of the world from the apostles' days. And, grandfather and grandmother, behold in this one point before us how the wisdom of God guides his Church! The common or vulgar languages are forever changing, and, in order to preserve her from losing in these changes a tittle of her unity, one language was chosen for all her ritual. Here her unity of faith, and unity of worship are both secured. A Catholic finds himself in a strange country; he knows nothing of the language spoken around him, but there is a Catholic Church; he sees the same sacrifice of the altar offered up in the same language in which he has always been accustomed to hear

^{*} Romans, xvi. 17.

[†] Ephesians, iv. 1, 2, 3. "Challoner's Catholic Christian Instructed," p. 116.

it. There are the seven sacraments, prayers for the dead, invocations of the saints, believing the same supremacy, dating back that supremacy, through long ages, to St. Peter, the rock on which the Church was built. He is no longer a stranger; he is at home with the members, in the union of one faith, one communion. Has any other than the Catholic Church unity like this?"

Grandfather's and grandmother's eyes were fixed upon the carpet, they heeded not her question; minute after minute passed by, but they still mused on. At length, raising his head, grandfather exclaimed:

"The second mark, child! Tell us about the second mark of Christ's Church. I believe you said it was holiness."

"I did, grandfather; for it stands to reason the Church which the blessed Saviour founded, wherein the fruits of his precious blood might be applied to the souls of men, could not be otherwise than holy." Christ himself declared 'the gates of hell should not prevail against it,'* that is, that no sin or wickedness should ever creep into it, and he promised to send another Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, that it might abide with it forever.† In Isaiah we read: 'And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it;‡ and listen to St. Paul, speaking of it, he says: 'Christ loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, nor any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.'§ You see, grandfather, holiness is another indispensable mark of Christ's Church."

* Matthew, xvi. 18.

† John, xiv. 16.

‡ Isaiah, xxxv. 8.

§ Ephesians, v. 25. 26. 27.

"Yes, child, yes," he impatiently exclaimed, while the black clouds gathered on his brow, "it must of necessity be holy, Christ could not be the founder of one that was not; but tell me how you can claim holiness as belonging exclusively to the Catholic Church? Methinks, child, I have heard any thing but holiness ascribed to it!"

"But by whom, grandfather? Its enemies. They found its purity and holiness laid too great a restraint upon their passions; they broke from it, and, ashamed to own to the world their unworthiness to be ranked among its members, they accused it of the very excesses of which they themselves were guilty. Look upon the lives of these pretended reformers; not one of them but seem abandoned to the most shameful crimes. Luther's violence of temper burst forth on all occasions; throughout his writings is displayed the same spirit of pride, hatred, and intolerance; he tried to make out God the author of sin, by denying free will to man; he boasted of having, with impunity, broken the most solemn vows. That peace which the world can neither give nor take away was not granted to his councils; he and his disciples were ever wrangling, disputing, and contradicting. Having thrown off the restraint of the Church, one would not submit to the opinion of another, hence followed bitter contentions, and suddenly a multitude of new religions were spawned upon the world. To believe each one's account of the other, never was there so quarrelsome, furious, and scandalous a set. What vile epithets, what odious comparisons, they dealt out to all who in the least dared to disagree with them! What seditions they stirred up! What confusion and tumult followed in their wake! And yet these were the pretended reformers of Christ's Holy Church! It would be impossible for me,

grandfather, to tell you all their inconsistencies, and wanderings after they began the business of reforming: I will, therefore, refer you to Bossuet's 'Variations,' there you will find them fully treated. And now, leaving them and their slanders against the Church which God has given his angels charge over, I will just glance at the boasted Reformation in England, and see what kind of men set about the same work there. Were they holy, God-fearing persons, who labored under the belief that errors had crept into the Church, and it was their pious duty to correct them? Were their tender consciences pained at the want of piety among the people? Did they strive to arouse them from their lethargy, and inspire anew in their hearts the love and fear of God? Grandfather, you and grandmother have been reading history, authentic history, you tell me, and what does it say?"

Grandfather's hands were crossed upon his cane, and his head bowed down upon them. He groaned aloud, no other reply did he make, and Becky went on:

"Grandfather," she laid her hand upon his knee, and her voice took the tone of deep feeling, "I know what you would say; I, too, have read history, and instead of all this, instead of being holy, God-fearing men, they were devoid of every sentiment of piety and humanity, and it was their morals, not the Church, which so terribly needed reforming. They slandered it; to be sure they did; but in the midst of all their slanders and persecution its purity and holiness shone forth more gloriously than ever. Like Luther, in the case of the Landgrave of Hesse, it might have consented to Henry the Eighth having two wives at one time, but it would not sanction so great a wickedness; and the firmness of its Pontiff, in maintaining its integrity, proves

to the world that God had not forgotten his promise; that the Spirit of Truth was still with it, guiding and directing it in all things."

Grandfather suddenly raised his head, and exclaimed: "Strange, child, strange, that England should boast of having thrown off the spiritual authority of the Pope, when she threw it off for no other reason than because he would not sanction so abominable a crime! And strange, too, that, having broken off from him, she should bow to the supremacy of one, a monster in human nature, for, from that time, Henry became the head of England's Church!"

"Yes, father, I recollect, and a strange head, a strange reformer, he must have been!"

"Grandfather and grandmother, it is no more than might be expected. Hardening her heart, she was given over to a reprobate sense; and, while we may exclaim: What blindness! what infatuation! we cannot but see in it the justice of Almighty God. She heaped the vilest slanders on his Church, and it is but fitting the world should know why she separated from its communion, and to whom she owed the existence of her own."

Grandfather put more wood on the fire, and, moving to one side of the fireplace, leaned his elbow on the mantel-piece and his head on his open palm. The clock near him ticked loud, with almost an intruding noise.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, after awhile listening to it; "how the babbling minutes fly! We linger—they heed it not—willing or unwilling, they drag us with them down the path of life!"

"And yet, grandfather, these minutes are laden with the choicest gifts to man."

"Becky, child, that may be easy for the young to believe, when to them every change has upon it the morning freshness of life; but not so to the old; morning and noon are past, and only the night of the grave is before them."

"To the aged worldling, he to whom this world is all, grandfather, it may be so; but not to the aged Christian. To him more joyous, more glorious, is the coming change. The grave he has not looked upon as the end, but as the beginning of his life; beyond it is his paradise of delights, where no serpent can come to tempt and lure him into evil. In triumph he exclaims: 'O Grave! where is thy victory? O Death! where is thy sting?'"

Grandfather moved on to his seat, and laid his hand gently on her head.

"Dear child," he said, "the world has never been to your grandmother and I our all, and yet how dark the grave appears to us!" There was an indescribable sadness in his voice, which brought tears to Becky's eyes.

"Grandfather," she replied, pressing her hands together, "it is because you have no sure faith to light you to it."

"No, child; no. For the last few months our hearts have been racked and torn; sorrows have multiplied upon us, and darkness is around us." He covered his face with his hands, and Becky knew by the convulsive breathing that her grandfather wept. In a moment grandmother was at his side. She had ever been his faithful partner, smoothing the rugged paths before him, and where his manly strength and courage failed, with her womanly patience and fortitude, soothing and helping him on.

"Zachary," she said, laying her hand on his shoulder, "remember the words Walter spoke to you this morning. The mercy of the Lord endureth forever.' It is dark be-

fore us now, but it is only the darkness just before day. I can already see a bright ray streaking the horizon!"

The passionate burst of grief was over, raising his head, in a calm, subdued voice, he replied: "Rebecca, the prejudices of years must be laid aside, and what we were taught to hate we must learn to love."

"So be it, Zachary, if light and peace come with it!"

"Becky," said grandfather, suddenly turning to her; "you believe your Church to be infallible?"

"I do, grandfather; I would have to doubt the words of Christ himself to doubt its everlasting purity and holiness. He said it would never err or go astray, and in believing his word I believe in its perfect infallibility. In it, grandfather, you will find those channels through which the grace of God may flow into our souls—there is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass daily offered up on its altars—seven sacraments—days set aside for fasting and prayer—lives of members eminent for their piety—in other words, lives of its saints, placed before us, that, while asking their prayers, we may make their virtues our own—every thing in it tends to excite a holy emulation in doing good—tends to a carrying out of those two great commandments Christ gave—love to God and man."

"Sacrifice of the Mass daily offered up—seven sacraments—days set aside for fasting and prayer—asking the saints to pray for us!" said grandmother, in a musing tone.

"Mother!" exclaimed grandfather, "we will talk to Becky about all them another day; but, child, tell us now about the third mark."

"Grandfather, the third mark of Christ's Church is its universality. It must extend to all nations: 'Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every crea-

ture.* It was not, like the Jewish religion, to be confined to one spot; the earth was to be its inheritance. 'All the ends of the earth shall remember, and shall be converted to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the Gentiles shall adore in thy sight. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he shall have dominion over the nations.† In the Acts we see the establishment of the infant church, and, following its history, in course of time, we see the disciples removed from their field of labor, others succeeding them, and the work still going on. Persecutions fall harmless upon it, and nations gather themselves under its sheltering roof. Heresies spring up, each claiming to be the Church of Christ; and a name is given it which it shall carry down to all succeeding generations. They strive to wrest this name from it and assume it themselves; but in vain, they cannot—it belongs not to them. Grandfather and grandmother, what is this name? It is Catholic. And why could they not assume it? Because it was to point out the one Church, the great Church, the universal Church; and what claim had they to being One, Great, or Universal? They, torn with dissensions, limited to a few members, and confined to remote corners! As to the modern heresies, many of them have in like manner claimed it, but with no better success. Like the early ones, they are known by the names of their founders, or nations among which they first appeared, or some novelty belonging to them, as Lutherans, Calvinists, Church of England, Kirk of Scotland, Baptists, Methodists, etc. The nicknames, Romanist and Papist, which they in their spleen have cast upon it, show up their malice and weakness, and the greater claim it has

* Mark, xvi. 15.

† Psalm xi. 28, 29.

to it; for, in spite of all, Catholic it came down to us, Catholic it still is, and Catholic it shall be, when they, like the early heresies, have passed away. Grandfather and grandmother, it would weary you, I fear, should I, in speaking of its universality of place, enumerate all the countries over which it is spread, for in those countries in which it is not the established church, as in England, Scotland, Holland, and the Protestant parts of Germany, it has numerous, very numerous followers, and the same may be said of it throughout the world. And not only in place is it Catholic or universal, but in time. Turn to any history you please, and however much the historian, in his prejudice, may wish to cloak it, you cannot but see it is the Church of the apostles' days. The very heresies which have in succeeding ages sprung up incontestably prove this. One denied the trinity, another the resurrection, another baptism, another transubstantiation, or the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, another the pontifical authority, and so of each of its tenets, and in combating and refuting these errors and maintaining the purity of its faith, it proves it was the same in doctrine, in liturgy, and in government, it is to-day. It had, as I observed, when speaking of its unity, the same sacrifice of the altar, the same sacraments, the same supremacy, and dating back that supremacy to Peter, the rock on which the Church was built, against which the powers of hell have never prevailed, and never can prevail."

With eyes bent earnestly upon her, grandfather and grandmother had listened to her words, but now grandfather spoke:

"Child, you are right. The Church which is Christ's must be universal, in time as well as in place. A church which cannot trace itself back to the apostles' days, can-

not be the church which Christ founded and his apostles preached."

"No, grandfather, certainly not; and this now brings me to the last of the four marks by which Christ's Church may be known—its apostolicity. It must be able, through a succession of bishops, to trace itself back to Peter, the first bishop. None of the Protestant sects being heard of till the sixteenth century, can they do this? Can they show an uninterrupted succession of pastors? No, grandfather; they cannot. The slightest knowledge of history would at once expose any pretensions they might make."

"But, Becky," said grandfather, "does not the Church of England, or Episcopal Church, claim an apostolic succession?"

"She does, grandfather; but through what channel? Through the channel of the Catholic Church. For she knows, the world knows, it is a fact as palpable as the noon-day sun, that the Catholic religion was the first Christian religion, the religion the apostles labored to extend, and which, through the most terrible persecution, and in spite of the most violent opposition, converted the Pagan world, and carried the light of the Gospel to the barbarous nations around."

"But, child," asked grandfather, "did it not afterwards fall into the grossest idolatry?"

"No, grandfather; that is only one of the many slanders its enemies have cast upon it."

Grandfather looked sharply at Becky, while a stern look of incredulity settled on his countenance.

"Father," said grandmother, observing his changed expression, "we must not be too ready to believe all alleged against it. Doubtless, when Becky comes to tell us of its sacrifice sacraments, and all those things she has promised

to tell us about, she will be able to clear up these accusations."

"Grandfather and grandmother, in my poor way I could easily do it, but you must not depend entirely on my word. I will bring you Milner's 'End of Religious Controversy,' and there, from the writings of one of its most learned divines, you will see all the slanders against it ably refuted, refuted, too, in a style you cannot but admire for its calm, reasonable, and sensible tone; no false rhetoric, no empty declamation will you find in it; only the strong, forcible language of truth."

"Child, you will bring us the book this evening?"

"I will, grandfather."

"And now, Becky," said grandmother, "speaking of the Church of England laying a claim to apostolicity through the Catholic Church, tell us, does she, even in that way, prove her claim good?"

"No, grandmother, she does not. Queen Elizabeth commissioned the Catholic Bishops of Bath, Durham, Landaff, and Peterboro, to consecrate Matthew Parker, he being a Protestant, and they Catholics, of course they would not do it; and for maintaining their rightful authority they were persecuted, deprived of their sees, and Parker, it was said, was consecrated by one Barlow, who had himself never been consecrated, thus, notwithstanding all her voluminous writings, unable to prove Barlow's consecration, her link is broken, and she has no more claim to an apostolic succession than any of the other heresies. But not so with the Catholic Church; through eighteen hundred years it can trace itself in a direct line back to Peter. In the first age, to Peter succeeded Linus; to Linus, Cletus; to Cletus, Clement: and the second age, to Clement, Anacletus; to An-

acletus, Evaristus; to Evaristus, Alexander I.; and, grandfather and grandmother, in the same manner, through all the centuries, I can descend to Pius IX., the present Pope or head bishop; making in the aggregate, two hundred and fifty-six who have occupied the chair of Peter. Strong and unbroken, grandfather and grandmother, is the chain that binds the Catholic Church to the eternal rock on which it was founded."

The door opened, and Jane informed them that tea was awaiting. "Becky, dear," said grandmother, rising, "you will not forget the book after supper?"

"No, grandmother, I certainly will not."

"And, Becky," said grandfather, taking the hand she lovingly extended to him, "we will ponder over your words, and when all you have told us is well considered, we will, child, refer to those subjects you promised to treat of."

"At any time, dear grandfather, at any time."

A glad, grateful look, passed between the two girls as they walked on with their grandparents to the tea-table.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days after Christmas, Mr. Hilton's carriage drove up before the widow Clement's door. Little Mark was to be taken to his new home. He was already dressed in his bright plaid suit, and was standing by his mother's knee listening to her parting words of advice. The children, Ellen and Clara, scarcely comprehended what it all meant. Marky was going away, but then he would soon come back again, and they would see him ever so many times, and he would bring them such nice presents. Alfred was very grave, but he strove to speak in an encouraging and even a cheerful tone.

"Mother," he observed, "this is a great chance for Mark; who would have thought, a few weeks ago, that he would be adopted by a rich man, and treated with all the kindness as if he was his own child?"

"Surely, Alfred, it is unexpected, and Mark must be good, and prove himself grateful." Her eyes filled; but, stooping, she tied his little shoes, and when she looked up again the tears were gone.

Mr. Hilton knocked; a pallor spread over Mark's face.

"He's come," he whispered, with white lips.

"Courage, Marky, courage!" said Alfred, walking to the door and opening it.

Mr. Hilton came in, seated himself, and after a remark or two addressed to the widow and Alfred, reached out his hand to Mark. "Well, Mark," he said, are you most ready to come home with me, and be my little boy?"

He made no reply, but, leaning his head on his mother's shoulder, sobbed aloud.

"Marky, Marky," she coaxingly said, "you mustn't cry. You will now have all the books you want to read, and such beautiful pictures; and by and by you will be able to take a little brush in your hands and make pictures yourself."

"But you won't be there! Oh, mother, mother, you won't be there!"

"Mark," said Mr. Hilton, drawing his chair up to him and laying his hand tenderly on his head, "your mother will be there as often as you wish to see her, and Alfred, Ellen, and Clara too; and Martha, you know, is there now."

"Martha!" he exclaimed, raising his head. "Oh, I had forgotten it; yes, she is there, and I won't be all alone!"

Mr. Hilton's countenance grew deathly pale, but, mastering his emotions he drew Mark to him.

"No, Mark," he said, "you will not be all alone, and now dry up your tears, and show them how brave you are."

Alfred wished to speak calm and collected, but feeling that little Mark's tears were becoming contagious, to change the conversation, he turned to Mr. Hilton and said:

"I have some good news to tell you, sir; Mr. Simonds has raised my salary."

"How much, Alfred?"

"One-third, sir."

"And have you agreed to stay with him a year?"

"Yes, Mr. Hilton."

"I congratulate you on having your salary raised, but I am sorry you are engaged. I would rather employ you myself; however, the year will pass quickly, and then don't engage with him until you see me."

"I will not, sir, and I should not have done so now if I had known you wished to employ me."

"Well, never mind, Alfred, it may be all for the best!" He turned for little Mark, he had stepped across the room, and in a low voice he was conversing with his little sisters.

"Come, Mark," he said, "kiss them now, and we will be going."

Mrs. Clement suddenly rose; 'twas evident she was struggling with bitter feelings. Alfred rose too.

"Mr. Hilton," he remarked, in rather an unsteady voice, "our home will be little Mark's home no more."

"No, Alfred; but he is going to those who will cherish him as their own."

"And, Mr. Hilton," said the widow, while her lips trembled, "when you observe faults in him, be not too hard with him; remember—remember—" she stopped, unable, with any composure, to proceed.

Again a change came over Mr. Hilton's countenance. "Remember, Remember! Can I ever forget? As I hope for mercy hereafter, the child shall be as my own."

He took little Mark by the hand, opened the door, and passed out. The widow and Alfred followed.

"One more kiss, Marky, and I must hurry to Mr. Simonds." He took it, silently pressed Mr. Hilton's hand, and walked rapidly away. A moment longer the widow lingered. "The past!" she whispered, in Mr. Hilton's ears.

"The past!" he slowly repeated. "The past!" And dashing a tear from his eyes, he tenderly lifted little Mark into the carriage. A quick drive, and they were at home. In the hall Mr. Hilton met Agnes. Kindly taking her hand, he said:

"Let me introduce to my dear Agnes her adopted brother."

She glanced down on him; his large blue eyes were raised timidly to hers, while he pressed close to her father's side. His golden hair, in short, thick curls, was brushed from off his beautiful forehead, and there was altogether such an angelic expression about his countenance, that, stooping, she threw her arms around him and kissed him.

"Oh, Miss Agnes!" he exclaimed; "I am so glad to see you again, to thank you for those nice pictures you sent me!"

He forgot his timidity, and now warmly pressed her hand.

"Then you liked them?"

"Oh yes, very much; especially the 'Fiddler and his Pets!'"

Again she kissed him. How she would have loved him, but for the demon pride. At that moment she caught a glance of Martha standing at the head of the stairs, and smiling through her tears. It seemed to Agnes a triumphant expression gleamed from that smile. All the cold, angry feelings rushed back to her heart; rudely pushing the fair child from her, with a stately step she passed on to her own room, while Mr. Hilton, with a heavy sigh, turned with little Mark into one of the parlors.

A week passed, and Agnes, in her own room, was taking copies from a sketch-book; for some time she worked diligently away, then a frown lowered on her brow, and, dropping her pencil, she leaned her head on her hands. Hard lines settled round her mouth; she was thinking of little Mark Clement and his family. Why had her parents persisted in taking him? Was there no other child but their seamstress's brother? Was Mark Clement any more an object of charity than a hundred others, whose friends would

never presume to intrude upon her home? "They think," she bitterly exclaimed, "to make me yield; but never, never will I look upon him as a brother while his go-between of a sister is in the house." Against Martha, in particular, was her animosity directed; but for her hateful presence, Mark's beauty and winning ways would have easily gained her affections. She never once considered that the poor girl, having so beautiful and charming a brother, would all the more bitterly lament that poverty which obliged them to transfer him to other hands; how, a menial in the house, she would see him raised to a station above her; how sad thoughts of her almost idolized father would arise; what great changes had come over them since his sickness and death; the home-circle broken, his children separated, some raised up, and others cast down. Ah, poor girl, such reflections as these will be no strangers to thy heart; and yet Agnes, blinded by pride and wilfulness, sees and heeds it not!

She arose, and going to the piano, raised the lid. Seating herself, her slender fingers swept the pearl keys, and she seemed about to commence a bold, spirited march, when suddenly changing her mind, she more lightly touched the keys; a faint prelude followed, and she sang a sweet Italian air of touching sadness. Tears trembled in her eyes, and, unable to finish it, she bowed her face upon her hands and wept. She was not thinking now of Martha, Mark, or her mother or father; no, her thoughts had flown to one whose every feature was indelibly printed on her heart — one whose rich, manly voice, had joined hers the last time she sang the strain; then she was all joyous and happy, and the sad air seemed in strange contrast with her buoyant feelings; now a shadow had fallen over her—a

shadow "no bigger than a man's hand;" but which threatened to obscure all the peace and sunshine of her home. Oh, if he were only with her, how soothingly would his words fall on her ears! but he was gone, and knew not how coldly her parents had turned. She loved Walter Starr with all the wild devotion of her proud, passionate nature; and yet, as she now longed for his presence, she instinctively shrank from the thought of ever revealing to him the cause of her sorrow. Noble and generous as he was, might he not think it betrayed a selfish and unfeeling heart? Not so with Becky; equally generous with her brother, she felt she could confide in her, could tell her all. She did not reflect how unjust was the cause of her grief, how it discovered a baneful passion—a passion which, if not restrained, would destroy all the natural goodness of her heart, and make her wretched in this world, and forever miserable in the next; no, she did not think of this, she only knew she was unhappy, and she longed to hear Becky's gentle voice, and feel her soft hand pressed lovingly on her brow. Raising her pale face, her slender fingers once more swept the keys, and with a voice quivering with emotion, she sang:

"More constant than the evening star,
Which mildly beams above;
Than diadem, oh, dearer far,
A sister's gentle love!
Brighter than dew-drop on the rose,
Than Nature's smile more gay;
A living fount which ever flows,
Warmed by love's purest ray.
Gem of the heart! Life's gift divine,
Bequeathed us from above;
Glad offering at affection's shrine,
A sister's holy love!"

Her voice became more calm, and rising from the instrument, she exclaimed:

"Yes, Becky has ever been to me a sister, kind and true." A faint tinge suffused her cheek as she thought of the time when Becky would have a stronger claim to the name sister than mere gratitude. She seated herself before her tapestry-frame, took several stitches, then went to her drawer for more worsted; again she saw the manuscript, her curiosity was once more excited, and, sinking into an arm-chair, she turned to the second chapter.

"THE dreary months of winter passed, and the beautiful months of Spring flung their fragrance over the world. Nature, animate and inanimate, seemed to rejoice; but still, from one little home the voice of lamentation arose. Mr. Harry lingered on, but how pale, how emaciated! A few days, and his pilgrimage shall close; a few days, and no more shall those racking pains assail him. His gentle wife glides like a spirit through the house struggling with her sorrow, and never easy unless preparing some delicacy, or busied in some way for him. Oh, if by some powerful effort she could wake and find it all a dream—a fearful dream—his sickness and approaching death, her loneliness and desolation, what joy would thrill her heart! Always tenderly attached to him, how would her love increase ten-fold! But, ah! it may not be, it is no dream, no wild and fearful dream; but a stern, aching reality. Little Joe has awakened to the sorrows of earth; the flowers of childhood have faded, and only a desolate moor stretches on before him. Eden's music is hushed; the ashes of Eve's forbidden fruit are strewn upon his heart; he writhes in the bitterness of new-born sorrow, and would fain escape it

if he could. One day he was sitting at his father's bedside, slowly fanning him; the invalid's eyes were closed, and he bent his head to hear if he still breathed; a light step sounded near, and looking up, he saw his mother standing beside him. A tear coursed down her cheek, and fell upon his forehead.

"Must he die?" he whispered, and the words smote so heavily on his heart, that, dropping the fan, he rushed from the house, and throwing himself under a tree near by, sobbed and cried in very helplessness of woe. His dog followed, and nestling his huge head against him, whined and moaned, as if he fully comprehended the cause of his young master's grief.

"Oh, Douce! Douce! go away," he cried, at the same time that he threw his arms around his neck, and sobbed with more vehemence than ever.

"Must he die? Must he be taken from us? Oh, father! father!" and tears rained over his cheeks. The singing of the birds, the gay sunshine, the clear blue sky looking so peacefully down—all, all seemed to mock him in his agony; and hugging the dog closer to his heart, he wept like one not to be comforted.

"Several weeks passed; it was at the close of one of those days, in early summer, that seem to pale and tremble at the remembrance of the wild storms of winter. The sighing breeze was silent, as if listening to some far-off echo of the past; shadows crept over the green fields, and the sky, lately so blue, looked pensive and sad behind her veil of fast-gathering clouds. Mr. Harny sat bolstered up in bed, the hectic glow burned on his cheek; his eyes, sunk far in his head, were fixed upon a crucifix he held in his feeble hands.

"Agnes," he faintly exclaimed, 'is it time to take my next potion?'

"She glanced at the clock: 'No, dearest, it lacks fifteen minutes; but if you feel very weak, you can take it now; the doctor said you could take it whenever you felt a bad turn coming on.'

"Give it me then," he gasped. The flush faded from his cheek; heavy drops of perspiration stood on his brow. She flew to the stand, poured out some liquid from a vial into a tea-cup, and quickly returning, raised his head on her arm, and placed the cup to his lips.

"Try to swallow, dearest," she exclaimed, in a trembling voice, while her cheeks blanched nearly as pale as his own. With difficulty he swallowed the draught; she reached the cup to little Joe, and wiped the glistening drops from his brow. He opened his mouth and gasped for air; Nellie Connor, who stayed constantly with the family, hastily threw up the window, and drew aside the curtain; the door was already open. Oh! it was fearful to witness his struggles; he convulsively clutched the bed-clothes, his nostrils became rigid, and a pitiful, helpless look of agony shone from his eyes. His wife bathed his temples, chafed his hands, did every thing in her power to relieve him; little Joe, in awe, buried his head in the bed-clothes, and wondered he could not cry.

"O Jesus, pity! Holy Mary, pray for him!" exclaimed the sorrow-stricken wife, in accents of terror and anguish. Nellie poured more medicine into the cup, and handed it to her; again she raised his head on her arm, and placed the potion to his lips.

"Oh, Francis!" she entreated, 'try to take one swallow, it will help you; do, dearest, do.' He raised his hand as if grasping for something, and, with a quick movement she

poured the liquid into his mouth; collecting all his energies, he forced it down.

"Dark clouds hastily ushered in the night; the winds swept ruthlessly round the house, regardless of the pain and suffering within. Nellie flew to the door and closed it, but left the window up; the rain came down in torrents, bright flashes of lightning streamed in through the windows, lighting up, with a weird unearthly light, the little room, for one brief moment, and then leaving it darker than before. Little Joe hastened to light a candle, while the deep-toned thunder seemed to keep time with the heavy feeling of despair tugging at his heart.

"O God! have pity on thy suffering child," exclaimed Nellie, sinking on her knees; "Mother of Sorrows, by the anguish which filled thy heart when standing at the foot of Calvary's Cross, pray for him, assist him, and help him in this great hour of need! Dearest Jesus, who suffered death that all might live, look down with pity on the greatness of his distress!"

"Little Joe, not knowing what to do, and anxious to do something, knelt down beside her, and tried to pray; but, poor child, all he could utter was: 'Father of Heaven, pity poor father! Holy Mary, pray for him!'"

"A glance from his mother, who was holding his father's head on her arm—for, raised up, the sufferer seemed better able to breathe—and he was at her side. 'Tell Nellie to get some hot cloths,' she whispered, 'to wrap round your father's hands; they are very cold, and doubtless his feet too.'

"At last his breathing became easier; the perspiration dried from his brow, and the hectic glow mantled his cheek.

"Thank God! you are better, dearest!" fervently exclaimed the pale wife.

"Lay me back against the pillow," he faintly murmured.

"Once more comparatively easy, he closed his eyes and slept, or seemed to sleep. The storm went down, the winds died away, and the silence of night reigned in the sick chamber. Mrs. Harny sat by his side, little Joe had been sent to bed, and Nellie been prevailed upon to lie down. The light, with a book placed like a screen before it, to shade its glare from the sufferer's face, was burning dimly on the bureau, the loud ticking of the clock fell gratingly on her ear; she feared it might waken him, and was just arising, intending to stop the pendulum, and thus silence its deep, heavy tick, when he opened his eyes and said:

"Never mind the clock, it does not annoy me."

"Quietly she reseated herself, and in a faint voice, he continued: 'In the morning, Agnes, I think you had better send little Joe for Mr. Connor, and have them send Maurice for the priest. My heart tells me there is one there now to fill Father Sheil's place.'

"Yes, dearest, as soon as the sun rises I will call him up.' She kissed his thin hand, and strove to appear composed.

"Agnes!" a tremor passed over his face; 'it's most over; but bear up, we will not be long separated.'

"Oh, Francis!" was all she could say.

"Agnes, you have been my good angel in life, be my good angel in death, and when you see me struggling in the last agony, with the arms of prayer and resignation assist me then."

"I will! I promise I will!" she sobbed, bowing her face upon her hands.

"Weariedly he closed his eyes; and again all was still.

A broad belt of light in the east betokened the approach of another day; broader and broader it grew, till the shades of night faded before it, and the sun gloriously ascended the horizon. Little Joe was awakened by a light touch on his shoulder; his pale mother bent over him.

"'Awake, my child,' she whispered; 'dress yourself as fast as you can, say your prayers, and come out to breakfast; you are to go for Mr. Connor.'

"'And father!' he exclaimed, wildly starting up.

"She placed her finger on his lips. 'Hush! do not disturb him, he is in a light sleep.' With a noiseless step she left him. Little Joe dressed himself with all dispatch, said his prayers, and on tiptoe stole from the room to the summer kitchen, or back room as it was called. Here a comfortable breakfast awaited him, and as he hastily partook of it, his poor mother delivered to him the message he was to take to the Connor family. With as heavy a heart as ever child had, he started on his errand. It was a beautiful morning; all earth looked refreshed after the shower. As he left the little lane, and entered the woods, he thought of the time, the summer before, when his father took him to A——, to attend Mass. The priest passing down the aisles sprinkling the congregation with holy water; the breath of incense ascending on high; the music of the choir, reminding him of the angel band his mother had told him of—all came back; and now, as he gazed upon the cloud-like vapors arising from the meadows, felt the cool drops fall on his face from the breeze-shaken boughs, and listened to the choral hymns of the birds and the anthem-like voice of the winds, it seemed all nature was assisting at a grand celebration of the Holy Sacrifice; sinking on his knees, he clasped his hands, and gazed

through the leafy canopy, at patches of the dark, blue sky, till it almost seemed he gazed

"'Through opening vistas into heaven.'

"He remembered how much his father wished to see a priest, and now he prayed a priest might be sent to him. Arising, with all haste, he pursued his way; a bounding step and panting breath caused his heart strangely to thrill; he looked behind him, with a sharp, shrill bark of satisfaction, Douce sprang to his side. Laying his hand on the faithful creature's head, he hurried on. Emerging from the woods, he came to a spot where, the summer before, his mother and father picked a large basket of strawberries; he was with them—Douce too; oh, how happy, how joyous he was, running from the berries into the woods, gathering crinkle root and ginseng, visiting his bird-nests, the robin away up in a maple, the woodpecker in the side of a partially decayed elm, and the sweet little bluebird in the cavity of a tall stump—then, running back to his parents, who, as they picked the luscious fruit, talked of their labors and laid out plans for the future. Wiping the tears from his eyes, he hurried from a spot so fraught with painful recollections. Alone, from all of their own creed, since the sorrow and desolation of sickness had come upon them, his father had loved to dwell on the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the child Jesus' sojourn in the dark land of Egypt, away from their dear Jerusalem, and in the long winter evenings, at his father's request, his mother, in her low, sweet voice, had often sung that plaintive hymn:

"'Like the children of Zion on Babylon's shore,
When Jerusalem, their country, smiled round them no more.'

"Oh, father! father!" in wailing sounds, burst from his lips. It was seven miles, across lots, to Mr. Connor's. As Mrs. Connor came from her dairy, to look after the dinner, little Joe, with flushed cheeks and swollen eyes, appeared in the open door before her. Raising both hands, she wildly exclaimed:

"Little Joe Harny! Your father—how is he? how is he?"

"Little Joe hurriedly replied: 'Last night we thought him dying, but he is better now, and wants to see Mr. Connor, and have you send Maurice for the priest; he says this time he won't be disappointed, he will surely find a priest there.'

"Yes, yes; I don't doubt it. Maurice shall go; God will not let his servant depart without coming to light him through the dark way.'

"Instead of sinking on a chair, the assurance that Maurice should go for the priest, that his father should see a priest before he died, so encouraged him that he no longer felt fatigued; but was all anxious, all eager, to go directly back with the welcome news. But Mrs. Connor would not hear of it. 'Sit down, child, sit down; you will ride over with us; for I will go too,' she said, turning to a girl of eighteen or nineteen; 'his mother must have some one besides Nellie. Ah! it's a sad, sad trial for her, poor thing, so pale and thin, so just like a shadow herself.' The kind matron wiped a tear from her eye.

"Bernard, Bernard," she called aloud. A boy of ten or twelve years, with two other children, came bounding in. Seeing little Joe, they rushed up to him with the eager joyousness of childhood, and, for the first time that morning, a smile lit up his tear-stained face. 'Bernard!'

exclaimed Mrs. Connor: 'run to the field just as fast as ever you can, and tell your father and Maurice to come right up, little Joe Harny's here, and to send Mike to the pasture for the horses. Here's your cap; quick, child, quick.'

"The child snatched the cap, and darted from the house. Mrs. Connor bustled about, hurrying up the dinner, giving directions to Bridget about the cheese the next morning; how much rennet to put into the milk, and, after carefully cutting the curds, how to fix them in the press; telling Fanny and Hughy to be good children, and mind their elder sister while she and their father were gone, and to take good care of Miles, a fat-cheeked, dimpled little darling of fifteen or sixteen months. Then she went into the next room to prepare herself. Mr. Connor, Maurice, and Bernard soon came in; glancing at little Joe, Mr. Connor saw him surrounded by his happy, light-hearted children, who were all looking pityingly into his face, and in trying to comfort him, child-like, probing his wounds still deeper.

"And so they are going to put your father into a box, and bury him away down in the ground," said little Hughy. 'I wouldn't let them do it,' he indignantly exclaimed.

"Sure he can't help it," said Fanny.

"But it can be helped," persisted Hughy, standing on tiptoe, and lovingly twining his arms around his neck, 'it can be helped; for father's going over, and he won't let them put him in the ground. Don't cry, Joe; for I tell you father won't let them do it.'

"Do stop, Hughy!" said Fanny, 'don't you see you are only grieving him still more?'

"The brave little fellow looked up, greatly puzzled how his words could possibly give pain. Mr. Connor, having

heard from his wife all the particulars, came and seated himself in the midst of the children, drew little Joe to him, took out his great cotton pocket-handkerchief, and pushing the hair from his forehead, wiped the tears from his cheeks, and tried in his plain simple way to comfort him.

"As they were sitting down to dinner, Mike came in. After the meal, Mrs. Connor kissed little Miles and Hughy, gave a few more directions to Bridget, and charging the children to mind her till she and their father got back, she sprang into the heavy lumber wagon. Little Joe was seated beside her, on the back seat; Maurice and Mr. Connor took the front. With the team they could not go 'cross lots,' and, consequently, had to go around the long way, making a distance of ten miles. At the village of Stanton, Maurice left them, and, hiring a horse and light wagon, proceeded to A——, for the priest."

As Agnes concluded the second chapter, she paused ere turning to the next. Never before had she felt so deeply interested in the hero of any story, as she now felt interested in little Joe Harny. She who turned so coldly from little Mark Clement, who, too, had early drunk the cup of sorrow, could tenderly sympathize with little Joe. His person had not been described, and yet he arose before her with bright black eyes, fine, clear complexion, and hair of the richest, darkest brown. As for his being a fictitious character, an imaginary being, such a thought never occurred to her. She had read many a novel, and would have smiled with supreme contempt at the imputation of believing any of the characters, incidents, or any thing connected with them had any foundation in truth—that they were pictures, more or less fairly drawn, of real, not realities of,

life, she readily admitted. But now, she looked on the life of little Joe Harny as a veritable history, and it had for her a strange, almost mysterious, interest. What a paradox is the human heart! how full of seeming contradictions! Agnes was at once cruel and hard-hearted, kind and impulsive. Since little Mark came into the family, save the morning she met him and her father in the hall, she had studiously avoided him. The poor child felt that something was wrong, but Mr. and Mrs. Hilton were so kind, trying to make up for her coldness, that, as yet, he comprehended not what that something was. As to Martha, were it not for the increased pallor of her cheek, one might suppose that she, too, was unconscious of it. As Agnes was about to turn to the next chapter, a servant entered bearing a letter from Becky Starr. She was almost tempted to lay it aside for the present, but the hope it might contain some little word about Walter, caused her to change her mind, and the manuscript was slipped into her drawer. Bidding the servant loop farther back the heavy crimson curtains, she leaned her head upon her hand, and gave herself up to the pleasure of Becky's letter.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the afternoon of the next day, that Agnes, after a lengthened call on Mrs. Starr, returned home; and, immediately repairing to her room, seated herself before her desk, drew out the manuscript, and commenced the third chapter.

"LEAVING Mr. Connor to sit by the bedside of their sick friend, Mrs. Connor went out to the little back kitchen, where Nellie was busy ironing.

"'Nellie,' she said, 'there's no time to lose, I must hurry and bake up things to have in the house for the comers and goers.' She would have said burial or funeral, but she could not bring herself to utter the word.

"'Oh, mother!' exclaimed Nellie, pausing in her ironing and looking up, 'do you think he is really so low?'

"'Yes, Nellie; he has fearfully changed since we saw him a week ago.'

"'Last night he had one of his bad turns, but we thought it was the shower coming up; he is always worse at such times. But, mother,' she stepped nearer Mrs. Connor, 'I really feared he would never have another. I don't know what will become of her; she prays and tries to be resigned, but she's all of a tremble whenever she speaks of his death.'

"'But mother will bear it. God will give her grace to be resigned; he will not forsake her.' Little Joe had come in unobserved, and was sitting on a bench near the door.

"Mrs. Connor's sympathy was literally of the active kind; she could not sit still a moment. She looked into the cream-pot, it was nearly full, and the thunder of the preceding night had soured all the milk; she skimmed the pans, put the cream into the churn, and set Nellie, who had by this time got through with her ironing, to churning; then she went about making pies and cakes, and preparing the yeast for the baking of bread early the next day. Her rapid movements reminded little Joe of happier times, when his own dear mother's step was as light and buoyant, and covering his face with his hands he turned to the wall and wept.

"'Don't cry, little Joe.' Nellie rested one hand on his shoulder, and bent over him with such pitying concern in her tones that his tears fell all the faster.

"'Oh, Nellie! Nellie!' he sobbed, 'it all comes over me so. Father is going, and we'll soon be all alone. Oh, Nellie! Nellie!'

"'No, Joe; don't say that—don't say all alone. Haven't you got us, and don't we feel just as if you were our relations?' The poor child looked up into her face, and then, with the sudden impulsiveness of childhood, arose and threw his arms around her neck. At that moment Mrs. Connor entered the room with a tray of flour.

"'That is right, Nellie, try and comfort the poor child, and if your churning is done take him out under the trees.'

"The churning was done, and she led him out. The cool breeze fanned his hot brow; there was the starry dan-

delion, the white and red clover, the bunch of violets by the little gate; the lilacs and early roses his father had planted, and his mother had tended with so much—we cannot say pride, for pride is a hateful word, not at all expressive of the feeling she experienced; neither does the word pleasure suit us, when used in connection with that deep, quiet, all-pervading happiness—that spiritual exaltation that was not altogether a prayer, and yet was so allied to praise that the idea of devotion seemed indissolubly connected with it. Little Joe looked at them, till each seemed to speak back his own grief; each seemed to feel all the loneliness that pressed upon his heart. He could stand it no longer, and with bowed head he turned and walked into the house.

“Mrs. Connor paused not in her work till, at last, the teatable was set, and a small piece of toast, neatly covered, stood on the hearth for the invalid. She then went into the room where he lay, and, with a kindness that was not to be resisted, insisted on Mrs. Harny going out and taking her supper, allowing her to wait on him during his meal.

“‘And, James,’ she addressed her husband, ‘go too, I can do better alone.’

“As Mrs. Harney sat down at the table, she glanced at the row of pies and tins of cake on the shelf by the window, and a shudder ran through her whole frame. Turning to Nellie, she said:

“‘Your mother is very thoughtful, very kind; they will be all needed—why, what is this?’ she exclaimed, rubbing her eyes; but a dimness had come over them; reeling, she fell into Nellie’s arms.

“Mr. Connor and Nellie carried her to the door; little Joe, with wonderful command of his feelings brought the

camphor bottle; but, as he rubbed her hands, with a low wailing cry, he called on her not to go; not to leave him alone, all alone. Poor child! his little heart seemed steeped in the waters of bitterness. At length, a deep-drawn sigh announced that his mother had returned to a consciousness of her misery. Rising up, and going out, where her sobbing might not fall on the ear of her husband, and add to his pain, she seated herself under a tree, and with little Joe’s hand in hers, gave vent to her sorrow in a paroxysm of tears. The golden red in the west faded away; darkness gathered around them. Little Joe looked up and twining his arms around her, softly whispered:

“‘Mother! don’t cry any more; see, the stars are looking down kindly upon us.’

“Mechanically she raised her eyes; the unnumbered lamps of heaven were all lit up.* In their twinkling distance they seemed to her the watch-fires of that heavenly home where man redeemed never feels more the blighting hand of sorrow. Yes, he was going there; her husband—her noble husband—and would she keep him back—back from the joys in store for him—back from the choirs that were waiting to receive him? Her head sunk on her chest, and she was lost in thought, till a hand was kindly, but energetically, laid upon her shoulder.

“‘Why, child!’ exclaimed the thoughtful Mrs. Connor, ‘you must not sit here, you will catch your death of cold. Just feel your dress, how damp it is. Come right in! Come right in!’

“She passed her arm around her, and helped her to arise. ‘There now, lean on me. And, child, don’t feel so bad; remember ’tis the will of God, and sure he wouldn’t afflict you but for some wise purpose. Afflicting! Why, isn’t he

doing the greatest good to him, taking him to his grand heaven, away from all the sorrows and wickedness of the world? Oh, child, child, why should you mourn? Isn't he showing him great favor taking him to himself?

"I have been selfish, very selfish!" exclaimed Mrs. Harny, clinging closer to her.

"No, not selfish, child; you couldn't help it." She feared her words, intending to be soothing, implied a reproof. "Heaven help her, poor stricken one!" she mentally exclaimed, drawing her to her warm, faithful heart.

"They entered the house; a lighted candle stood on the stand, and its dim flame, swayed by the wind coming in through the window, shed a fitful light through the room. Little Joe, weary with his long walk and after ride, sank on the bench near the door. Young as he was, how memory, with her painful contrasts, tortured him! A year ago he had sat on the same bench with his father and mother, and watched the fire-flies, and listened with charmed ears to the katydids answering each other from the trees near by. His mother, too, had sung her favorite hymn, '*Ave Maria*, day is declining,' while his father's rich manly voice, taking up the refrain, filled the air with one of the beautiful melodies of the Catholic Church, but now he was going away. No more in that humble cottage would his voice be heard in grateful praise; a few more sobbing prayers, and to earth it will be forever hushed. Douce came in, laid his head on little Joe's knee, and looked up sorrowfully into his face. Poor dog! he too felt that the King of Terrors was near, for he shuddered, looked wistfully around him, and crowded up closer to the child.

"Mrs. Harny sat near the head of the bed, holding a wasted hand of her husband's in hers; his large, sunken

eyes slowly turned in their sockets till they rested on her face.

"'Courage, dearest,' he faintly murmured. With a calmer countenance than she had worn for weeks, she replied:

"'Yes, courage, for it is God who calls thee, Francis, from this dying life to undying bliss.'

"He looked at her wonderingly, and while a smile irradiated his pale, sunken features, in a hollow voice exclaimed:

"'My prayer is heard. I prayed for this. Oh, Agnes, in pain and agony I prayed for this, that God might give you grace to be resigned! He will not forsake you. He is the protector of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless.' He glanced at the crucifix on his breast; she raised it to his lips, and he reverently kissed it. The hours wore on. A long dreary night it was, but at last day broke in the east. A few more hours, and Maurice, with the priest, would be back. Oh, who could tell how anxiously they looked for them! Every hour the sufferer waxed feebler and feebler, his extremities became cold, the fluttering pulse ascended the arm. As the sun crept in at the western window, they all knelt around his bed, and, in a firm voice, Mr. Connor read aloud the prayers for the dying. After all his longing desires to see a priest, he was to go while the priest was on his way to him. He opened his eyes, and looked searchingly around. In a hoarse whisper he pronounced the name 'Agnes.'

"'What, dearest?' she bent her head to catch his words.

"'The priest—'tis God's will—praises to his holy name!' He made an effort to sign himself, for the last time, with the sign of the cross. She took his cold hand in hers, raised it to his forehead, rested it a moment on his chest, guided it to the left, then to the right shoulder. A smile rested on his

face. Little Joe left the room, to see if he could possibly catch a glimpse of Maurice and the priest. He came back on tiptoe, and whispered to his mother as Maurice and the priest came in. A thrill passed over the dying man's frame as the word priest fell faintly on his ear; he looked up, the veil that was fast gathering over his eyes cleared away; an eager, joyous expression lit up his countenance. The priest glanced at the stand and took one of the vials, his knowledge of medicine at once told him the nature of its contents; promptly, he administered a large portion. 'Twas astonishing to see what a change came over the sufferer; his breathing became easier, and once more, in a faint voice, he was able to speak. They all left the room; putting on his stole, the priest sat down beside him, heard his confession, and administered the Last Sacrament. The family again gathered round the bed, the pale wife gazed for a moment on the face of her husband, and, without a groan, fell heavily back into Mrs. Connor's arms. His spirit had winged its flight to a better world; his pain and suffering were all past. They carried poor Mrs. Harny out, and it was some time before they succeeded in restoring her to consciousness. Little Joe clung to Father John, crying and sobbing, but when his mother opened her eyes he flew to her, and threw his arms around her neck.

"He told me to be resigned!" she faintly said. Father John spoke kind and soothing words, but with her arms clasped round little Joe, and her eyes fixed on the ground, she seemed not to hear them. With white lips she continued to murmur, 'He told me to be resigned! He told me to be resigned!'

"Extremely alarmed, Mrs. Connor entreated all to leave her, that, alone with her, she might rouse her from her fear-

ful apathy. She begged her, by her duty as a Christian, by the reverence for the last wish of her husband, to be resigned; and by her love for Joe, poor little Joe, to rouse up and try to live. But her words fell on unheeding ears. No murmur, no sound now escaped the white lips, but such a look of desolate wretchedness gleamed out from the fixed eyes, that Mrs. Connor clasped her cold hands in hers, and falling on her knees, in wild, impassioned language, called on her who is our refuge in affliction, our consolation in suffering. Jesus loved his mother, and is it not a shame that those who profess to be Christians should feel scandalized when the fruits of her intercession are mentioned? The poor widow listened, at first, with that abstraction of glance one sees in the somnambulist; then, while a great flush swept over her face, she leaned her head on Mrs. Connor's shoulder, and wept till the fearful agony was calmed in a shower of tears.

"When the neighbors heard of the death of Mr. Harny, they were greatly astonished that they had not been informed of his being worse, so they might have offered their assistance; but the invalid had preferred to have only the Connors around him during the last great agony. Only those who had been sick and brought down to the verge of the grave, can realize the desolation of the soul away from the church, the sacraments, and all the hallowing influence of religion in the midst of strangers hostile to our creed, that treasure we cling to with greater fondness at the closing hour, the link that binds us to heaven, the torch that lights us through the shadowy valley, our mentor in life, and angel in death—angel that leaves us not, but bears us safely, through all the dark places, up to the presence-chamber of the Deity. Oh, holy, thrice holy religion! Well

may thy children shrink from hearing, with their dying ears, one word against thy faithful love; well may they long to have only those around them who, like themselves, love and revere thee. But now he was gone, the struggle past, the victory gained, and they all came hastening in. One went to the village of Stockton Mills to order a coffin, and purchase a few mourning things, remembering to get these latter of a quality that would not afterwards be distressing for the widow to pay; another went over to the Connors, to let those at home know the event, and dig a grave. On Mr. Connor's farm a little plot had been fenced in, where, for want of a cemetery nearer than A——, two of his children and one other Catholic had been buried. The women offered every assistance: one brought in a black bonnet, another a black crape veil, and another a rich mourning shawl. She could, indeed they urged she must, take them; they, their owners, would not need them till after the funeral.

"Oh, there is a blessed feeling of sympathy and benevolence in the noble-hearted Americans. What other people on the face of the earth can be so disinterestedly, so touchingly kind in the hour of great affliction? Who so careful lest, by any thoughtless word, they wound the heart already steeped in sorrow? Who so soon forget that the sorrow-stricken is a stranger—a member of a creed they have, by interested parties, been taught to look upon with distrust, to use no harsher term? That sickness is in the family, that the shadow of Death is hovering around it, is all-sufficient to gain their kindest sympathies. When the neighbors saw Father John sprinkle the corpse with Holy Water, when the widow, little Joe, and the Connors, fell on their knees, and begged his blessing, instead of sneering smiles and scornful words, tears sprang to their eyes, and they turned

sobbingly away. Oh, may the time come when their eyes will be opened to the glories of our beautiful religion; when their kind hearts will learn to prize the soul-touching sweetness of that faith which they cannot look upon unmoved.

"Father John dared not wait to celebrate Mass the next morning, as the Connors so earnestly desired he should. No; others might be as anxiously watching for him as they that day had watched. What a life of toil—toil without rest, the priests of those days led! When Maurice reached A——, he had just returned from a sick call of some thirty miles; without a moment's rest, he said a little prayer, started with the new messenger, and, stopping only to change horses, reached, as the reader has seen, barely in time to administer the Last Sacrament to the dying man. No, he must not stay; Maurice started back with him that night. Two days after, the remains of Mr. Harny, followed by many of the neighbors, were borne to the grave. It was a beautiful day; a quiet serenity reigned over all, the roses on the graves seemed almost tempted to close their delicate petals, the tall grass forgot to wave, and the birds, way up in the tree-tops, hushed their wild songs, and only chirruped forth their gentlest notes. Nellie remained at home. Bridget and Michael accompanied the widow, and little Joe back to the desolate house."

As Agnes finished the chapter, she laid the manuscript on her desk, and, approaching the piano, raised the lid; for a moment she paused, then her fingers swept the pearl keys, and the soul-subduing, soul-entrancing *Dies iræ*, swelled on the air. When she had sung several stanzas, she leaned her head on her hands, and the melody ceased. Her father

er's quick, nervous rap was heard; he opened the door and came in. But Agnes raised not her head; an indescribable feeling had come over her. 'Twas now several days since little Mark had become a member of the family; during this time she had shunned her father's society as much as possible, and, when unavoidably in his presence, had treated him with marked coldness. This, it cannot be denied, caused her many a lonely hour, many a remorseful pang, when, to drown the voice of conscience, she would either fall into a violent passion, or sink into a sullen and stubborn mood. She had hoped her continued coldness and icy wretchedness would move the hearts of her parents, and cause them to yield to her wishes, either to dismiss Martha, or to return Mark to his family. But, instead of that, Martha daily gained in favor; her mother spoke to her in the kindest tones, and her father seemed to take the greatest interest in her welfare. Little Mark was his constant companion, down at the counting-house, in the sitting-room, dining-room, and library; he walked with him every morning to Mass, sat beside him in the pew, knelt by his knee at night and said his prayers, and worse, oh, worse than all, the poor widow and Alfred and Ellen and Clara had been to see him, and had been kindly and graciously received by her parents. How wretched, how unhappy she was! She saw the humblest, the lowliest, preferred before her, preferred by whom? By her own parents. Jealousy and pride tugged at her heartstrings. Then she thought of Walter: would he, too, turn as easily from her? Would he forget the loving past, and treat with indifference and contempt her every wish? Would others usurp the place in his affections which only she should fill? Waves of jealousy swept over her soul, and a deathly pallor chased

the roses from her cheek. Her father came forward, glanced a moment at the desk, and, approaching her, bent over and tenderly kissed her brow.

"Agnes, my dearest Agnes, why are you so estranged? Look up, darling, and speak to your father."

Could she turn a deaf ear to that sorrowful voice? could she slight that loving appeal? The very fear, very probability, that Walter might forget his love, almost paralyzed her soul with grief. Little Mark, father, mother, all were merged in this one, great overwhelming fear. She felt the need of sympathy, of support; with a shudder she arose, threw her arms around her father's neck, and hid her pale cheek on his shoulder.

"Agnes, my dear child, this estrangement has pained me—pained me past words to tell!"

Still she did not speak; it seemed her white lips had lost the power of articulation.

He clasped her hand, and started back; 'twas icy-cold. In a voice of alarm he exclaimed:

"Dearest! you are ill, let me lead you to the sofa—there now." He had just reached the bell-rope, when she faintly said:

"Don't, father; don't ring."

"But you are not well, dearest, and your mother should know it."

"No, father, no." A frown contracted her brow, and, returning, he seated himself beside her. Again she laid her head on his shoulder, his kindness, their estrangement, the cause of it—all came over her, and she wept like a very child. He spoke soothing words; she did not reply to them, but still sobbed on, and he thought the cold, proud spirit was at last subdued; but, alas, it was not sub-

mission, but exhaustion, not contrition, but mortified pride, that caused these tears and sobs. She raised her head from its resting-place; twilight was fast coming on; shadows were gathering around them. The grate sent out a fitful glare, that seemed to make the darkness all the more visible. The St. Agnes, by the piano, that always reminded her of her beautiful sister Rosie, now almost seemed as if it was Rosie's self—darling angel Rosie—come back to soothe her in her loneliness; her lips quivered; she turned her head, and from the mantelpiece the meek, gentle *Mater Dolorosa* looked down so sorrowfully, so reproachfully, upon her, that again she hid her face on her father's shoulder. The gloom deepened; carefully lifting her head, he arose and lighted the gas.

"Darling!" he said, "you look weary; lie down, and I will send your mother to you."

He bent over her, once more kissed her pale brow, and left the room.

CHAPTER X.

A FEW mornings after, as Agnes entered her room from the breakfast-table, she saw on her desk a note addressed to her. It was from Edith Carter; opening it, she read:

"Dear Agnes,—Why have you so long absented yourself from my sick-chamber? Will you not come to your sick friend?
EDITH."

"I will," she said, replacing the note in the envelope. She smoothed down the wavy folds of her hair, drew on a rich velvet cloak, put on her bonnet and gloves, and leaving orders for Terence to come for her with the carriage at six o'clock, was on her way to her sick friend. After a somewhat lengthened walk, she paused before a fine-looking residence, and, ascending the broad granite steps, rang the bell. Her summons was almost immediately answered, and the next instant found her in Edith's room. It was now three weeks since she had seen her, and what a change that short time had wrought! She had had a slight recurrence of the hemorrhage, and although Agnes had heard that her lungs were very sore, and her cough worse, she did not expect to see her so feeble.

"Agnes!" exclaimed the invalid, slowly rising and coming forward to meet her, "as I looked out of the window and saw the clear sky, and the glorious sunshine, I felt so lonely in my room, that I had to send for you."

Agnes stood for a moment gazing upon her, then, drawing her to her heart, said: "Oh, Edith! you have been struggling with death; I with the world!"

Astonished at the singularity of the expression, Edith fixed her large wondering eyes full upon her, and slowly repeated: "With the world, Agnes! with the world!"

"Yes, Edith," she brokenly replied; then, holding her off, so as to scan her slight form, added: "Ah! but death almost gained the victory, you are but a shadow of your former self."

A still greater pallor settled on her wan countenance, as she hoarsely remarked: "Yes, Agnes, the walls of mortality are giving way."

Stooping, and tenderly kissing her, Agnes replied: "And, dearest, if they are, what is death to one like you but a happy transition from a world of care to a world of bliss?" Edith leaned heavily on her arm, while large drops stood on her forehead.

"You tremble, dear Edith; let me assist you to your chair." She sank weariedly into it, and Agnes wiped the moisture away.

A quiet, gentle being was Edith, with deep piety pervading her every thought, and it astonished Agnes that she should dread to die. If the deceitful pleasures of earth had enthralled her soul; if the vanities of the world and the homage of society had engrossed her mind, then might Agnes not have been surprised that now she should shrink back from the narrow and contracted prison of the grave. But Edith's hopes had long been pointed to heaven. A deep sorrow had early fallen upon her that showed her the nothingness of life. Soon after leaving school, her affections had been gained by one whose worth promised her

an unusual share of happiness. She loved him with all the ardor of her young, trusting heart. Already was the fame of his talents bruited abroad; she trembled with delight as she read the high encomiums pronounced upon them, and felt how worthily they were bestowed. And she was to be his wife! the one to lighten his toil and make pleasant his home! Her cheek glowed with happy anticipations, and she looked forward to vistas in the future, opening joyously upon her. It lacked but one short week, and they were to be united; jewels were bought, cards sent out, every preparation made; but, in the midst of all he was stricken down with a fever, and the day that was to have witnessed their nuptials saw him consigned to the grave. It was a severe blow to Edith, one that she well-nigh sunk under; but, rallying after the first few days of abandonment and grief, she strove to bear her trial with the resignation of a Christian. In the strict practice of her religion she sought and found a balm for her wounded spirit; she became an angel of mercy to the suffering poor, and the gentle and beautiful Edith was better known in the homes of poverty and sorrow than in the halls of fashion and wealth. Two years before, she accompanied her parents to Europe. She visited Rome, saw all the wonders of that "City of the Soul;" was in the presence of the Father of the faithful, he to whom the care of the whole flock is confided, received his blessing, and more than ever longing for heaven and loathing the pleasures of earth, she prepared to accompany her parents on their return home. In Paris they stopped, intending to stay a few days, and there she was taken violently ill with hemorrhage from the lungs; for a long time she lingered, but at last got able to recross the ocean. Agnes, with whom she constantly corresponded,

was informed of all the particulars of her sickness, and she thought how rejoiced will dear Edith be to join her affianced in another and better world. But, when she saw her, it was with pain and surprise she perceived, that as death appeared at hand, the gentle and pious Edith shrank back with terror at his approach. How could she go into the presence of her Lord to be judged? The world called her good, but how did she know whether her actions had been performed in the true spirit of piety or not? Was it to please God, or to fly from bitter thought, that she went among the poor, and tried to relieve their sufferings? Did she shun the *salons* of fashion through self-denial, or because she took no pleasure in them? Did she frequent the sacraments in obedience to the commands of the Church, or because she found in them a sensible delight? Poor Edith; fear and trembling seized upon her soul, and she who had led so exemplary a life wept at the approach of death. Agnes was in wonder at it. She had read how the saints rejoice when the moment of their release draws near, and why should Edith, whose life so much resembled theirs, be filled with fear? Her earthly happiness had been blighted, why then should she not rather rejoice to die, to go to that blessed land where, with the loved one gone before, she would forever bask in the sunshine of God's holy presence, away from sorrow, away from sin? Ah! this dread; this fear was one more trial the gentle Edith had to suffer before going to her rest. Sometimes, at the thought of the awful moment of dissolution, a cold perspiration would bathe her whole body; in a low, wailing voice she would cry: "In this very room shall I be judged. Here shall my eternal lot be apportioned to me!" Then bowing her face upon her hands, the hot tears would wash through

her attenuated fingers. But God is faithful, he permits not his servants to be tempted above their strength. At such moments of utter desolation, thoughts of her loving Saviour, and all he had suffered to open heaven for man, would rush upon her; confidence would return to her heart, a revulsion would come over her feelings, and no longer dreading, she would long to die, to go to that blessed Saviour.

"Edith;" Agnes spoke, in her kindest tones, "did you resign all hopes of recovery from the first of this sickness?"

"Agnes, I did. Mother, and father, and sister Bertha tried to change my mind, but the painful shortness of the breath, and the ever-constant pain in my side, told me too plainly of the grave to be deceived. Although I have all along known it, and struggled—struggled, oh! so hard, to be resigned; still, at times, so great a dread of the grave—no, Agnes, not the grave; I know I am not to be there, only the frail body—but, so great a dread of going, with all my imperfections, into the presence of my Judge, that I am afraid—I tremble. In the language of Job, I ask: 'What shall I do when God shall rise to judge me? and when he shall examine, what shall I answer?'"* She leaned her head against the back of her chair, and tears coursed down her wasted cheeks.

"And, dearest Edith," said Agnes, gently taking her hand, "don't you, at other times, feel perfectly willing to go?"

"Yes," she feebly replied, with closed eyes, "wait till I rest, and then I will tell you all about it."

"Would you not rest better on the sofa?"

"I believe I would; and, if you please, you may get

* Job, xxxi. 14.

me a pillow from my bed, and the quilt on the chair beside it." Agnes got the pillow and quilt, and settled the invalid so comfortably, that, with a sigh of relief, she said:

"Now, indeed, shall I rest. Ah! dear Agnes, what a kind hand you have around the sick."

Agnes bent over her, and kissed her brow. "Edith!" she exclaimed; while tears sprang to her dark eyes, "what would I not do if I could only ease you of your pain!"

"I know, Agnes, how generous you are, and may God bless you, and give you that best of gifts, an humble and pious heart."

Agnes's long lashes drooped; turning away, she made no reply.

Edith released her pearl rosary from the cord of her robe, signed herself with the sign of the cross, fervently kissed the crucifix, and closed her eyes. Agnes sat looking at the thin lips, the sunken cheeks and marble brow, with its delicate tracery of blue veins; and she thought how soon would the gentle being before her be hid from her sight in the cold, dark grave; then glancing round the room, she mentally exclaimed: "How desolate will it be when she is gone. Not only her friends, but her books, her pictures, the very sofa on which she is lying, the chairs about the room—all will seem lone without her! What is life? a dream—a vision—we are here to-day, to-morrow passed away!" She bowed her face upon her hands, and her thoughts insensibly wandered from her sick friend to little Mark, her curly-headed adopted brother, and kind feelings for awhile gained the ascendancy of pride. At length Edith opened her eyes, and, fixing them on her, quietly observed:

"Before the couch of death pride drops its gorgeous trappings, and appears in all its real deformity."

Agnes started, and the blood mantled her cheek.

"I was thinking," resumed Edith, raising herself to a sitting posture, "that it was the sight of the dead body of the Empress Isabella of Spain which first opened St. Francis Borgia's eyes to the nothingness of worldly pomp and grandeur. Pride then appeared to him in all its real deformity. He saw how little wealth, dignity, and station avail when death comes."

Agnes knew not what to say in reply; she felt ill at ease, and lest her uneasiness might be observed, she chose to remain silent. The distant murmur from the streets below came up like the restless beating of the sea against the rock-bound shore. And has man, she thought, from the creation, been ever the same busy, restless being? In the ages past, did the same passions urge him on? Did envy, pride, desire of fame, and love of pleasure exert the same influence over him that they do to-day? She could not doubt it. History, ruins, dating back to another time and race, told her it was so. And how long will the struggle last? How long shall the ceaseless tide of humanity beat against the crumbling walls of time? Her reflections were interrupted by Edith's again addressing her.

"Agnes, I promised, when I had rested, to tell you of God's great mercy to me. You asked, did I dread all the time to die? I tell you no. No!" she exclaimed, while a radiant glow lit up her wan countenance, and she folded her transparent hands over her breast; "Like the disciples at sea, when the storm rages wild round me, and darkness envelops me, and the waves threaten to engulf me, frightened and dismayed, I rush into the inner chamber of my heart, and throwing myself at the feet of my blessed Saviour, cry: 'Lord save me, I perish!' and rising, he commands the winds and the waves; they all rush back; dark-

ness retreats; and, lo! a great calm ensues, and, with the Psalmist, I cry out: 'The Lord is my help, and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' Oh, Agnes! Agnes! death has no power over me then; on the contrary, I long to go—to be released from this prison-house of clay; and so great is this longing, that with St. Teresa I pray:

'Ah, Lord! my light, my living breath!
Take me, oh, take me, from this death,
And burst the bars that sever me
From my true life above.
Think how I die thy face to see
And cannot live away from thee,
Oh, my eternal love!
But ever, ever weep and sigh,
Dying because I do not die.'*

She ceased; her hands were tightly clasped; her eyes, brilliant with celestial light, were raised with so eager an expression, that Agnes sank upon the carpet, and threw her arms around her, as if to detain her.

"Oh, Edith! Edith!" she sobbed, "don't leave us, don't."

Edith unclasped her hands, and looking in her face, with touching sadness said: "Dearest, I cannot go when I please, but must patiently wait the hour of my deliverance."

Both were silent for some time; at length Edith exclaimed: "Agnes! rise, I beg you." Agnes seemed not to hear the request, and again was it repeated. With a pale, tearless countenance she arose, but did not speak.

Deep thoughts were stirred; would she be as happy when death came to her? Edith was several years older than Agnes, but those years would fly swiftly; and then, if she

* Translated by the Rev. Father Caswell.

should be called to go, would she be as well prepared? What brought that reproachful pang, when Edith spoke of pride? Was it pride, or only asserting her just rights, her objecting to having little Mark's family hanging round? The cold glance returned to her eye, and with it the resentful feeling to her heart. She left Edith's side, and seated herself at the table.

"You have some exquisite drawings here," she said.

"Yes; they are some Bertha selected. You can look them over at your leisure, and if you wish to copy from any, they are at your service."

"Thank you, Edith; I have not copied all those you so kindly brought me yet; here is one I would like to take home."

"Which one is it?"

"'The Bride of Christ; or, taking the veil.' The nuns, what sweet faces they have; and the young postulant, how beautiful she looks in her bridal array. But, she is going to lay it aside forever. See, at her right hand is the simple white band that is to encircle her fair smooth brow, and the coarse dark robe that is to clothe her delicate form; in front of her is the long black veil. Oh! what a heavenly smile is on her face; she doesn't mind giving up the world; she is taking heaven in exchange. Do you know," she exclaimed, looking eagerly up from the drawing, "I always thought that you would be a nun!"

"What made you think so, Agnes?"

"I don't know; but I suppose it was your gentle, quiet ways, and the tone of piety which pervaded your whole mind. When we were at the dear Sisters', I used to say to myself: 'Edith is just like them; she will never leave them, she will become one of them;' and when you returned home, and a different report was brought to me. I could

hardly credit it at first. No, no; it was a mistake; it could not be; but, when every thing confirmed its truth, then I felt grieved, disappointed. I was busy with my books; for you recollect I had two or three years of hard study before me when you left school, at the time the news came ——." She suddenly checked herself, but Edith said:

"Go on, Agnes, dear; it does not pain me now to hear you refer to those days."

"I was thoughtless, dearest; forgive me; I will change the conversation."

"No, Agnes, do not; go on; what were you going to say?"

"That when the news came of Jerome Power's death, I said: 'Now, surely will Edith come back to the Sisters.' I left school; I saw you shunning society; leading in the world the life of a religious, and I wondered my expectations were not realized."

"Dear Agnes!" it seemed an angel note thrilled Edith's voice, it was so sweet, "from the time of Jerome's death I did resolve on becoming a Sister. The world was nothing more to me; but I must wait till the image of the beloved was effaced from my heart. I dared not present to God affections sullied by earthly love. The bride of heaven must be wholly, not partly devoted to her spouse. In that little drawer," she pointed to the bureau, "are the jewels I was to have worn that day—you know the day I refer to?"

"Yes, dearest; I do."

"Well, beside them are the letters he wrote me, his portrait and a lock of his hair; these I could not look at without feeling all my sorrow renewed, and I knew as long as this remained the old love was not gone. When I went to

Europe, I took all but the jewels with me. Although I could not look at them, still I could not bear to leave them behind—they must go with me. I mentioned it to mother, and she kindly took them out, and packed them in my trunk. In Rome, one day, feeling more than usually depressed, I knelt before the great altar, in St. Peter's, and fervently prayed that God would give me grace to be resigned to his holy will; that I might think less of my suffering, when it all at once occurred to me how little had I suffered in comparison to my blessed Saviour. I thought of the bloody sweat in the garden, the head crowned with thorns, the cruel stripes, the hands and feet pierced with nails—all, all for me! Oh! who had ever loved me like my God? Whose love could compare to his? I fell prostrate before the altar, and while the aching feeling left my heart, I realized why the saints rejoice in the midst of the greatest persecutions—they are suffering for the God who suffered for them! What joy, what happiness, to be able to make some little return! Gratitude thrilled my whole being; the old love was forgotten; I was free. I could offer to God my undivided affections; I was all his. Before leaving the church, I said a little prayer for the repose of Jerome's soul, and, on my return to our lodgings, took out my casket and gazed unmoved upon its contents. With a determination, as soon as I reached home, to dedicate the remainder of my life to God, I went with father, mother, and Bertha to Paris. They intended to stay only a few days, but I was impatient; I longed for the moment when I could bid adieu forever to the world; a lassitude was stealing over my frame, and I feared something would happen to disappoint me. That something did happen; sickness came upon me, and I knew I was soon to die. Oh, Agnes! then it was the sinfulness of my repinings all

arose before me. God had called me to be his—I held back—and when I came forward, he would not receive me.” Tears bathed her cheeks; bowing her head, she covered her face with her hands.

“Dear Edith!” said Agnes, kindly, “don’t cry; you were chosen to join the community of saints above, to be the spouse of Christ in heaven, where death can never more afflict you.”

“Afflict me, Agnes! oh, if I had only resigned myself to the will of God, it would never have afflicted me. It was not death, but my own rebellious heart which had made me suffer.” Her voice was tremulous with sobs.

“Edith! Edith! this is rebelling again. Submit yourself to God, and you have nothing to fear. Here, let me read to you out of this little book. I know you love it, for I see in it many marked passages.” It was St. Liguori, “On the Love of Jesus Christ,” and she read from it till the mind of the invalid was calmed and relieved. As she closed the volume she said:

“Now, Edith; I will arrange your pillows again, and with these words in your ears, you must try to take some sleep.”

“I will, Agnes, I will. Like the lullaby which soothed us in our infancy, they speak of protective kindness, and endearing love. Can a child in its mother’s arms know fear? Can a Christian, surrounded by the love of God, distrust his salvation? No, no, Agnes; fear and distrust shall be cast out: ‘In peace, in the selfsame, I will rest, and I will sleep.’”

Agnes spread the quilt over her, smoothed the sunny hair from her brow, tenderly kissed her cheek, and reseated herself at the table. She had looked over nearly all the drawings, when Mrs. Carter softly opened the door, and

came in. There was between the mother and daughter a great resemblance; the same slight form and delicate complexion; the same breadth of brow and eyes of heavenly blue, shaded by long silken lashes. She affectionately greeted Agnes, and in a whisper asked:

“How long has dear Edith been sleeping?”

“About an hour and a half.”

“Has she coughed much?”

“No, Mrs. Carter; I have not heard her cough at all. Does she cough much in the day?”

“No, dear; but sometimes she coughs so at night that she can take no rest. Last night I don’t think she closed her eyes.”

“Poor, poor Edith! and she never mentioned it to me.”

“No; she never speaks of her sufferings to any one. I heard her, or I should not have known it. But, dear Agnes, come with me down to the parlors, I fear our whispering will disturb her. Johana will sit by her side, and when she awakens we will return.” Mrs. Carter cast a lingering look of affection on the invalid, and led the way out.

In the parlor she talked of their late tour, but Agnes was abstracted. At any other time she would have listened with pleasure to the graphic descriptions Mrs. Carter gave of all she had seen abroad; but Edith’s sickness had brought up thoughts which clashed with the idol passion of her heart. These thoughts must be battled with; self-love must be soothed and flattered. Was she proud? No, she was only just; some people let piety warp their minds, and through fear of offending in one point, offend in another. If it is wrong to have grades in society, why have grades always existed? Why is one a prince, another a peasant? Why is one born to serve, another to be served? It is for the good of the whole; by it order is maintained, and society

preserved. Should hers be the daring hand to help tear down the barrier separating one from the other? No; she would adhere to her first resolution; reason and common sense told her it was right. Pity her reason and common sense did not lead her a little farther, or rather that piety did not enlighten them, then she would have known that, as the different grades go to form one great body politic, so it is necessary a fraternal bond of charity should exist among them all. Should the eye despise the hand because it cannot see? Should the hand despise the eye, because, seeing, it cannot take hold of and possess?

It was after dinner that they were recalled to Edith's room. Johana was taking a salver out as they entered.

"Dearest, did you enjoy your meal?" asked Mrs. Carter, drawing up a chair, and seating herself near her.

"Yes, mother; the toast and egg were excellent, and the grapes very fine; they came so opportunely, too, just before dinner. Agnes, you must carry home my thanks to your mother for her kind present." Edith, of course, knew not how matters just then stood between Agnes and her mother, and thought the commission would be a pleasant one. Without saying whether she would do it or not, Agnes asked her how she felt on waking.

"Rested, greatly rested; and now, Agnes, will you grant me another favor?"

"Certainly, Edith, if it is in my power. What is it?"

"It is to play for me 'Bright Mother of our Maker, Hail.' You know we used to sing it every evening at the dear Sisters'."

"Yes, I remember." Agnes seated herself at the melodeon; and as she sang the lines, her happy school-days, the study room, with its long row of well-filled desks, the Sisters and pupils, all came so vividly before her, that she

forgot the lapse of time. Edith was well, her voice and the voices of a hundred more joined hers in that fervent invocation to the Virgin Mother of God. The air finished, she arose from the instrument and seated herself near the window. The door opened, and Mrs. Carter was summoned to the parlor.

Edith, observing a great gravity had settled on Agnes's face, was about asking her the cause of it, when she impatiently exclaimed:

"I love 'Bright Mother,' there is something so simple, so childlike about it, and yet I can never sing it without feeling sad."

"Why, Agnes?"

"Because every thing around me is so changed. I was happy then." Edith looked earnestly at her, and asked:

"Agnes, are you not happy now?"

"Happy, Edith; sometimes I think I am; other times I know I am not. If you should ask what caused my unhappiness I should not be able to tell you. I said every thing was changed, but nothing is so changed as myself. What constituted my happiness then, does not constitute it now."

"Dear Agnes; can you tell what constituted it then?"

"Yes, Edith; easy enough. A letter from home, well-learned lessons, and approving smiles from the dove-eyed Sisters. Ah! how light my heart was; how little it took to make it happy!"

Edith laid her head on her hand, and reflected awhile. "I see," she said, "how it was. A strict performance of your duties made you happy; neglecting them you would have been wretched. Children and grown people, in this respect, differ not so much. Irksome tasks are placed before the child; he is told he must accomplish them; sub-

mitting his will to others, he toils on, succeeds, and happiness crowns his labor. And why is he happy? Because he performed his duties. How did he perform them? By obeying. Why did he obey? Because he was humble. And here, Agnes, is the secret of a child's happiness—its humility. If man, in after years, would be as humble as the child, he would as faithfully perform his duties, and, performing them, be just as happy."

"But, Edith, if asked in mature years to countenance a positive wrong, would it be right for us to do so?"

"Certainly not."

"Would it be pride in us to refuse?"

"Again I repeat, certainly not. We would not be performing our duty to consent to wrong; but, at the same time, we should not, through an obstinate pride, object to what is right, simply because it is offensive to our tastes. There are many things which may be disagreeable to us, which self-love may incline us to shun—such as coming in contact with the poor, living in humble style, when our means calls us to it, instead of madly striving to follow after our wealthier neighbors; being kind and amiable to all, even to those for whom we may feel an aversion, cheerfully fulfilling the duties of our station—all these, like the child's task, may be irksome, but by performing them, like the child, we are happy."

Agnes was silent, and Edith said no more. She was too well acquainted with her friend not to be aware of her ruling passion. Having heard all about the adoption, she knew her proud, imperious nature would rebel against Martha being retained in their service after Mark had become a member of their family. Through delicacy of feeling she had refrained from speaking on the subject. Agnes was of a reflective turn, and she thought a few suggestions

about pride might work on her mind, and leave an impression of good. To her friends, those whom she considered her equals in intellect and station, she was kind and affectionate; to all others, cold and repulsive. The poor, the vain and superficial, she ranked in the one class; if the poor rose, they formed the vain, superficial part of society; if the vain and superficial sunk to poverty, they showed, in their total want of real refinement, the condition of those to whom they were justly levelled. Like "the comet of a thousand years," there might be, now and then, a gifted one from among them, but it was the exception, not the general rule. As her father said, she was deeply proud at heart, yet all the time she flattered herself that she was only just. "I dislike the soulless butterflies fluttering about the flame of fashion; and, because I candidly express my feelings, the sanctified raise their hands and exclaim: 'Behold her pride!' I hate the sycophancies of the poor, and their everlasting trying to edge themselves into notice; and, because, with no false covering of my sentiments, I let them see that I do, I am pointed out as one devoid of every particle of generosity—utterly hardened. They are so humble, make so many fine speeches, and are so charitable, that while astonished at their own goodness, they daily thank God they are not so great sinners as I. Well, never mind; let them have their way; let them think as they please; I shall not waste my breath contending with them, I shall just go on in the same way in which I have begun." Her brow contracted into a frown, and glancing out of the window, she saw with satisfaction that Terence, punctual to orders, had come for her.

"Edith;" she said, "I must go now."

"Has the carriage come?"

"Yes. Johana, I believe, left my things in the next room."

"Wait a moment, Agnes; I will ring for her."

"No, no; I can get them myself just as well."

She got them, and was drawing on her cloak, when Edith said: "Agnes, you have been very kind to come and stay with me to-day. You will come again, will you not?"

"Yes, Edith; whenever you wish to see me, you have only to send me word, and I will hasten to you. I would come unbidden at any time, but it might weary you; therefore, I propose waiting till I am sent for."

"How generous and thoughtful you are, Agnes! I will never forget it!"

"You are surprised, because you expected no good in me." There was a hard, disagreeable smile about her mouth as she said this.

"No, Agnes, no; I never had any reason to think so. You have always been kind and affectionate to me, and our old school friendship you have never forgotten."

Referring to her school-days always touched a tender spot in Agnes's memory; bowing her head, the long, dark ringlets fell over her face, and hid the tears that rushed to her eyes. In a moment, regaining her composure, she threw her arms round Edith, and drew her to her heart. She had reached the door, when Edith exclaimed:

"The drawing you wished to take home you are forgetting."

"Sure enough; it had quite escaped my mind. When shall I return it?"

"Keep it as long as you please." Edith stood with her hand leaning on the marble table, and she looked so pure and holy, so ethereal, that Agnes thought, surely she is

ripening for heaven; no unkind sentiment sullied her soul. After a riveted gaze, she exclaimed:

"Dearest Edith, you are truly good. I believe from the bottom of my heart, you entertain no uncharitable feeling for any living creature."

"Why should I, Agnes? God loves them all."

"Yes, I know; but all are not like you. Once more good-bye." She caught her hand, pressed it, and hurried away. In the carriage she tried to feel at ease, but there was a restlessness about her she could not quiet. "Being with the sick all day has made me nervous," she exclaimed. With an impatient movement of her hand she opened the carriage window, and glanced out on the thronged street. Poverty and wealth she saw jostling together; there was the well-dressed lady, the poor seamstress and servant-girl, the man of business and the laborer—all hurrying on, each intent on his own affairs; and, what had she to do? What was her portion in the great struggle of life? Edith's course was almost run; was she nearing the end of hers? If she should die, would she be missed? Where were the throngs of the year before? Were they all there? No; many had passed away. Did they leave a vacancy behind? No; the street was just as crowded. She might go, and they would not know it. What was she but an atom, and yet atoms go to form the whole. She closed the window, and drew the veil over her face. She would have been satisfied could she as easily shut out thought; but no, it was busy—busy, gnawing into her very soul. "I am wretched!" she exclaimed, pressing her hand to her forehead; "like Saul, I must have music to calm this terrible feeling that has come over me." Reaching home, she met her father and mother in the hall; but, without saying a word to either, she ascended the stairs, and hastened to her room.

CHAPTER XI.

A MONTH passed away before Becky was called upon to renew the subject of religion with her grandparents. It was in the evening that she was summoned to their room.

"Becky," said grandmother, pointing her to be seated near her and grandfather, "we have carefully read the books you gave us."

"And, dear grandmother, in them you have found a fuller explanation of the four marks of the Church than in a conversation I could possibly give."

"We have, child, we have," said grandfather; "and we see these marks are absolutely necessary to prove the Church of Christ. Without unity, how could it faithfully preserve the doctrine it had received? Without sanctity, what worth would that doctrine be? Without catholicity, or universality, how could it be the Church, whose limits was the whole world? Without apostolicity, or a regular succession of pastors, how could it be able to prove its descent from the apostles? No, child, these four marks, unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity, are so essential, that a Church lacking them can have no claim whatever to being the Church of Christ." The old man took off his spectacles, and laid them on a table beside a volume he had been reading.

"Becky," he abruptly asked, "do you recollect a remark I made in the sitting-room on Christmas Eve?"

"What was it, grandfather?"

"Why, mother said something about her eyes being dim, and I remarked that while the eyes of the body had grown dim, the eyes of the soul had been opened."

"Oh, yes, grandfather, I remember it well, and a great joy it brought to my heart."

"It need not, child, it need not. No joy did it bring to us."

"Why, grandfather?" Becky looked up surprised.

"Because we thought before we were in safety, and consequently for ourselves we feared not, but then our eyes were opened to know that dangers surrounded us on all sides. That which we had trusted in was a false light, an *ignis fatuus*; and into what marshes was it leading us. I tremble, child, when I think of it." The word "infidelity" escaped his lips, when, starting-up, he exclaimed:

"Child, we had read the arguments by which each sect attempts to prove itself the Church of Christ, and how unsatisfactory we found them; nothing real, nothing sound; all inconsistent, all chaffy, and forming a most insufficient food for the eager, hungry mind. In fact, after all our reading we closed the volumes with the conviction that their whole aim was not so much to substantiate their own, as to disprove the Catholic's claim. And why do they all vent their spleen against this particular Church? A modern Babel in multiplicity and confusion of creeds; why are they so united in hatred to this?"

"Because, grandfather, split up into a thousand fragments, teaching doctrines they find necessary to be continually changing and mending, confined to very inferior numbers, unheard of till the sixteenth century, they know they can have no claim, not even the shadow of a claim, to being the Church of Christ. Not so the Catholic, they know—and for this they hate it—that it can date back to

the foundation of Christianity; that it is the Church which overcame the pagan world, that is by far the most widely extended on the face of the earth, and that, being under one head, one government, its unity is unbroken. Its unity, universality, apostolicity they cannot deny, because it is public to the world. Nothing is left them but its doctrine, and in their blind hatred they rush upon it with every slanderous weapon they can lay hold of."

"Doctrine, child, it is on this point we wish now to speak. Doubtless you think from the books you have given us, Milner's 'End of Religious Controversy,' 'Faith of Catholics,' and Challoner's 'Catholic Christian,' we could find out all about it ourselves, but we are all weary with reading, and would rather listen awhile to you; then, when we turn to them, it will be pleasant to have the memory of your words going with us."

"Yes, dear grandfather and grandmother; but, like the four marks, I will not be able to treat them so fully as you will afterwards see them treated." She sat with her hands folded on her lap, looking up with a calm, peaceful countenance, and her voice was so sweetly attuned that they forgot their deafness and drank in with avidity her every word. Grandfather's hands rested on the arms of his chair, and his eyes were bent keenly, searchingly upon her. Grandmother's countenance was equally anxious but not so troubled.

"When we went to Church on Christmas," said grandfather, "we saw that which appeared to us strange and unaccountable—the lights burning in the daytime, the dress of the priest, and the different language of the ritual. The reason for this last, in speaking of the unity of the Church, you have explained to us."

"And, grandfather, does it now look inconsistent?"

"No, Becky, it does not. In fact, for a religion that is to last to the end of time, to extend to all nations, it would, viewed from a merely human point, strike us as a wonderful instance of worldly wisdom and foresight. What better means could be adopted for the perfect preservation of the faith than a language which is not in common use, and which, therefore, is not subject to the continual changes of a common language; and what could better conduce to unity of worship, for, as you justly remarked, let one professing the faith be cast on whatever part of the habitable globe he might, he is able, by this very means, to join his brethren in worship. Every part he understands, the language is not strange to him, for it is the one in which he has always heard the service performed. Oh, child, the explanation of this one point has opened to our eyes the grandest stroke of policy we ever saw, ever heard of."

"Grandfather, it is more than human, it is divine wisdom which governs and directs it. Christ promised to be with it all days, even to the end of the world;* that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, should abide with it forever, teaching it all things; and as in this so in every other point, you will see it indued with a wisdom above the wisdom and understanding of man. What else has enabled it to withstand the storms which, for eighteen hundred years, have beat against it? It was built upon a firm foundation, and the arm of the Omnipotent supports it on every side."

"Well, child," said grandfather, "without any more digression, will you tell us the meaning of the lighted candles on the altar?"

"It is, grandfather, to denote the light of faith with which we should approach it, and to express our joy for the

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

glorious triumph of our Lord, commemorated in the sacrifice there offered up."

"Sacrifice, Becky, that is a word which, in reading the four marks of the Church from those books you gave us, we frequently saw, and it struck us as something very strange, something quite uncalled for. Was not Christ's sacrifice on Calvary an all-atoning sacrifice? What need of any other?"

"Grandfather, it is no other; it is the same sacrifice offered up in an unbloody manner."

"But, being once offered up, what need of offering it up again?"

"That we may have in the sacrifice of the altar a standing memorial of the death of Christ; that by the sacrifice of the altar the fruit of his death may be daily applied to our souls; that his children may have, to the end of the world, an external sacrifice, in which they may join together in the outward worship of religion, as the servants of God from the beginning of the world had always done; and that in and by this sacrifice they may unite themselves daily with their high-priest and victim, Christ Jesus, and daily answer the four ends of sacrifice."*

"Well, Becky, first tell us what these four ends are, and then how the Mass, as you call it, is a sacrifice."

"As to the ends, grandfather, first, for God's own honor and glory; second, in thanksgiving for all his blessings, conferred on us through Jesus Christ, our Lord; thirdly, in satisfaction for our sins through his blood; fourthly, for obtaining grace, and all necessary blessings from God.† These, grandfather and grandmother, are the four ends for

* Challoner's "Catholic Christian," p. 94.

† "Grounds of Catholic Doctrine," p. 54.

which sacrifice is offered up; and now, to prove that the Mass is a sacrifice, we must first prove that Christ instituted a sacrifice, and then if what is offered up on our altars be in accordance with that institution." She arose, took the Bible from the mantelpiece, and, returning to her seat, opened and turned to Luke xxii.

"Before you read, tell us, Becky, is that our Bible or yours?"

She knew her grandparents would prefer their own, and therefore had chosen theirs.

"It is yours, grandmother," she replied, "and in it we find our Saviour on the eve of his passion, verse 19, blessing bread, breaking it, and giving it to his disciples, saying: 'This is my body, which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me;' likewise the cup after supper, saying: 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.' Our version has it: 'This is my body which is given for you: Do this in commemoration of me.' In like manner the chalice also, after he had supped, saying: 'This is the chalice, the New Testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you.' In chapter xxvi., verse 26, of Matthew, and chapter xiv., verses 22, 23, and 24, of Mark, we see a confirmation of this given even in stronger terms. Here, in speaking of the bread, after blessing and breaking it, he says: 'Take, eat; this is my body,' and of the cup, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sin.' Here, grandfather and grandmother, we see the disciples partaking in a mystical manner of his body and blood; mind, in speaking of the blood, he does not say it is a figure or type, but that it is his body, and he further orders them to do it in commemoration of him; or, as your Bible has it, in remembrance of him. And of the chalice or cup, he

says: 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.' The Old Testament was dedicated with the blood of lambs, oxen, and goats; the New, with the blood of Christ here mystically shed. And in Psalms, cix. in ours, and cx. in yours, our Lord, speaking of Christ, in the most emphatic manner declares him to be a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedeck. Turn to Genesis, xiv. 8, and we find that Melchizedeck's offering was bread and wine; so Christ, in offering himself mystically under the form and appearance of bread and wine, changing that bread and wine into his body and blood, soul and divinity, is a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedeck. In Malachy, i. 11, it is promised that from the rising to the going down of the sun the name of the Lord shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place there shall be sacrifice offered to his name, a clean oblation."

"That is somewhat different to our version, Becky; turn to it and see what it says." She turned to it and said:

"Yes, I see there is a difference; here, instead of sacrifice, it is incense; and instead of oblation, it is offering. I will make no comment on these variations, but to-morrow I will bring you Ward's 'Errata on the Protestant Bible,' in which you will learn the motive or reason for them." She paused a moment, her calm, thoughtful eyes fixed on her grandparents, and then resumed: "But, notwithstanding the difference, we have, by the word offering, a sacrifice promised in every place, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, and what can this sacrifice be but the one Christ instituted when he was pronounced a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedeck? And he said to his disciples: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' Do what? Offer up the same sacrifice which he was then offer-

ing up. And did they do it? Did they obey him? Did they continue to offer up the sacrifice his loving mercy instituted? Turn, grandfather and grandmother, to 1 Corinthians, x. 16, and hear what St. Paul says: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?'"

"But, child," said grandfather, "does not St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, ix. 11, 12, say that 'Christ being come an high-priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;' and further on, I believe it is the 25th verse: 'Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.' And, again, in Romans, vi. 9, 10: 'Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once.' How, child, can you reconcile these passages with the belief that Christ is offered up on the altars every time the priest says Mass? Death hath no more dominion over him; how, then, can he be made to die daily?"

"Grandfather, it is very easy to reconcile these passages with the belief of Catholics in regard to the sacrifice of the altar."

"How, child, when, as I just quoted, he was not to offer himself often; for, as the Apostle justly says: 'Then must he often have suffered from the foundation of the world; but now, *once* he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. *Once, child, you see it is once.*'"

"Yes, grandfather, I do; and in no way does that clash with the Catholic's belief. Christ died once for man; his death paid our ransom, made us free, and opened heaven for us, consequently there can be no need of his dying again."

"Then why the sacrifice of the altar? That seems to imply that *his* sacrifice was not sufficient."

"No, grandfather; so far from that it proves its all-saving power. The blood of the Saviour cancelled our debt, and in an unbloody manner is it offered up to show our love and gratitude, and in obedience to the command he gave, when he said: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' In Acts xi. we see the disciples continuing the breaking of bread; and in 1 Corinthians, xi. 24, Saint Paul repeats the history of this adorable institution, and solemnly affirms that as often as one shall eat of the bread and drink of the chalice, *he shall show the death of the Lord until he come.* You see, by this, grandfather and grandmother, that it is not by way of a new death the Mass is offered up, but as a standing memorial of that death, a daily offering up of the same to God, and applying to our souls the precious fruits thereof. And to prove that this unbloody sacrifice has always been offered up from the apostles' times, you have only to consult the ancient Liturgies of the Church and you will be able to trace it through all the centuries down to the present day. Thus it is by the faithful obedience of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church to the commands of Christ that the prophecy of Malachi is fulfilled. In

every place, from the rising to the setting of the sun a clean oblation is thereby offered to the Lord, and his name is great among the Gentiles."

Grandfather looked earnestly at Becky, and as she was about to make some further remarks he raised his hand to enjoin silence. He must pause and consider what he had already heard before he could hear more. Grandmother rolled up her knitting, took off her spectacles, handed them to Becky, who laid them on the table, and with her hands clasped, sat gazing into the fire. Minute after minute passed. A winter storm raged without, and while Becky listened to the blustering winds, creaking trees, and rattling window-blinds, she thought of the suffering poor, and sent up a silent prayer for them:

"'Tis a wild night," said grandfather, at length rousing himself from thought, "a wild night, and yet 'tis only typical of life. Becky, child, the jarring of the elements without is nothing to the storms that have shaken my soul."

"But, father," said grandmother, in her soothing way, "they are past, and we will not think of them; we will only bless God that the sunshine of peace is at last beginning to shine on our declining days."

"Mother, you are right; let the storms of the past be forgotten; let only the calm succeeding them be remembered." A smile of love and gratitude lit up his venerable features. "Child," he exclaimed, turning, in his abrupt manner, to Becky, "if you were a Protestant, what would first strike you on entering a Catholic place of worship?"

Becky smiled, as she answered, "I suppose, grandfather, it would be the Mass."

"And that explained, you would want further to hear the meaning of the ceremonies attending it?"

"Yes, grandfather, I would not be satisfied till I knew all."

"Then, tell us, child, why the priest wears so strange a dress? Why the little bell is now and then rung, and why the priest bows to the altar, kisses it, and passes from one side to the other in the course of the service?"

"Grandfather, in the order in which you have put your questions, I will answer them; but first I must explain that, in regard to ceremonies, although the homage of our Creator essentially consists in the internal dispositions of our souls, and without these, outward worship is vain, still the construction of our nature is such that we require external signs and ceremonies, to act through the medium of the senses upon our souls, and raise them to God."

"True, child; the worship of the old law was rendered more solemn by them, and surely if they had not been requisite to our nature, God himself would never have instructed Moses to embody his religion with forms and ceremonies. But I will not further interrupt you; go on, child, and tell us of the priest's dress."

"As the Mass, grandfather and grandmother, is, as I have told you, a representation of our Saviour's passion, so it is meet that the priest, who officiates in his person, should wear, while officiating, vestments representative of those with which our blessed Jesus was ignominiously clothed at the time of his passion. The Tonsure, or crown, the curious-shaped cap the priest wears, represents the crown of thorns with which our loving Saviour was crowned. The Amice, that is, the small piece of cloth the priest first puts on his head and then lowers to his shoulders, represents the cloth with which the Jews blindfolded Christ when they bade him prophesy who it was who struck him. The Alb, that is the long, white garment, the white robe Herod, in

mockery, put on him. The Girdle, the cord which you saw confining the folds of the Alb; the Maniple, the small garment he wears on his left arm, and the Stole, the long, narrow robe round his neck, and crossing on his breast—these represent the cords and bands with which he was bound in the different stages of his passion. The Chasuble, the outside vestment worn over the others, represents the purple garment which they put on him when they mockingly saluted him King of the Jews. The cross upon the back of it represents the cross he bore upon his bleeding and lacerated shoulders."

"Becky, child," said grandfather, "when we went to church on Christmas, and saw every thing looking so strange, we were almost bewildered; but the next day, happening to turn to Exodus xxviii., we read of the garments, which, by the instruction of God, Moses ordered to be prepared for Aaron and his sons, in which to minister to the Lord, and we felt that, however inconsistent to unreflecting eyes these things may appear, if they had not been very necessary helps to devotion, God would not have introduced them into what was then the purest religion on the face of the earth—a type of that religion which Christ, the second person of the blessed Trinity, was coming on earth to establish. I am glad, dear child, that you have explained the meaning of the priest's dress to us, when mother and I talked it over between ourselves, we concluded they might be symbolical of something—of what, we could not tell."

"You were right in your conclusion, grandfather; not only do they refer to the different parts of the passion, but they are emblematic of the virtues which should adorn both priest and laity. The Amice denotes divine hope—hope, which is termed by the Apostle, the helmet of salva-

tion; the Alb, innocence; the Girdle, purity and fidelity; the Maniple, patience and submission; the Stole, the sweet yoke of Christ, which is to be borne in this life, in order to be happy in the next; the Chasuble, the outside vestment covering the others, charity, which covereth a multitude of faults, and which marks us children of God, and disciples of Christ. 'Love you one another, as I have loved you . . . by this shall all men know you are my disciples.'* Five colors are made use of in the vestments: white on the festivals of our Lord, the blessed Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, the angels, and those saints who were not martyrs; red, on the festival of the finding and exaltation of the cross, that of Pentecost, and the festivals of the apostles and martyrs; green on most of the Sundays and holidays; violet in the penitential times of Advent and Lent, and on the Vigils and Ember days; black, upon Good Friday, and in Masses for the dead. Your next question, grandfather, was about the occasional ringing of the little bell during Mass; it is rung to give notice, to such as cannot see the altar, of more solemn parts of the sacrifice, to recall the mind from all distraction, and impress it with greater fervor and devotion. And now, why the priest bows or makes a reverence before the altar? It is because the altar is the seat of the divine mysteries, and a figure of Christ, which is not only our sacrifice and high-priest, but our altar too."

"Altar, child?"

"Yes, grandfather; inasmuch as through him we offer our prayers and sacrifices. And why does he kiss the altar? it is for the same reason. And why does he move from one side of the altar to the other? After the epistle is read the book is carried to the other side in order to read there the gospel. This removal is to represent the passing from

* St. John, xiii. 34, 35.

the preaching of the old law, figured by the epistle, to Christ's gospel, published and established by the new. At the beginning of the gospel priest and people make the sign of the cross upon their foreheads, to signify they will not be ashamed to confess Christ and his doctrine; on their lips, to signify they will profess it by their words; and on their breast, to signify that not only outwardly but inwardly shall it dwell with them."

"Is that the time, Becky, that they all rise?"

"Yes, grandfather; they rise and stand during the reading of the gospel, to show their willingness to do whatever their Saviour shall command. On Sundays, the festivals of our Saviour, those of the blessed Virgin, the apostles and doctors of the Church, the *Nicene* Creed is said, to aver the truths contained in the gospel, and the people remain standing till they come to the words, '*Et homo factus est*'—'And was made man,' and then they kneel and bow their heads in reverence of the mystery of our Lord's incarnation."

"Becky, child, I noticed the priest, soon after the gospel, washed his fingers at the corner of the altar."

"Yes, grandfather, and this washing denotes the cleanness and purity with which the divine mysteries should be celebrated."

"And I noticed, too, at one time of the Mass, a great silence to fall upon the people, and, all uninstructed as I was, a great awe came over me."

"No wonder, grandfather; that silence signified the crucifixion, at which the earth trembled and shook to its foundation, and darkness covered the face of nature. Oh! grandfather, that was an awful moment. I am never present at the august sacrifice that I do not then feel as if I was standing at the foot of Calvary's Cross, a witness to all

the prodigies of that day—the sun refusing to give light, the veil of the temple rent in two, the rock shivered, the earth trembling—and with the centurion I am ready to cry out: ‘Indeed, this was the Son of God!’” An intensity of light beamed from her eyes, and her voice, though low, thrilled with feeling. Her grandparents were deeply affected, but, after a little pause, grandfather gently said:

“Dear child, go on; the evening is waning fast, it will soon be eleven, and we fear to keep you up too late.”

“Dearest grandfather, you are kind and thoughtful; it would not weary me to dwell on this subject the whole night. But I have little more to say. The elevation of the Host and Chalice, before which the people bow down in adoration, is to represent his painful elevation on the cross, and the Communion denotes his death and burial. Just before the last gospel, the priest turns and gives his blessing to all present; and, at the gospel, we again stand, as I said before, to signify our readiness to do whatever God shall command; at the words, ‘*Verbum caro factum est*,’—‘The word was made flesh,’ we again kneel in reverence to the mystery of our Lord’s incarnation. In Chaloner’s ‘Catholic Christian’ you will see a more particular account of the Mass, and the ceremonies attending it.” Her words ceased, and again silence filled the room. As the clock struck, grandfather started up and exclaimed:

“Child; we will keep you no longer, but another day you must tell us the difference between the Sacrifice of the Altar and the Sacrament of the Eucharist.”

“Dear grandfather, to the best of my poor abilities I will endeavor to explain it.”

“Well, now go; and may the Father of all bless you!” He turned his face to the fire; and, kissing the withered cheek of her grandmother, Becky left the room.

CHAPTER XII.

It was at the close of a clear, beautiful day, the pale slanting rays of the sun came in at the window, shedding a sickly light on the floor, that the widow Clement, just returned from a visit to little Mark, was seated before the stove. Ellen and Clara stood, one on each side of her, asking numerous questions about little Mark—how he liked his new home, what fine things he had, and how often he was taken out a riding.

“Did he say,” Ellen impatiently asked, “when he was coming to see us?”

“No, my dear, he did not; but he sent you one of his picture-books, and said you must learn to read all the pictures by the time he comes again.”

She eagerly extended her hand to receive it; little Clara moved round to her, and seating themselves on the floor, with the volume spread out on Ellen’s lap, began to enjoy the gayly painted pictures. There was one that particularly delighted them. It represented a peaceful rural scene; a little girl, with a basket on her arm, was standing under the shade of an enormous straw hat; one little hand was holding a bunch of wild flowers, the other was scattering grain from a basket to a flock of ducks, which had just emerged from a pond close by. Some with their broad, flat bills were shovelling up the food with notable industry, while others were looking up gratefully into their pretty mistress’s

face, as if trying their best to speak their thanks. On one side of the pond were short, clumpy bushes, part washing their roots in the water, and part only bathing their dainty leaves therein. A velvety pasture, dotted here and there with white and red clover, spread around, and over the whole the sunshine danced and played in the most natural manner. How intently they examined it. And bending their heads low, they strove to decipher the few lines under it! Reading was yet a sealed mystery to Clara, while Ellen could only pick out a letter here and there. Their mother's countenance looked as if engaged in deep thought, and they knew at such times they were not to disturb her; oh! if Marky were only with them, he could tell them all about it.

"Mrs. Clement's basket of sewing was by her side; she touched it not, but sat gazing fixedly upon the stove. She was thinking of all Mr. and Mrs. Hilton's kindness to her, how happily Mark was situated in their family, how wonderfully improved was Alfred's health, and there was a glad, grateful feeling in her heart as all this passed before her; and yet, one thing puzzled her; Martha seemed sad, notwithstanding the happy changes in her family, and Agnes Hilton maintained a cold, distant bearing, not at all in accordance with the generous sympathy of her parents. The past, as far as Mr. Hilton was concerned, she had never mentioned to her children. In the sorrow and desolation of after-life it had gradually passed from her mind, or, if for a moment memory turned to it, it brought back so many painful recollections, that she had learned to pass over it as we pass over the package of time-stained letters we received in our youth, when those who wrote them, and those to whom they were written, knew naught but of the joy and sunshine of life; when not a cloud had chilled the buoyancy

of our spirits; when our happiness seemed as lasting as the heavens above; and when sickness, old age, and death, seemed so far—so very far off—that we could hardly believe it possible they could ever come upon us. Ah! these were happy days, and yet the letters written then we cannot now bear to read. The hand that traced those delicate characters has long since mingled with its mother dust; the spirit that dictated those fond words has long been called to join its sister band in heaven—they passed away, but their letters still remain—remain, and are cherished as mournful relics of our early love. Ah! those glowing hopes all blighted; those grand designs never accomplished; those glorious pictures of the future all false—'tis too much, our bruised souls cannot go over the ruins of the airy castles of our youth. And so the sunny past, with all its rainbow promises, had been a sealed book to the sorrow-stricken widow; and yet not altogether a sealed book, for sometimes, like the dissolving views of a magic lantern, the present would insensibly fade away, and the past, with all its music of glad voices, would arise before her. But like the wandering Jew, when he consulted the great Cornelius Agrippa, a sight of past joys made present sorrows more unendurable, more bitter still. The children would see a greater pallor spread over her cheek and unbidden tears spring to her eyes; but, for fear of further grieving her, they dared not question as to her sorrow; pityingly they would turn away and wonder what made poor mother weep.

Proverbially kind to the indigent and unfortunate, Mr. Hilton's care for the widow and her children caused no remark. Little Mark's adoption was very easily accounted for; he had no son of his own, and it was nothing singular that he should adopt so intelligent and beautiful a boy.

With Mrs. Clement he freely conversed upon the past, but before her children he carefully avoided referring to it. It might be pride caused this silence, or it might be he feared they would fancy they had too great a claim upon him. At all events, she, too, determined to be silent on what was evidently, to him, a sensitive subject. But, was she happy? Looking on the improved condition of her family; feeling that her prayer for little Mark had been answered, could she be miserable? No; the restored bloom to Alfred's cheek, and little Mark's glowing accounts of his new home, forbade it. If she was not happy, she, at least, was not miserable. She was grateful, and gratitude and happiness are so nearly allied that sometimes it is almost impossible to distinguish between them. But, how different was it with Martha; naturally quick and sensitive, she saw the adoption of her brother the cause of a bitter estrangement, and her first thought was to tell her mother and have him returned home; but then Mark could never be educated, and might, struggling with poverty, grow up feeble and unable to support himself. Alfred, young as he was, had already as great a burden as he could bear; while others of his age were scarcely looked upon as more than children, he was called to be the principal stay of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Hilton were very kind to Mark, and seemed to be very much attached to him. Might not his removal even make the breach wider? Could it be possible that Agnes's coldness arose from the fear that Mark would receive a portion of her father's wealth, and thereby lessen her inheritance? One glance at her was enough to acquit her of any such sordid fears; there was a nobility stamped upon her brow, that raised her above any such suspicions. Was she proud? Alas! could Martha doubt it, when she daily encountered her cold, disdainful glances. Yes, the

fact that Mark was the brother of their seamstress affected her more than if he were to come in for all, instead of a part, of her father's wealth. Martha would have left, and thereby removed this cause of her uneasiness, but when she spoke of going, Mrs. Hilton insisted on her staying, and offered to increase her wages; this she would not consent to, and told Mrs. Hilton it was not for higher wages she wished to change her situation. Then what was it? Poor Martha was silent; she could not give the true reason without bringing a seeming accusation against Agnes, their only child, and she had been reared too piously to conceal the truth under a subterfuge. She was painfully embarrassed, and in her agitation, to silence farther questioning, promised to stay. Mrs. Hilton warmly pressed her hand, and saying: "Another day, Martha, I will tell you why I cannot let you go," left the room. When alone, Martha thought it all over, and determined, as long as they so strongly insisted on her staying, that she would remain, and in the mean time say nothing to her mother and Alfred of the unpleasantness of her situation. One consolation was left her, Mark was too young to feel keenly the sting of Agnes's aversion; he would remain with them, receive a liberal education, embrace one of the professions, and be able to pay back with interest all they had expended on him; and his great talents—ah! how the sister heart of poor Martha rejoiced in this—would make them proud of the day they adopted the little fatherless boy. One day, after she had concluded to stay, she met Mr. Hilton in the passage; Mark was with him. Laying his hand gently on her head, he said:

"And so you will not leave us?"

"No, sir;" she timidly replied.

Looking earnestly into her face, as if he would read her

very thoughts, he asked: "And what does your mother and Alfred say to your staying?"

"They knew nothing about my intending to leave, and now, concluding to stay, I think it quite unnecessary to—to—" She stammered and blushed.

"To say any thing about it at all," he said, finishing out the sentence for her.

"Yes, sir," she replied, with downcast eyes.

"And you would not give them pain by telling them any thing you knew would trouble them?"

"No, sir; I would not. Mother has seen sorrow enough without my adding to it; and Alfred has no need to be burdened by any foolish complaining of mine."

"Martha," he said, "you are a good, thoughtful girl," and taking little Mark by the hand, he passed into the library.

Ellen and Clara pored over their book of pictures till the gray twilight gathered so thick around them, that all was one undistinguishable mass of red, green, and white. They closed the magic volume and looked around; the table was set for the evening meal, the fragrant tea sent out a grateful odor, a bowl of oyster soup, a favorite dish with Alfred, was steaming on the hearth. Mrs. Clement lit the lamp, and placed it in the centre of the table, as Alfred, with light buoyant step, came in. The children gathered around him and told of their new present—what a grand book Marky had sent them, and what wonderful pictures were in it. Little Clara held up the volume in her tiny arms, and in language unintelligible only to the ear of affection, childlike, repeated her elder sister's every word. A broad light played over Alfred's face, and words rose to his lips, but he paused as if on the eve of doing a very unmanly thing. One glance at the earnest upturned faces,

swept away every foolish fear. Stooping, he tenderly kissed Ellen, and raising Clara in his arms, pressed her to his heart.

"Darling little Clara tries to tell me all about it. Blessings on her. Blessings on my baby sister. If Marky is gone, I have two little pets left."

Mrs. Clement poured out the tea, and Ellen taking up a spoon with great care filled it with sugar from the sugar-bowl, and put it into Alfred's cup, then poured some milk into it. His cap had fallen on the floor, she picked it up, and, too little to reach the hook he generally placed it on, she went and laid it on the bed. She looked at the table to see if there was any thing more she could do; yes, she could place the chairs around it. With considerable raking and pushing she accomplished this. Alfred was still playing with Clara, rocking her in his arms, covering her soft cheeks with kisses, and enjoying that most musical of sounds, a child's rich, joyous laugh, when Ellen came up and pulled his coat.

"Alfred," she said, "why don't you sit down to your supper? it's all ready, the soup is just as you like it, and your tea is seasoned."

"And who seasoned it?" he asked, setting Clara down.

"I did," she replied, looking quite important and very happy.

"I wonder, mother," he said, turning to the widow, "if Mr. Simonds is better waited on in his own home, or is a more considerable personage than I am in mine?"

"He don't deserve to be, Alfred, for I am sure he can be no kinder."

Grace said, and the children's slices of bread spread and placed upon their plates, Alfred remarked:

"So, mother, you visited Mark to-day?"

"Yes, Alfred."

"And did you see Martha too?"

"No, she did not come down to the parlor." A cloud rested on her brow, and seeing it, Alfred said:

"You are worried about her, mother?"

"I don't know what to think about it. I fear she is not well."

"What! because she is so silent and restless when she comes home?"

"Yes; you know that was not her way. She was always so cheerful, and had so much to say, and now you can hardly get a word from her."

"But, mother, if all this is owing to sickness, why should she hide it from you? I am sure there never was a kinder mother." Alfred bent on her a fond, grateful look.

With a troubled countenance, she replied: "I cannot tell; were it not for Mr. and Mrs. Hilton's great kindness to us all, I should fear she was not happily situated, and refrained telling us through fear of giving us pain."

"I declare, mother, it would seem so; but then it can't be. Mr. Hilton takes the greatest interest in us. To-day I met him in the street. After cordially shaking hands with me, he pressed me to visit Mark as often as I could, and regretted I had so soon resumed my place at Mr. Simonds's. Linking his arm in mine, he walked with me the length of the street, and, as we parted, he held my hand, and with great earnestness said: 'Alfred, if you need assistance in any way, come to me; you will find me ever willing and glad to aid you.' Oh, mother, isn't he kind? isn't he good? he so wealthy, to take such an interest in people as poor as we?"

Tears trembled on the widow's lids; to conceal her agitation, she busied herself with replenishing the tea-pot, and putting a fresh supply of coals into the stove.

After the meal, as Alfred was preparing to return to the store, he said: "Mother, the next time Martha comes home, we must ask her what the change in her means, and if she is not happy there, she must leave."

"Alfred, where could she find a better place? Where a kinder mistress than Mrs. Hilton?"

"I don't know; but, mother, it may make her unhappy to be away from you. You know she never was before."

"Yes, Alfred; but then if she left them she would have to get a situation somewhere else. You know we can't all be a burden on you."

"Why, mother? Do you suppose I would begrudge her the morsel she eats, and the little it takes to dress her?"

"No, Alfred; but each must contribute their share to the general support."

"Just as I did, when I had the fever? No, no, mother; if Martha is unhappy away from you, she must come home, and stay at home too. I will have enough for you all."

"If she only understood the coat and jacket business, I would not object, she could be kept in sewing from Mr. Simonds's. But, I will tell you, Alfred, it's my opinion that she is home-sick for Stanton; being with me, and having nothing to employ her, she would constantly think of those days; her despondency would become settled, and her health would give way. Now, if she is at service, she will be kept busy, and in time may get over it."

"I hope she will, but we must try to think of something to cheer her up. As soon as I can I will get Mr. Simonds to give me a holiday, and then I will take her out a riding. She is missing the glorious rides we used to have in the country. And now, mother, good-by, till I get back again." He opened the door, and Ellen closed it as he passed out.

Several mornings after, as Agnes Hilton was passing along the hall, the door-bell rung, and ere she had time to beat a hasty retreat, a servant ushered in Miss Pauline Simpson. Biting her lips with vexation, she led the way to the parlor. She felt in no humor to receive morning visitors, and was thoroughly annoyed to be called upon to entertain one that, even in her most genial moments, was disagreeable to her. - With a haughty wave-of the hand she motioned to the sofa; the fairy-like form of Pauline sank upon it. Agnes seated herself near the table, and fixing her eyes on an engraving, in an indifferent, abstracted voice, asked for her friends.

"Oh, they are well, thank you; but, upon my word, I thought you had about forgotten us."

Agnes looked as if not quite sure of what Miss Pauline had said, but as if it was of too little importance to ask her to repeat it.

"Your mother is well?"

"Very well, I thank you."

"And your adopted brother? What a sweet child he is! I declare you must feel proud of him. I have seen his elder brother, Alfred, I believe, they call him; he is in Mr. Simonds's store; and, do you know, I have a great mind to make father adopt *him*." This was said in an ironical tone, illy calculated to soothe the irritated feelings of Agnes. A light laugh followed it. Pauline often smarted under the superciliousness of Agnes, and found great relief for her wounded vanity in these little spiteful thrusts. Agnes's brow bent, but without paying the slightest attention to the remark, she calmly asked if she had lately seen Edith Carter.

"Ah, yes, poor Edith! She is passing away. I called a few moments yesterday, and I declare I felt sad the whole day after."

"The whole day after!" slowly repeated Agnes, with undisguised contempt in her tone.

An angry flush swept over the face of her visitor, but after a moment she gayly asked: "Why were you not to the concert at Tweedle's last night? You would have heard the most witching strains."

"Who was the Prima Donna?"

"Miss Sandford. She has a fine soprano voice, clear as the nightingale's, and is an accomplished pupil of the Italian schools."

"I have heard her," quietly observed Agnes.

"Well, don't you think her almost divine?"

"No," she coldly replied, "I have heard others who far excel her."

"Who?"

"Madam Elfray. She has not only the bird-like sweetness of the Italian school, but the deep cathedral tones of the German masters."

"Ah, now I recollect why you were not at Tweedle's; you were at the Oratorio at St. James's?"

"I was."

"I suppose I need not ask you how you liked it?"

"No; a host of talent being secured to do justice to the *chefs-d'œuvre* of a Handel, Haydn, Himmel, and Beethoven, any thing I could say would be quite superfluous."

"I attended one a few days before Christmas, at St. Mary's, and I declare I would rather go to one Oratorio than to fifty ordinary concerts."

Consistency is a jewel, so thought Agnes; she said nothing, only it occurred to her that if Pauline was so partial to sacred melodies, why did she not attend at St. James's instead of going to Tweedle's? However, it might be a kind of conciliatory slip of the tongue. Pauline looked as

if she had said something very gracious, while Agnes ominously curled her lip, and leaning her head on her hand, made no farther effort to prolong the conversation. After an embarrassing silence, Pauline rose to go. Scarcely had the door closed upon her, when, giving strict charges to Archie that she was "not at home" to any one, she hastily retired to her own room. Her ears rung with the hosannas she had listened to the night before; throwing herself on the nearest chair, she bowed her head, and covered her face with her hands. With the sublime strains came a remembrance of her loneliness and isolation from all that once made life dear to her. Pride and obstinacy spread a pall over her beautiful home; tears, bitter, scalding tears washed over her cheeks; rising, she approached the piano, and in a low, trembling voice sang the anthem, "O God, have mercy." There was an exquisite tenderness in her tones; every harsher feeling seemed charmed to rest. The words died on her lips, and she reverently folded her hands. A light breath sounded near her; she looked up, and started back. Was it an angel standing beside her? She blushed as she asked herself the question. It was nobody but little Mark, her golden-haired brother. Her first impulse was to sharply rebuke him for intruding on her, and send him from the room; but the meek, pleading look silenced the haughty words.

"Oh, Agnes!" he exclaimed, his sweet face all lit up with enthusiasm, "isn't it beautiful!"

"But, why did you come in?" she asked, in rather a sorrowful than reproachful tone.

"I was in the passage," he answered, "and I heard you singing so that each sound seemed to touch my heart. I rapped, but you did not hear me, and I rapped again. Then I opened the door, and came in softly not to disturb

you. And oh, Agnes," he added, while tears stood in his eyes, "I didn't know whether I had been taken up to heaven, or heaven had come down to me."

She looked kindly on him, and rising from the instrument, walked to her arm-chair before her desk, and seated herself in it.

"Mark, you may come and sit down on this ottoman," she pointed to one at her feet. With joyful alacrity the child obeyed; resting her elbow on the arm of her chair, she leaned her cheek on her open palm, and attentively regarded his sweet innocent face. The demon of pride was laid in her heart for the present; would that it might never again rise! Bending forward, she swept the sunny curls from his brow, and holding his face in her hands, tenderly kissed him. In an instant his tiny arms were around her neck, and he found himself, he could not tell why, sobbing and crying as if his little heart would break.

"Oh, Agnes, dear, dear Agnes!" he exclaimed, when at last he could speak, "I do love you, and every day I pray for you, I do."

"What do you ask of our dear Lord for me?"

"That you may be always good, and please God." Tears filled her eyes and again she kissed him.

Holding her hand in his, he looked up into her face, and said:

"When I stood in the passage, and heard you sing, it made me think of the time when we lived in Stanton, and we, too, had a piano."

"What became of it?"

"Oh, it went when father got sick." A great gravity rested on his childish face, and his eyes musingly sought the carpet. "Every thing went then," he added, with a

sigh; "no, not every thing, not till Alfred got sick; then it was that all went." Shudderingly he glanced around, and as if for the first time he had noticed the elegant appendages of her room, with the volatility and susceptibleness of childhood, he exclaimed: "Oh, how beautiful!" pointing to the right hand of the piano, he asked: "What statue is that?"

"That is Saint Agnes."

"How lovely it looks with its hands folded, and its eyes raised in prayer. And there, over the mantelpiece, as true as I live, is the *Mater Dolorosa*! Oh, how I love it! How I love it!" he exclaimed, clasping his hands.

"You have seen it before?"

"No, not that one; but we used to have one just like it, except it wasn't in so grand a frame. We all loved it so, we kept it as long as we could. Father died with his eyes fixed upon it; but when Alfred got sick, and every thing went, mother at last had to send that away." He took out his tiny pocket-handkerchief, and wiped away the great tears that rolled over his cheeks.

Agnes was surprised to find herself in familiar converse with one whom she had looked upon with, as she considered it, well-founded aversion,—one whose adoption into her family had been sorely against her will. Never before had he entered her room; never since the first morning she met him and her father in the hall had she spoken to him, yet now he conversed with all apparent ease, and was so gentle and affectionate in his nature, that she felt she could truly love him, and almost regretted her cold, proud obstinacy. But the wicked thought that Martha had triumphed over her—for, as usual, pride, with all its loftiness, had stooped to mean, petty rivalry, and foolish jealousy—arose before her like the prompting of some dark fiend. It

brought with it so desolate a feeling that she tried to silence it, and hastily addressed the child.

"And so you like my room?"

"Oh yes, it's all grand below stairs, but here it is beautiful, so beautiful. The landscape yonder, how strange it is; the bending sky, and the bare hills, the narrow winding stream, and the dark trees in the valley. Oh, how still every thing around it looks; even the sunshine and shadow seem silent and sad!"

Agnes led him up to the picture: "Does it look so lone now, Mark?" she asked.

"Oh yes, lone, very lone. The sky is very blue, and the little stream is so clear, that I can see the smooth stones at the bottom, and the trees seem stirred by some gentle wind, but the bare hills." He paused, and taking his eyes from the picture, looked up into her face. She answered the mute appeal by finishing the sentence for him: "But the bare hills, Mark, are silent, and the spirit of desolation broodeth there."

"Yes, oh yes, Agnes. What is the name of this strange picture?"

"It is a 'View from the east side of Jerusalem.'" He clung closer to her, and pressing her hand in a half-timid, half-entreating tone, exclaimed:

"Oh, Agnes, I should like so much to hear all about it. Father James used to tell me a great deal about Jerusalem, where our Lord suffered and died."

"But did he ever tell you of David and Goliath?" A smile played round her beautiful mouth as she glanced down on the enthusiastic child.

"Oh yes, he told me ever so much about them; how Goliath gloried in his great size and strength, and was greatly puffed up with pride; how he defied the whole army of the

Israelites, and challenged them to fight hand to hand with him; how he showed himself to them, mocking and tempting them, for, I think he said, forty days, and by-and-by our Lord, to show how much he despised his pride, allowed him to be killed by a boy with a sling; that David was the name of the boy; and Father James further said that when the multitude went out with great rejoicing to meet him, and sung that Saul had slain his thousands and David his ten thousands, envy entered the heart of Saul, and from that he tried to kill him." A look of horror passed over his countenance as he said this. "Oh, isn't it dreadful, dreadful to think of? But Father James told me that from pride comes envy, and from envy, hatred; and that these passions ruined Saul, who had been chosen by the Lord to be king over his people, and that afterwards he died miserable, and David was chosen in his place to reign over all Israel. You see I don't forget what Father James said?"

"No, Mark; you have an excellent memory. Now, you see these two hills confining the valley on the right and the left?"

"Yes."

"Well, here the armies of the Israelites and Philistines took their stand. The little winding stream is the very stream from which David took the five small stones that he placed in his scrip, and the valley through which the stream flows, is the very valley—the valley of Terebinth—in which the youthful David slew the proud Philistine."

The child stood, with wonder depicted on every feature. "The very stream! the very valley! the very hills!" he murmured; then pointing with his outstretched arm to the landscape, he asked: "But where are the people that were gathered there? Father James told me the mountains were covered with them."

Agnes started back at the strangeness of the question; when, without waiting for an answer, he slightly bent his head forward, and fixed his eyes on the carpet. She did not wish to disturb his reverie by any remark, but leaning against the high back of an arm-chair, attentively regarded his grave thoughtful countenance. At length, raising his head, he exclaimed:

"Ah! now I know why it looks so silent and sad; the stream, the hills, the valley—they are mourning for the dead people—for them that are gone."

"Yes," she musingly said; "they are, indeed, gone. They are a nation no more."

"I don't want to see any other picture, or fine things," he said, after another pause; "I have seen enough for to-day."

"Well, then, you may go. I have some books to look over, and I would like to be alone."

He started, and had reached the door; when, with his hand on the knob, he turned, and hesitatingly asked:

"May I come again when I have told sister Martha all about the picture, and how kind you have been to me?" Childlike, he had touched on a most forbidden subject.

Sister Martha! how those two words rung in her ears, fiercely rousing the dormant passion within. Poor little Mark! he quailed beneath her angry glance, as she sternly answered: "No!" He strove to open the door, but in his confusion his tiny hands were powerless. With a sudden assumed haughtiness, she approached, and opened it for him. As she returned to her seat, she regretted she had not at once sent him from the room. The more lovable she found him, the more was she incensed against her parents for being so gracious to his family, and retaining Martha in their service.

"They do it to show their authority over me, and to let me see they regard the feelings of a servant more than they do mine." A hard expression settled round her mouth; turning to her desk, she brushed aside some papers, and once more took up her manuscript.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHE slowly turned the leaves over till she came to the fourth chapter, and while her lips retained their firm compression, and her brows their heavy frown, commenced its perusal.

"'Tis not till after the funeral rites have been performed, and we return to the silent house, that we fully realize our sad bereavement. Before, the confusion of people coming in and going out, the hurry of the attendants, and among the poor, the struggle to get decent mourning habiliments, thinking to neglect it would be showing disrespect to the dead; among the rich, the pride, ostentation, and the secret, away back in the heart, feeling of satisfaction, that many will attend, who, on like occasions, had found it impossible to make so grand a display; or, as flattering self-love teaches them to term it, had thus honored and revered their deceased. 'Tis after all this is over, the struggle on the one hand, and the pride and vanity on the other, that, as I said before, we fully realize our bereavement. We look on the vacant bed, the unoccupied chair, the deserted room, and feel that they are gone. We listen—but why, alas! should we listen? that well-known footstep will never more strike on the ear—that well-remembered voice will never more send to the heart its thrilling tones of gladness. They are gone! they are gone! and now in loneliness and desolation we wander through the silent rooms, and ring our hands and groan, in all the agony of inconsolable bereavement.

"The gay and volatile, in the course of a few months, may so far forget their sorrow, that, were it not for the outward garments of mourning, one would hardly believe the eyes beaming with joy ever shed tears over the couch of death. Even to themselves, the anguish they experienced will rise up before them like the horrors of some fearful dream, or, rather, like the remembrance of past physical pain. But, there are others, with whom the wound is never healed. Years may pass; the mourning garments be laid aside; but still the heart weeps on; they feel they have no longer sympathy in the world; no one can understand them; should they speak out the thoughts that crowd upon their minds, they feel they would be considered wild and visionary, and they instinctively shrink from the condescending forbearance of some, and the rude wonder and sneering taunts of others; and so communing only with the dead past, they become to the world timid, silent, and reserved.

"The bed and bedding, on the death of Mr. Harny, had been carried out; a wide board placed on the empty bedstead, a sheet spread over it, and on this his cold, stiffened form had been laid, shrouded in the white habiliments of the grave. The board and sheet had been removed by some thoughtful hand; only the empty bedstead met the gaze of the widow on her return from the burial. Removing her shawl and bonnet, she seated herself near the head of it, and clasping her hands, with a marble face of wretchedness, sat gazing fixedly upon it. Joe crouched up near her, for in the loneliness of the room he began to feel a great fear stealing over him. Bridget busied herself in the back kitchen; Mike put out the horses, milked the cows, and did the evening chores. In due time Bridget announced tea; the widow started like one aroused from a painful dream.

"Come, mother, come; tea is all ready, and I feel so lonesome here.' Little Joe vigorously pulled her hand; she did not draw it back, but with the other softly pushed the hair from his forehead, and smiling, calmly arose. Her calmness pained the kind, affectionate Bridget more than tears and sobs; it seemed so sad, so uncomplaining. At the table, Mike tried to think of something to say that would take her mind from her grief. His father and Maurice had been over about a week before, and harvested the wheat, but the barley and oats were still out, and he knew they intended in a few days to come over and cut them, so now he would speak of them.

"Wasn't father and Maurice lucky to get the wheat in just before that tremendous shower?"

"Yes, Mike;" she replied, in a low voice, without directing her eyes to him.

"And don't you think, Mrs. Harny, that they'll have a fine time for the barley and oats?"

"She did not answer him; her thoughts were far away to the first time she saw Francis Harny, and the pitying light that beamed from his eyes upon her. His had been the first kind voice she had heard since her parents' death; and how nobly, how generously had he taken part against the exactions of a hard, selfish mistress; and when that mistress, indignant that any one should feel a sympathy for her, grew harder and more exacting than ever, how he released her from her bondage by marrying her, and taking her to his own home. But now he was gone! gone! and she was once more alone. A wild look of agony gleamed from her eyes, and heavy drops stood on her brow. Bridget, with thoughtful kindness, pressed her to taste the delicacies she placed upon her plate.

"I can't, Bridget, I can't. Don't ask me to. And

Francis is in his close damp grave,' she said, pursuing her own train of thought. 'In his close damp grave to-night; the winds are murmuring around him, and the dews have settled on his bed.'

"'But his soul,' said Bridget; impressively laying her hand on her arm, 'his soul, praises to God, is this night in heaven. No more will he be troubled for want of breath; and no more will that wearing cough and tightened feeling across his chest trouble him. He's away from it all, and the good God has freed him from every pain.'

"'Yes, yes; he is away from it all, and free from every pain; but—but—oh! I cannot speak what's in my heart. God's will, not mine, be done. And now eat your meal, children, and don't mind about me. I will drink some of your tea, Bridget, but I cannot eat.'

"No more was said during the meal, and after it Bridget quietly cleared away the dishes, then lighted a candle, set it on the shelf under the window, let down the paper curtain, and drawing up a chair seated herself on one side of the widow; Mike, too, drew up his chair, and Joe, with his arm round Douce's neck, sat on a low bench before her. How wistfully they gazed up into the pale face, with its settled look of wretchedness!

"'If she would only cry,' whispered Bridget, 'I know she would feel better.'

"'I am frightened,' said little Joe, for the loneliness pressed heavily upon him; 'let us say our prayers,' he cried, untwining his arm from Douce's neck, and hastily crossing himself. They all sank upon their knees, and taking out her beads, Bridget commenced the second part of the Rosary. As they arose, Mrs. Harny gratefully pressed her hand.

"'God's mercy endureth forever,' she said, 'we are not all alone—all desolate.'

"'No; Mrs. Harny, no; not as long as you have us. We'd go the round of the world for you. There's nothing we wouldn't do for you in your great sorrow.'

"'And may God reward you. But, oh! if I could only shake off this load that's on my heart; it presses me to the very earth.' She sighed heavily.

"'You can't shake it off yourself!' exclaimed Mike, reverently raising his eyes; 'you can't shake it off, but God will lighten it for you, if you only won't forget, when you feel it weighing you clear down, to call on him and his blessed mother.'

"'Yes, Mike; if I would not forget. But there it is; when it presses so heavily upon me, I forget every thing. I only remember—a greater pallor spread over her countenance, and her voice died away to a whisper—'him who is gone! and a stonier wretchedness creeps over me.'

"'I feel it creeping over me now!' exclaimed Joe, shuddering, and glancing over his shoulder into the darkened room.

"'No, Joe,' said Bridget, kindly; 'you don't feel it. You think you do; but your feelings are very different from your poor mother's.' She snuffed the candle, and again seating herself, threw her arm around him.

"'Mother, father, and Miles will be over Sunday,' observed Mike, after a somewhat lengthened pause.

"A light broke over Joe's face. He was so lonely, and his mother was so sad, that the prospect of seeing the kind-hearted Mrs. Connor sent a glad feeling to his heart. The poor widow smiled a vacant smile; 'twas evident her thoughts were far away. Bridget and Mike, who closely resembled each other in their fine, fresh complexions, sandy hair, and hazel eyes, looked upon her with the most protective kindness. Bridget was a sensible girl, and she

thought the best way to rouse her from the stupor of grief would be to enlist her sympathies for some one who had been similarly bereaved; pity for the sorrows of others would lighten her own.

"‘Mrs. Harny,’ she said, ‘do you recollect the widow Donnell, at whose place we stop when we go to A——, to Mass?’

"‘Yes, Bridget,’ was the abstracted reply.

"‘Well, now, Mrs. Harny, let me tell you her story. She, too, has seen a great deal of trouble. Mr. Donnell, soon after his marriage, came to America. With the first money he earned he bought a house-lot, and with the second built a small, but comfortable, house. This was about the time the church was built, and being head carpenter he got the job. As soon as he received his pay he sent for his wife; she arrived in the fall, immediately they went a housekeeping, and a happier couple you never saw. Every spare moment Mr. Donnell devoted to working in his little garden and beautifying his house; they had the finest vegetables, excellent grapes, currants, and berries, and just under the windows—nowhere else, for he couldn’t spare the ground for it—were sweetbriers, lilac-bushes, morning-glories, and woodbine; indeed, the morning-glories and woodbine formed their curtains and window-blinds. I used to think it was the loveliest spot on the face of the earth, and Mr. and Mrs. Donnell were so happy. But lasting happiness belongs not to this world. One day, a high scaffold he was working on gave way, and he fell, badly hurting his shoulder and knee. He was taken home, and a physician sent for; he came, set the knee, but said his limb would be ever after stiff; as to his shoulder, he thought it would soon be well. Mrs. Donnell waited on him with the tenderest care, but he never got able to do another day’s work. His knee in due

time got well, and, as the doctor said, was stiff; but his shoulder grew worse, and finally his whole arm became palsied. Mrs. Donnell did her best to support him; she took in sewing, and when he got able to sit up she went out a washing; but, with all her exertions, she could not keep out of debt. Mr. Donnell would want this doctor or that, thinking they might help him so he could go to work again, and although she had but little faith in their skill, to please him she would send for them. At length, worn out with pain, he died, and she, like you, Mrs. Harny, was left a widow.’

"‘And what did she do, Bridget?’ The abstraction was gone, and a tear of sympathy glistened in her eye.

"‘Her house was so heavily mortgaged that she could no longer call it her own. Indeed, Mrs. Harny, when he died she hadn’t a cent in the world, not even for the funeral expenses.’

"‘And was he buried by the town?’

"‘God forbid! No, no! When his friends—all from his own country, you know—heard how matters stood, they raised a subscription among themselves; bought a handsome coffin, decent mourning clothes for her, and had as respectable a funeral for him as he could have had if he had died wealthy. Well, after it was all over, she gave up her beautiful little house, and went out to service. She stayed out for four or five years, every year sending home to Ireland twenty or thirty dollars, besides laying by a little sum for an object she had in view.’

"‘What was the object, Bridget?’

"‘It was to get enough money to rent a small house, her old one, if possible, and take in a few boarders. At last she accomplished it, and you don’t know how wonderfully she got along. In two years she bought back her old

home; she said she might as well be making payments as paying rent. Well, in a little while, she had paid up every cent for it, and then, what did she do but buy another; this she also paid for, and now the rent of it very comfortably supports her, and she is no longer obliged to keep boarders. She takes in a little sewing, enough to clothe her and pay her church dues; and, although she has seen much poverty and great sorrow, she is always cheerful and resigned. In the eyes of the world, I have heard Father John say, she might be looked upon as a poor ignorant woman, but in the school of affliction, she had learned the wisdom of the saints. In every thing she resigns herself to the will of God, and this, Mrs. Harny, is the best and greatest of wisdom.' Bridget's story was finished, and she sat anxiously watching the changing countenance of the widow.

"'Bridget!' she at length said; 'you are right, and may God give me grace ever to bow to his holy will! But, children, it is getting late, we will say our prayers; and, Bridget dear, you will read the Litany for the Dead.' Her voice quivered and her eyes filled as she made the request.

"'Yes, Mrs. Harny, I will.'

"Weeks passed on; the widow strove to be resigned, but the pale face and weary watching eyes told of a bitter struggle. She had not the natural buoyancy of Mrs. Donnell, and beside her health was rapidly failing. Sometimes, taking her work-basket, she would leave the house, and, walking to the woods, seat herself on the very log where, in happier days, she and her husband had talked of the pleasant future. Pleasant! ah! how that word mocked her now, as she listened to the memories of the past. At her feet was the moss-covered stone that he had called her fairy foot-stool; here and there lay decaying logs wrapped in a thick pall of velvety green; scattered profusely around her

were pale fragrant flowers, that looked as, if removed to the open fields, they would wither and die; above her head waved the maple and beech, upon whose branches the wind chanted a low sweet dirge, in unison with her saddened thoughts. Here she had sat, and while looking into his fine open countenance, and listening to his kind words, felt that she, a poor orphan girl, need no longer feel the coldness and unkindness of the world—that God had raised her up a noble protector—a protector who not only labored hard to make her a comfortable home, but who had kindly and unweariedly instructed her, till she became a devoted child of the true faith—that glorious faith which soothed and comforted her now, in the sad hours of bereavement. Her love had not been of the selfish kind; she fully realized his devotion, and she strove to repay it by being the kindest and most affectionate of wives. She kept his house in the finest order, she scrupulously attended her little dairy; his meals were always regularly served, his clothes, when they became broken, were carefully mended; every thing to her was a labor of love; and now, when he was gone, and she could do no more for him, she would have sunk into an apathy of woe had there not been left to her the pious duty of praying for his departed soul. He was so good, so faultless, that she would have considered it almost superfluous to pray for him, had she not borne in mind that the just man falls seven times; that we must give a strict account of every idle word, and that out of the prison-house of propitiation the soul is not released till the last farthing is paid. Slipping from the log, she would sink on her knees, and tightly clasping her hands, in the language of Tertullian, speaking of the duties of Christian widows, 'pray for her husband and beg refreshment for him.' Then, with a calm, resigned countenance, she would return home, and,

busying herself about the house, glide round with the noiseless step of a spirit. During the day she seldom spoke, but in the evening, gathering little Joe, Mike, and the faithful Bridget around her, in her low sweet voice, she would converse with them on the duties of a Christian, and strive to instil into their youthful minds lessons of piety and virtue. Thus the summer months passed away. Already the setting sun had tinged the autumn leaves; the pale wood-flowers were gone, but a fragrance, like the spices of the East, filled the air; a carpet of rustling leaves covered the ground, and pale slanting rays of sunshine streamed through the half-denuded branches; the social song of the robin and the wild rapturous carol of the bobolink no longer were heard; naught but the mournful sobbing voice of the winds broke the silence of the dying year.

"One day, little Joe came in from the fields, and not finding his mother in the house, he went to seek her in her favorite place, the woods. She was kneeling beside her rustic seat, her head bowed down upon it, and her face buried in her hands. He twined his arms around her and begged her to arise and come home.

"Oh! do, mother, do!" he exclaimed, turning with a frightened expression, and pointing to the west. "See! a big cloud has risen, and is sending a shadow over the earth. Come, mother, come before the storm bursts on us!"

"She slowly raised her head from the log and removed her hands from her face; 'twas deadly pale, and traces of recent tears were visible upon it.

"Mother! oh! mother, will you break my heart?" he asked, wiping with his pocket handkerchief the moisture from her cheeks. She made an effort to reply, but the words died away on her white lips; she tried to rise, but fell heavily against him. A dreadful fear thrilled his heart.

Was his mother dying? In an agony of terror he hung over her, and wiped the heavy drops from her brow. She smiled on him and pressed his hand.

"Oh, mother, don't die! don't leave me all alone!" he sobbed.

"My God! my God! James, she is dying!" exclaimed a well-known voice, and, to his great relief, Mr. and Mrs. Connor stood beside him. They were coming cross lots, to stay with the widow over Sunday. Mrs. Connor quietly took off her warm woollen shawl and wrapped it around the slight form; Mr. Connor spread his coat on the log, and carefully they lifted her to it, while little Joe was immediately dispatched to the house for blankets and stimulants.

"Pray God!" exclaimed Mrs. Connor, chafing her hands and temples, "she may revive so as to be removed to the house before the storm comes down! How dark it grows, and how fearfully the wind howls through the trees! Oh! poor thing, it would quite kill her to be caught out, and it raining!"

"Do you think it is a faint, Ellen?"

"Oh no, James, it's more like death. She is perfectly sensible; but how wildly the leaves are blown about. O God! what shall we do if the rain comes down? I felt a sprinkle on my face just now; there, James, sit so she can lean against you, and I will stand so as to shelter her as much as possible. Oh! how pale, how pale she is; pray God it is not death!"

"With redoubled effort, the kind Mrs. Connor rubbed her cold hands till little Joe, almost breathless, returned. A warm blanket was immediately wrapped around her, and a stimulant administered; soon the blood once more coursed through the blue veins. She feebly raised her head from its resting-place, and silently pressed the hands of her faith-

ful friends. Tears stood in the depths of her eyes, but they did not fall; she glanced wildly around and hastily arose.

"Oh, the storm!" she faintly exclaimed.

"Yes! it is very threatening. If you would only lean on us, I think we might reach the house before it comes down. At least, James, we might make the attempt," she added, reading the doubting, troubled expression of his countenance; "it would be better to be in the open fields. I fear the uprooting of some of these heavy trees."

"Almost carrying the slight form, they succeeded in reaching the house just as the cold rain came pattering smartly against the window-panes. Mrs. Connor advised her immediately retiring to bed, and all that night she watched over her with the gentle, patient love of a mother. For several hours she complained of great oppression of the chest and difficulty of breathing, then she rallied and spoke long and clearly of little Joe's affairs. In conclusion she said:

"When Francis appointed Mr. Connor and Mr. Reed trustees, deputing to them the authority of guardians in case I should be called away before he attained his majority' (she smiled to hear herself, a poor sick woman, using law terms), 'he felt, Mrs. Connor, that he was intrusting him to those who would have truly a fatherly care over him, and that you would be a kind, faithful friend to him.'

"He might well know that, child; never shall Francis Harny's son want for a friend while I live. Oh, poor Francis! well do I remember the day that you and he first came to see us. We were almost beside ourselves with joy; we didn't know that there was a Catholic nearer us than A——, and to think that you had moved, as I might say, right in our midst, for what signified the seven or eight miles between us? Ah, that was a bright, proud day for us, long

after you went back, the next day, James and I sat by the fire, talking of happy Sundays, Father Gillen, the ivy-clad chapel at home, and the quiet churchyard where, after James began to pay his addresses to me, we often used to wander, to get away from the noisy children. There we were not disturbed; the silence of the place, and the still marble head-stones, and here and there the little wooden crosses, called forth a grave, but not a gloomy, train of thought."

"They chastened and purified your love."

"Yes, child, yes! There where others had laid down the cares and burden of life, we just commenced ours—there we planned and laid out our after-life—talked of leaving that hallowed spot where the bones of our fathers slept—the home where all our memories were enshrined, the chapel where we had lisped our earliest prayers, the friends who had ever been kind and generous—talked of leaving them all, to cross the wild waters of the ocean, and build in a strange land a home for ourselves and children. We were strong in each other's love; 'twas well we were, for when we come to bid them all good-by, and at last found ourselves borne along as it were, by some invisible power to this dreary wilderness, it sometimes seemed as if the gates of the world were closed against us, and we were in a gloomy prison, suffering a living death. No chapel, no priest, no friends, no quiet graveyard, no home with its thousand and one endearments. Our dark little cabin, child, seemed no home to us. We worked hard and saved all we could; at last we got able to build a better house. We thought, then, we would enjoy life. How foolish the thought! Walls and doors could never fill the empty place in our hearts; we were lonely still. We missed, ah, none can tell how much, we missed the society of those of our own faith. The Protestants around us were kind; but you know what a stiff,

proud, self-sufficient way they have of looking on Catholics, and talking—some of their most ignorant—of the Dark Ages of Popery, and calling us priest-ridden and superstitious, because we wouldn't go to hear some of their ministers, dubbed Brother this, or Elder that. It was a cold rainy evening in the fall, just such an evening as this, the wind whistled the same round the house, that James, who had been to A—— with a load of grain, came home, and told me a priest had been up from New York, that they were going to build a church, and that he had given towards it all his load of grain had brought. I could scarcely believe him; I thought he only said so to fool me, but four weeks from the following Sunday, we went, and sure enough the priest was there saying Mass in a private house, and talking with the few Catholics around him of the church. We again subscribed our mite, and had Maurice, Bridget, Nellie, and Mike baptized. Ah! that was a grand day for the Catholics in and around A——. They had come in for forty miles; the priest's voice trembled, and there wasn't a dry eye in the room.' She paused a moment, to regain her composure, and then hurriedly resumed:

"Well, the church was built, and we used, from that, to go as often as two or three times a year. We didn't, then, feel so lonely; but, still, we missed Catholic neighbors. At last you came among us, and it seemed as if all our wishes were granted. Oh, child, you don't know what a gap you filled in our hearts!" (she bent forward and kissed the pale brow of the widow), 'you were our brother, our sister, the cherished kindred we left in the olden home; long, long, I say, after your visit, James and I sat and talked of the past, and again to-night it all comes over me so.' A large tear rolled over her cheek, and again bending forward she kissed the pale brow.

"In a sobbing voice the poor widow poured out her gratitude for all her kindness, and begged her, when she was gone, to be a mother to little Joe, and see that he was faithful to his religion. The promise was solemnly given; then shaking up the pillow, Mrs. Connor begged her to try and compose herself to sleep.

"I have talked too much,' she said, dashing the tears from her eyes.

"Deeply affectionate in her nature, the prospect of the widow following her husband, and leaving them, as before, alone with those who looked with insulting condescension or cool contempt on the religion which Jesus founded, and his apostles propagated, shook her very soul with grief. But as she gazed on the pallid face and trembling lips, she feared she had unconsciously stirred the bitter fountain of memory, and that its remorseless waves were washing all peace and happiness from the stricken heart. Strong convulsions shook the feeble frame, and tears streamed through the closed lids. She passed her hand caressingly over the wan cheek, and spoke kind and soothing words. At length the sobs died away, the invalid sunk into a light slumber, and dreamed of him whose image was never absent from her waking thoughts.

"Several weeks she lingered on, suffering no pain, but daily growing more and more shadowy. The sun of little Joe's life was hid behind black heavy clouds; an intolerable gloom hung over him; the joyous smile of childhood died from his face; his step lost its elastic bound. Silent and sad he would sit by his mother's side, and, gazing tenderly into her loved face, think how short a time and she would be sleeping beside his father, and he be left alone—all alone. What a world of anguish these words express! none knew their meaning better than he. In vain the Connors assured

him of their faithful friendship. His noble and gifted father—his beautiful and gentle mother, would be gone, and nobody would ever again love little Joe as they had loved him. Poor child! he writhed in the agony of despair, and alone, all alone, still rung in his ears.

"It was past the cheese-making season, so Mrs. Connor stayed constantly with the invalid. At last she became so low that again was Maurice dispatched for the priest; he came, and, fortified with the last Sacraments of the Church, the widow went to rejoin her husband in a better land. Another mound was raised in the little cemetery, and Joe Harny was left a lone orphan in the world. Taken to the faithful Connors, he remained with them a year."

As Agnes concluded the chapter, she arose, and slowly walked up and down the room. "How strange!" she exclaimed; "but the casual mention of that little cemetery reminds me of the landscape 'By-gone Days; or, the Cemetery of the Woods,' which father gave me several years ago." She paused before a plainly gilt frame. Cemetery, did she say? Surely that peaceful scene speaks not of the cypress and the yew. Upon a slight eminence stands a pleasant farm-house; two windows are open, through which curtains, white as drifted snow, are gently drawn; morning-glories and eglantine creep over a long open porch; a rich green, with here and there a rose and lilac bush, sweeps down the road, from which it is separated by a neatly painted fence. On one side are wide-spreading fields of grain; on the other, a noble meadow stretches far away, while in the background rises a fine thrifty orchard. A cemetery! Surely she must have said it in mockery. Never was there a scene farther removed from the gloom and sadness of the grave. But look again; there, on the right side of the

meadow, are grand old forest trees, sending a deepening shadow over the waving grass and nodding clover, and keeping sentry, as it were, over a small plot, fenced in by a tastefully painted fence. Flowers are clustering inside; but still, you can plainly see the white marble pointing to several graves, and right in the centre rises a single monument, surmounted by a cross and anchor. Tears trembled in Agnes's dark eyes.

"Death! death!" she bitterly exclaimed, "even here he comes. Oh, man, how vain is thy boasted strength! everywhere a grim tyrant follows thee. Flee where thou wilt, he is still there!"

Stepping up near the picture, she gazed more intently upon it. Directly over the cemetery the light clouds had parted, only the blue expanse of unfathomed space smiled down upon it; and, as Agnes looked, a revulsion came over her feelings. It seemed the opening of the heavens, through which the soul travels home to its God. Reverently folding her hands, she murmured:

"Death, a tyrant, following man everywhere, did I say? Oh, who can gaze upon that radiant opening with such bitter thoughts. A tyrant? No:

'Death is a path that must be trod,
If man would ever pass to God.'

She returned to her chair, and, sinking into it, glanced round her room. It was strange after such musings, but pride and pity struggled in that glance. It would have puzzled a philosopher to have witnessed the haughtiness and disdain of her heart at one moment, and its deep solemnity and religious fervor at another. Again she thought of little Mark, and tears of vexation passed over her cheeks.

Suddenly starting up, she brushed the dark ringlets from her brow, and wiped the tear-drops away.

"Preach humility to me! Oh, the sanctified pride of the Pharisees! Crush my feelings, despise my wishes, and *this* is parental affection!" Bowing her head upon her hands, she burst into a passionate flood of tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

"MARTHA, what makes you look so sad? Why don't you talk to me?" Little Mark leaned against her knee, and looked up earnestly into her face.

"You see, Mark, I am busy."

"Well, then, if you can't talk, will you not sing for me? Sing some of the dear songs you used to sing in Stanton, 'Glendalough,' or the 'Bells of Shandon,' or 'Araby's Daughter.'"

"No, Marky, I cannot."

"They will not hear you if you sing them low. Do, Martha, just do; you don't know how I long to hear them once more."

"If I could, Marky, I would, but I can't."

"Why can't you?" he asked, with the pertinacity of childhood.

"Because—because—child, don't tease me, I tell you I can't."

"Does it make your head ache?"

"No, but my heart."

He looked at her silently for a few moments, then slowly went back to his play of arranging little trees, which Mr. Hilton had brought him from the bazaar, into groves and avenues.

Martha was thinking how singular it was that Mr. and Mrs. Hilton should so strongly insist on retaining her in their service when they could not be blind to Agnes's deep

aversion for her. Knowing her pride, she could easily account for her dislike, but the partiality of her parents seemed to her strange and mysterious. She had not the vanity to suppose that she filled the station of seamstress in their family better than any other would. She faithfully performed her duties, but others would do the same. Mr. and Mrs. Hilton had a tender love for Agnes, then why so indifferent to her wishes? Why provoke so bitter an estrangement? Agnes no longer spoke to them, and a gloom, like the gloom of death, seemed thrown over the whole household. The servants shook their heads and surmised many a cause for the change, but, to Martha's great relief, never the right one. Ought she to stay? How many times had she asked herself that question even after she had promised Mrs. Hilton she would not go. But why should she insist on keeping her when her presence made Agnes so wretched? There was something in that she could not solve; strange thoughts began to trouble her. Mrs. Hilton had, on several occasions, let fall words that left a deep impression on her mind. One day that she was going into her room for some directions in her sewing, as she approached the half-open door, she heard Mr. Hilton say: "I tell you she knows nothing about it, Martha—" her rap cut short his remark. He went out, and after Mrs. Hilton had given her instructions, she paused, and looking in her face, said: "That flower," pointing to a piece of embroidery on which she was working, "rises up plainly before you, but not plainer, Martha, than the past to others;" then seizing her hand, she pressed it till it almost forced a cry of pain from her. "Go, now, go," she said, suddenly releasing it, "and remember, for the sake of that past, you are dear to us." Martha returned to her room, wondering much how she could be connected with Mrs. Hilton's past;

wondering, too, to see one so quiet and calm so greatly moved. At another time, after conversing awhile with little Mark, she turned to Martha, and observed: "He is happy now; pray God he may never know sorrow like his poor mother!" Martha looked up surprised, and she continued: "She is alone, and long has a sore spot rankled in her heart; long has she wept over the one wrong step in life and the wretchedness—" She suddenly checked herself, and, while a flush suffused her cheeks, abruptly changed the conversation. Martha knew that her mother was a widow, and might, therefore, be called alone; that she had seen great sorrow in the poverty, sickness, and death which had visited them; but the one wrong step, what could that be? Never was a more pious, gentle mother than hers. What could Mrs. Hilton mean? She had often, before and after their removal to A——, caught her mother in tears, and when she asked the cause of them, had invariably received the answer: "Bitter memories are over me, Martha, leave me, and pray for me." Could it be possible that her loved mother was weeping for some early error? They had only lately become acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. Hilton, yet they seemed to be aware what that error was. How came they to know it? Could her mother have confided in them what she had always concealed from her own children? No, she could not have done it; they must have come to the knowledge some other way. But what way? And their past, what had it to do with her? She was completely puzzled; felt almost tempted to ask her mother what it all meant. But no, she must not; if her poor mother had aught in the past to reproach herself for, she must not be the one to refer her to it. Neither would she tell her of Agnes's aversion for her and little Mark. Alfred and she rejoiced in his good fortune; should she cloud

their few moments of happiness? No; so long as she stayed, she would say nothing to them about it. And she would try to be more cheerful when she visited home; she could see they worried about the change in her, and should she be so selfish as to think only of her own trials, forgetting that they, too, had theirs? No; she would laugh and talk as of old. She would exert herself to the utmost to make those happy who were so dear to her. What subject of conversation could she manage in her present state? She could not join their congratulations about Mark. She could not speak of Agnes without wounding charity; she had made a resolution, and, with God's help, she would keep it, never to say an unkind word against her. 'Tis true, she might tell of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton's love for little Mark, but that would be constantly contrasted in her mind with her dislike, and it would—she knew her own weakness—in spite of herself, cast a gloom over her. But she would speak of Stanton and the happy days they had known there; that was a subject they all loved. Her musings were interrupted by Mark sweeping the little trees from the table into a box; laying the box on a chair, and approaching her:

"Martha," he asked, "when are you going home again?"

"Not till Saturday."

"And what is to-day? let me see, it is—it is—"

"It is Wednesday, Mark."

"Yes, so it is. Monday I got my geography lesson, and traced places on the map; Tuesday I learned a line of the multiplication table, and to-day I was at the geography again."

"Did you miss any of it?"

"No, I repeated every word, and Mrs. Hilton said I mustn't study any more till to-morrow; that I might come

in, see you, and play with my trees. After dinner, I will write my copy out; that, you know, will not be studying."

"No, Mark; but have you got past the w's?"

"I finished those you set me, but Mrs. Hilton said I did them so badly, that she would set me another copy of them."

"Did you blot them?"

"No, Martha; but I wrote them so fast that Mrs. Hilton said there was no form of a letter about them; she would set me some more, and I must write them slower and take more pains; and so I will. You don't know how pleased she was with my v's; and she said a very little care would make my w's just as good." He raised his hand, pushed back the short golden curls from his forehead, and laid his head on her lap.

"Are you tired, Mark?" she asked.

"No, but I am going to think a little."

She smiled, stooped, and kissed him. "And what is my little brother going to think about?"

"That which keeps coming in my head all the time. When I am studying I have to put it away, and mind my lesson. When I am playing—for Mrs. Hilton says I must play a part of the time, to be healthy, that little boys will get sick if they study and think too much—I remember the fields and maple groves of Stanton, but now I am just going to think of Mr. and Mrs. Hilton's kindness to me. I love them best of anybody in the world, except mother, you, and Alfred."

"Well, think away, Marky; it is not every one that has so pleasant a subject to dwell upon."

Some time passed, when, hearing the hall-door open, and a step in the passage, he quickly raised his head: "That is Mr. Hilton," he said, "I must go down to meet him."

"Wait a moment, Mark. Did not Mr. and Mrs. Hilton request you to call them father and mother?"

"Yes, Martha; and I mean to do it as soon as I can just get used to the thought." He hastily left the room, and Martha, while her fingers were busy with the needle, again pursued her train of thought. She must try to make home happy; it was her duty, the duty of every Christian, by kind words, gentle, obliging manners, and tender considerations for the feelings of those around them, to throw a halo of peace and good-will around the family hearth. It might be trying for her to laugh, when she felt much more like crying. It might be difficult to speak of pleasant scenes when her heart was sad and heavy, but she would pray to God to assist her. It was no dissimulation in her to conceal her uneasiness from Alfred and her mother; as, so long as she remained in her present place, it would be worse than foolish to tell them. It would only destroy their happiness without restoring her own. Father Joseph knew all about it; she had confided all her sorrows to him, and he had promised to pray for her, approved of her prudence, and advised her to stay. She paused in her sewing, crossed herself, and said a little prayer. Saturday again came round; her week's sewing finished, she put on her bonnet and shawl, and with the usual quantity of apples and cakes from the kind, thoughtful Mrs. Hilton, she set out for home. The widow was busy preparing the evening meal as she came in. Ellen and Clara, who had been watching at the window, rushed to meet her; tenderly kissing them, she removed her shawl and bonnet, and went about helping her mother. A smile played round her features, and her step was light and buoyant. "Mother," she said, "would you not like some of these apples Mrs. Hilton sent stewed for supper? They will give a relish to the bread and butter."

"Yes, Martha; and Alfred will like them very much."

"Has he to go back to the store after tea?"

"No, this evening Mr. Simonds said he need not return."

She quickly pared and cored several large apples, put them in the saucepan, and pouring a little water over them, placed them on the stove. They were done and sweetened, the table set, the meal all ready as Alfred came in. Warmly shaking her hand, he turned to his mother and explained:

"Martha's herself again. Why, bless you, Martha, I would hardly know you, you look so much like your former self! I heard you laugh, I positively did, as I neared the door. Now tell me what, in the name of wonder, brought that long face to you, and tied up your tongue?"

Her heart ached then, notwithstanding her smiles; that very afternoon had she received cruel taunts from Agnes, been called hypocritical, artful, and insinuating; had seen little Mark pushed rudely aside, and a glance cast upon him that would have been enough to annihilate him, if glances could annihilate. No wonder, then, that her voice trembled a little, and her laugh sounded somewhat forced as she answered:

"Never mind, Alfred, how it came or went; we are here to make each other happy. Move, Ellen, dear, and let me sit opposite to him."

Kind attentions to each, and pleasant social conversation enlivened the meal; when it was ended, Martha cleared the table, washed the dishes, and swept up the crumbs. The widow resumed her sewing; Alfred, sunk into the easy-chair, with his feet on another, watched her every movement. How dear to him was that gentle, pale-faced sister! Little Ellen and Clara, seated at the table, were looking over one of Marky's picture-books; Alfred had found time to explain

the meaning of every one, and now more than ever they enjoyed them.

"Mother," said Martha, taking a seat beside her, "don't sew any more to-night, I know you must be tired."

"But I want to finish the jacket, so that Alfred can take it to the store Monday morning."

"How much more have you to do to it?"

"The sleeves to put in, and the buttons to sew on."

"Oh, I can do that; just let me have it."

"No, Martha, you have been sewing all day; and you, too, must be tired."

"But I am quite refreshed now, so let me have it. That's a dear, good mother," she said, as the widow reluctantly yielded it to her.

"Martha," said Alfred, "what kind of a person is Agnes Hilton? Is she not very proud? her countenance indicates as much."

A pained expression for a moment rested on Martha's face; but quietly raising her eyes from her work, she asked: "Alfred, do you remember the picnic Father James got up the first year he came to Stanton?"

"Right well, Martha?"

"And do you recollect that there was among the children a little boy that fell into a great passion because he was not allowed to carry one of the baskets?"

Alfred laughed. "Yes, yes, Martha! I remember that too. I believe the little boy was a brother of yours."

"Not Mark?" she said with a smile.

"No, indeed! not him, but the other one, Alfred by name. But what has that little fellow and his quick temper to do with my question?" He affectionately placed his hand on her shoulder.

"Simply this, Alfred, that as Father James told you,

when, afterwards ashamed of your violence, you asked him why so wicked a passion had been given you, it was, that, fighting and struggling against it, and thereby gaining its opposite virtue, your diadem might not lack its crowning gem of glory. And do you recollect he told you that every one had a predominant passion, against which to contend: pride, anger, sloth? Now, yours was anger; another's might be pride; another's sloth, and so on."

"Yes, Martha; I remember all that he said. And so you think Agnes Hilton's is pride?"

"I do not say it is, Alfred; but it would be nothing very surprising if it was. You know she is very beautiful, learned, and accomplished, has an elegant home, and is the flattered child of society."

"I thought she was of a retired turn, and cared but little for society."

"No, she does not; but there are many who try, but try in vain, to get on more intimate terms with her. I really believe her very exclusiveness makes her more sought after."

"But why should she be so exclusive?"

"I am sure I cannot tell; but it seems her tastes are very refined. Her friends are sensible, intelligent, and free from all affectation."

"And, I suppose, like herself, proud as they can be."

"Not at all; they are truly pious."

"Pity, then, they don't give her a few lessons in humility." Alfred's face colored; he remembered a cold, scathing glance she had favored him with one day that, by Mr. Hilton's pressing invitation, he had called to see Mark. Martha raised her meek, pleading eyes to his.

"Alfred, don't allow any uncharitable feeling to sully your soul." Alfred was silent for several moments; at length he

exclaimed: "There, Martha; I am calm now. I have been putting Father James's advice into practice."

"That advice about saying 'Our Father,' and 'Hail Mary,' whenever you feel excited to anger?"

"Yes, Martha; and it was the best advice I ever got," Alfred, said Father James, "when you are tempted to anger, never allow yourself to speak till you have repeated an 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary;' when bitter memories crowd upon you, do the same, and when dejected and cast down, raise your heart with these beautiful prayers. The blessed Saviour taught man the first; the Angel Gabriel and Saint Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Ghost, addressed the fore part of the second to her who was chosen to be the mother of God; and the Church, also inspired by the Holy Ghost, added the latter, and finished it. In every trouble, say them, my child, say them.' I promised him I would; and oh, Martha, what do I not owe to them? Now, as to anger, let me tell you that one who is employed by Mr. Simonds will find enough to try him; he is a good manager and a fair dealer, honest to his hands, and faithful to his word. Excellent traits, these, Martha; but, like every other mortal, he has his drawbacks; he is passionate himself, and the most imperious man living. For this reason he can seldom retain one in his service the second year; they generally get enough of him the first. I only engaged with him for three months, to fill out the year of a clerk who had indignantly left before the expiration of his term."

"And did he forfeit his salary, Alfred?"

"Yes, every cent of it; but Mr. Simonds paid him up for the time he stayed, and let him go. Every one who knew him, prophesied I would be glad when the three months were out; but, instead of that, I have engaged again, and this time for a year. Well, do you know, it is

all by the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary,' I have been able to do it. Whenever he begins his lordly, domineering ways over me, and I feel anger rising in my heart, I forthwith commence an 'Our Father,' then follows the 'Hail Mary;' and by the time that is finished calmness is restored; or, if not, I continue them till it is. One day a lady came in, made a purchase of ten dollars, handed me what I supposed was a ten-dollar bill, and left the store. I still had the bill in my hand when I was called to wait on another customer, a gentleman; he, also, made a ten-dollar purchase, and handed me a twenty-dollar bill to change. I reached out the bill I held in my hand, and, glancing at it, saw the lady had made a mistake, it was a hundred, instead of a ten dollar bill, she had given me. I was provoked with myself for not having noticed it before she turned from the counter; I knew, if I should tell Mr. Simonds, he would rave at my stupidity; and, may-be, insinuate dishonest intentions. Giving the gentleman his change, I thought I would say nothing of it, and when I came home to dinner, I would go round by the lady's residence and call on her."

"Then, you fortunately knew her?"

"Yes; I had seen her several times. It was Mrs. Simpson. But this arrangement did not quiet me; I was ill at ease. I began to fear, if she should discover her mistake before I could see her, she might recollect where it was made, return, and, if I happened not to see her come in, walk up to Mr. Simonds, explain the matter to him, and he, from my silence, would at once accuse me of downright dishonesty. As soon as I could, I drew him aside, and told him all about it. He gazed at me silently at first; I saw by the red, swollen face, a storm was gathering, and oh, Martha, you should have heard it burst on me; or, rather, you should not, for, I verily believe, it would have fright-

ened your gentle soul from your body. He declared a blind fool would have seen there was no X on the bill; he wouldn't have his reputation ruined by any smooth-faced knave in his employ. I told him it was a mistake I would be most happy to rectify, and that mistakes would happen with the best intentioned people. 'Yes, yes, young man, I understand you!' he exclaimed, 'mistakes will happen. A very comfortable doctrine that for young gents to preach, whose extravagance outruns their income—very comfortable doctrine, when the mistakes are all on *their* side!' and from that he went on till every feeling of anger in my heart was aroused. I was about retorting sharply, when the 'Our Father' came into my mind. I was trembling with rage, but I repeated it and the 'Hail Mary,' and I continued repeating them till he cooled down. When I came out of the counting-room, who should I see but Mrs. Simpson; she was inquiring for Mr. Simonds. I immediately walked up to her: 'Mrs. Simpson,' I said, 'you made a slight mistake this morning, and I did not see it till after you left the store. I handed you a hundred, instead of a ten dollar bill?' 'Yes, madam!' I replied; 'here it is.' She took it, handed me the right one, and returning to Mr. Simonds, I told him Mrs. Simpson had called again, and the mistake was rectified. 'It is well for your sake, young man, that it is!' was all the answer he deigned me. My heart was full of gall and wormwood against him for his base insinuations; but, still, while waiting on the customers, the silent 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' went up; before I came home to dinner every feeling of resentment had died away—I was as happy and light-hearted as little Ellen or Clara. Now, Martha, they may tell you it is just as good a rule, when in a passion, to count ten, twenty, or a hundred, according to the urgency of the case, before allowing yourself to speak; but, from

experience, I know it is not. I had been told to do this; told, too, that it was the advice of Jefferson to his namesake, and, of course, had weighty enough authority to be followed. I followed it. With what result? Listen, Martha; when angry, keeping myself counting prevented me saying many a foolish thing. So far, it was good; but, although my tongue was chained, bitter feelings rankled deep in my heart, I think even bitterer than if I had spoken out. I have often caught a glimpse of my face, in a glass, at such times, and I would hardly have known myself, there was such a hard, determined look about the mouth and eyes. For hours—even days—I could scarcely think of any thing else but the harshness and injustice with which I had been treated; I could not bring myself to speak in the old friendly way to those who had offended me; a cold, precise formality marked my bearing to them. I had been injured; I had not retorted; the counting had kept me from that, and now I should have my revenge; they should see, if I was silent, they could not abuse me with impunity. Pride, Martha; deep, sullen pride, was getting fast possession of my heart. Father James saw it all; at a time when I had been tauntingly reminded of the falling off of father's school, by one of the pupils of the new academy, and made no reply in return, he took me aside and said: 'Alfred, you did well to be silent.' I was pleased with his approval, and at once told him the method that had been pointed out to me, and that I was determined to follow it. 'But,' said I, 'Father, although Alfred Clement speaks not, he remembers.' 'That is just what I expected,' he replied, 'just what I expected. Your counting may do very well for those who have no higher sense of duty than what cold, selfish philosophy points out. It may make a man worldly prudent; but, like the maxims of the world, it falls far

short of its aim—it will never make him happy. Alfred, I will point out another way—the Christian's way—it will not only keep you silent in the heat of passion, but will enable you to forgive, and forgiving will restore peace to your heart.' Then he told me, whenever excited to anger, instead of counting, to say an 'Our Father,' and 'Hail Mary.' In the 'Our Father,' he said, 'you pray to be forgiven as you forgive others. Repeating it at such times, the meek counsels of the blessed Saviour will recur to you, and professing his doctrine, you will feel urged on to practise his precepts, after praying not to be led into temptation; and to be delivered from all evil, you will address your petition to her, by whose intercession the first miracle of the Saviour was wrought, even before the time of his public manifestation had arrived—the changing of the water into wine, at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Mary's power was great on earth—how much greater in heaven! In her poor home in Nazareth, the angel Gabriel saluted her, full of grace, declaring the Lord was with her, and that she was blest among women; and the Church, therefore, to the Angel's salutation, has added an earnest appeal for her prayers.' And then, in a more impressive manner, he went over, and told me concerning these prayers, what I have already repeated to you. Well, Martha, I gave up the counting, and adopted the 'Our Father,' and 'Hail Mary,' and now I don't want to say any thing in self-praise but——"

"But you merely wish to speak, Alfred, of the success of this course, to point the superiority of Christian rules over worldly prudence?"

"Exactly so, Martha; while adhering to the counting, while excited, I was silent, but wretched, sullen, and morose; since adopting Father James's advice, I am not only silent at such times, but the hard, bitter, and revengeful feelings

melt into Christian meekness and forgiveness. I forgive, and, as Father James told me, peace is restored to my heart, and with that peace I am happy. When disagreeable memories rise before me, as they did to-night, when speaking of Agnes Hilton, the 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary' are sure to drive them away; and when I am tired and discouraged, and begin to contrast our present with our former home, they are the friends that point out the many blessings that still surround us. We have our daily bread, we are not led into temptation, and our home, though humble and poor, is peaceful and happy; and I, your great, awkward, and ungainly brother, have the best sister in the world."

A tear stole down Martha's cheek, and her voice, soft and low, was slightly tremulous. "Alfred," she said, "can I be a better, kinder sister than you are a brother? How eagerly Ellen and Clara watch every night your coming in! What a halo your bright, cheerful face throws round our little room! And how generously your earnings go for the support and comforts of the family!"

"And do not yours go for the same?"

"I earn but little in comparison to you."

"That makes no difference; that little goes just as generously."

"That may be; but I often think what would we do without you. Oh! Alfred, may God bless you, and may each of us, Ellen, Clara, and myself, as faithfully perform our parts."

"Martha, you make me ashamed of myself; I am not half as good as you think me. But come, mother, say something; I have not heard you speak since tea-time."

A smile was on the widow's face; love and gratitude beamed from her meek blue eyes. "Alfred," she replied, "I prefer listening to you. While you are talking, I feel

how little it takes to make the Christian happy; his religion, and its holy maxims, are such a boundless source of happiness, that outward circumstances can only momentarily affect him. Life is no parched and dreary waste to him; deep in his heart is a fountain that never fails; thus, fresh flowers are ever springing up in his path, let that path be ever so brambly and thorny. But I see the children have fallen asleep; I will awaken them, have them say their prayers, and put them to bed. Poor little dears, the day is long to them; night finds them weary!" She roused them up, and while kneeling at their mother's knee, saying their prayers, Martha and Alfred opened a book, the "Following of Christ," and together read from its inspiring pages. Scarcely had the cheeks of little Ellen and Clara touched the soft pillows before their eyes were closed in sleep. Awhile the widow lingered at the bedside, then pressing a mother's fond kiss on the forehead of each, she returned to her seat.

"Mother!" said Martha, raising her eyes from the book, "I finished the jacket, rolled it up, and placed it in the chest. Alfred, you must not forget it Monday morning."

"No, Martha; and now, while I think of it, I must tell you a project I have in mind."

"What is it?"

"It is to have a ride one of these days. I will get leave of absence for one day from Mr. Simonds, and then, Martha, you and I will leave the crowded city far behind. Oh! it will be glorious to get a sight once more of wide-stretching fields, crooked rail fences, and snug country houses; it will bring dear old Stanton fresh to our minds."

Martha's countenance wore a pleased expression; but, after a little reflection, she said: "Alfred, would it not be better to wait till your year is out; then, without losing

time, after making your engagements, before commencing another term, we might, mother, Ellen, Clara—all of us, go out to Stanton for a few days. The ride on the cars will not cost so much as the hire of a carriage, and we will all have such a pleasant time. We can call on Father James, the Donaldsons, Fitzhughs, and all our old friends."

Alfred seized her hand. "God bless you, Martha," he exclaimed, "that is just what we will do. We'll wait till my year is up, and then we'll see old Stanton again. We will visit the church, father's school-house, the fields, orchards, maple groves, and all the dear places. Do you think, Martha, that Mr. Hilton would let Mark go too?"

"Certainly, Alfred, it would not be in his kind heart to refuse. But, as we are to receive in the morning, we will now dismiss the thoughts of Stanton from our minds; I will again open 'The Following of Christ,' at book fourth, chapter xi., and read two or three chapters on the preparation of the soul for holy communion."

"And, after that," said the widow, "we will say our prayers, and, in the name of God, go to our rest."

With grave attention the reading was listened to, and when Martha closed the book for awhile, they bowed their heads in meditation; then, kneeling, the widow said the prayers, while Martha and Alfred, with fervent devotion, made the responses.

When Martha had retired, she thought of Father James's advice to Alfred. Not only when excited to anger was he to say an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary," but when dejected and cast down. Certainly, against Agnes Hilton she cherished no hard or revengeful feeling; she would not injure her if she could; she did not hate her; so afraid was she that any such sentiment should enter her soul, that every day, morning and night, she said a prayer for her; she had

ever spoken respectfully of her, and in no way had she exposed her pride and haughtiness; still it was wrong in her to be so cast down; like Alfred, instead of brooding over her unkindness, and the misfortunes which had visited her family, she would keep saying an "Our Father" and "Hail Mary." This would make her, not only in appearance, but in reality, happy. God was her father and she was his child; why then should she despond? He would do all for the best, and she would resign herself to his holy will. With a prayer that she might be made worthy to receive her blessed Saviour in the morning, and might obtain from him a patient and submissive spirit, she closed her eyes and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

It was a clear, cold morning after the storm. In the sitting-room, reading one of those stories which seem life put on paper, and which preach to the young touching lessons of home duties, was Becky Starr; grandfather and grandmother, in their comfortable easy-chairs, were sitting by the fire; the troubled expression had passed from grandfather's face, but still he looked weary and worn; grandmother's calm, meditative eyes beamed with a mild, gentle light; her knitting-work was in her hand, and the clicking of the needles fell musically on the ear; Jane was busy in the next room, helping her mother in the morning's work.

"Becky, child," said grandfather, after awhile watching her countenance, "you seem greatly interested in that little book."

"Not so greatly interested, grandfather, but that I can lay it aside if you wish me to talk to you."

"No, child, no. If you draw amusement or instruction from its pages, read on. I must not be selfish; I have been too much so."

Becky at once closed the volume, and, moving up to her grandfather, seated herself on the stool at his feet. "Grandfather," she said, laying her hand on his knee, "you must not say that; you are aged, and it is our duty to attend to your comforts, and reverence your slightest wish."

"Child," he replied, covering with his broad palm the

little hand, "it is not every one that thinks so. The young are apt to look upon the old as selfish and exacting. Their reminiscences are tedious to them, their ways disagreeable, and their presence irksome. They do not like the bowed form, gray hair, and wrinkled brow always before them, reminding them what, if they live, they must surely come to."

"Grandfather, this should not be; the bowed form, gray hair, and wrinkled brow, tell of a long journey drawing to a close—of a goal almost won."

"What goal, my child?"

"The goal of peace and rest, after the toils and troubles of life."

Grandfather mused awhile, and said: "Yes, child, the goal they are nearing is of peace and rest, if a sure faith—the faith Christ bequeathed to man—is lighting their way; but if it is not, they are like Johnson's 'Obidah's Journey of a Day.' They find themselves overtaken by night, darkness obscuring their path, and tempests gathering around them. They know not, child, whether they are advancing on to safety or destruction; a dreadful uncertainty hangs over them, and, conscious that in the morning and noontime they neglected to secure themselves a sure path, terror and remorse seize upon them. This, child, is what makes the closing scene so fearful to many an aged one."

"But, even then, grandfather, they should not despair. God's all-powerful hand is able to draw them into the right path, the narrow path, which leads to everlasting rest and repose."

"I believe you, child. Not more grateful to Obidah was the light from the hermit's cottage than have been the teachings from those books you brought to us." Taking up his staff, he arose. "Mother, we will return to our room, and Becky, child, come with us; while we are too weary to

read, we will listen to you on the subject you promised to speak to us about."

Becky took up some netting from the table, and followed her grandparents to their room. When they were seated, grandfather said: "Child, you recollect you were to tell us the difference between the Mass and the Communion of your Church."

"Yes, grandfather, I do; but what I said then, I must again repeat. You must not expect me to be able to give so full or learned an explanation of this or any other question relating to our beautiful religion, as you will find in the works you are daily reading."

"Child, your grandmother and I do not expect you will, but even while resting we wish to be learning; the little you will tell us will help us in our search."

"In the blessed Sacrament, grandfather, we receive under one kind, the form of bread only, the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ into our souls for their nourishment and support. In the Mass, the sacrifice consists in the separate consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ, and offering the same to the Eternal Father, as a perpetual memorial of the death of his Son, and a continuation of the same to the end of time."

"Child," said grandfather, "I have derived much satisfaction in reading your books; I see plainly in unity, apostolicity, and universality—marks which must, of necessity, point out the Church of Christ—the Catholic Church, above all others, bears the palm. The solemnity of her ritual tends greatly to increase fervor and devotion, and the system of her teaching implants firmly in the hearts of her children the seeds of morality and virtue; but it seems strange to me that she should, in these passages, take the literal

meaning of our Saviour's words. In John, x. 9, he says: 'I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.' And again, xv. 5: 'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.' These are taken in a metaphorical sense; why not the expression of the bread being his body, and the wine his blood?"

"A superficial glance at these passages might lead to such a conclusion: but, grandfather and grandmother, if we for a moment consider the nature of metaphors, we will at once see there is a vast difference between saying, 'I am the door, I am the vine, ye the branches,' and 'This is my body, this is my blood.' A metaphor is a figure founded on the resemblance which one object bears to another. Christ says: I am the door, because through him we enter heaven; by him heaven is open to us. In the same way he is the vine, we the branches, because it is from the vine the branches derive their nourishment and support, and are able to bring forth fruit; and it is through him, and from him, we receive the life-giving grace to bring forth good works. But, grandfather and grandmother, in the blessed institution wherein he bequeathed himself to us, his expression carries not the same import. Mark me here: in saying he was a door and a vine, he did not say a door and a vine was him; he was a door and vine, because in some respects he resembled them, because he possessed some of their properties; but at the Last Supper he said of the bread that it was his body; and of the wine, that it was his blood. Taking bread, he blessed, and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said: 'Take ye and eat: This is my body.' And taking the chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the

New Testament, which shall be shed for many for the remission of sin.* Here the language is plain and simple. No metaphor was needed to open their minds to the reception of this divine mystery; already had he prepared them for it. In John, vi., to show there was nothing impossible to God, he fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and when they were filled, and the disciples had gathered up the fragments, filling with them twelve baskets, he departed from them; but so struck were they with the miracle, that they sought him out, and then it was he began conversing with them on the bread of life. When he said: 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world.† The Jews, grandfather and grandmother, as the sacred text tells us, debated among themselves, saying: 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?‡ and Jesus answered them, saying: 'Amen, amen, I say unto you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed; and my blood is drink indeed.§ Now many of his disciples thought this a hard saying, and to confirm the truth of his assertion, and at the same time correct their gross apprehension of eating his body and drinking his blood in a vulgar and carnal manner, he spoke of his ascension as an instance of his power and divinity, and that his body and blood was not to be partaken of as they supposed. But many left him, and walked no more with him. 'When Jesus said to the

* St. Matthew, xxvi. 26, 27.

† St. John, vi. 51, 52.

11*

‡ St. John, vi. 53.

§ St. John, vi. 54, 55, 56.

twelve: Will you also go away? Peter, answering, in the name of his brethren, replied: Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* They could not understand more than the others, but they submitted their reason to faith, and Christ rewarded their submission by explaining to them at the Last Supper how they could partake of his body and blood, free from a gross or carnal manner. Taking bread, he gave thanks and brake, and gave to them, saying: 'This is my body which is given for you: Do this for a commemoration of me.' In like manner, the chalice, also, after he had supped, saying: 'This is the chalice, the New Testament in my blood, which shall be shed for you.† The disciples knew his power. They had seen him perform miracles, and the miracle he then performed before them did not astonish them. Then it was they understood how they could partake of his precious body and blood without doing it in a gross or carnal manner.‡ And he bade them feed others with the same divine food: 'Do this in commemoration of me.' And in giving the command he gave the power: 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.§ Now to prove to you, grandfather and grandmother, that the disciples understood him in the literal sense, that they placed no figurative signification upon his words, I will open the Bible and turn to St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, x. 16: 'The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?' Behold here, grandfather and grandmother, their belief in the literal meaning of his words: and behold, too, their obedience to his divine

* St. John, vi. 68, 69.

† St. Luke, xxii. 19, 20.

‡ See note under John, vi. 63.

§ St. John, xx. 21.

command: 'Do this in commemoration of me.' But, as still stronger proof, in the very next chapter he gives a history of this adorable institution. It is so beautiful and so conclusive, would you not like me to read it?"

"Yes, child; the words of the apostles are words of life. Read them to us."

"I will, grandfather. He says, commencing at verse 23: 'For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, the night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat: this is my body, which shall be delivered for you: Do this for the commemoration of me. In like manner, also, the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink it, for the commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.' Here, grandfather and grandmother, all the circumstances attending the institution of the blessed sacrament are minutely mentioned—the time when, the night in which he was betrayed, the manner, blessing and breaking the bread, and blessing the chalice, consequence of unworthy reception, guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; wherein, because 'he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord.' What stronger proof could there be that the apostles took the literal meaning of our Saviour's

words? How could one by an unworthy reception be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord—eat and drink judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord—if the body and blood of the Lord be not there?”

Grandfather made no reply, but arising he slowly walked up and down the room; his head was bent, and the thin silver locks fell over his venerable features. Grandmother's knitting had dropped from her hands, but she knew it not; on her face, so calm and thoughtful in its expression, rested a great light. For awhile she remained with her eyes fixed on the carpet; then folding her hands, and raising her head, her lips moved in prayer.

“And this is what I have heard called ‘the idolatrous Mass,’ the ‘idolatrous sacrament!’” said grandfather, resuming his seat.

Becky smiled: “Grandfather,” she said, “the slanders heaped upon the Catholic Church, and the fierce spirit of hatred directed against it, afford the strongest proofs of its being the Church of Christ: ‘If the world hate you, know ye that it hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’* They hated Him without cause, and without cause they have hated His Holy Church. They accused Him of having a devil; and they have accused His Church of all evil.”

Grandfather was deeply affected; leaning his forehead on his open palm, he remained some time buried in thought. At length, raising his head, he observed: “On Christmas morning I noticed that none but the priest partook of the cup.”

“No, grandfather; the laity partake only under one kind.

* St. John, xv. 18, 19.

“But did not Christ give a positive command to *all* to drink of the chalice, as well as to eat of the bread? ‘Drink ye *all* of this.’”

“To all the twelve apostles he certainly did; and they obeyed him; they all drank of it.* But, grandfather, as I told you before, this was not only intended as a sacrament, but as a sacrifice. As a sacrament, receiving under one kind, we receive Christ, whole and entire, into our souls; he cannot be separated. He is true God and true man, under the form of bread, and under the form of wine. Christ said, John, vi. 51, 52: ‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.’ The disciples at the Last Supper received under both kinds, for they were not only partaking of the sacrament, but offering a sacrifice. In this sacrifice which is a memorial of Christ's death for the more lively representing the separation of Christ's body from his blood, the priest consecrates and receives in both kinds. But unless offering up the holy sacrifice, that is, grandfather and grandmother, unless saying Mass, neither priest, bishop, nor pope receive but in one kind. In Luke, xxiv., we read that our Saviour, on the day of his resurrection, appeared to two of his disciples, when on their way to Emmaus; they knew him not, but when at the close of the journey he sat down to the table with them, and took bread, blessed, and gave to them, their eyes were at once opened. Now, grandfather and grandmother, if this had been common bread, would the eating of it have opened their eyes? No; and this is proof positive that the disciples then received under one kind. And again, in Acts, ii. 46, we read that the disciples con-

* Mark, xiv. 23.

tinued the breaking of bread. In chapter xx., 7, it says : ' And on the first day of the week when we assembled to break bread.' You see from these passages that from the very first the faithful received under one kind ; yet, lest my words might lead to a wrong conclusion, I will mention, that while it is a matter of faith that under the form of bread the precious body and blood, soul and divinity, of Christ is received into our souls, it is only a matter of discipline whether we receive under one or both kinds ; for whether we receive under the form of wine, or under the form of bread, the blessed and loving Jesus is still received. He cannot be separated ; he cannot be divided ; neither do we, receiving under both kinds, receive two Christs. The Holy Ghost descended on our Saviour in the form of a dove, and on the apostles in the form of fiery tongues, still we know there is but one Holy Ghost ; thus it is with the blessed sacrament under either form, or both forms, there is but one Christ."

" But, child, the bread seemed not of the common kind."

" No, grandfather ; the Church makes use of wafers of unleavened bread in the sacrament of the Eucharist. By unleavened, I mean that it is of fine wheaten flour, with no other mixture than pure water. The reason for this is to have it of the same kind as that Christ used when he instituted the blessed sacrament. You recollect, grandfather and grandmother, it was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. Now upon that day, and for six days after, there was no leavened bread to be found in all Israel ; it was even death to eat of any other than unleavened bread during that time. This was in accordance with the law of Moses. In Exodus, xii. 15, it says : ' Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread : in the first day there shall be no leaven in your houses : whosoever shall eat any thing leavened, from the first day until the seventh, that soul shall

perish out of Israel.' From this it is conclusive, being the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread, that our Saviour made use of no other at the Last Supper. Unleavened bread is also symbolical of sincerity and truth. St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, v., 7, 8, admonishes us to forget the old leaven of malice and wickedness, and feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The wine made use of in the sacrament is the wine of the grape. And now, grandfather and grandmother, for a fuller explanation of this sacrament I will refer you to Challoner's ' Catholic Christian.' " Becky ceased, and for awhile her grandparents were silent ; then grandmother spoke :

" Dear Becky, do you recollect you were to tell us of the sacraments of your Church ?"

" Yes, grandmother ; I do."

" When reading Milner's ' Second Mark of the True Church,' its sanctity, we found there, were seven sacraments. This of the Eucharist is one, will you now tell us of the other six ?"

" Yes, dear grandmother, with pleasure. I will commence with Baptism, the first Christian sacrament ; this washes away actual and original sin, introduces us into the Church, and makes us children of God and heirs of heaven. Its water is true, natural water ; the form, the one our Saviour gave when he commanded his disciples to ' Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'"

" But, child," said grandfather, " which way does the Church administer it, by dipping, pouring, or sprinkling ?"

" It is not essential which way, grandfather ; but it is customary with the Church to administer this sacrament by dipping in the water, or pouring water on the person bap-

tized ; the former way is used in the East, the latter in other places."

"But, Becky, does the Church hold that baptism is a saving ordinance?"

"Yes, grandmother, it does: 'Except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'"*

"Therefore, child, the Church holds that without baptism, none can enter heaven?"

"Grandfather, there are two exceptional cases: first, if one is so situated that he cannot possibly receive the sacrament, yet has an earnest desire for it, joined to a perfect love of God and a true contrition for his sins, and dies in these dispositions, such a one is saved, for he receives the baptism of the Spirit. The other case is, when one before baptism, yet having desire for it, suffers martyrdom for his faith, he is saved, he is baptized in his own blood."

"Child, I hardly think you can call these exceptional cases."

"Why, grandfather?"

"Because it seems one must be baptized, one way or the other; either by water, Spirit, or blood, to be saved?"

"Very true, grandfather; and this shows how strongly the Church considers baptism necessary to salvation. In a case of necessity, when a priest cannot be had, and a child is in immediate danger of death, a layman, woman, or even child, can administer this sacrament; but they must be very careful, to render the baptism valid, to use the exact form, that is, to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But unless the case be urgent, it is a criminal presumption for a layman to administer it."

* St. John, iii. 5.

"But, child, if a person has been baptized in any other church, does the Catholic Church hold that baptism valid?"

"Yes, grandfather, if the true matter and form have been observed. That is, if true, natural, not artificial, water has been used; at the same time, pronouncing the words: 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Catholic, in repeating this, always makes the sign of the cross, but if this sign is omitted, as of course it is with Protestants, provided the true matter and form are observed, it does not render null the sacrament. The next sacrament in order is Confirmation."

"Before you proceed with that, Becky, having mentioned the sign of the cross, tell us why it is so much used by Catholics."

"It is openly to profess our belief in a crucified God, to show the world that we are not ashamed of the cross, and to remind us continually of Christ's death and passion. Making the sign of the cross is making an act of faith, hope, and charity. We believe in Christ crucified, we hope through his crucifixion to obtain pardon for our sins, and we love him with our whole hearts for all he has suffered for us. It is made use of in all the sacraments to denote that it is through the death and passion of Christ all their efficacy is derived."

"Mother," exclaimed grandfather, "surely to a Christian—one who hopes for salvation through the cross—this sign ought to be held in reverence and respect; not sneered at and contemned."

"No, father, certainly not. Contempt for the sign of the cross implies contempt for the religion of Christ. But, Becky, dear, we will no longer hinder you; tell us now about the second sacrament."

"It is a sacrament, grandmother, by which, after bap-

tism, we receive the Holy Ghost to strengthen and confirm us in the faith ; hence its name, Confirmation. It is administered by the imposition of hands, and anointing the forehead with chrism, with these words : ' I sign thee with the sign of the cross, I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation ; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; ' its ordinary minister is a bishop, and as, like baptism, it leaves a spiritual mark upon the soul that can never be effaced, so, like baptism, it is never received but once. In baptism we are reborn children of God ; in confirmation we are enrolled under the banner of the cross to fight the battles of the Lord. Job says : ' The life of a man upon earth is a warfare, and in this sacrament we receive weapons with which we may win the victory. ' These weapons are the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost : *Wisdom*, which weans our affections from the world, to the love and enjoyment of God : *Understanding*, to know and penetrate the excellency of them : *Counsel*, whereby to choose what is for the glory of God, and the good of our souls : *Fortitude*, to withstand the devil, and all his agents : *Knowledge*, to discern the right from the wrong : *Piety*, to walk with delight in the service of God : *Fear*, to adore him in all his attributes, and tremble to offend him.* These weapons enable us successfully to combat all our spiritual enemies, and, in the end, gain the crown of glory, which is laid up for us in heaven. Grandfather and grandmother, do you recollect in the last chapter of Luke that our blessed Lord bade his disciples, before they should begin their mission, to wait in the city till they had been endued with power from on high. And, then, in the first chapter of Acts, where this command, in speaking of the ascension of Jesus, is men-

* " Poor Man's Catechism," p. 207, 208.

tioned, and in the next, how the disciples did wait till the promised strength came, till the Holy Ghost descended upon them."

" Yes, child, we recollect it, now that you have spoken of it to us."

" And do you recollect, in chapter viii., that when the apostles that were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, how they sent to them Peter and John, and who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost ? This was after their baptism ; they had not yet been endowed with power from on high, but when Peter and John laid their hands upon them, the Holy Ghost descended upon them. From the very next verse we learn that this ceremony was called the imposition of hands. In chapter xix. we find that, when the Church was established in Ephesus, those that had been baptized Paul imposed hands upon, and they thereby received the Holy Ghost. And, again, in Hebrews, vi., we read of the imposition of hands, proving plainly, grandfather and grandmother, that this second sacrament was practised by the apostles."

" But, child, in these passages to which you have referred, I hear nothing of the anointing, yet you told us that it was ministered, not only with the imposition of hands, but anointing the forehead with, I think, you said, chrism."

" Yes, grandfather, I did ; but in 2 Corinthians, i. 21, 22, you will find anointing is part of the ceremony. St. Paul says : ' Now he that confirmeth us with you in Christ, and he that anointed us, is God. Who, also, hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts. ' "

" Becky, child," said grandfather, " is this the way the Church has always administered this sacrament, by anointing, as well as by imposition of hands ? "

"From the writings of the Fathers, and the councils of the Church, it is evident that it is. St. Cyprian lived in the third century; he writes: 'It is moreover necessary, that he who has been baptized should be anointed; in order that, having received the chrism, that is the unction, he may be anointed of God, and possess the grace of Christ;'* and in the council of Laodicea, held in the fourth century, the Church says: They who have been instructed must, after baptism, be anointed with the celestial chrism, and be made partakers of the kingdom of Christ.† Many others could I quote to prove that this sacrament has always been administered in the one way, but it would weary you, and these I have quoted will convince you that anointing with chrism, as well as imposition of hands, has ever, from the apostles' time, been practised by the Church."

Grandfather crossed his hands on his cane, and bowed his head on them.

Grandmother observed: "Becky, dear, we must think over what you have said. Father and I must not let lightly pass from our mind the things we have heard."

Becky was silent; but, while her fingers were busy with the netting, her heart was lifted in prayer.

A half hour passed away; grandfather slowly raised his head, looked earnestly at grandmother, then, turning to Becky, said:

"Child, I would like to know what this chrism is."

"Chrism, grandfather, is a compound of oil of olives and balm of Gilead, blessed by a bishop on Maunday Thursday. The outward anointing of the forehead with chrism represents the inward anointing of the soul with the Holy Ghost. The oil, whose properties are to fortify the limbs,

* Ep. lxx. ad Jan. p. 125.

† Can. xlviii. p. 5105,

and to give a certain vigor to the body, represents the like spiritual effects of the grace of this sacrament in the soul. And the balm, which is of a sweet smell, represents the good odor of Christian virtues, with which we are to edify our neighbors, after having received this sacrament.'"*

"But, tell us, child, is confirmation, like baptism, a saving ordinance?"

"No, grandfather; it is not so necessary to salvation, but that a person may be saved without it; but it would be very wrong, if an opportunity occurred, not to receive it. God's loving mercy should not be slighted; he has instituted the sacrament for the good of our souls, and it is our imperative duty, if we possibly can, to avail ourselves of its wonderful means to salvation. The next sacrament in order, is the Holy Eucharist; but, as I have already spoken of it, I will proceed to the next, Penance."

"Wait a moment, child; there is another question which I wish to ask; but, perhaps, I weary you with too many?"

"No, grandfather; it is a pleasure for me to answer them. What is it you would like to know?"

"Becky, child; it is well, when studying out a difficult question, to learn the meaning of every word. You are now explaining the sacraments, and it may seem like bringing in a foreign subject; but as you mentioned Maunday Thursday, when speaking of the bishop's blessing the chrism, I would like to know the meaning of it; why it is called Maunday Thursday, and to what does it refer?"

"It is so called, grandfather, from the first word of the anthem, *Mandatum*, 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you,' and is in mem-

* Challoner's "Catholic Christian," p. 44.

ory of our Lord's Last Supper, when he instituted the blessed sacrament of his precious body and blood." Becky was just commencing an explanation of the sacrament of Penance, when Jane summoned them to dinner.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was not till the afternoon of the next day that grandfather and grandmother again sent for Becky.

"Well now, child," said grandfather, as she seated herself near him, "we will hear what you have to say about Penance. I will be very candid; I think you have in it the hardest sacrament of the seven to explain." Becky smiled.

"It would be hard, grandfather, if I had not Scripture and the early testimony of the Church to support it."

"I have heard a great deal about this sacrament, child, and I once considered it the masterpiece of all villanies. I looked upon Catholics as the most miserably deluded set in the whole world. I had been told that they were taught to believe they could buy from their priests pardon for their sins, and not only for those already committed, but for those they wished to commit! What scripture could sanction so horrible an impiety? What doctrine so damnable? Words are unable to express the deep, settled feeling of detestation I had for a religion so utterly at variance with every sentiment of virtue and morality. But, child, this feeling has passed away; although I do not yet understand on what scriptural authority this sacrament is based, my eyes have been opened to know this buying pardon for sins already committed, and license to commit more, is a vile and shameful slander."

"It is, grandfather; and many a Catholic family, living

away from the Church, among Protestants, and many a poor girl and boy, gaining, by the sweat of the brow, their bread among them, have every feeling of their hearts outraged by this, and other horrid misrepresentations of their holy religion. Now, I will try and tell you and grandmother the Catholics' belief concerning this sacrament, and the scriptural authority for that belief. Penance is an institution of Christ, by which those who have fallen into sin after baptism, by confession, contrition, and satisfaction, may obtain absolution from the priest, pronounced by the authority of Christ."

"Child, what do you mean by satisfaction?"

"I mean a faithful performance of the penance enjoined, such as making restitution to our neighbor, prayers, alms-deeds, or fasting."

"And does the Catholic believe that these things merit forgiveness for his sins?"

"No, grandfather; the Church teaches that man of himself can merit nothing. All his merit comes through the death and passion of Christ; still, 'good works, proceeding from grace, are so acceptable to God, that through his goodness and promise they are truly meritorious of eternal life.'* Hence, St. Paul, in his First Epistle to Timothy, vi. 18, exhorts us to be rich in good works; and in his Epistle to Titus, iii. 8, he says: 'It is a faithful saying; and of these things I will have thee to affirm earnestly, that they who believe in God may be careful to excel in good works. These things are good and profitable to man.' St. Peter, in his Second Epistle, i. 10, entreats us: 'To labor, that by good works we make sure our vocation and election.' God wills every man to be saved; through the

* "Catholic Misrepresented and Represented."

merits of Jesus Christ, out of his infinite mercy, he grants to all abundant grace to work out their salvation. But we must respond to this grace; we must, as the Apostle entreats us, 'labor, that by good works we may make our vocation and election sure;' for 'God will render to every man according to his works.' Of ourselves we can do nothing, but 'we can do all things in him who strengtheneth us.'* 'Grandfather, do I make my meaning clear to you?"

"Yes, child; you mean that good works are necessary, but the merit arising from them comes from the merits of Christ; that we have nothing that we have not received, and are, therefore, not to glory as if we had not received."

"No, grandfather; all our glory is in Christ—in whom we believe, in whom we merit, in whom we make satisfaction, bringing forth 'fruits worthy of penance.'—Luke, iii. 8. This fruit has its efficacy from him; by him it is offered to the Father; and through him is accepted by the Father."†

"Well, child," said grandfather, "I see in this part of the sacrament of penance—satisfaction—nothing contradictory to Scripture. What more just, if we have wronged our neighbor, to undo that wrong so far as in our power? If we have stolen from him, to restore what we have unjustly taken. This was even more strictly laid down in the law of Moses. Becky, child, in Exodus, xxii., you will see, if a man stole an ox or a sheep, killed and sold it, he was to restore five fold and four fold; and if he had not wherewith to make restitution, he was himself to be sold. If that which he stole was found alive with him, he was to restore double. The law of restitution, enforced in the sacrament of penance, is a just and righteous law. And as to prayer,

* Phil. iv. 13. 1 Cor. iv. 7.

† St. Vincent's Manual, p. 196. Note.

is it not the very life of the soul? What Christian could object to that?" Grandfather said nothing of alms-deeds and fasting, and Becky thought she ought to make some remarks about them.

"Grandfather," she said, "and as to alms, in Matthew, vi., the loving Saviour teaches how they are to be given. 'When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee.' He teaches us also how to pray: 'When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee;' how to fast: 'When thou fastest, annoint thy head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not fasting to men, but to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee.' Now, grandfather and grandmother, I know the generality of Protestants, while willing enough to bestow alms, quite object to fasting; but if fasting were not one of the good works which brings forth fruit worthy of penance, would Christ himself have instructed us how to fast, and have promised a reward for it?"

"No, child, certainly not," said grandfather; then, turning to grandmother, he exclaimed: "It is surprising, mother, that, in all our readings of this chapter, we never observed the force of these words."

"Father, they have often struck me, and I have wondered when the blessed Jesus taught us how to fast, as well as how to give alms and pray, that any body of Christians should deny that fasting was not a Christian's duty as well as prayers and alms."

"It must be, mother; if it were unnecessary to fast, instead of telling us how, Christ would have told us not to

fast at all. Strange, while founding belief on the Bible, so much of the Bible should be overlooked, and its teachings passed heedlessly by. But, child, now that we have heard about Satisfaction, we will speak of the Confession. Mother and I have come to the conclusion, that it is made in a kind of general way, something like the confessions of the newly converted among Protestants, except, instead of being made before the whole congregation, it is made in private, to the priest."

"Grandfather, I did not know that Protestants practised confession in any way."

"I do not know as they call it confession, child; but when they experience religion they arise in church, and tell the trials through which they have passed, what wretched sinners they have been, and how the remembrance of their wickedness had almost plunged them into despair, when the great mercy of God descended upon them, assured them of forgiveness and restored peace to their hearts. Now is not the confession of the Catholic made something like that?"

"Not in the least, grandfather. A Catholic, preparing for confession, offers up earnest prayers, that he may have a true sorrow for his sins, and grace to avoid them in future; then, praying that he may be enabled to make a sincere confession of them all, he carefully examines his conscience to see wherein he has offended in thought, word, or deed; after this, revolving in his mind all God has done for him and the poor return he has made, the great danger incurred by sin and the terrible punishment awaiting it, he once more offers up his earnest prayers to God, begs from him the gift of a true contrition, and making a firm resolution, with his holy help, never more to offend him, and to fly the occasion of sin, he enters the confessional.

There, on his knees, penetrated with a sense of his unworthiness, and the infinite mercy and goodness of God, who offers to him reconciliation and forgiveness through the sacrament of Penance, he makes the sign of the cross and exclaims, 'Bless me, Father, for I have sinned!' The priest pronounces the blessing in these words: 'The Lord be in thy heart and in thy lips, that thou mayest truly and sincerely confess all thy sins: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Amen;' then the penitent repeating the *Confiteor* as far as 'through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault,' proceeds to accuse himself of all his sins; telling first when he was at confession last, if he was absolved, if he performed the penance enjoined, and if he performed it with fervor and devotion, or carelessly and without due attention. Having confessed all his sins, which after a careful examination, he can remember, he concludes with these words: 'Of these, and all other sins of my life, I humbly accuse myself; I am heartily sorry for them, and beg pardon of God, and penance and absolution of you, my ghostly Father;' he then finishes the *Confiteor*. This prayer, grandfather and grandmother, you will find in our prayer-books. If you wish, after tea, I will bring one to you."

"Yes, child, bring one to us, we would like to see it. But proceed, mother and I are greatly interested."

"I will, grandfather. After the *Confiteor* he listens with attention to the advice of his confessor, and humbly accepts the penance he enjoins, whether as to restitution to his neighbor, prayers, or alms. When the priest absolves him, he respectfully bows his head, and receives the absolution as coming from the hands of God himself. This is the spirit in which the Catholic makes his confession. To

hide or conceal a mortal sin in the confessional, or color it, so as to make it appear less than it really is, he would consider a grievous crime, making null his whole confession."

"But tell us, child," said grandfather interrupting her, "what do you mean by mortal sin?"

"One that kills the soul, grandfather, and merits eternal punishment. In saying it kills the soul, I do not mean that the soul dies. No; the soul is immortal, and can never die. But as by death the soul is separated from the body, so by mortal sin the soul is separated from God. Now as the separation of the soul from the body is called the death of the body, so the separation of the soul from God is called the death of the soul. Therefore, by mortal sin the soul suffers a spiritual death: hence its name. All sin is either mortal or venial. Mortal sin I have explained; and of venial, I will say, it does not kill, but weaken, the soul. That there are different degrees in sin Scripture and reason tell us. In Matthew, chapter v. verse 22, our blessed Saviour says: 'But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be guilty of the council. And whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be guilty of hell fire.' Here we see three different degrees of sins, by the three different punishments allotted to them. As to mortal sins, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, v. chapter, 19th, 20th, and 21st verses, and in other epistles points them out; and to prove that there is, what Catholics call, mortal and venial sin, St. John in his First Epistle, v. chapter, 16th verse, tells us there is a sin which is *not* unto death, and in the next verse, after telling us all sin is iniquity, that there is a sin which *is* unto death."

"Well, now, dear child, that you have explained this

matter to us, we would like to know on what scriptural authority the Catholic is obliged to confess his sins to a priest, and also what scriptural authority he has to believe that the priest has power to absolve him."

"Grandfather, when our blessed Lord gave the commission to his apostles to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and promised to be with them all days, *even to the consummation of the world*, did he mean that the apostles would live to the end of time?"

"No, child; they were only to live the natural term of life, and many of them not even that."

"Then, did not this promise extend to their successors?"

"Yes, child; to their successors in the ministry it surely did."

"And when he said to them: 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you,' did he not mean—with the same power and authority with which he was sent to establish his religion on earth, he sent them?"

"It seems so, child."

"It was so, grandfather; for, had they not been endued with power and authority from on high, could they, poor fisherman, have shaken the pride and pomp of the greatest empire on the face of the earth, swept their idols away, and established in their place the most sublime religion the world ever knew? All the old landmarks were to be removed, pride was to be humbled, and men that only sought after glory and fame, were great in the field of learning, and great in all the world calls greatness, were to bow in adoration of a God born in a stable, that led a life of toil and poverty, and ended that life by an ignominious death upon the cross. Unaided, they could never have done this; in vain had been their preaching; in vain the last drop of

their blood spilt in the cause. Power from on high was needed; and power from on high was given. 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold, I am with you all days, *even to the consummation of the world*.* Yes, he was to be with them in their successors, to the consummation of the world, and the power which the Father had given him he gave them. 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you, to preach, to teach, to baptize, to forgive sins;' and to prove, past a doubt, that the forgiveness of sins in his name was included in the divine commission, he breathed on them and said: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose you shall retain, they are retained.† This is the scriptural authority, the words of Christ himself, by which the priest of God is empowered to forgive sins, the scriptural authority which enforces confession of sins to him. In Matthew, xvi., after blessing Peter, and declaring he was the rock upon which he would build his Church, and that the gates of hell should never prevail against it, he promised to give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and that whatsoever he should bind upon earth, it should be bound in heaven; and whatsoever he should loose upon earth, it should also be loosed in heaven. Here the promise of the Son of the Eternal Father, the Saviour, whose blood ransomed a sin-cursed world, is given to Peter, and in Peter to the priests of the Church, that whatsoever they bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever they loose on

* St. Matthew, xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

† St. John, xx. 22, 23.

earth, shall be loosed in heaven: and shall we doubt the fulfilment of that promise? or shall we believe that Christ has forgotten to make good his word? To prove that, in giving that power to Peter, he gave it not alone to him, but to the Church, in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of chapter xviii., of the same Gospel, he says—and grandfather and grandmother, note the solemnity of his words, and note, too, the impressive manner in which the promise before given is again repeated:—‘If thy brother shall offend thee, go, and reprove him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouths of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican. Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.’ What words could be stronger or plainer, and, as long as Christ has said it, shall it not be done? Shall not the sentence which the priest pronounces on earth be ratified in heaven?”

With his forehead resting on his hand, grandfather revolved her words in his mind. Would Christ say one thing and mean another? When he said, ‘Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose you shall retain, they are retained,’ did he mean something quite contrary to his word? that the sins in the one place were not forgiven, and in the other not retained? No; the God of truth would not deceive his apostles. The commission he gave them was expressed in the plainest terms, and should vain man gainsay his words? ‘Woe to him that striveth with his Maker. Shall the clay say to him that

fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?”* Should God’s power be doubted, and his commands, because hard to be obeyed, be slighted? Troubled waves washed over grandfather’s face; but, at length, raising his head, he said:

“Becky, child, there is one more question I would like to ask concerning Penance; but first, I must remark, this confession of one’s sins to a priest seems to me the hardest thing in human nature. I might be willing enough to confess my sins to God, but to bow my knee to a sinful creature like myself, and whisper in his ear all the transgressions of my life, would be humiliating in the extreme; and, then, notwithstanding power had been given him to pronounce absolution upon my bleeding soul, once out of the sacred seat, the memory of them going with him, what advantage might he not take of the knowledge thus gained? How unjustly use the confidence reposed in him?”

“Grandfather, I admit confession of sins to a priest is very trying, but a rite so humiliating to the human heart would not, in all ages of the Church, have been so faithfully observed had it not been necessary, to enable the priest to use the power Christ had intrusted in him; in other words, had it not been necessary to obtain the pardon of them. And as to the latter part of your remark, dear grandfather, I will tell you, and you will find the same in Challoner, p. 126, ‘That, by the law of God and his Church, whatever is declared in confession can never be discovered, directly or indirectly, to any one, upon any account whatever; but remains an eternal secret betwixt God and the penitent soul, of which the confessor cannot, even to save his own life, make any use at all to the penitent’s discredit, disad-

* Isaiah xlv. 9.

vantage, or any other grievance whatever.' You see, dear grandfather and grandmother, another instance of the care and providence of a good God over all his creatures, and the tender solicitude the Church has for the spiritual welfare of all its members."

"We do, child; and I am glad you have told us this. Not for a moment should we distrust the mercy of God. 'The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure; they stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He hath sent redemption unto his people; he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name.'"^{*} The sunshine of peace rested on the venerable features of grandfather; raising his head, the long silver locks fell over his shoulders. It was some time before Becky spoke.

"Grandfather," she said, softly laying her hand on his knee, "what was the question you were going to ask?"

"Child, you have already answered it. It was if confession has always been practised by the Church. You say that it has."

"Yes, grandfather. In Acts, xix. 18, we read 'that many of those that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds.' Tertullian lived in the age next to the apostles. He writes: 'If you withdraw from confession, think of hell-fire, which confession extinguishes.' St. Basil, in the fourth century, writes: 'It is necessary to disclose our sins to those to whom the dispensations of the divine mysteries is committed.' St. Austin, in the sixth century: that 'Our merciful God wills us to confess in this world, that we may not be confounded in the other;' and again, 'Let no

^{*} Psalm cxi. 7, 8 9.

one say to himself, I do penance to God in private.' Is it, then, in vain, that Christ has said, 'Whatsoever you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven?' Is it in vain that the keys have been given to the Church?^{*} Grandfather, you thought the explanation of the sacrament of Penance would be a difficult undertaking; but having, as I said, Scripture and the early testimony of the Church to sustain it and assist me, I have easily done it."

"Dear Becky," said grandmother, "we have read the Bible all our lives; but it seems we have read it with bandaged eyes. The plainest texts were blurred to our vision, and only conveyed a confused meaning to our minds. But the bandage is removed; and now, like the blind suddenly restored to sight, we are bewildered and amazed. Our hearts rejoice in God, we know his mercy and power are great." Grandmother's voice was tremulous, and as she concluded she wiped away a tear, trickling down her cheek.

Becky was affected; but, with a calm voice, she asked: "Grandfather and grandmother, shall I not continue with the sacraments?"

"Certainly, child," exclaimed grandfather, "you were to tell us of them all. Which is the next?"

"It is Extreme Unction. In the sacrament of *Baptism*, we are received into the Church, and made heirs of heaven; in *Confirmation*, we are confirmed in the faith; in the *Holy Eucharist*, our souls are fed and nourished; in *Penance*, their maladies are cured; and in *Extreme Unction*, they are strengthened for their passage out of this life into a better. Having watched over us and guided us through life, the loving mercy of God leaves us not in death. In that trying moment he is with us; enemies rise up against us, but

^{*} "Extracts of the Fathers," taken from Milner,

he is our keeper; they cannot harm us, for he is our salvation."

Grandfather reverently laid his hand on her head. "Becky, child," he said, "your words remind me of the words of the Psalmist, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*' Becky, child, I gather from your words that these are the sentiments with which the dying Catholic receives this sacrament."

"Yes, grandfather, they are; though in the midst of death he is not afraid, for God is with him; a table is prepared for him in the presence of his enemies, and he is anointed with oil. The mercy and goodness of God following him all the days of his life; in leaving his house of clay he hopes to go into the house of the Lord forever. All the parts of this sacrament are explained in St. James's Epistle, v. chapter, 14th and 15th verses, where he commands, 'Is any one sick among you? let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil, in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.'"

"Can this sacrament, child, be received but once?"

"Yes, grandfather, whenever a person is in danger of death by sickness, he can receive it; but in that sickness he cannot receive it again, unless it be long, and after a

* Psalm xxiii., 4, 5, 6.

partial recovery he suffers a relapse. Infants, fools, and insane persons, who have no lucid intervals, cannot receive this sacrament, because, having no reason, they are incapable of sin; neither can persons under sentence of death."

"Why, Becky, can they not in this case?"

"Because, grandmother, it was commanded to be administered to none but the sick; and, therefore, only those who are in danger of death by sickness can receive it."

"Child, this looks strange! Should not the poor condemned criminal, if he repent, be allowed to receive the benefit derived from it? Death, at any time, is a terrible ordeal through which to pass; but when the body is worn down by pain and weakness, the trial seems not so great. Every pang speaks the wretchedness and misery of life; the nothingness of the world rises up before them, and turning from the bed of pain and suffering, they rejoice to leave the tabernacle of the flesh, and go into the everlasting habitation of the Lord. But not so with those who, in health and vigor, with long years stretching on before them, find themselves suddenly cut off from length of days, and the grave opening to receive them. The memory of their crimes darkens the past—the present is without comfort, and must the future be without hope?"

"No, grandfather, God forbid! Through the merits of Christ, in the sacrament of Penance they can obtain pardon for their sins; and although they cannot be anointed—Extreme Unction being a sacrament only for the sick—with humble confession and true contrition, they can receive into their poor souls the precious body and blood of Christ. In their need they are not left without spiritual aid and comfort."

Again grandfather was silent. The fire was burning low, and noiselessly, so as not to disturb his meditations; Becky

arose, stirred up the dying embers, and put on a fresh supply of wood. She had resumed her seat, and was busy with her netting, when he raised his head and said: "Well now, child, your grandmother and I would like to know the oil made use of in the sacrament."

"It is oil of olives, blessed by a bishop on the Maundy Thursday of every year. The beautiful and solemn prayers accompanying the anointing you will find in our prayer-books; also, prayers and instructions for the sick, and prayers for the dying. And now, before proceeding to the next sacrament, I must remark that, from the beginning of the world, in order to save confusion, and for the general welfare of the whole, it has been necessary to have some one on whom authority might devolve—some one to lead, govern, and direct. In Genesis, first chapter, we see man created, and dominion over all the living creatures of the earth given to him. Adam ruled his own family, and the patriarchal form of government seemed to exist till after the flood. But of the grandsons of Noah—Noah, whose descendants were to repopulate the earth—we read that Nimrod began to be mighty; he chose Babylon as the seat of his kingdom, and cities and kingdoms began to spring up. Pride, ingratitude, and worldly glory were sweeping all remembrance of the Creator from the minds of men, when Abraham was chosen to keep alive the faith and homage due to God. He was promised a numerous posterity; children were born to him, and from Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, and so on, from father to son, the priesthood descended till the time of Moses. Then the law of nature was reduced to a written law, and the priesthood was confined to the family of Aaron. This continued till the time of Christ; then the old sacrifices were abolished, and he became our high-priest, offering himself to the

Father, a sacrifice for the sins of men. This sacrifice, in an unbloody manner, was to be continually offered up, and he consecrated his apostles to the priesthood, placing Peter as visible head on earth. They, in their turn, using the power which had been given them, were to consecrate others, thus continuing the priesthood till his second coming. And now, grandfather and grandmother, Holy Orders, the sixth sacrament, is the sacrament by which priests of God are consecrated to their holy offices, and receive power and grace to do them worthily. There are seven degrees, or orders, in ascending to the priesthood; four less, and three greater. Of the less, the first is *Porter*; the second, *Lector*; the third, *Exorcist*; and the fourth, *Acolyte*. By these lesser degrees, or orders, they ascend to the greater; the first of which is *Subdeacon*; the second, *Deacon*; and the third, *Priest*. While receiving the lesser orders, they are at liberty to retire from the ecclesiastical calling and marry; but if they choose to become subdeacon, they must engage themselves wholly and forever to the service of God and his Church."

"And from that time they cannot marry?"

"No, grandfather, they are to lead a life of perpetual continency. St. Paul says, 1 Corinthians, vii. 32, 33, 'He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.' Now, in order that the priests may be wholly devoted to the service of God, that they may have no family cares to distract their minds from their holy calling, the Church has always ordained that none but such as are willing to leave all to serve Christ shall become priests. Enrolled as his ministers, no ties bind them; from country to country they can go, carrying the light of the Gospel to

all nations. Contagious diseases appall them not; no wife or children are in danger from them. Poverty is not feared, for their Master before them was poor; persecution retards them not, for, ministers of a crucified God, they rather rejoice in suffering."

"Well, child," said grandfather, after some consideration: "this being free from the distracting cares of a family seems for a minister or priest no ways unreasonable to me. Many have thought and said vile things concerning it, but it is only those whose hearts are naturally corrupt, and who, carrion-like, gloat over a tale of vice, concocted no matter by whom, or of whom, if it is only sufficiently spiced with horrors. But to those who can study cause and effect, it presents another instance of the wonderful wisdom which guides the Church. No wonder the Catholic religion, in spite of all opposition, gains a sure foundation everywhere; no wonder it is so extensively spread. Its ministers have nothing else to do but to struggle and battle for it; nothing else to care for but its advancement."

"Dear grandfather, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls are the beginning and end of their care, their labor. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, xiii. 17, tells us, that they watch as being to render an account of our souls; and, therefore, that they may do this with joy and not with grief, he exhorts us to obey them, and be subject to them. A heavy responsibility is theirs; and if St. Paul, a vessel of election, stood in need of prayer, how much more they! They are our spiritual fathers, and through them, next to God, we are indebted for our spiritual life and being. It is through their ministry that we receive the blessed sacraments, those great means and helps to salvation, and it is our duty ever to pray for them; while, as 'Christ's ambassadors,' we are to honor and respect them."

"But, Becky, you spoke of bishops conferring the sacrament of Confirmation."

"I did, grandfather; but the order of priesthood has two degrees of power and dignity; that of *bishops*, and that of *priests*. The office of a priest is to consecrate and offer the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, under the forms of bread and wine; to administer all the sacraments, except *Holy Orders* and *Confirmation*; to preach the Gospel, to bless the people, and to conduct them in the way to eternal life; as, also, to bless such things as are not reserved to the benediction of the *bishop*. The office of a bishop is to govern the Church, both clergy and laity, in his particular diocese; to inflict censures, excommunication, suspension, etc.; to offer sacrifice, to preach the Gospel, to give *Confirmation* and *Holy Orders*; none but bishops receive this sacrament *in full*, so as to have power to administer all the sacraments. Of these degrees of Holy Order, only bishops, priests, and deacons constitute the hierarchy of the Church, which is of divine institution. But, as there are several degrees in order, so there are higher and lower degrees of dignity and spiritual jurisdiction in the episcopacy itself: first, that of *Ordinaries*; second, that of *Archbishops*; third, that of *Primates*; fourth, that of *Patriarchs*; fifth, that of the supreme head and common father of all, the *Pope*, who holds his supremacy, as successor of St. Peter, by divine right.* For a fuller explanation of this sacrament, and the manner of administering it, I will refer you and dear grandfather to the 'Poor Man's Catechism,' and Challoner's 'Catholic Christian.' The former of these I studied at the dear Sisters, and its lessons come back so fresh to mind, that you will see, in answering

* "The Poor Man's Catechism," pp. 256, 257.

your questions, that I have sometimes used its very language."

"Did you study Challoner too?"

"No, grandfather; but, nevertheless, it is familiar to me. For some time past I have had a Sunday-school class going over it. And here I may as well remark, as anywhere else, that, in order that no Catholic may be ignorant of his faith, the learned divines of the Church have assiduously labored to compose works, wherein the doctrine, precepts, and every thing belonging to the Catholic religion are carefully explained. These works are plainly and simply bound, and within the reach of all."

"And Becky, child," said grandfather, smiling, "this refutes another slander against your Church."

"What is it, grandfather?"

"That the priests strive to keep the people in ignorance. I must say that I have always found Catholics, no matter how poor and uneducated, better acquainted with the principles of their religion than the members of any other denomination I have ever come in contact with. But now, child, we will listen to the next sacrament."

"It is Matrimony, grandfather. A sacrament of the new law, by which a new dignity is added to the indissoluble marriage contract, and grace given to those who worthily receive it. It was instituted in the garden of Eden, when God, casting Adam into a deep sleep, took from his side a rib, and fashioning it into a woman, presented her to him as a companion and help; and, because she was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, therefore, man is to leave father and mother and cleave to his wife. In John, ii., we see that our blessed Saviour honored the married state by his presence at the wedding in Cana, at which he was pleased to work his first miracle."

"But, child, what is the difference between marriage being a contract and a sacrament?"

"Grandfather, as a contract, a civil contract, marriage is to fill the earth with inhabitants; as a sacrament, it is to increase the members of God's Church, and fill the courts of heaven with happy redeemed spirits, who will join the angelic hosts in eternal praises to the Three in One—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, v. 32, calls it a great sacrament. And why? because, being an indissoluble contract—a contract which no power on earth can break—it is a type of Christ's union with his Church, which is also indissoluble; and to those who worthily receive it, gives grace to live in peace and mutual charity together, and bring up their children in the love and fear of God. Now, in order to receive this sacrament worthily, it is necessary to be in a state of grace. Sins should be washed away in the sacrament of Penance, holy communion should be received, and the intention of entering the married state should be pure, like the pious and chaste Tobias and Sarah. If under the care of parents, they should be consulted, and on no account should so important a step be taken without their approval and consent; but, in using their authority, parents are not to force their children to marry against their inclinations."

"Child," said grandfather, "although I have seen several Catholics married to Protestants, I believe I have heard that the Catholic Church does not approve of these marriages."

"No, grandfather, she does not approve of them."

"And why not, child? I should suppose she would be pleased with them; for the Protestant being united to the Catholic in the closest ties, she would hope to see the Protestant thereby converted. I have certainly seen many instances of such conversions."

"No doubt, grandfather; but the reason the Church is averse to these mixed marriages is, that as long as the Protestant, notwithstanding St. Paul's solemn affirmation that it is a 'great sacrament,' looks upon it as no such thing, she does not wish her children to receive it with them. Another reason is, that it is often the cause of bitter family dissensions, the wife believing one way, the husband another; there is danger, too, that the Catholic party may be perverted; or, at least, not allowed the free exercise of their religion; and another danger is, that the children may be brought up in error!"

"But, Becky," observed grandmother, "in this matter I think there should be a generous understanding between the parents. One should not expect to have the sole guidance of the children's belief. A part, say the girls, should be taught to believe with the mother, the boys with the father."

"By no means," exclaimed grandfather, "mother, your good-nature would lead you into an agreement that would cause you much and bitter pain. Could you bear to see a part of your children brought up from their very infancy in a faith that you honestly considered wrong, and, being wrong, displeasing to God, and, displeasing to him, rendering them objects of his wrath?"

"Father, I did not look at it in that light, but a moment's reflection teaches me you are right. Surely it would be a great grief to me, and to any conscientious Christian mother. But, Becky, are there not such instances known?"

"There may be, grandmother, but it is in direct opposition to the Catholic doctrine. God and his Church will have no such division, nor give up thus their right to any one.* As to the manner in which the sacrament is received,

* Challoner's "Catholic Instructor."

or the marriage ceremony performed, you will see it in Challoner. And now, grandfather and grandmother, having finished the sacraments, as I said when treating of the second mark of the true Church, its holiness, are they not wonderful channels through which the grace of God may flow into our souls? By Baptism, original sin is washed away, and we are reborn children of God, and made heirs of heaven; by Confirmation, we are blessed with the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Ghost, and made valiant soldiers of Christ; by Penance, our souls, sick in sin, are restored to health, and their spiritual maladies healed; by Holy Eucharist they are fed and strengthened with the precious body and blood, soul and divinity, of our blessed Saviour; by Extreme Unction, they are soothed and comforted, and not left a prey to the terrors of death; by Holy Orders, faithful guides are furnished to lead them to the fountain of all good; and by Matrimony, they are raised above the grossness of flesh, and children are born not for the world, but for God."

"Becky, child," said grandfather, "I am much pleased with your explanation of the sacraments. Certainly, to a Catholic, they must be great helps to devotion. The more I reflect upon it, the more I am convinced that Catholicity reduced to practice, is very different from what I once thought it was."

Tears rushed to Becky's eyes. "Grandfather and grandmother," she said, "you now forgive your children for embracing a faith which you looked upon with so much horror."

"Child," grandfather replied, "your question pains us. Forgive them! God knows how, from our very hearts, we have long since forgiven them, and only felt that they, not we have been the aggrieved party. Oh, can they forgive us?—forgive me? Mother was always gentle, but I—oh,

can they forgive and forget the sternness and harshness of the past?" He bowed his head upon his hands, and his aged form trembled with sobs.

Becky arose, and tenderly threw her arms around his neck. "Dearest grandfather," she said; "your children have pitied and prayed for you. You loved them as your very life; is it any wonder, then, that you should feel deeply pained to see them cling to a religion that you strongly believed would lead them to eternal misery? Grandfather, they have nothing to forgive or forget. They know the depth of your affection for them, and not a day has gone over their heads that they have not prayed for you in your sorrow and affliction."

"Noble, noble-hearted children!" he exclaimed with streaming eyes, "while I reviled them, they prayed for me!"

"Yes, grandfather, they did; and now let your poor old heart be comforted. The mercy of God has washed away the remembrance of their sorrow, and now they are so happy."

"Praises to God! I am not deserving of this. But leave us, child, leave us," he exclaimed, dashing away the tears from his eyes, and abruptly brushing the thin, white locks from his lofty brow. She wished to ask him should she return with the prayer-book as she had promised, but she saw he was deeply affected, and questions would only annoy him. Stooping, she kissed his withered cheek, and having also kissed her grandmother, quietly left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

AGNES HILTON laid down her crayon, and leaning her cheek on her hand, gazed intently at the drawing before her. It was "The Taking of the Veil," and the young bride of heaven looked so calm and happy, laying aside forever the pomp and vanities of the world, that tears swam in her dark eyes,

"Oh, that I, too, were happy!" she sighed; a heavy feeling of loneliness weighed down her heart; the longer she gazed on the fair face the sadder she felt.

"Why should I long for imaginary happiness?" she exclaimed, sweeping back the soft ringlets, and resuming her crayon. "Why should I, looking upon a picture, fancy life and feeling on unsentient paper? Shadows have obscured the sunshine of my heart; but will the shadows last forever? Will not the sunshine again burst forth? It may, if not in my own home, at least in the home of another. Thank God, that hope is left to me!" Her eyes rested for a moment on an envelope lying on the table; it contained a letter from Walter Starr, which told of golden prospects opening before him; year after year had he toiled, and now the time, which once seemed so distant, was just at hand. A few months more, and her father could no longer delay the fulfilment of his sacred promise. Agnes would be his, and hand in hand they would go down the stream of life. Age might come upon *them*, but their love would never

grow old ; it would bloom in perennial brightness, and if cares and sorrows should gather around them, it would lighten them ; and when length of years made them weary of life, untouched by the shadows of death, it would go with them into another and better world, and last through the boundless cycle of eternity. Agnes's heart throbbed with gladness while reading the letter ; but, as she replaced it in the envelope, an undefinable dread cast a shadow over its bright hopes. Was she happy in her own home ? No. Would she be happy in his ? Time alone could tell. The past we know, the future is veiled. With unwearied fingers she worked on. The venerable priest and attendants, the altar back, with its lighted candles and vase of rich flowers, were finished ; a few more touches, and the picture would be done. She turned it, carefully viewed it, and again took up the crayon. With every thing around her to make her happy, she was wretched. What caused her wretchedness ? The same passion which created confusion in the highest heavens, and hurled legions of its brightest hosts down to the lower abyss of misery and woe. She arose from the table ; the picture was finished ; glancing at the little clock on the marble mantel, she went into her chamber, and soon returned habited for a walk. Wrapping up the drawing, from which she had just copied "Taking of the Veil," in a paper, she left the room. In the passage, as she was hurrying along, she met Martha, and though paler than ever, a calm, peaceful light beamed from her eyes. Agnes swept past her with pride and disdain, plainly visible in her countenance. Descending the stairs, the drawing fell from her hands to the hall below ; little Mark was there, and hastily picking it up, respectfully handed it to her. With a harsh rebuke for his officiousness, as she called it, she took it from him, and passed into the street. She was

going to visit Edith Carter, and remain with her during the night. Edith had become so low, that she was now obliged to have constant attendance. The fear of death had passed away, and, strengthened with the last rites of the Church, her gentle spirit longed for the moment of its release. As Agnes, after removing her cloak and bonnet, entered her room, a bright smile broke over her face.

"Dear Agnes," she said, "I have been looking for you, and I knew you would come !" How strangely hollow her voice sounded. Agnes's long lashes drooped, heavy with tears, as stooping, she kissed her forehead, and asked :

"And how, dearest, did you rest last night ?"

"My cough was very annoying, but poor mother suffered more than I ; it troubled her so to see me struggling for breath." In all her pain the gentle Edith thought only of the sufferings of others ; her own she scarcely minded. The poor, the objects of her tenderest regards, were not forgotten. Many a feeble mother's burden was lightened by her thoughtful care. Many a little one owed their warm shoes and stockings, and comfortable clothing, to her kind, unobtrusive charity. And through fear they might suffer when she was gone, she had prevailed on her father to set aside a part of the fortune that would have been hers, that the income arising from it, might be solely applied to relieving their wants.

"I have returned your drawing, Edith," said Agnes, laying it on the table.

"And have you succeeded in getting a copy to please you ?"

"Yes, I like it very well ; but I have purposely made some little variations."

"What are they ?"

"The fair young girl, you know, is represented as tall ; I

have drawn her about the medium height, but very slight; and the expression of the eyes was so much like yours, that I have also made the brow like yours; consequently, it is not so high as in the original, but it is broader. The sweet smile about the mouth, and the calm, holy peace of the whole countenance, I could not better; indeed, I had hard work faithfully to copy them." She seated herself at the bedside of the invalid. "Edith," she said, "I am going to stay with you again to-night."

"You are very kind, Agnes; but I fear it will be too fatiguing on you to sit up with me so often."

"No, dear Edith; you must have no uneasiness about that. I assure you, it would deeply pain me not to be allowed the privilege. You are going to open your lips to say you thank me, but you need not."

"Why should I not?"

"Because it's unnecessary: you are too weak to waste your breath thanking me for that which deserves no thanks at all." Edith made no reply, but watched the troubled waves that washed over her friend's face. After a somewhat lengthened silence, she spoke:

"Agnes, before I go, there is something I wish to say to you."

"Cannot you say it now, dear Edith?"

"No; not now. I am too weak, but I would not like to die with it unsaid."

Agnes looked at her surprised. "Edith," she said, "you know you can trust me. Tell me, dearest, is it any thing that grieves you?"

"Yes, Agnes; grieves me past words to tell. I must say it. I must, I must, before I go!" A violent fit of coughing nearly exhausted her breath. Agnes raised her up, and gently supported her in her arms, till it was over; then ar-

ranged the bed-chair, so she could lean in a sitting position against it.

Mrs. Carter entered the room, and after a kind welcome to Agnes, walked to the bureau, took up a powder, and emptying it into a glass half filled with water, gave it to the invalid.

"Is that the same you have been taking after coughing?" asked Agnes.

"Yes, the same; the doctor has in no way changed them."

"And do you continue the solution?"

"Yes, I occasionally take it; but it gives very little relief. Mother, Agnes is going to stay with me again to-night."

"Agnes, this must not be; so much loss of sleep will wear you out. Bertha sat up night before last, I did last night, and Johana will to-night."

"No, Mrs. Carter, Johana will not; I will, myself, to-night, sit up with dear Edith, and take the charge of her medicine. You need not fear to trust me, I shall be faithful and neglect nothing; and I will not talk, for I know how wearing this is to a very sick person."

"Dear Agnes, there is none that can take better care of our darling Edith; but you look pale, and I fear you have not strength to endure it."

"Mrs. Carter," rejoined Agnes, "you would not refuse me a favor that you could easily grant?"

"Certainly not."

"Then pray do me the favor to make no more objections. The nights I pass at the bedside of Edith are treasured in my memory, and will never be forgotten."

Tears appeared in the mother's eyes; warmly pressing her hand she said:

"And never, Agnes, will your faithful friendship to our

dear Edith be forgotten, either; but, tell me, will you take your tea with the family, or, shall I send it up, that you may take it with Edith?"

"The latter, Mrs. Carter, if you please."

After some further conversation, Mrs. Carter left the room. Agnes opened a book and read till the shades of evening obliged her to lay it aside. She looked at Edith; her wasted fingers were slowly going over the rosary, and her lips moved in prayer. Agnes thought a tear stood on her cheek, but it was too dark plainly to see. As Johana came in to light the room, she raised her hand and wiped it off. When they were again alone, Agnes tenderly asked: "Dearest Edith, have those moments of dread and fear passed away? Do they not occasionally rise up phantom-like before you?"

Edith's large blue eyes, intensely bright, as if the light of heaven shone from them, were set upon her. "Agnes," she said, "the mercy of God has banished every fear; no longer do I dread going into the presence of my Judge, for he is my Father. Earth is but our momentary place of banishment; heaven is our true home; there is our Father's home, and there is his children's inheritance." Her wan countenance glowed with seraphic love. It seemed as if the wing of an angel had touched her brow, there was such a heavenly peace resting upon it.

"But, dear Edith," rejoined Agnes, "does not earth's sadness sometimes weigh heavily on your spirit?"

Several moments passed before Edith answered. "Agnes," she said, "'tis the sorrow of others that casts a gloom over my heart. No longer weeping for myself, I often weep for them; their hopes, which should soar heavenward, trail in the dust; born for heaven, their thoughts cling to earth; passions choke the seeds of virtue in their hearts, and

tares are springing up where only the pure grain should be."

"You think, then, their sorrow is caused by some defect in themselves?"

"Agnes, there are many in affliction who, like Job, have ever faithfully served the Lord; sorrows gather around them and bitterness clothes their spirits; but, still, their trust is in God, and hope dieth not within them. The time of their affliction shall pass by, and in the end they shall be doubly blessed. But there are others, and 'tis for them I grieve, who suffer themselves to be tormented by their own passions; they walk in the shadow of death, and know it not; they feel secure while every danger is around them. With their vain self-trust, they wonder they are not in peace; but peace knows them not, she flies far from them; the passions they hug so closely to their hearts prove thorns in their sides, and in the end, if they cast them not out, like Esau, they will find they have sold their birthright for a miserable price."

The entrance of Johana, with a salver, interrupted the reply Agnes was about to make. A deep flush dyed her cheek. Edith's words had to her an implied reproof. "She, too, is leagued against me," she thought, "but let it be so, I have said it, and I will not change. Others have been persecuted for maintaining just opinions, and it is not surprising that I also should suffer for the same. What do I care for the opposition of the whole world? Shall I be made to bow and cringe to mean, insinuating, artful creatures, who cloak their low, selfish ends under religion? No; so long as Martha Clement remains in the house, so long shall I look upon her with every feeling of loathing and contempt; so long shall I refuse to accept her brother as mine. What spirit can she have to stay, when I have plainly told her

how matters stood? She would have long since left, but my mother and father have entreated her to stay; nay, my mother has begged her, if she considered her peace of mind, if she felt the least gratitude for what she had done for her family, not to go, and she has given her word that she would not. Well, I, too, have given my word, and we will see how it will end!"

Edith sighed heavily as she watched the scornful working of her features. Nothing was said during the meal; and although Edith was able to partake but very sparingly of the delicate viands, she was so oppressed for breath after eating, that Agnes gave her another powder, threw up the windows, and drew aside the heavy curtains. Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Murray, the latter Edith's sister Bertha, came in. Agnes was greatly alarmed!

"Is it death?" she whispered to Mrs. Carter.

"No, I trust not; of late she has many such turns."

"And can nothing be done to relieve her?"

Mrs. Murray hastily spoke: "Mother, I have often applied an oiled paper to the chest of my little Mary, when threatened with croup, would it not be advisable to try it for dear Edith?"

"Yes, Bertha, I think we will. It will do no harm, and it may relieve her."

A piece of paper was quickly oiled and placed upon her chest. It seemed to give relief, for a short time her respiration became less labored. Mrs. Carter and Bertha remained till she was easy, and after they had left, Agnes, with unwearied devotion, watched over her. Her cough was very distressing, and she slept none till in the latter part of the night; then she sunk into a heavy exhausting slumber. Agnes gazed down on her pale wan face, and tears trembled in her eyes. Memory went back to her own and Edith's happy school-days; day after day, with its regu-

lar routine of study, recitation, and recreation arose before her.

Edith, so calm and thoughtful, so happy and contented, who would have thought her gentle spirit would have been so sorely tried? Who would have thought that her sun would set before it reached its meridian—that ere the noon-day of life she would be sleeping her last sleep? The invalid tossed her arms, and murmured incoherently; Agnes arose, shaded the lamp, and again seated herself at the bedside.

"Poor, poor Edith!" she sighed, "what a wreck. Not one trace of your former looks can I discover. Where is the face that Jerome Powers loved so well? Should he return to earth, would he recognize in the wasted form the beautiful and blooming girl that was to have been his bride?"

Gracious heavens! what is life? a vanishing shadow: a cloud that melts and dissolves before we have time to study it. How many since then that were praised, flattered, and admired in society, have become residents of another world! They passed away, and their flatterers and admirers have forgotten them; the places that knew them know them no more, and in the mad struggle of fashion and folly they are not missed. If only the vain and giddy were subject to death, then might the grave and thoughtful feel themselves truly raised above them. But no, all, all must die—the simple and the wise, the learned and unlearned, the poor and the rich. Death knows no distinction; all belong to his harvest, and all are gathered in; nothing escapes his sickle. Again the invalid murmured in her sleep, and this time her words were audible.

"Father, for thy dear Son's sake, bless and convert her. Oh, Agnes! must we part, never, never to meet!" Heavy

drops glistened on her brow, and her features writhed as if in acute pain. A pallor spread over Agnes's face; softly arising, she moved to the table, placed a screen between her and the bed, partially lifted the shade, and turning up the wick of the lamp, opened a book. It was Chateaubriand's "Travels in the Holy Land;" and as she read of the desolation of that country, famous as the theatre of the most wonderful events recorded in Scripture, a strange feeling of awe came over her. Egypt points to her pyramids, and the still undecayed paintings of her ruined cities, as proofs of her former grandeur and magnificence; Greece is filled with mouldering monuments of her early greatness; Rome abounds in relics of her ancient glory; but Jerusalem teems with memories the most solemn that can affect the heart of man. There was the land of promise; there the home of the chosen people of God; there David and Solomon reigned; there the brave Judith prayed for strength to deliver her people from the hands of their enemies, and there praise and thanksgiving arose to God when her prayer was heard—when by her, a weak woman, the power of the Assyrian was humbled, and Israel saved from destruction. There the prophets foretold the coming of the Saviour; and there, in the fullness of time, Jesus was born. O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! that witnessed the life, miracles, and dying struggles of the Man-God! well mayest thou in thy desolation "seem yet to be pervaded by the greatness of Jehovah and the terrors of death!" Agnes closed the book, and leaning her elbows on the table, rested her head upon her hands; her temples throbbed, and questions which she could not silence rose up. Why did they turn a deaf ear to the burning eloquence of his words? Why were they blind to his astonishing miracles? Why did they hate and persecute him unto death? Because he came in the garb

of poverty; and their hearts, hardened with pride, would not acknowledge as King and Saviour one from among the poor and lowly. Had he come in regal pomp and splendor, as one of the princes of the earth, would they have despised him? No; they would have ranged themselves under his banner, and gloried in being his followers; but because he was poor, they hated and put him to death. Pride was the cause of the reprobation of the Jews! Pride crucified the Son of God! She glanced at the clock; it was time to give Edith her medicine. The glass was in her hand, and she stood at the bedside, dreading to wake her lest she might not be able to go to sleep again, when she opened her large blue eyes.

"Oh, Agnes," she exclaimed, "what a blessed sleep I have had!"

"Only two hours, dear Edith."

"Two hours! I do not know when I have had so long a nap! How refreshed I feel!"

"I am glad to hear it; and now, dear Edith, swallow this."

Edith swallowed the mixture, and handed back the glass. "Now let me shake up your pillows, and then you must try to go to sleep again."

"You may shake them up, Agnes, but I can sleep no more. Thank God, I have had such a good long rest!"

When she was laid comfortably on them she said: "Now, dear Agnes, will you not read me a few pages out of St. Liguori?"

"St. Liguori on the 'Love of Jesus Christ?'"

"Yes, Agnes; that is the one. Well may the venerable Bede exclaim, 'Blessed are the hands that write good books!' St. Liguori has passed to his reward, but in his works he still lives; still preaches the mercy, goodness, and justice of God; still encourages the weak and fainting, ad-

monishes the sinner, and strengthens and confirms the good. Oh, it sometimes seems, when I am reading his books, as if he, St. Liguori, had come to my sick-room, and was sweetly conversing with me. The tones of his voice ring in my ears; I look, and wonder I cannot see him."

"And do you ever fancy to yourself how he looked in the flesh?"

"Yes, Agnes, and it is quite different from the pictures I have seen of him. You recollect the one at the dear Sisters?"

"Yes, Edith, perfectly well. He is sitting at a table writing; on one side of him is his library, near it is his reading-desk, on which is an open volume, and over the desk is a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The Saint's countenance is very expressive and intellectual; in his right hand is a pen, before him a sheet of paper partly filled, near him is another sheet closely written over; a small figure of the crucifixion stands on the table on his left, on the right is a rosary, the crucifix of which is partly hanging down; another rosary is round his neck, and the crucifix of this he holds in his left hand. It seems he has been meditating upon it, for his eyes are raised in tearful sadness, while a glory plays around his features. Edith, I have studied that picture till it seemed I could almost see the trembling of the lips, and the convulsive heaving of the chest."

"Beautiful as it is, Agnes, it is not as St. Liguori comes pictured to my mind. A smile is on his face, and his countenance glows with the fervor and piety of his heart; charity beams from his eyes, and although he frequently speaks of the justice of God, he looks as if he had much rather dwell on his mercy. With the enthusiasm of St. Bernard, he has the mildness of Fenelon; his hands are stretched out to sinners to lead them to God, and when he weeps,

'tis not in sadness, but in joy, that they are converted. Such is St. Liguori to my mind; but now, dear Agnes, read to me from his blessed writings. In the stillness of the night, when the house is asleep, and darkness curtains the world, his words come so soothing and comforting to my heart."

"I see, Edith, as I turn over the leaves, many passages that look as if tears had dropped upon them!"

"Yes, Agnes; in the fearful struggles past, I used to fly to them for peace and comfort, and those passages which you see blotted with my tears, are the ones which seemed in my need particularly addressed to me."

Agnes removed the lamp to the stand near the bed, and giving Edith a spoonful of solution, seated herself, and in a low soft voice read till the invalid closed her eyes, not in sleep, but, with her crucifix clasped in her emaciated hands, to meditate on the peace-giving words she had heard. Agnes closed the little volume, and softly arising, walked to the window, and gazed down on the sleeping city. It was very dark—the darkness before day; all was tranquil, and the countless lamps stretching along the streets seemed guardian spirits of the night. The poor had forgotten "Life's endless toil and endeavor," the rich their pride and importance; sleep, for a time, had levelled all distinctions. The lines of the poet occurred to her:

———"The weary clouds,
Slow meeting, mingle into solid gloom.
Now, while the drowsy world lies lost in sleep,
Let me associate with the serious night,
And contemplation, her sedate compeer;
Let me shake off the intrusive cares of day,
And lay the meddling senses all aside.
Where now, ye lying vanities of life!
Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!
Where are ye now? and what is your amount?"

Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.
 Sad, sickening thought. And yet, deluded man,
 Thy scene of disjointed visions past,
 And broken slumbers will rise still resolved,
 With new flushed hopes, to run the giddy round."

"Yes!" she mentally exclaimed, "a few hours, and the struggle will again commence, passion will jar against passion, and the streets, so silent and deserted now, will be thronged with the busy, eager, bustling crowd; many will toil as if life were to have no end; others, the sad, the unfortunate, those whose hopes have all been crushed, and whose prospects all blighted, dragging through the weary day, will long for the sleep that knows no awaking." She leaned her head on her slender hand, and tears weighed down the long lashes. A violent fit of coughing seized the invalid, and roused her from her musing. She flew to the bed, raised her up, and again supported her in her arms till it was over. Then raising the bed-chair, she gently laid her against it. The next instant she handed her a powder.

"Agnes," said Edith, as she took the glass, "you look pale, and your eyes wild; I fear you are greatly exhausted."

"Not at all, dear Edith; think of the seekers of pleasure. What are my vigils compared to theirs?" Stepping to the table, she took up a soft towel, and returning, smoothed the damp hair on the broad brow, wiped the heavy drops of perspiration from her face, and rubbed her little hands and arms till they were dry,

"There, now, dear Edith, you feel better, don't you?"

"Yes, Agnes; and will you please tell me what time it is?"

"It is ten minutes of six."

"And another night is passed?"

"Yes, Edith; day is appearing in the east." The invalid commenced groping under the bed-clothes.

"What are you looking for, Edith?"

"My beads. I want them to say my morning prayers on."

"Well, do not trouble yourself, I will find them. I think I saw them when I raised you up." She placed her hand beneath her and drew them forth. Edith kissed the crucifix and signed herself with the cross. Agnes knelt; and, as in the days past at the dear Sisters, they said their morning prayers together.

The sun was rising when Mrs. Carter came in. "How did Edith rest?" she asked.

"In the fore part of the night, her cough troubled her a great deal; but, in the latter part, she dropped asleep, slept two hours, and felt greatly refreshed when she awoke."

"Thank God, she did! The night before, she had no rest at all."

Standing at the window, she happened to glance out. "Agnes, your carriage is come, and accept a mother's best thanks for your kindness to her poor sick child."

Agnes made no reply, but pressed her hand. Moving to the bed, she stooped over and kissed the cheek of the invalid. "Edith, I am going now, and may you have a pleasant day."

With a sudden impulse, Edith threw her arms up round her. "Oh, Agnes, Agnes!" she exclaimed, "may God bless you; and, I must say it, may he convert you. Oh! may not so much goodness be destroyed by one passion!" Agnes gently disengaged her arms, and with a bitter smile turned away. In the next room, she found her cloak and bonnet, Johana assisted her in putting them on, and Mrs.

Carter followed her to the carriage. Reaching home, she immediately retired to her room; laying aside her cloak and bonnet, she swept the long dark ringlets from her face, and threw herself on the sofa, but her head ached, and she could not sleep; arising, she walked up and down the room; a feeling of utter wretchedness came over her. "Home is no home to me!" she bitterly exclaimed. "Here I thought to rest; here I am more tormented than anywhere else. They say they have surrounded me with comforts. Yes; but take precious pains to poison them all. My own father and mother to league with a servant-girl and her family against me, their only child! If I believed in witchcraft, I would surely think they were the victims of some diabolical trick." An expression of intense scorn writhed her beautiful features. Happening in her walk to glance at her desk, she saw something from it had fallen on the carpet. She stooped, picked it up, and found it was the manuscript. Several days had elapsed, although she frequently thought of little Joe Harny, since she had looked into it. Drawing up her chair, she seated herself, and turned to the fifth chapter.

"A YEAR, how quickly it passes away, let it be heavy laden with sorrow, or light-winged with joy! The Connors did every thing in their power to soothe and comfort the orphan heart of little Joe Harny. Yet, often, despite all their kindness, his loneliness would press heavily upon him. In his dreams, his mother's slender form would hover round his bed; again the silvery tones of her voice would thrill his ears, and again she would smile upon him her sweet, sad smile. Reaching out his arms to clasp her to his heart, he would start, wake up, and find her gone, and he alone, all alone. Poor child! an overwhelming

sense of loneliness would oppress him—wringing his hands, he would cry:

"Oh, mother, mother! how shall I be able to go through life without you; never see you as long as I live; never hear your voice again! Oh, mother, mother! why don't death come to me?" He slept with Bernard; and, at such times, Bernard would twine his arms around him, and try to comfort him as best he could.

"But not all the time was he so sad and desponding. There were days that smiled on him as serenely as if death had never overshadowed his young heart; days that seemed so much a reproduction of days treasured in his memory, that every jarring sound would be hushed, and peace, soul-resting peace, would fill his whole heart, till he would almost feel the visible presence of his guardian angel leading him on. Undisturbed, he was left to enjoy these peace-laden moments. Precious moments they were to him; they dispelled the dark clouds obscuring his young life, and gave him strength to battle with the great future.

"The winter, spring, and early summer passed away, and a long-looked-for time drew near. It was between the hay harvest and the wheat, and they were all to go to church—all but Mrs. Connor and Maurice; they were to remain at home to see after the cows. For a fortnight before, there was nothing else talked of. They were to go on Saturday, stay over Sunday, and return Monday. For several weeks Bernard and Joe had very carefully reviewed their Catechism, also, Bridget, Nellie, and Mike; these latter were to make their first communion, Bernard and Joe for the first time to go to confession. The children would naturally have dreaded approaching this sacrament, but Mrs. Connor spoke of it as so great a favor, and dwelt so much on the great credit they would receive, of living so far from the church,

and knowing their Catechism better than those who lived near it, that their emulation was thoroughly aroused, and, in their great desire to excel, they entirely overlooked any embarrassment they might feel in approaching the penitential sacrament. Carefully the weather was watched, and most devoutly did they pray for a fine day; they were up early and late, working hard to get ready—for there were new suits throughout to be made for Bridget and Nellie and Mike, to make their first communion in—and talking incessantly of the last time they were at Mass, what Father John said, how the altar was dressed, of the grand music that rang in their ears for days after, and of the great happiness they possessed of being Catholics. An almost grateful feeling for that mark of the favorite children of God, contempt of the world, their little world, began to well up in their hearts. What did they care now that Deacon Lane's children called them Papists, and accused them of worshipping the blessed Virgin; or that Elder Pearson's family elevated their nostrils, and turned aside their heads every time they passed them by, and a thousand other petty nameless persecutions they had endured? What mattered it all now? They were going to Mass, to be present at the renewal of Calvary's sacrifice, and were they not rejoiced they could crowd round the cross, with each his little cross upon his shoulder? What would a Christian be without his cross?

"At last, Saturday, clear and cloudless, dawned upon them. Bernard and little Joe hastened to the pasture with the cows, breathlessly repeating on the way passages from the Catechism. After an early breakfast, all washed, combed, and dressed, down to little Miles—for he was to go too—they were handed into the heavy lumber wagon. Mr. Connor, Bridget, and Miles occupied the front seat, Nellie, Joe, and Mike the middle, Fanny, Bernard, and Hughy the back.

A full load it was; but, as Mrs. Connor remarked, they were mostly little folks, so there was less in weight than their number spoke.

"A long, tiresome ride they had; but, as the sun sent lengthening shadows to the east, they stopped before the house of Mrs. Donnell. Little Miles, who had fallen asleep in Bridget's arms, was immediately put to bed, to finish his nap. Mrs. Donnell flew round to make everybody comfortable. She took their things, led them into her little parlor, opened the windows, and handed a fan to each of the girls; then seating herself, she asked them a great many questions about their mother, spoke gratefully of the beautiful apples she sent her last winter, scolded them for bringing so large a basket of cherries, and laughingly wondered on what tree the jar of honey, carefully wrapped in paper, grew. As to little Joe, she exclaimed:

"Sure he was the child that had lost his parents; but, praises to God, hadn't he fallen into good hands? Why his cheeks are as red as pionies, and his eyes as bright as stars. Ah! its Mrs. Connor, God bless her! that wouldn't let a little orphan pine himself to death."

"Mr. Connor soon returned from the livery stable, where he had been attending to the wants of his tired horses.

"Well, Mrs. Donnell,' he said, sinking stiffly into a chair, and laying his hat on another beside him, 'here we are again!'

"Yes, sir; and it's a long time since I saw you."

"Ah! Mrs. Donnell, one that lives between thirty and forty miles from the church, with such horrible roads as we have got, can't get often to Mass."

"True, for you, Mr. Connor; but it must be a great cross to live so far from the church."

"It is, Mrs. Donnell,' exclaimed the lively Nellie; 'but,

you see, to comfort ourselves, we keep thinking of the old saying, "the farther from church, the nearer to God."

"Mrs. Donnell smiled; but the smile died away, as Mr. Connor asked: 'And how is Father John, and how does he get his health?'"

"Ah! poorly, poorly, poor man! He's drove to death; out day and night, scarcely home from one place before he's sent for to another. Last week he was sent for fifty miles to visit a sick man that had not seen a priest for eighteen years. He had just returned from some place below Littleton, and jolted for twenty miles over a horrible road, felt so stiff and lame that he could hardly stir; but the messenger begged of him, for the love of God, to try and see the sick man, for his mind was greatly burdened, and he couldn't die in peace till he had seen a priest. Well, without even waiting for a meal, he started with him."

"Did he reach in time?" hastily asked Bridget.

"Yes; on the morning of the second day he got there. The poor man's mind was greatly eased by confession. Father John anointed him and gave him the holy Viaticum; soon after he died—died with the voice of Father John, repeating the prayers for the dying, sounding in his ear. Ah! Mr. Connor, wasn't that a great consolation after all the years he was away from the church?"

"Yes, Mrs. Donnell, a great consolation, indeed. To many a one it has not been granted. You were a little girl, Bridget, but you remember the death of Hugh Keating?"

"Yes, father; and he now lies buried in our little burying ground."

"Well, Mrs. Donnell, the very year before the church was built in A——, poor Hugh hired out to a farmer, living about five miles from us. He came direct from New York, and didn't know of any Catholic being near, and sure we

knew nothing of him. One day, one of our neighbors, a sister to this farmer, was in, and speaking to Ellen, told her, that the day before she was to her brother's, and that his hired man was taken sick with brain fever, and was constantly calling on Jesus and Mary, and begging them to go for a priest. That she never saw any one so out of his mind, and that he kept tearing the cloths from his head, and striving to leave his bed so as to go home where he could see a priest. Ellen could hardly wait till I got in from the fields, and that very night, after the chores were done, we went to see him. Poor boy! how he did rave! He tore the cloths from his head, and, wringing his hands, called on our blessed Saviour and his holy Mother. I took his hand and signed him with the cross; he looked at me vacantly for a moment, then covering his poor unconscious eyes with his hands, sobbed the loved names—Jesus, Mary. For a while he lay still and quiet, then, starting wildly up, in piteous tones begged for a priest. Oh! how my heart ached! If there had been a priest within fifty miles, that night would I have started for him; but there wasn't, and all I could do was to kneel by his bed, and pray. All through the night he was very bad, and though no better by morning, I had to go home."

"And did Mrs. Connor have to go too?"

"Ah, no, Mrs. Donnell, Ellen stayed with him the short time he remained. It was only for a few days, poor boy; a few days!" Mr. Connor bent his eyes in a thoughtful manner on the floor, and slowly shook his head. 'Early on the morning of the sixth day,' he resumed, 'while the family, who had been very kind to him, were yet sleeping, Ellen saw a great change come over his countenance. She was kneeling by his bed, repeating, in a low voice, the litany for the sick. His eyes were closed, but tears forced their

way over his pale cheeks. 'Where am I?' he faintly asked, 'and who is with me?' Ellen told him how we had heard of his sickness, and, being Catholics, had hastened to him; because, we knew, it would do his heart good to see us. Poor boy! his whole frame shook, and faster and faster came the tears. To quiet him, for she was afraid, he was so weak, if he continued crying, it would bring back the fever. She gave him his medicine, and again kneeling, read aloud the Penitential Psalms. The tears dried away, and by-and-by he slept. Every thing seemed to betoken his getting nicely on, but soon after waking he began rapidly to fail. Ellen, in haste, sent for me; when I got there the doctor was standing by his bed, the family and a number of the neighbors were gathered in. Ellen, with his hand clasped tightly in hers, knelt by his side, reading aloud the prayers for the dying. All were greatly affected, and respectively moved aside for me. As I neared the bed, he faintly spoke, I bent down to catch his words: 'I shall never see a priest in this world,' he said, 'but 'tis God's will, and his will be done.' A light rested on his face. 'That is right, Hughy,' I replied; 'that is right. Bow to God's will; his will is always for our good.' Broader and broader grew the light, a smile, a heavenly smile, Mrs. Donnell, parted his lips; he folded his hands, and repeating, with great devotion, the loved names which had been on his tongue during his whole sickness, without a groan, a pang, passed away. Ah! Mrs. Donnell, never will I forget that death; it taught me that nowhere can one, who resigns himself to the will of God, die unprepared.'

"Mrs. Donnell, quite overcome, hurriedly wiped away the tears, and with the ostensible purpose of seeing to her meal, but, in reality, to hide her emotion, hastily left the room. A great sadness came over little Joe. The grave

of the stranger boy was beside his father's; and often, of a Sunday afternoon, when the Connors gathered into the little cemetery, to read the litany for the dead, had he laid himself down in the little hollow between the graves, and looking up into the depths of the clear blue sky, felt that the graves beside him were a mockery; that immeasurable distances lay between him and his loved parents, and that he must wait long weary years before Death would open the portals of the sky, and lead him to them. Nellie saw the great gravity of his face; drawing her arm around him, she brushed the hair from his forehead, and with sisterly kindness kissed him.

"Don't be sad, Joe," she coaxingly whispered, 'by-and-by we're all going over to Father John's, and he'll be so pleased with us for knowing our Catechism so well.' Little Joe smiled, and resolutely wiped away a great rolling tear.

"I don't see, for my part, Mr. Connor," said Mrs. Donnell, returning quite composed, 'why one need go and settle themselves so far from the Church.'

"I might say the same, Mrs. Donnell, if I did not see in it the hand of God. By thus settling ourselves away from the Church, we help to spread it. If the Catholics had stayed in New York, because there was the Catholic Church, instead of spreading out into the country, would there be to-day a Catholic church in A?"

"I don't know as there would, Mr. Connor; but it must be a great trial for them to be so far from the comforts of their religion.'

"Yes, Mrs. Donnell, it is; but, then, when we know that our trials are helping to spread it, we feel that we have been chosen to do a great and a good work.'

"And that you'll be rewarded for your trials?"

" 'Yes, Mrs. Donnell, rewarded in seeing churches spring up here and there, where, but for us, they would not be.' "

"Tired with his long walk, he found it impossible to sit any longer; rising, he walked up and down the little room with a careful tread, as if he still had on his coarse, heavy boots, and was afraid of making too much noise.

" 'And how, Mrs. Donnell,' he asked, 'does Father John stand these long, tiresome rides? "

" 'I don't see, Mr. Connor; may the Lord save him! I often fear he will sink under them, like Father Shiel. The Lord rest his soul! it was just so with him. Never any rest day or night, summer or winter!' Again she stepped into the next room, and after a few moments returned. 'I declare,' she exclaimed, standing with her hand on the door, 'one would suppose Father John had enough to do without going to Haughton every seven or eight weeks.' "

" 'To Haughton, Mrs. Donnell; to Haughton? "

" 'Why, bless you, yes! Didn't you know that he goes there? "

" 'No, this is the first I have heard of it. Bridget, do you hear that? Father John goes to Haughton! "

" 'Oh, Father!' was all the full heart of Bridget could say, and Mrs. Donnell continued: 'if it was only now and then that he went to Haughton, he might stand it; but think of all the other amount of labor that's on him besides that.' "

" 'If he only had a curate! "

" 'Curate! how can he get one when there's not enough priests to have one in nine places out of ten that need them? "

" 'Very true, Mrs. Donnell; but may the great God send faithful laborers to his vineyard! In a few years, I trust, we shall have more priests.' "

" 'That is just what Father John himself was saying. But come, Mr. Conner, Bridget, Nellie, and all of you, tea is ready.' "

"She led the way into the next room, and taking the head of the table, pointed out a seat to each. Encouraged by her frank, hospitable ways, the children heartily enjoyed their meal. Little Miles awoke during it; and rested with his long nap, had a fine appetite for the bread and milk Mrs. Donnell prepared for him. No symptom of childish fretfulness did he show; and Nellie, hugging and kissing him, declared there never was such a blessed little darling, and gave, as her candid opinion, that roses, after a shower, wouldn't look fresher or more beautiful than he; blessings on him! Then he was handed round from one to another, that each might have the pleasure of hugging and kissing him. Finally, coming to little Joe, he refused to go any further; but, with his fat little arm thrown lovingly round the orphan's neck, sat looking the very picture of content.

"After tea, they all went over to see Father John. He looked so worn and exhausted, that it seemed years had been added to his age; but buoyant and hopeful, he spoke of the labors of his widely extended mission in a tone that told he had a spirit happily suited to a pioneer priest.

"The children had intended telling them a great deal about their apples. When out at the time Mrs. Harny died, he stayed over night to the Connors, and going through their orchard, which had just begun to bear, had expressed himself greatly pleased with its size and variety. There were the trees with the Pound Sweets and Fall Pippins weighed clear down, and the Spitzenberghs and Greenans just as full as they could be. And Bernard requested Fanny and little Joe not to let him forget to tell him all about the plums, and pears, and—making a quick transition from the orchard

to the dairy—of the spotted-faced calf, line-back and brindle. They were sure it would all greatly interest him ; and then their Catechism—in their excitement they did not forget this—ah, wouldn't their knowing it so well more than all the rest delight his good heart ? and wouldn't they be very happy, and have all to talk at once to get through in any reasonable time with their wonderful stock of news. But now, standing before him, listening to his kind voice, and feeling his hand laid softly on their heads, they forgot all, and, embarrassed and frightened, crowded up close to Bridget and their father, and only in a bashful and hesitating manner let out some little monosyllabic sound, intended for yes or no, to his kind questions. When, however, he touched on their Catechism, Bernard and little Joe looked up with more confidence ; and when Mr. Connor told the good Father that before they left home they could repeat every word from beginning to end, without ever a question put in to help them along, their cheeks became still more flushed, and tears of gladness glistened in their eyes.

“ ‘ Father, please examine them from any place in it,’ said Mr. Connor, with parental pride. Then turning to his children, he fluttered his pocket-handkerchief in his hand and exclaimed :

“ ‘ Come, come, children ; you mustn't be afraid. Who's going to harm you ? Hold up your heads, and answer his reverence.’

“ A number of questions were asked, as ‘ What are the marks of the true Church ;’ the ‘ Articles of the Apostles’ Creed ;’ the ‘ Spiritual and corporal works of mercy ;’ the ‘ Cardinal virtues,’ ‘ Theological virtues,’ ‘ Seven sacraments,’ ‘ Gifts of the Holy Ghost,’ etc., etc. Although at first their answers were almost inaudible, they gained courage as they proceeded, and their voices became clear

and distinct. Towards the close of the examination, Mr. Connor, who had scarcely taken his eyes from off them, began to be greatly troubled with a profuse perspiration, to judge from the way he rubbed his brow and cheeks, and when Father John called them good, industrious children, an honor to their parents' Christian rearing, and bade them kneel and receive his blessing, he hastily walked over to the other side of the room, and, pretending to be greatly attracted by a picture on the wall, turned his back to the little company, and used the pocket-handkerchief more vigorously than ever. After the Catechism, Father John told Mr. Connor of a new church he was about building ; that he had already three hundred dollars collected, and in the bank, waiting till he should have enough to make some advances towards complete payment.

“ ‘ In the mean time, Mr. Connor, we are using an old building, formerly a dwelling, for a chapel.’

“ ‘ How long, Father, before you will be able to commence it ?’

“ ‘ Oh, I hope to have it framed and inclosed by another year.’

“ ‘ And how often will you be able to go there ?’

“ ‘ I suppose, unless I am so fortunate as to get a curate, not oftener than I go now, and that is only once in seven weeks ; and if I am much called off, not oftener than once in nine or ten. Oh, we need more priests ; we need more priests !’

“ ‘ Yes, Father, although few Catholics as yet, they are so widely scattered that one priest cannot possibly attend to them all. And Mrs. Donnell tells me that you come to Haughton.’

“ ‘ Yes, Mr. Connor, there is where my new church is going to be.’

"Haughton! Haughton!" he exclaimed, seizing the priest's hand.

"Yes, Mr. Connor," said Father John, smiling, "in Haughton."

"In Haughton! Oh, Father John, little did I ever think of a church being there. Why, it's only sixteen miles from us. Children do you hear that? Father John's going to build a church for us in Haughton."

"Their bright smiles and beaming eyes told they had not been unattentive listeners."

"I didn't know," said Mr. Connor, setting Miles down after a hearty caress, "as there were any Catholics at all in Haughton, and, of course, didn't know you went there, till Mrs. Donnell told me this afternoon. How long have you been going there?"

"About a year. I had been called to visit a sick man living five miles from Haughton. On my return, just as I reached Haughton, my wagon broke. I stopped at a blacksmith's in the place, and in the course of the conversation, or rather in the course of answering his questions as to where I was raised, and what I drove at for a living, I told him I was a Catholic priest. Well, you may be sure he was surprised; stopping from his work, he eyed me intently. 'Well!' he exclaimed, finishing his survey, and then quite silent went to work again. He worked on for some time; suddenly pausing, he looked me full in the face, and remarked: 'I guess, Elder, you don't know there's some of your kind of people living round here.' I told him no, I was not aware of it. 'How many are there?' I asked. 'Well, there are four families, I should think in all about twenty.' After a slight pause, he added: 'They live down by the mill.' 'Work in the mill?' I asked. 'Some of them do, and some don't; O'Brien, you see, is a miller;

he, of course, works in the mill; Murphy and Sullivan work out by the month for farmers, and Reilly works round wherever he can get a job.' I asked: 'How long have they been residents of the place?' 'Four months; the mill was then finished, and O'Brien being hired to take charge of it, the rest moved in with him. I tell you what, Elder!' he exclaimed, looking up and rubbing his hands, 'to-day is Saturday, and it's so late that you cannot get back to A—— to-night—no use in trying!' he nodded, seeing me about to speak: 'If you had started two hours ago, instead of waiting here to get your concern mended, you couldn't have got there to-night; so supposing you stay here, and preach for us for to-morrow? I tell you, everybody will be to hear you, for, except them down at the mill, none of us ever heard a Catholic priest.' I had not expected to reach A—— that night, but had intended staying over Sunday in Littleton, and there offer up the Holy Sacrifice; but thinking it might be the means our blessed Lord had chosen to draw these wandering sheep into the true fold, I concluded to remain in Haughton."

"But, Father John, you laughed," said Mike, forgetting his bashfulness, and grinning almost from ear to ear, "at the way he called you Elder?"

"No, my child," kindly replied Father John, "I was too much in earnest, and Mr. Franklin too unconscious of any blunder to mind it. Well, the news flew from house to house. A Catholic priest was in the place, and was going to preach next day in the school-house. They all flocked in so fast at the blacksmith's, that I hurriedly left, and repaired to O'Brien's." Father John's voice here grew husky, and his eyes filled.

"Oh, Mr. Connor," he said, "I can't tell you the joy of these poor creatures when they saw me, and heard I was a

priest. They gathered around me, sobbing and crying, and trying to speak. I sank into a chair, completely overcome. I couldn't help it,' he exclaimed, dashing away a tear, 'it put me in mind of the fervor and piety of the early Christians. I looked upon them as the Marys and Johns who remained faithful at the foot of the cross when prouder and sterner hearts trembled and shrank away.' Father John paused, and after a few moments' silence resumed :

"The next morning, going over to the school-house, I met Mr. Franklin, the blacksmith. "Well, Elder," he said, "we've been talking it over among ourselves, and we think it best for you to preach to us under the trees back of the school-house; there are so many coming that they can't all get in." 'But hold, sir,' I asked, 'do they who live out of the village know of my being here?' "Why," he answered, "you see yesterday was Saturday, and there was a great many farmers in; they brought the news home, and to-day they and many others will be in, and there's not a man, woman, or child in the whole village but what will be here too."

"The benches from the school-house were carried out, and these not sufficient, long boards were brought and other seats formed. Mrs. O'Brien sent up a table, and opening my portmanteau, I soon converted it into an altar. There, under the noble forest trees, with the blue sky arching above us, I robed myself to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. As I cast my eyes over the eager, wondering faces, thus strangely brought together, it reminded me of the multitude that used to flock to hear St. Paul and the other apostles, and I felt how unworthy was I to be a colaborer with them.' Again his voice trembled, and he turned aside his head to hide his emotions."

"Well,' he continued after a moment's pause, and while

a smile played round his expressive features, "they were greatly pleased with the explanation of the Mass, but quite objected to its being in any other than the English language."

"Didn't like its being in any other than the English language, Father; and did they think you'd change it to please their notions of what was right, and what wasn't?" indignantly asked Mr. Connor.

"Softly the good priest laid his hand on Mr. Connor's arm. 'My child,' he said, 'they meant no offence, it seemed to them incongruous, and they frankly owned it. This was much better, for I had taken thereby a fine opportunity, the next time I went there, to remove their prejudices, and further instruct them in our holy Faith.'

"But, Father, how came you to go again?"

"I told you there were four families in the place.'

"Yes, Father,' said Mr. Connor, a broad smile of intense satisfaction lighting up his sunburnt features.

"Well, they told me,' continued the priest, 'of another family, living about seven miles in one direction, and another about six miles in another direction, making, with the sick man's family I had just visited, five miles away, seven in all. The O'Briens, and the rest round the mill, pressed me so hard to come again, that in six weeks I again went. These other families having been duly informed of my expected visit, were there, and, all uniting, laid their cases so pressingly before me, that I was obliged to promise to visit them every seven or eight weeks, if not called off by sick calls. I kept my promise, and the first I knew they handed me a contribution of one hundred and fifty dollars towards building a church for them, declaring they could not live without one. Since then, one of the most prominent and intelligent men of the village, a Dr. Lawrence,

from hearing the explanation of the Mass, became anxious to know more of our holy religion. I lent him Milner's "End of Religious Controversy," "Faith of Catholics," and Bossuet's "Exposition of the Catholic Doctrine." While reading and pondering over these, he called on me several times; indeed, every time I was in the village he took the opportunity to converse with me on the subject of religion. His strong inquiring mind could not rest satisfied till it had sounded the depth of every question. His wife, a very intelligent lady, joined him in his labors. A few months found them thoroughly acquainted with the Catholic religion, and the last time I was there, five weeks to-morrow, I baptized them and their three children. Since then, he has sent me a letter inclosing fifty dollars, towards our little church; the other hundred have been added to the fund by the congregation here.'

"'Praises to God!' fervently ejaculated Mr. Connor, taking out a leather pocket-book, 'and, Father John, let me add my mite to it too.'

"How much he added cannot with any certainty be told; but Father John strongly insisted on his taking back a part, lest, in the impulse of the moment, he was giving more than he was able; but Mr. Connor shook his head, gently pushed aside the priest's hand, and arising, took little Miles in his arms.

"'Come, children,' he hurriedly exclaimed, 'we must be going, we are intruding on his reverence's time.'"

The fifth chapter concluded, but Agnes was too much engaged to pause; brushing back the ringlets from her brow, she commenced the sixth. Following her example, we also commence another.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was evident that the volume, so mysteriously appearing on her desk, possessed for her a strange, unaccountable interest. A softened expression played round her features as she read, and at times a moisture dimmed her eye. It was strange, passing strange, that this proud heiress should feel so interested in the life of the poor little orphan.

"EARLY the next morning found the Connors in the church. Already had Mr. Connor, Bridget, Nellie, and Mike approached the peace-giving sacrament. Little Joe, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, knelt in his pew shrinking from the duty before him. How could he tell all his faults of thought, word, and deed? Father John now felt kindly towards him, but would he ever so much as speak to him again, when he should hear how very bad he had been? Poor child! All the frailties of his young life arose before him with startling vividness; his heart grew faint, and a feeling of shame and anguish thrilled his soul. He cast a furtive glance at Bernard, his head was bowed and an expression of sorrow shaded his face. One after another went into the sacristy, yet he and Bernard stirred not. Mr. Connor looked uneasily at them, and finally, whispering a few encouraging words to Joe, took him by the hand, and led him to the door. A darkness came over the child-penitent; he leaned heavily against his kind friend, and with his cold little hands wiped the drops from

his brow. 'Oh, let me go back, Mr. Connor,' he beseechingly whispered; 'Oh let me go back.'

"Mr. Connor bent over him till his dark locks touched his cheek, and in a low voice said:

"Go back, little Joe, go back! Shame! shame! this is the devil's tempting. Break from his snare, child, and go right in. What are you afraid of? Your father and mother are looking down upon you from their home in heaven this morning, and sure you won't let them see you turn from God's holy sacrament.'

"At the mention of his parents' names he yielded a passive obedience. Mr. Connor opened the door, and he passed in. On his knees before the priest it seemed his soul would die within him; he tried to repeat the *Confiteor* but his lips refused to utter a single sound; turning a wild and troubled look on the calm, mild countenance of the confessor, he bowed his head, and buried his face in his hands.

"Poor child! poor child!" murmured Father John, tenderly stroking the heavy mass of hair on the bowed head; and then he spoke so kindly, so soothingly that the flood-gates of his soul opened, and tears streamed over his cheeks. In sobbing whispers, he poured into the priest's ears all his faults since memory first dawned upon him. By timely questions, and assistance when his tongue was like to falter, he soon had told him all. It was a duty which had looked terrible to him, but now that he had courageously done it, what a load seemed lifted from his heart. Before he had sobbed through shame and fear, now, unable to contain the triumphant feeling that filled his heart, he bowed his head upon his hands, and sobbed again. After a slight pause, Father John spoke—Father John, that little Joe feared would never again speak to him

when he should hear how very bad he had been. Ah, what benignity was in his voice; what an interest he took in the orphan boy, and how earnestly he exhorted him to the faithful observance of his religious duties. With heart brim full of blissful emotions little Joe listened to his every word. The penance he gave him, he never forgot, it was to say for two weeks a prayer his mother had loved so much, St. Bernard's Prayer to the Blessed Virgin. '*O memorare.*' With a light buoyant step he returned to his seat. 'Go, Bernard,' he whispered, 'don't be afraid, you don't know how happy you will feel after.'

"Like him, poor Bernard went in pale and trembling; and, like him, he returned joyous and light hearted. Blessed, blessed religion! that soothes and comforts the timid and desponding, and holds back and restrains the bold and the reckless; that bravely battles with the vices of life, and gives strength to bear patiently its ills; that cherishes the poor as well as the rich, and feels for all alike the tender love of a mother. Oh, blessed, blessed be God forever for this beautiful, this holy religion!

"At length Father John got through with the confessions, the sacristy door opened, and a little boy in a long, red robe, and over it a short white tunic, confined at the waist with a red sash, came in. In one hand he carried a tiny pitcher, in the other a small basin; he laid them on a light stand on the right side of the altar, and presently another little boy, robed in the same manner, came in with a towel. Then there was a great passing in and out from the sacristy to the altar, of the two boys. Little Joe could not help watching their movements. How favored they seemed to him, handling those consecrated things, laying the book frame on one side, placing the large volume upon it, lighting the candles, then placing the little bell and prayer-book

on the steps opposite to that side of the altar on which the great book was lying. They were not as large as he or Bernard, they were not larger than Hughy; he wondered if they would ever be priests, and if priests, if they would be as good as Father John. Father John was the best in the world, there never was such a dear, good priest. He placed his hands upon his heart all fluttering with joy. The chains that bound him had fallen off, and a glad feeling of exultation thrilled his whole being. Tears forced their way over his flushed cheeks, bowing his head to hide them, he forgot everything but his great happiness till the deep toned voice of Father John struck on his ear.

“*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*”

“Raising his head, he hastily opened his prayer-book, and tried to follow the order of the Mass; he followed as far as ‘*Sanctus! Sanctus! Sanctus!*’ when again kneeling, the words swam before his eyes, he closed the book, and bowing his face upon his hands, thought of the Sacrifice of Cavalry, the darkness that overspread the whole earth, the rending of the veil of the temple, the graves opening and the dead appearing to many. Sitting on his father’s knee, many a winter’s evening had he listened to the wondrous history of man’s redemption, and now it all arose before him. An oppressive silence, disturbed by not the slightest sound, filled the whole church; a great awe came over him, he scarcely dared to breathe; the Sacrifice of Propitiation that was offered up to God the Father eighteen hundred years before, was renewed that morning in the plain little chapel of A——. ‘From the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof,’ shall this glorious sacrifice be renewed—renewed till that morn when the heavens shall roll back as a scroll, the earth, and all that is in it pass away, and the new Jerusalem come down.

“At the Communion, Mr. Connor, Bridget, Mike and Nellie, with the other communicants crowded round the altar railing. Little Joe looked at them, and thought a time would come when he also would be allowed to approach the Sacred Table. Oh, how he longed for that time. On conclusion of the Mass they remained for some time in the church to offer up thanks for the inestimable favor they had received, and then returned to Mrs. Donnell.

“Little Miles had awakened during their absence, and in his night-dress, on the floor, was amusing himself with the various playthings Mrs. Donnell gathered around him; but when he saw the sight of his father coming through the gate, he turned from them all, clapped his dimpled hands, and shouted with delight. After breakfast, he was carefully dressed, and, in his green suit, looked so charming, that again he was hugged and kissed by them all, and again he chose to remain with little Joe. This preference of his quite excited the jealousy of Hughy. He insisted on Miles staying with him.

“‘Come,’ said he, taking hold of his arm, ‘come to me. Little Joe’s no brother of yours; he ain’t got no brother or sister.’

“‘Poor Joe; in a moment his loneliness all pressed upon him, his lip trembled, and a tear filled his eye.’

“‘For shame, Hughy!’ they all exclaimed, ‘for shame! Little Joe is brother to us, and we are brothers and sisters to him!’

“‘But a host of painful recollections crowded fast upon him; he longed to be alone where he might cry; before them all, he must control his feeling; his crying would grieve them, and would it not be wrong to grieve his kind friends on such a morning? He bowed his head, and, pre-

tending to be engaged examining little Miles's green shoes, managed to maintain a calm exterior.

"Half-past ten o'clock found them again in church; the worshipping strains of the organ raised him above all his sorrow, and filled his heart with the peace of the early morning. No longer he felt alone; but it seemed, afar off, he could hear the choirs of heaven joining the choirs of earth in their hallelujahs to the Lord. All through the Mass he was like one raised above earth and all its sorrows. In the afternoon he attended Vespers, and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; in the evening, joined the Rosary class. Oh, day of bliss! day of happiness unspeakable!

"The going to A——, to attend Mass, was the grand event of Joe Harny's year to the Connors. For weeks before, nothing else was talked of; for weeks after, it was still the loved topic of conversation; and when, in after-life, he looked back on the first year of his orphanage, this day loomed up so bright that it seemed a sun in the firmament of memory, lighting and shedding a halo of peace and happiness o'er all the other days of that year. Thus it is; memory centres itself round only the great events of a lifetime. They come forward like the principal groupings of a picture; everything about them is bold and prominent; all the little incidents that are disposed of here and there on the canvas of life, only tend to make more marked the light and shade of these, to mellow and enrich their tints.

"Before starting for home, Monday morning, they repaired to Father John's, to bid him good-by; but already had he been hurried away on a sick-call. With a fervent prayer that he might be endued with strength to carry him through his arduous duties, and not sink under them, like Father Shiel, they turned from his humble door.

"A great many words passed between them and Mrs. Donnell, on parting; so many, indeed, that Mr. Connor thought they would never end; but at last they were over, and they found themselves on their way home. For six or seven miles, it was pleasant enough; but when they left the turnpike, then it was that each, down to Hughy, began to feel the terrible jolting occasioned by the half-decayed logs thrown, every few feet, across the road. The country along here, had a wild and lonesome look; low marshy soil, overgrown with small, stunted cedar, rank underbrush and tall flag, gave a sombre, desolate appearance to the whole. With its stagnant, greenish pools, oppressive heat, and swarming mosquitoes, it seemed the very hot-bed of ague and fever. To the children, it brought to mind every horrible story they had ever heard; and many and thrilling enough to please the most ardent admirer of sensation stories, were the legends they told of credulous victims having been deluded into just such places, robbed, cruelly murdered, and while their friends, alarmed at their long absence, were offering large rewards for their discovery, there, under the dank weeds, moldering away to skeletons.

"There was a peculiar grating on the nerve-kind of fascination in these stories; although their blood thrilled with horror, and they repeatedly crossed themselves while listening, no sooner was one finished than they were eager for another. But when they left the swampy lowlands, and began to climb the high hills which lay between them and home, the nightmarish legends were all forgotten, and they began to wonder if the bees under the long shed had swarmed.

"'I hope not,' said Mr. Connor, taking off his hat and wiping the perspiration from his face, 'I fear Ellen and Maurice would have trouble hiving them.'

"‘Yes, indeed,’ said Bridget; ‘you know what trouble we all had when the two swarms went to Mr. Allen’s woods.’

"‘And you remember father,’ said Mike, from the middle seat, ‘how I got stung?’

"‘Sure it would be short memory I’d have, Mike, if I could so soon forget that.’

"‘And, father,’ said Bernard, with a twinkle of humor in his eye, ‘do you remember how he rolled and kicked on the floor that night, and what terrible roars the pain forced from him? Why, I think if it hadn’t been for mother’s saleratus, that he’d have been roaring still.’

"All laughed but Mike; he colored, and hastened to turn the conversation.

"‘Father,’ he asked, ‘do you think that the wheat will be ready to cut next week?’

"‘Well, yes! if the rain keeps off, I think we may be in it.’

"‘And how much will we have to the acre?’

"‘I shouldn’t be surprised if we had thirty bushels. It’s a good piece of ground, and Maurice put in at the right time.’

"‘Yes, just in the right time, father,’ said Mike, pretending not to see the pantomime Bernard, on the back seat, was enacting for his especial benefit, distorting his features, writhing, twisting—in fine, going through all the agony of an imaginary bee-sting, ‘just in the right time. But if he had waited till after that rain, it would have been a fortnight later; for, you know, it rained a whole week, and it would have taken another week for the ground to have been dry enough to plough.’

"‘You are right, Mike,’ said Mr. Connor, perfectly unconscious of the suppressed roars of laughter behind him,

‘and it’s not much I’d give for wheat put in later than the middle of September.’

"‘Oh! what will mother say,’ suddenly exclaimed Bridget, ‘when she hears Father John comes to Haughton?’

"‘Faith, and maybe she’ll think we are fooling her; as she thought I was, when I brought home the news that they were going to build a church in A——.’ Mr. Connor laughed at the remembrance of his wife’s incredulous look on that memorable night, and then further observed:

"‘But, it will be glad news to her. Sixteen miles from our house to Haughton! why that will be nothing; we’ll be there every time Father John is—but, I declare this road is horrible. Not a single break up the whole hill to rest the poor horses. See how wet they are! Boys, get out; it’s enough to drag an empty wagon up such a hill as this is.’

"Giving the reins to Bridget, he sprung out himself, the boys quickly followed his example, declaring it much pleasanter out than in. Little Miles stretched his dimpled hands to be taken out too; his father lifted him in his arms, and carried him a part of the way up, then his brothers took him, and in this way, laughing and crowing, and perfectly happy, baby Miles reached the top of the hill. They were far ahead of the team, and seating themselves under the shade of a wide-spreading tree, waited the coming of the patient, toiling horses. At length they, too, reached the top, and then, fastening the back wheels, to secure them from rolling, they once more got in. Bridget, stout-hearted girl as she was, shrank back, as, on the front seat, she watched the cramping of the horses, striving to hold the heavy wagon back. The far-bending sky, the wild and beautiful scenery, the wide-spreading forests, the rich fields of waving grain, the farm houses, some of them log, some

frame, stretching along the way had great charms for them, but still they counted the hills they would have to climb and descend before reaching home, and deep was the sympathy they expressed for poor Father John, that rain or shine, had so often to go over them. At last, as the sun was sinking to rest, on a bed of purple and golden clouds, they reached the village of Stanton, and thence had a pleasant, even road home. A fine supper waited them, which having done ample justice to, they, the children, very happy and very tired, went to bed, leaving Bridget and Mr. Connor to tell their mother and Maurice all the particulars of Father John, and his new church in Haughton."

As Agnes concluded the chapter she arose, slipped the manuscript into her desk, and had just lowered the lid when her mother came in.

"Agnes, dear!" she tenderly remarked, "you have not slept any since your return."

With a severe countenance and repellant voice, she replied, "No, and neither do I wish for sleep."

"But you are pale, and your eyes weary;" said Mrs. Hilton, unheeding her coldness.

"Does your head ache, darling?" she inquired, laying her soft hand on her brow.

"What makes you ask?" There was an unsteadiness in her voice, and a tremor of her proud lips.

"Because, darling, although pale, your forehead is hot."

"It does ache a little," she admitted.

"Well then, dear Agnes, come and have some toast and a cup of tea; you can lie down then and sleep."

Again her countenance became cold and repellant. "I neither wish for toast, tea, nor rest."

Her mother saw it would be useless to urge her, and

hoping to gain upon her by kind attentions, she wheeled up an arm-chair before the grate, and placed an ottoman before it. "Sit down, darling," she said, leading her to it, "and tell me how you left Edith?"

Unable to resist her endearing tenderness, Agnes sank into it. "She slept a couple of hours in the latter part of the night," she answered, "and this morning felt better."

"I am glad to hear it; yesterday I called to see her, she looked haggard and worn, and coughed incessantly. Poor child! I wonder her strength holds out as it does."

"It will not hold out much longer." Agnes's eyes were bent thoughtfully upon the fire.

"No, I fear not; she has greatly changed for the last few weeks."

"And you pity her mother?" Agnes asked, suddenly raising her head.

"Yes, Agnes, from the bottom of my heart; and I pray God that she may be able to bear her trial with Christian patience and resignation."

"I pray she may; but, mother!" she spoke with bitter emphasis, "I would it were I, instead of Edith, that was now on the death-bed; you, instead of Mrs. Carter, that was called upon to witness a daughter's dying struggles."

An agony swept over Mrs. Hilton's face. "Agnes! Agnes!" she faintly exclaimed.

"Even so, mother; from my heart I fervently wish it. You might grieve for a while, but Martha Clement's soothing ways would make you soon forget your loss. She would teach you Christian patience and resignation." There was an intolerable irony in her voice.

"God help you, my child; God help you!" replied her mother, leaning heavily for support against the low mantel-piece. Then, after a slight pause, she added: "Agnes,

why should you feel so to Martha? she in no way intrudes herself on your notice—in no way presumes because her brother is adopted into the family. I never saw a more modest or unassuming girl."

"I am glad you like her so well; glad, too, that she is so worthy of your distinguished regard," was the mocking reply.

Pale as the marble statue of death, Mrs. Hilton exclaimed: "May God forgive you, Agnes! but you are breaking my heart."

There was a pathos in her voice that brought tears to Agnes's eyes. With all her pride she tenderly loved her mother, and but for that baneful passion, would have ever treated her with kindness and respect.

"Mother!" she brokenly replied, "you once loved me; but that day is past, and others have supplanted me in your affection."

Mrs. Hilton feebly approached her, and tenderly threw her arms around her. "Oh! Agnes, Agnes!" she exclaimed, "put away this foolish jealousy. None ever has—ever can supplant you in my affection. Freely would I lay my life down to make you happy."

Agnes dashed the tears from her eyes, and in a quick, hurried manner said: "Mother, give me some proof of your love, that I may believe it. Send Martha home, or return Mark to his family."

Mrs. Hilton was deeply pained. Seating herself beside Agnes, she laid her hand impressively upon her arm, and in a low, earnest voice said: "Agnes, your father's sacred honor is engaged in this affair. How, or wherefore, another day you shall know; at present I am not at liberty to tell. But, as you value your after peace of mind, I beg you to look more favorably upon Martha and her brother.

You will have reason to rejoice if you do; to regret, if you do not. Take a mother's warning word in time."

Agnes looked up in surprise. "Mother!" she exclaimed, "what do you mean? your words seem full of mystery."

"I cannot now farther explain my meaning, but consider what I have said." The breakfast-bell rang, and Mrs. Hilton rose.

"Agnes, dear, if you do not feel able to come down to the dining-room, I will send Nora up with some toast and tea, that will quiet your nerves, so that after it you can lie down and sleep."

"No, mother, you need not. I cannot possibly take any thing this morning." Mrs. Hilton bent over her, tenderly kissed her, and left the room.

Alone, before the grate, with her head resting on her hand, Agnes Hilton dwelt on the strangeness of her mother's words. In what way could her father's honor be engaged in the keeping or dismissing of Martha. For a long time she puzzled her mind to find a clue that would unravel the mystery, but her efforts were vain. At length, arising, she walked into her chamber, bathed her forehead and eyes, and returning to her room, seated herself before her desk, and tried to read, but the volume she had opened proved dry and tedious. Taking out her drawing materials, she was soon engrossed copying a wild and picturesque scene from the Alps.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was evening, and again was the Graham family gathered in the sitting-room. Mr. Graham was reading aloud from his paper an interesting account of the laying of the corner-stone of a new church. Of course, his paper was Catholic; he would have considered it a sinful apathy to neglect so powerful a means of keeping himself and his family informed of the progress which the Church of God was making in the great world; its trials in one place, its sufferings in another, and its triumph everywhere. There, in their retired country-home, they listened every week to the sermons preached to them through the columns of their paper by the most eloquent divines of the day. What his Holiness the Pope, or his Eminence, such or such a Cardinal; or his Grace, such or such an Archbishop; or such a Bishop or Priest said on this or that subject, they knew perfectly well entered into all their views, and talked as if they enjoyed an intimate acquaintance with them all. As for the lighter literature, what cared he for the startling, thrilling stories of the sensation papers? he never read them—never allowed the pure minds of his children to be sullied with them. The Catholic world of mind furnished them with a healthful class of works especially adapted for the young; there no false, sickly sentiments were imbibed; no disrelish for the plain realities around them; but many an excellent lesson was learned, many a sound common-sense-

view of life taken. Jane, gentle and loving, was naturally of a very impressible, romantic turn, and fatal to her would have been the reading of the trashy, flimsy stuff, called "fashionable novels." Of the works derived from a source not purely Catholic, the parents carefully looked them over, to see there was in them nothing injurious to faith or morals, before intrusting them to their children's hands, and in like manner should every Christian parent act.

Mr. Graham had finished the article on the new church, and after each had made a few remarks on the beautiful and appropriate words spoken by the bishop on the occasion, he turned to another; he read that and several others, and at last his eye rested upon a piece of poetry in one corner.

"Becky," he said, "here is something your voice can do better justice to than mine."

"What is it, Uncle," she asked, looking up from her sewing.

"It is poetry, entitled, 'Mother of Mercy,' and written by Father Faber."

"Dear Father Faber! Oh, it must be beautiful. I love any thing coming from his pen!"

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed Jane, "his pure thoughts and the sweetness of his language are like pearls strung together with golden links!"

As Becky reached her hand for the paper, the door opened, and grandfather and grandmother entered. Mrs. Graham instantly arose, and stepped to George and Henry who were each occupying their grandparents' comfortable chairs near the fire.

"Children," she gently said, "your grandfather and grandmother have come, and you must move to other seats."

They at once vacated them; and Henry was drawing up another chair, when grandfather with his cane pointed to the soft cushioned-stool at his feet, he sunk upon it, while George seated himself at his mother's side, and laid his head on her lap.

"Grandfather and grandmother," said Becky, holding the paper in her hand, "I was about reading a beautiful poem from one of our best writers, would you not like to hear it?"

"Yes, child," replied grandfather, "we are weary, and poetry is just the thing to rest our minds."

In a finely modulated voice, Becky read:

"Mother of Mercy! day by day
My love for thee grows more and more;
Thy gifts are strewn upon my way,
Like sands upon the great sea-shore.

Though poverty and work and woe
The masters of my life may be,
When times are worst, who does not know,
Darkness is light with love of thee.

But scornful men have coldly said
Thy love was leading me from God;
And yet in this I did but tread
The very path my Saviour trod.

They know but little of thy worth
Who speak these heartless things to me:
For what did Jesus love on earth
One half so tenderly as thee?

Get me the grace to love thee more;
Jesus will grant if thou wilt plead;
And, Mother, when life's cares are o'er,
Oh, I shall love thee then indeed!

Jesus, when his three hours were run,
Bequeathed thee from the cross to me;
And oh! how can I love the Son,
Sweet Mother! if I love not thee?"

As Becky concluded the beautiful lines, a radiant glow lit up her thoughtful face. "No, no," she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and looking upward, "how could we love the sweet Jesus, if we loved not his blessed mother?"

Mr. Graham was about to speak, but grandfather hastily interrupted what he was going to say.

"Becky, child," he exclaimed, rising, "will you come with us—mother and I—to our room?"

"Yes, grandfather, with all pleasure." She laid aside the paper, rolled up her sewing, and placed it in her work-basket.

"Father," said Mr. Graham, taking the little lamp from the mantelpiece and lighting it for him, "I was in hopes you and mother would stay with us awhile."

"No, Walter; you, Fanny, and the children enjoy your paper, mother and I are called to labor; we cannot rest."

Tears sprang to the son's eyes; he remembered his own trials and struggles in the years long past. "Father," he exclaimed, warmly pressing his hand, "you are going over the same field Sarah and I once went over. We were often weary—often felt we should faint on the way, but the good God directed our steps, till at last we found rest. In like manner he is now guiding and directing you and mother, and in like manner will you also find rest."

"Walter," replied the old man, while with a quick movement of his disengaged hand, he swept the thin locks back from his ample brow, "time was when such words would have sounded like mockery to us, but we see things in a different light; our labor is not hopeless, for we feel we shall

be carried through it." Mr. Graham followed them to the door.

Reaching their room, grandfather stirred up the fire, and put on more wood. Becky placed the little lamp on the mantelpiece, lighted the astral on the table, and drew up a chair near to her grandparents; when seated grandmother said:

"Dear Becky, father and I had well considered the subject of your last conversation—had studied the books you pointed out to us, and our minds satisfied as to the strong Scriptural proof supporting the Catholic's belief concerning the Mass and Sacraments. We intended resting before proceeding to other matters, but, as father says, labor is before us, and we cannot rest till our task is accomplished. The reading of those verses, which fell with wonderful sweetness upon our souls, reminds us of another question we would like to discuss."

"What is it, grandmother!"

"Invocation of the saints. You recollect you were to speak to us about it."

"Yes, grandmother, I do."

Grandfather had been thoughtfully looking into the fire. "Child," he exclaimed, suddenly turning to Becky, "much has been said about the Catholic's devotion to the Virgin Mary, that they honor her with the homage which alone belongs to God, and look upon her as equal, if not superior, to her divine Son."

"Grandfather, if you study the Catholic's belief concerning this point, you will see how very different it is to their enemies' account of it. Catholics honor the blessed Virgin as the mother of God, by being the mother of Him, who in one and the same person, is both God and man.* They

* Challoner, p. 228.

hold as an article of faith he came into the world free from any touch of original sin; that as she was destined from all eternity to be the mother of Him 'who is the author of grace, who came to destroy sin,' so she was by a special prerogative of grace preserved pure above all creatures in heaven or on earth. The angel Gabriel, when bringing to her his wonderful embassy, saluted her as full of grace. Jesus was born of her, she was His mother, nursed and tended Him in His infancy, watched over Him during His childhood, and ever enjoyed the delight of His divine presence. How pure, how holy she must have been! and loving, and honoring Jesus, how can we help loving and honoring His blessed mother? Yes, we do love her, we do honor her, and in this, as Father Faber beautifully expresses it,

———'We do but tread
The very path our Saviour trod.

Did he not, after astonishing the learned doctors with his wisdom at the early age of twelve, return with his blessed mother and foster father to Nazareth, and remain subject to them? Did he not, at her suggestion, even before his hour had come, perform his first miracle? Did he not, when writhing on the cross, his whole frame racked with pain, in the midst of all his agony, all his intense suffering, feel for her sorrow, her loneliness and desolation? Did not all the tenderness of his heart go out to her when he consigned her to the care of that disciple whom he loved? To John he said, 'Behold thy mother!' and to Mary, 'Behold thy son!' and the gospel, with touching pathos, tells us, 'that from that hour the disciple took her as his own.' Yes, from that hour she became the mother of Christians. Christ is our Saviour, Mary, his holy mother, is our mother, and as

children we love and reverence her; we ask her to pray for us, feeling assured that He who refused not on earth to grant her petitions will not now in heaven refuse to grant them. But, grandfather and grandmother, while we look upon her as raised above the angels and saints, and occupying a station far above them, we know there is still an infinite distance between her and God, and in no way do we pay her the worship or homage which alone belongs to Him. This would be a heinous crime, is strongly forbidden by the Church, and would bring upon one so offending, the severest censures. Our enemies accuse us of idolatry; they maintain that the Church of Rome, meaning the Catholic, 'has other gods beside the Lord,' and that, because we ask the saints and angels to pray for us, we have brought back the heathen multitude of deities into Christianity; but, grandfather and grandmother, hear what the Catholic Church teaches concerning invocation of the saints. 'That the saints who reign with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men, and that it is useful and good to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, help, and assistance, in order to obtain blessings from God, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, *who alone is our Redeemer and Saviour.*'* And so strongly marked is the difference between the homage we pay to God and the respect we pay to the angels and saints, that a child, acquainted with the rudiments of the Christian doctrine, cannot err in this point; The little Catechism placed in his hands, tells him that the angels and saints are to be honored as God's special friends and servants, but not with that honor which belongs to God, that he is to ask their prayers, not as if they were the authors or dispensers of pardon, grace, or salvation; or as if

* Council Trid. Sess. 25 de Invoc.

they had any power to help us independently of God's good will and pleasure,* but being loosed from the bonds of the flesh, and enjoying the presence of God, they would obtain from Him that which he stands in need of. Gother, an eminent divine, in his 'Catholic Misrepresented and Represented,' after refuting the charge of idolatry against us, solemnly declares, 'Cursed is he that believes the saints in heaven to be his redeemers, that prays to them as such, or that gives God's honor to them, or to any creature whatever.' And as regards the Blessed Virgin, the most pure of all created excellence, 'Cursed is he that believes the Blessed Virgin Mary to be any more than a creature; that worships her, or puts his trust in her more than in God; that believes her above her Son, or that she can in any thing command him.†' Does this look like idolatry? does it look like the Catholic Church having other gods beside the Lord? or 'bringing back the multitude of heathen deities into Christianity?' "

Grandfather and grandmother's eyes had been riveted on Becky; and in silence had they listened to her words, but now grandfather spoke:

"Child," he said, "I would ask, as long as we have a mediator with the Father, Christ Jesus, what need have we of others; but, before I do so, speaking of that part of the invocation of saints which particularly treats of its idolatrous tendencies, I would like you to tell mother and I why the Catholics have statues of the Virgin and saints in their houses, and why they always place them in their Churches?"

"It is, grandfather and grandmother, to keep in lively remembrance the virtues which made the servants of God

* Challoner, p. 218.

† Catholic Misrepresented and Represented. Abridg. p. 78.

so pleasing to their Creator, to recall our minds from distractions, and raise them to heavenly things; but by no means to worship them. On this subject the first Catechism placed in the hands of children says, in answer to the questions: 'Is it allowable to honor relics, crucifixes, images, and holy pictures?' 'Yes, with an inferior and relative honor, as they relate to Christ and his saints, and are memorials of them.' To the very next question: 'May we then pray to relics and images?' The plain, unequivocal answer is: 'No, by no means; for they have no life or sense to hear or help us.'

"But, child, did not God in his second commandment forbid the making of any image, or the likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth?"

"Grandfather, he forbid the making of them, to worship or pay divine honors to, for he immediately adds: 'Thou shalt not adore, nor serve them;' but as for the making of images for other purposes, he certainly did not forbid it, for we see in Exodus, xxv. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, he commands Moses to make two cherubim of beaten gold, and place them in the tabernacle; their wings expanded, covering both sides of the propitiatory and oracle, and thence, from the midst of the cherubim he would speak to him. Now, if the mere making of images had been forbidden in the commandments, the first, too, according to our division of them, would God have ordered Moses to make them, and promise from their midst to speak to him? Again, in Numbers, xxi., we see when the people offended the Lord, and were punished with fiery serpents, God then commanded Moses to make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign, that whosoever was struck looking upon it might be saved. And in John, iii. 14, 15, our blessed Saviour tells us that this was

an emblem of himself: 'For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have life everlasting.'

"Child," exclaimed grandfather, "hand me the Bible!"

"Your Bible, grandfather?" she asked.

"No, child, but yours." From the time she brought him Ward's 'Errata on the Protestant Bible,' he had used no other than the Douay version. She handed it to him, and he carefully read over the passages to which she had referred.

"Surely, child," he exclaimed, "I see no commandment against the making of images, when divine honor is not intended to be paid to them! Mother," he bitterly added, turning to her, "it seems to me the strangest thing in human nature that the Protestant world should be so blind to this distinction."

"Father, I am thinking it is not altogether blindness, but a spirit to bring accusations against the Catholic Faith, for we all know as to the making of images or likenesses, entirely forgetting that innocent misconception of the second, or, as Becky calls it, the first commandment; that they are ready enough to make images or statues of statesmen, generals, or others who have, in any way, rendered themselves famous. They even profess a great admiration for the statues of Venus, Jupiter, Cupid, and other heathen deities. And, as to pictures, why the world is flooded with them; every house we enter we find portraits, daguerreotypes, likenesses, all in direct opposition to their pretended belief of this commandment."

"Mother, it is prejudice—a prejudice which blunts the judgment and darkens the understanding. As far as our own pictures and statues were concerned, the distinction was always clear enough, it was only when the Catholics

were brought in question that we suddenly lost sight of it. They worshipped their statues and pictures, hence to them was this commandment a sweeping denunciation against *all* pictures and statues. 'As ye mete to others, so shall it be meted to you.' " Grandfather bowed his head upon his hands and groaned aloud. In a kind and soothing voice Becky spoke :

"Grandfather, you had been taught to believe that the Catholics worshipped their pictures and statues, and that was the reason you looked upon this commandment as particularly directed against them."

"Child," he exclaimed, looking wildly up, "your words madden me; they mock me! Been taught! Did not God give me sense to search, find out, and know for myself? Was I to take the *ipsi dixit* of interested parties, and blindly follow their teachings?"

"But, grandfather, although it is at the eleventh hour that you have begun your work, trusting in the mercy and goodness of God, despair not; at the close of the day you will get your reward with the other laborers."

The troubled expression passed from his lips, he smiled, and reaching out his hand, softly laid it on her head; he did not speak, but silently it seemed he was invoking a blessing upon her.

"Grandfather," observed Becky, after a few moments, "you speak about having one Mediator with the Father, our blessed Saviour."

"Yes, child," he replied, rousing himself from the reverie into which he had fallen, "we must understand the whole question; no hurried glance and hasty conclusion will satisfy us. When St. Paul says that there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,* I want you

* 1 Timothy, ii. 5.

to tell us, child, on what ground the Catholics have so many?"

"Grandfather, the Catholic Church holds that Christ is alone our mediator of salvation; for, in the words you just quoted, St. Paul immediately adds: 'Who gave himself a redemption for all.'"

"One Mediator of Salvation! Certainly you must call the angels and saints mediators, as long as you ask them to pray for you; or, in other words, to mediate for you."

"Yes, grandfather; we ask them to pray for us; and, therefore, they are not mediators of salvation, but of intercession. In asking the saints and angels to pray for us, we no more transgress against belief in *one* mediator than did St. Paul himself, when, in his epistles, he entreated the faithful to pray for him. In his Epistle to the Romans, xv. 30, he begs his brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, to assist him by their prayers to God, that he might be delivered from the unbelievers that were in Judea, and that the oblation of his services might be acceptable in Jerusalem to the saints. Here, grandfather and grandmother, he makes a clear and plain distinction between the mediation of salvation, and the mediation of intercession. They, the mediators of intercession, were to offer up their prayers for him, that through Jesus Christ, the mediator of salvation, they might obtain that for which they prayed. To the Ephesians, vi. 17, 19, he begs that, when offering up their supplications for the saints, they would pray for him, that speech might be given him, that he might open his mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. Again, in the last chapters of his First Epistle to the Thessalonians and that to the Hebrews, we find him, after instructing them in many things, begging their prayers."

"But, Becky, child, these were yet living, and it was not, therefore, like praying to them after death."

"Yes, grandmother, they were yet living; but, if it be profitable to beg the prayers of those in the flesh, who are not without sin,—for the just man falls seven times, and no one living can say he sins not,—how much more so to beg the prayers of the angels and saints in heaven, who are free from every stain, as nothing in the least defiled can enter these blest abodes? Can they forget their brethren on earth? No; St. Paul assures us that charity never faileth; and now, confirmed in glory, enjoying the presence of Divine Majesty, how much greater must be their influence on our behalf?"

"It may be greater, child, and their charity may be the same, or even increased; but does it not argue a diffidence in the mercy of God to go to them, instead of going direct to the fountain-head?"

"No, grandfather; no more than it did in St. Paul's asking his brethren to pray for him. And to prove that their prayers may be more acceptable to God, in our behalf, than our own, we have only to turn to Job, xlii. 7, 8. Here our Lord, speaking to Eliphaz, says: 'My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends, because you have not spoken the thing that is right before me, as my servant Job hath. Take unto you, therefore, seven oxen and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer for yourselves a holocaust; and my servant Job shall pray for you; his face I will accept, that folly be not imputed to you; for you have not spoken right things before me, as my servant Job hath.' The next verse tells us that Eliphaz, Baldad, and Sophar, did as the Lord commanded, and that the Lord accepted the face of Job, showing very plainly that while he accepted the prayers of Job in their behalf,

and was reconciled to them, he would not have accepted theirs."

"But, child, as your grandmother remarked, Job was living when they went to him. Now, what proof have we that the angels and saints know any thing of our affairs, or can hear the prayers we send up to them?"

"The words of Christ himself. Luke, xv. 10: 'I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.' Now, if the angels and saints rejoice over a sinner's conversion, does it not prove that they in heaven know of the sinner's conversion here on earth?"

Grandfather and grandmother's eyes were fixed upon her, but they did not speak; silently they were revolving the question in their minds. Minute after minute passed, at length grandfather exclaimed:

"Child! is not this supposing the angels and saints hear and know all the prayers addressed to them, giving to them two of the divine attributes—universal knowledge, and universal presence?"

"By no means, grandfather; we neither believe the angels and saints to be everywhere, nor yet, to have a knowledge of all things; but that they do hear our prayers, Scripture assures us. In the Apocalypse; or, as it is named in your Bible—Revelation, v. 8, we read that 'The four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having, every one of them, harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.' Again, in chap. viii., 3, 4: 'And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censor: and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of

the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel.' Now, how the saints hear or know the prayers addressed to them, we cannot with certainty tell; that they *do*, we have here positive proof. But their hearing them affords no cause to believe that they must necessarily be in every place. They have not to come down from heaven to us; but our prayers go up to them: 'The prayer of him that humbleth himself, shall pierce the clouds.*' Shall I not, grandfather and grandmother, read a little what Challoner says, treating on this subject; he makes it so much plainer than I possibly can?"

"Yes, child; and afterwards mother and I will thoroughly read him." Becky opened at p. 224, and read:

"If you ask me how they can know our prayers without being everywhere, and knowing all things? I answer that there are many ways by which they know them. 1st. The angels may know them by being amongst us in quality of our guardians; and the saints may know them by the angels, whose conversation they enjoy. 2d. Both angels and saints may see them and know them in God, whom they continually see and enjoy; or, by revelation from God, as in God they see the repentance of sinners, Luke, xv. 10. For they that see God face to face, by the light of glory, discern his divine attributes, and in them innumerable secrets impenetrable to nature. And therefore, though they themselves are not everywhere; yet, by contemplating Him that sees and knows all things, they have a vast extent of knowledge of things that pass here below. 'In thy light shall we see light,' says the royal prophet, Psalm xxxv. (alias xxxvi., 9.) And 'we shall be like to Him,' says St. John, 1 John, iii. 2; 'for we shall see Him as He is.' 'Now we see,' says St. Paul, 1 Corinthians, xiii. 12, 'through a

* Ecclesiastus, xxxv., 22.

glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known.' 3d. Both angels and saints may know our petitions addressed to them, by the ordinary way by which spirits speak to one another, and hear one another; and that is, by directing our thoughts to them, with a desire of opening our minds to them; for, we can no otherwise understand or explain the speech and conversation of spirits who, having neither tongues nor ears, must converse together by the directing of their thoughts to one another. Now, this kind of conversation, by the thoughts, may extend to ever so great a distance, as being independent of sound and all other corporal qualities, and, consequently, independent of distance.' And thus the Catholic carries out the belief he subscribes to in the Creed, Communion of Saints. The Church militant communicates with the Church triumphant, and also with the Church suffering; I mean, grandfather and grandmother, that this communion of saints is not confined alone to heaven and earth, but extends to the middle state, called Purgatory. As we beg the angels and saints to assist us by their prayers, so we try, by our prayers, to help our brethren detained in that prison, from which our blessed Saviour assures us they cannot be released till the last farthing be paid."

"Praying for the dead!" exclaimed grandfather, "implies a third state, a heaven, a hell, and a state between these two; however, before we hear the scriptural proof for this third state, we want to know what part of Scripture supports the belief that prayers can be of any possible avail to one after death."

"Grandfather, in 2 Machabees, xii., we see that when the pious general, Judas Machabeus, had gained divers victories over the enemies of his religion, he sent ten thousand drachms to Jerusalem, to have sacrifices offered up for those

of his soldiers who had fallen in battle, it being 'a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.' And, although Protestants, contrary to Catholics, do not receive as canonical scripture the books of Machabees, still, as authentic records of the people of God, they have ever venerated and respected them. Here then we see, that prayers and sacrifices for the dead are not of modern origin, as some of our enemies have alleged; that even before Christianity, the Jews offered them up; and to this day they continue the practice."

"To this day, child?"

"Yes, grandfather; ask any Jew, and he will tell you the same. Now, as our blessed Saviour bitterly reproached the Scribes and Pharisees for the evils and corruptions they had brought into religion, if this had been one of them would he not have mentioned it? In the severest language he reprobated their pride and hard-heartedness, their worldly-mindedness, and always striving to be in the first place. Read Matthew xxiii., and reflect upon the woes pronounced upon them, and for what. Turn to Mark xi., and John ii., where he casts the buyers and sellers out of the temple; also, Mark xii., and Luke xi., xii., and xx., and in all that he reproaches them with, for all he pronounces woes upon them, not one word is said against this practice of praying for the dead. If it had been one of the doctrines and commandments of men, making void the commandments of God, would he have been silent on the subject? Would the valiant and pious general, Judas Machabeus, so strict an observer of the law of God, so zealous in reclaiming the holy places from the hands of their enemies, and cleansing them from their heathenish abominations, so beloved by the Lord, and assisted by him in all his battles, would he have practised praying for the dead and

offering up sacrifices for them, if it had been against the law of God; or, if it had not been what the inspired writer says of it, 'A holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins.' And it has been the perpetual practice of the Church of God from the very beginning. Tertullian lived about a hundred years after the apostles. In one of his works, speaking of the duty of a Christian widow, he affirms that she should pray for the soul of her husband, and beg refreshment for him. St. Chrysostom, the light of the Eastern Church, who lived in the age but one following, writing on this subject, says: 'It was not without good reason, *ordained by the apostles*, that mention should be made of the dead in the tremendous mysteries, because they knew well that these would receive great benefit from it.' St. Augustin expressly declares, 'through the prayers and sacrifices of the Church and alms-deeds, God deals more mercifully with the departed than their sins deserve.*' And in the same way, grandfather and grandmother, from age to age, I could quote the Fathers proving that prayers and sacrifice for the dead have ever been offered up in the Catholic Church."

It was some time before grandfather spoke. Becky was about to continue her remarks, but he impressively raised his hand to enjoin silence. Slowly rising, he walked up and down the room. She knew a fierce struggle was going on in his heart; old prejudices had to be battled with; and, with her head bowed on her palms, she prayed that truth might triumph over them. That evening had she spoken of the invocation of saints; and, now, directing her prayers to her who is "Queen of angels," and "Queen of all saints," she earnestly entreated her intercession for her grandparents'

* "Extracts from the Fathers," taken from Milner, p. 267.

behalf. She felt of herself, a poor, simple girl, she could do nothing to enlighten them, and that, unless heaven blessed her words they would be, as marks left in the sand, washed away with the first wave.

"Becky, child," said grandfather, at length, resuming his seat, "mother and I have a confused idea of what is meant by the word 'purgatory;' but we want you clearly to state to us the Catholic's belief concerning it."

"Grandfather, purgatory is a middle state, where souls, departing this life with the guilt and eternal punishment of their sins remitted, but with yet a temporal punishment remaining due, or not wholly freed from small defects, such as venial sins, are purified before they are received into heaven, where nothing defiled can enter."

"The guilt and eternal punishment remitted, and the temporal still remaining due?"

"Yes, grandfather; we have many instances in holy writ where God has remitted the guilt of sin and the eternal punishment due to it, but still inflicted a temporal punishment on the repentant sinner. We see in 2 Kings, xii. 14, when David had grievously sinned, upon his sincere repentance, the Lord put away his sin, that is, remitted the guilt and eternal punishment due to it; but by His prophet, He told that nevertheless, his child should die—nevertheless, the temporal punishment he should suffer in the death of his child. But the one which comes home to our hearts with the greatest force—the one which every one must suffer, which no one coming into the world can escape, I will refer to now, grandfather and grandmother, I mean *Death*. Can one look on his icy signet without being deeply impressed with the truth of the Catholic doctrine on this point? Adam sinned, he repented; the eternal punishment due to his sin was remitted; but the sentence of

death was pronounced upon him, and all his posterity. Man still suffers this temporal punishment, and so long as time shall continue, so long shall he endure it; his body must return to the dust whence it was taken. Oh, grandfather and grandmother, have you ever gazed upon the dying without feeling that, although the blood of the Saviour opened heaven to man, still he was suffering for Adam's sins?"

"No, child, never. Never have I watched the faintly heaving chest and failing breath, but the thought has invariably occurred to me."

"And as long as Adam was forgiven, what could this be but, as the Catholic Church teaches, a temporal punishment due to his sin, after its guilt and eternal punishment had been remitted."

An agony swept over the features of her grandparents, her question they did not heed; the mention of the faintly heaving chest and failing breath had brought to their minds the early loss of household treasures. Years had passed, the world had forgotten them, but in the hearts of their parents their memory was cherished still. Grandmother attempted to speak, but tears choked her utterance. Large drops stood on grandfather's brows; wiping them away, in a tone forced to calmness, he remarked:

"Mother, the Lord gave them to us, and in his own good time he took them; blessed be his holy name."

A low, responsive "Amen" came from grandmother's lips, but the smothered sobs showed how undying is the love and tenderness of a mother.

"But grandfather and grandmother," said Becky, anxious to turn the current of their thoughts from past griefs and sorrows, "you wished me to tell you the scriptural proof for this middle state?"

"Yes, child, yes!" exclaimed grandfather, again fixing his eyes upon her.

"Grandfather, in Romans, ii. 6., St. Paul tells us, that 'God will render to every man according to his works,' that is, those who have sinned most shall be punished most, those who have sinned less shall be punished less. Here we have the words of the Apostle, and can we doubt the truth of them? Can we for a moment suppose that one guilty of a few small faults, and one who has outraged every law of God and man, will receive alike the same punishment? Will one who has stolen a few pennies and one who has stolen an hundred pounds; one who, in a momentary fit of passion, has given his neighbor a light blow, and one who has coolly and deliberately murdered him, be ranked in the same class as offenders? No, the law of man would very quickly distinguish between them, and punish accordingly; and will the law of God be less just? Some may say that these smaller sins hinder not the soul from immediately going to her rest, but Scripture solemnly declares that nothing defiled can enter heaven. St. Paul, 1 Corinthians, iii., after telling us that Christ is the foundation of our building, the foundation of our hope, adds that 'every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, that the fire shall try every man's work, what sort it is.' If any man's work abides which he hath built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burns, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. If there was no other testimony in Scripture supporting the belief of a middle state, or purgatory, this alone would be most convincing proof of its existence. Having built on a firm foundation, Christ and his holy doctrine, and in a state of grace, although with some imperfections, he shall be

saved yet so as by fire. Surely, this cannot be the fire of hell, for out of hell there is no redemption, out of hell one cannot be saved. But another proof we see in 1 Peter, iii. 18, 19, 20, where we are told that Christ 'being put to death, indeed, in the flesh, but brought to life by the spirit, went and preached to those spirits who were in prison: Who in time past had been incredulous when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noah, when the ark was a building.' Could this have been heaven? No; heaven is no prison. Could it have been hell? No; Christ would not descend to the damned, for his presence could bring them no comfort; his preaching could not relieve their pain, and vain to them was the death and passion of the Man-God. Already had sentence been pronounced upon them—already had almighty justice rendered to them according to their works. Then where was it, if it was neither to heaven nor to hell? Clearly to this middle state, to purgatory, to the prison whence 'none can be released till the last farthing be paid.'"

"Becky," said grandmother, in her quiet, gentle way, "there is a passage, I think it is the second or third verse of the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes, which is frequently quoted against this belief of purgatory. Father and I would like to hear how the Catholics answer it."

"What is it, grandmother?"

"It is, 'If the tree fall towards the south, or towards the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall lie.'"

"Grandmother, supposing this to refer to the soul after death, 'it only proves what no Catholic denies, viz.: that when once a soul is come to the south or to the north, that is, to heaven or hell, its state is unchanged.* But it in

* Challoner, p. 155.

no way disproves the existence of purgatory. When the just man falls seven times, when 'we must give an account for every idle word;' when some are to be saved, 'yet so as by fire,' how can we, believing the Bible, doubt the existence of a middle state? 'Nothing defiled can enter heaven;' will, then, the just man who falls seven times be condemned to hell? For every idle word will we be eternally punished? No; God will render to every man according to his works; by his Apostle he hath assured us that those who build on a sure foundation, although their works suffer loss, although their wood, hay, and stubble be burned, still they shall be saved, yet so as by fire. The fire having purged away all defilement, all that can defile, they shall be received into the new Jerusalem, into the eternal glory of the blest; they shall be saved."

The clock on the mantle struck twelve. "Child," exclaimed grandfather, "we have kept you too long. Tomorrow mother and I will read over Challoner on this subject; but go now. It is so still that I think the family must be all in bed."

"No, grandfather, they are not." She smiled as she rose, kissed them, and bade them "good-night."

No, the family had not retired. The Thirty-Day Prayer finished, again had it been commenced, and they were waiting for her to join them. It was the penitential time of Lent, and besides the regular evening devotions there was the Rosary to say, and the Penitential Psalms to read. As she entered the sitting-room her uncle closed the volume he had been poring over, her aunt and cousin laid aside their sewing, and with grateful, fervent hearts all knelt in prayer.

CHAPTER XX.

AGAIN had Agnes Hilton watched at the bedside of her sick friend. Edith had passed a miserable night, and she left her not till the afternoon of the next day. Returned home she hastened to her room, seated herself before her desk, drew out her manuscript and turned to the sixth chapter.

"SUMMER, with its gay sunshine, its many-toned voices of joy and promise, had passed away, and under a spread of russet-brown the fields had sunk to sleep, not to be awakened till another spring. The trees, stripped of their graceful foliage, with strong outstretched arms, stood ready to battle with the howling blasts of winter. The sky looked sorrowful and sad, as if mourning for the bright days; and a few light clouds flitted swiftly over it, from the west to the east, as if hurrying with all their might to join a cavalry of clouds just above the eastern horizon. A cold, bleak light, which seemed a very mockery of the bright sunshine, illumined the scene, and as little Joe, seated on a rising eminence, glanced down into the desolate wood, it seemed all the sad and sorrowful things he had ever heard were being put to music, and played by the spirits of the wind: first came up a low sweeping dirge, that reminded him of the swelling sound of the waves that met the dying ears of Jemmy Brien when the kind-hearted sailors carried him

on deck that before the film of death came over his eyes he might see once more the glorious sky. Then struck in a few wild, tremulous notes, like the cry of the waylaid traveller, begging for his life on the dark and lonely moor; then followed a wailing shriek that brought to mind the despairing cry of the man who bartered his soul for gold—the demon-bought man—as the awful hour of payment drew nigh. With a shudder he turned aside his head, but the shriek died away, a trembling rustle of leaves followed, and all was still. With a grave thoughtful face he listened, another whirl of leaves, and again the symphony began—but now, instead of swelling waves, lonely cries and fearful shrieks, it came so soft, so low, that although sorrowful still, it spoke peace and hope to his trembling heart. Another change, and it was carried aloft in powerful cadences, hope, sorrow, and supplication blending their voices in it. A reverential awe came over him, he had never heard the funeral anthems of the Church, but he had often listened to his father speaking of them, and now it seemed way down in the naked woods the wind-spirits were intoning a grand *miserere* for the dying year. Rising, he bared his head and reverentially folded his hands; all the great events of his young life crowded fast upon him—his parents' sickness and death, Father John and the Connors' kindness to him, his going to A—the summer previous, and his first confession. Joy and sorrow filled his heart; bowing down, he threw his arms round Douce's neck, and wept with uncontrollable emotion. He was still weeping when Bernard came up, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, in an excited voice exclaimed,

“So you've heard the news. Arn't it a shame, a blushing shame?” He did not know to what Bernard referred, and, of course, did not know what the blushing shame was,

but it so little interested him to learn that he raised not his head from the neck of his shaggy friend.

“Oh, Joe! Joe!” exclaimed Fanny, as she and Hughy joined them, “did you know that you are to go away from here, away from us?” Now he raised his head, and looked wildly up. ‘Go; where am I to go?’ he asked.

“Way off with that hateful Mr. Reed's brother, to-day or to-morrow. He has been talking to father and mother, and telling them it's wrong for them to keep you here, because we are bringing you up in idleness, there are so many of us, and we pet you so much that you will be spoiled, and all the people are talking about it, and so he says he thinks it's best for you to go off to his brother's family, that there you'll be well treated, and your religion shan't be touched.”

“She told all this in an excited, breathless manner, and her breath exhausted, she hid her face in her apron and sobbed.

“Joe rubbed his head like one bewildered, and said:

“Go—go—no, it can't be. You must be mistaken.”

“No; we arn't,” replied Bernard in a grave, thoughtful voice, ‘I only wish we were. Mother says she has known it for a fortnight, and that's why she made your coat before she made any of ours.’

“Sorrowfully the children repaired to the house. Mrs. Connor was sitting by the window with the sweetbrier before it, her hands were folded listlessly on her lap, and her knitting was lying all unheeded on the floor beside her, while her eyes looked as if she had been weeping. Mr. Connor's chair was drawn up to one end of the great kitchen table, and Mr. Reed with judicial gravity was seated at the other. He was a small wiry man with a very wrinkled forehead, wrinkled cheeks, and indeed, so

many wrinkles gathered round his eyes, nostrils, and thin lips that it seemed wrinkles formed the ground-work of his face. A small blue eye, gleaming with real or assumed kindness and a great deal of calculation, peered out from a thick bushy eyebrow, and a lank mass of dry, sandy hair, carefully smoothed down, lay on each temple.

"He and Mr. and Mrs. Connor were engaged in conversation when the children came in. Mrs. Connor was saying:

"I don't know, Mr. Reed, whether we are doing right or wrong in letting Joe go; but one thing is certain, it's but little comfort James or I will ever take if wrong comes out of it to him. Didn't we promise his mother, and she dying, that we'd be ever faithful to her child?"

"I know it, Mrs. Connor," he replied, in a smooth, soft manner, "you'd do any thing for the boy's good, but jist consider it; as I said afore, aint it more for his good to be where he'll learn to think for hisself, and be made to do suthing, and grow up kind of independent-like, and as if his father and mother dying when he was young wasn't no reason for his always a hanging on to other folks' skirts, and not knowing what his own limbs was made for."

"Every word of this stung little Joe to the quick, and brought a burning blush to his cheek.

"I tell you what it is," continued his tormentor, "his father 'pointed me guardeen as well as Mr. Conner there; and I, for one, vote that he go to Brother Crushford's."

"A frown contracted Mrs. Connor's brow; she was about to speak, when Mr. Reed hastily broke in.

"His religion shan't be touched." He was deep-sighted enough to know this would have a great effect on the Connors. "I knowed Mr. Harny," he went on to say in a most patronizing manner, "and I never knowed a better Christian than he was. Brother Crushford worked for me the year

afore he was married, and he know'd him, too, and he'll think a great deal of his boy, now that he's gone."

"Well he may! well he may!" exclaimed Mr. Connor, laying his arm heavily on the table, "if he only makes half as good a man as his father, it will go hard with him but every one will yet respect him for his own sake. And he'll have, besides, such a good chance for winter schooling."

"He'd have that here," said Mrs. Connor; "every one of them, from Maurice down to Hughy, went to school last winter. Joe didn't stay out a day, and they said he studied the hardest and learned the most of any child in school. Mr. Lathrop, the schoolmaster, thought every thing of him, and many's the time he told James and I that nobody could look into his sorrowful face without feeling kindly to him; and true for him, isn't it himself that's got his own mother's large, pitiful black eyes." She stooped, and dashing away a tear, took up her knitting, and went to picking up the stitches with all haste.

"After a little silence, Mr. Reed said:

"And so it's agreed he is to go?"

"Well, yes;" replied Mr. Connor. "I suppose it's all for the best." The latter part of his answer was directed to his wife.

"I can't say, James, whether it's right or wrong we are doing in letting him go; but, Mr. Reed, what is all that for?"

"He had drawn from his coat-pocket a little square ink-stand, a pretty well used-up quill-pen, and a sheet of foolscap, partly written over.

"You see," he observed, turning to Mr. Connor, with a patient, forbearing smile, as if Mrs. Connor, being a woman, her ignorance of such matters was quite excusable, but, at the same time, quite too profound for him to attempt to en-

lighten, 'it's the way we guardeens do when we bind out a boy.'

"'Man alive,' exclaimed Mr. Connor, starting up, 'what do you mean? Who's been talking of binding Joe out?'

"'Why, when Moses was out last week didn't you both talk it all over?'

"'We talked it over, but sure I didn't agree to it. I tell you now, what I then told him. If Joe had no friends to look after him, binding him out to some honest farmer might be a very excellent thing for him; it would insure him a home, where he could grow up with steady, industrious habits. But Joe is differently situated; his father left him a good farm, that, rented, brings him quite a little income, sufficient plainly and decently to clothe him, and pay any little expense arising from sickness.'

"'But, his board and waiting on, at such times, Mr. Connor?'

"'His board and waiting on could be very easily paid.'

"'How?'

"'Why by the wages he'd earn when well. You don't suppose he's going to be sick all the time?'

"'No, not exactly that; but we being his guardeens, must make some calculations for these ere things. He looks well enough now, but he is too much like his mother to be overly strong. If he was bound out to Brother Crushford, he would get two good hum-made suits a year, three months' schooling every winter; and, if he happened to get sick, be taken care of till he'd be well agin; and then, when he'd be twenty-one, he'd have a hundred dollars clear profit. The rent of his farm could be laid up for him, and added to the hundred dollars, would make, if he wanted to lay it out so, a handsome payment on another farm. I tell you what, Mr. Connor, you'd better, when Brother Crushford comes,

sign this ere article, it will be jest the making of Joe's fortin.'

"'Mr. Reed, I admit it might be to his advantage, but still I can't do it.'

"'Can't do it!' repeated Mr. Reed, in surprise. 'As long as you own it might be to his advantage, why can't you?'

"'Because I promised his father he should always have a home with me, and,' he had refrained from bringing forth his greatest and most important objection, but now he boldly expressed it, 'his not being a Catholic, it would never do to bind Joe to him.'

"'But, although Moses goes to meeting every Sunday, he don't belong to no church, so that would make no odds to him.'

"'It might make no difference to him, but it would make all difference to Joe. While taking care of his body, I must not forget his soul.' Mr. Reed smiled derisively, and seemed about to make some remark, when Mr. Connor again observed:

"'I should have mentioned this first, but I thought I could act just as well without intruding on you any scruple, that, believing different from me, you cannot feel. Nothing worried his parents in their death-sickness—God rest their souls!—so much as the fear that Joe would grow up forgetful of his religion. I gave them my promise, and so did Ellen, that we would ever have a particular care over him, and see that he learned his Catechism well and frequented the sacraments, and so, with God's help, we will. But, supposing I had made no such promise, still, as a Catholic, I would not bind the child of Catholic parents to one who was not himself a Catholic. Joe can go to Mr. Crushford, and stay at so much per month, for six, seven, or eight months, or a year; at Easter he must be allowed to come home for

a few days. Then Bernard and Fanny are to make their first Communion, and Joe is to make his at the same time.'

"Well, whether he was bound to him or not, Moses would not object to that.'

"Without heeding the remark, Mr. Connor continued: 'Every morning he must have time to say his morning prayers, and as to night prayers, I know Joe will not lay his side to a bed before saying them.'

"All this very little interested Mr. Reed, and he hastened to other matters. 'I heard you talking to Moses about his wages, but I forgot what he said about it.'

"He agreed to pay him four dollars a month for the fall months; in the winter he is to go to school for three months, and work night and morning and one day in each week for his board; after school, when the spring work commences, he is again to have the four dollars per month.'

"But his schooling?"

"That is to come out of his wages.' Mr. Reed said no more. On these terms it was that Joe was to go to the Crushfords. Poor Joe! That night, kneeling down to his prayers, he felt more than ever alone—all alone in the world—and, from a heavy heart, the prayer of orphanage went up. It was nearly noon the next day when Mr. Crushford came for him. All the morning Mrs. Connor had been brushing his clothes, putting a stitch here and a stitch there; and when they were thoroughly mended, carefully packing them away in his father's old leather trunk. Douce was to go too. This had been particularly insisted on by Mrs. Connor, and, at length, reluctantly agreed to by Mr. Crushford, when he was there the week before.'

"Poor child!" she said, 'it's but little kindness one could have that would wish to separate him from his dog.'

"After a dinner, which he was scarcely able to taste, and one more visit to the loved graves, his trunk was handed into the heavy lumber wagon, and with much weeping and wailing on the part of the children, and many fervent prayers for his welfare—and tears too, for the truth must be told, on the part of the parents—little Joe and his dog started out into the world.

"Mr. Crushford was a silent, uncommunicative person; he had a blank, expressionless face, which was hard to make out. Little Joe studied it very closely without being able to come to any conclusion. Although not over thirty years of age, his hair was of that peculiar hue it was impossible to tell, at first glance, whether it was the steel shade of age or the flaxen tint of youth; his complexion was an unrelievable sallow, features large and regular, so regular that, joined with his small, greenish-gray eyes and faded complexion, they gave to his countenance an expression of great dullness. Recollecting the oft-made assertion, that dull people are always good-natured, little Joe hoped he would be easy to please. But, might not his very stolidity make him insensible to the instincts of kindness? Might it not deaden him to every generous impulsive feeling? Such countenances we meet every day—meet them without being able, like little Joe, to read what kind of a heart the phlegmatic exterior may cover, whether prosy and good-natured—the usually asserted concomitants of dullness—or selfish, exacting, and tyrannical. He instinctively felt he should not like him. But his wife, she might be very different, and feel for the orphan placed under their charge. He would hope for the best; he would not despair. Dismissing his doubts and fears, he looked about him. The sun burst from a black mass of clouds, and shed a pale, sickly light over the desolate scenery. The bare trees by

the road side creaked in the fall wind, and cast fitful shadows over their way; the hills looked lonely and sad; he could hardly persuade himself they were the same hills he saw when going to A——, the summer previous, then covered with fast ripening grain, with a blue sky above, and birds and sunshine and waving trees around. Now the bright sunshine and birds were gone, and stripped and bare they stretched on before him, lone and desolate, the wailing of the winds and the creaking of the naked trees making more marked the silence that wrapped them around.

"Are we to climb that hill yonder?" he asked, pointing to one in the distance, up which the road they were on seemed to lead.

"Yes."

"How far is it to the top?"

"Don't know—never measured it;" was answered in a tone that told he considered it very impertinent for little boys to ask questions.

"Joe thought of a hundred, and would like to ask, but abashed by Mr. Crushford's freezing manner, he only looked, and silently wondered what was the name of the broad valley with the creek running with a musical, laughing ripple through it—the only joyous sound he heard that day—and if the hill on the left was not the hill where Little Fish, the Indian, stabbed the first white settler of the place; and if the woods back of the hill were not the very woods in which, years before, a little girl had been lost, and when the few inhabitants gathered together, and went out in scouting parties to find her, one brought back a part of her dress, another a little shoe, and another, oh! sadder still, a lock of her golden hair; proving the sorrowful fact, that the household pet, the forest flower, had fallen a prey to the wild beasts. Joe had heard it was somewhere in the

direction of these hills, and it might be in that dark frowning woods rising just above the cedar-crowned hills, and again it might possibly be in the grand sweeping forest on his right. But a log would have answered questions as soon as Mr. Crushford; so silent they rode on. Douce jogged just ahead of the horses as if their especial guide he was good-naturedly showing them the way. Every little while, feeling very lonesome, Joe would give a loud whistle, when he would come bounding up to the side of the wagon, and, with a quick, sharp bark, express his satisfaction in being allowed to follow the fortunes of his young master.

"It was nearly dark when they drove up to the gate before a small unpainted house. Springing lightly from the wagon, he opened the gate, and, as the team was passing through, found time to give Douce a silent caress.

"You may go into the house," said Mr. Crushford; then, suddenly changing his mind, he called him back. 'Come along to the barn,' he said, 'and help me put out the horses, so the next time you can do it yourself.' Joe cheerfully obeyed him. Soon they were 'put out;' and Mr. Crushford, telling him he might drive the cows into the yard, and feed the pigs in the pen, went up to the house for the milk pails. It was some time before he returned; giving Joe a pail, he pointed out to him the cows he was to milk. With a determination to win from his immovable face an approving smile, he seated himself, and milked away with all his might. As Mr. Crushford rose from his fourth cow, Joe was from his third.

"Seeing you can milk as fast as that," said Mr. Crushford, without relaxing a muscle of his face, 'you can go and milk old brindle, yonder.'

"He stood by while Joe, with aching wrists, milked the last cow in the yard.

"With a heavy pail hanging from each arm, he followed Mr. Crushford into the house. Mrs. Crushford was busy preparing the evening meal; but, she paused in her occupation before the large, old-fashioned fireplace, and leisurely surveyed him from head to foot; then, turning to Mr. Crushford, in an indifferent manner, she observed:

"And so that's him."

"Yes," he briefly replied, walking into the buttery and straining the milk.

"With a decided curl of the upper lip, she resumed her work. Joe's hopes of finding in her a kind, indulgent mistress, faded away. She was a large bony woman, with a sour morose countenance; a habitual frown contracted her brows, and brought her dark heavy eyebrows together; her eyes were blue, and looked as if they might have once been pretty; but, somehow, they had got frozen, and were ready now to freeze any thing upon which their glance might rest; her mouth was large, and expressed a remorseless and exacting disposition. Letting his eyes wander from her, he glanced round the room. It was a large kitchen, the doors and wainscoting painted a light blue, and the walls and ceiling whitewashed, gave a lightsome look to the room. A tall clock, like his father and mother's, stood between the two front windows; on one side of it was a small dingy-framed looking-glass, and just under it, on three brass nails, an eight-cornered crimson pin-cushion with little yellow bobs fastened to each corner; several year's almanacs, sewed together, and a work-bag that, like Joseph's coat, was of divers colors. Seven or eight kitchen chairs stood in a straight row back by the wall, in the corner was an old stand, and near it, seated on stools, were two children, boy and girl,—

one about five, the other three. They looked as if all the fogs of November had gathered round their hearts and dispelled the genial sunshine of childhood. They crowded up closer to each other, without taking any notice of Joe; but when Douce came in, they bent wistful eyes upon him, and began to whisper. At last the little boy most unexpectedly let out a laugh; it was a feeble, timid laugh, but Mrs. Crushford heard it, turning sharply round, she walked to him, boxed his ears, and soundly shook him. Not a word was uttered on either side; returning to her occupation before the fire, she touched, with her foot, the rocker of a cradle. The infant in it was awake, but looked as if its little life was almost frightened out of it, by the scathing glances of its mother. Joe wondered if she ever smiled; and, as he watched her movements round the house, he came to the conclusion that even a smile from her would have something in it disagreeable. A strange, unaccountable silence seemed to have taken possession of the whole family, and although the fire burned brightly on the hearth, he felt a chill creep over him; his ears ached for some other sound than the loud ticking of the clock, and the mournful, murmuring song of the teakettle that, away in one corner of the hearth, moaned out its unceasing plaint. The meal ready, Mrs. Crushford lifted a plate piled with buttered pancakes to the table; the tea was poured out; the children were seated on one side; Mrs. Crushford at the head; Mr. Crushford on her right, while little Joe was ordered to find a seat at the foot. Nothing was said during the meal; and immediately after it Mrs. Crushford took up the baby, fed it, undressed it, and then rocked and sang it to sleep. The air was soothing, and well adapted to act as a soporific on infant nerves; but she sang it in so stern and defiant a manner, that it screamed and struggled wildly in her arms. This only made her sing the

louder, and rock the harder; and at last, as the only way to silence her, it closed its eyes and sobbingly went to sleep. Douce was then put into the wood-house, and Joe sent to bed. Kneeling by his bed, he pressed his hands over his eyes, and tried to shut out the sickening fear that he was really, truly alone—all alone in the world. He had hoped to find Mrs. Crushford like his gentle mother, or the kind Mrs. Connor. How grievously had he been disappointed! Were all his hopes to prove as mocking illusions as this? His parents had been called from him; his little home broken up; and from kind friends, who pitied his loneliness, he was sent to strangers, whose hearts seemed steeled to every kindly instinct. Was this painful beginning only a shadowing forth of what his whole life was to be? An anguished cry burst from his lips; feeling the storm gathering wildly around him, he clasped tightly the crucifix he held in his hands, and bowing his head upon it, repeated as fast as he could an 'Our Father' and 'Hail Mary.' Again and again, he repeated them, till, growing more calm, he sought his pillow and went to sleep; not to the sweet refreshing sleep of childhood, but to dream all night of Mrs. Crushford, her stony eyes and harsh discordant voice."

As Agnes concluded the chapter she closed the manuscript, and leaned her head on her hands. Thoughts of Edith Carter's sickness, the estrangement in her family, little Joe Harney's sorrows, and her mother's mysterious words, all rushed upon her. She was weary and exhausted with long watching, and her mind was confused. She could not range the subjects, and treat them separately, as she wished. Little Joe's sad, sorrowful face, Edith's passing away, her mother's strange language, and the lone, bitter feelings at her heart, all came up at once. She swept the

long curls from her hot brow, and rising hastily, exclaimed, "I must have music, or my brain will be wild." She walked to the piano, seated herself and played several airs; at the end of one she paused a moment, then again her fingers touched the keys, and the sweet notes of "*Ave Maria Stella*" floated on the air; at first her rich voice was slightly tremulous, but gained tone and firmness as she proceeded; as she concluded the last stanza, calm and collected, she arose from the instrument, threw herself on the sofa, and while resting, endeavored to study out how her father's honor could be in the least concerned in either the keeping or dismissing of Martha Clement. No satisfactory clue to the mystery could she find, and at length thought flagged, and the long lashes drooped in sleep.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FORTNIGHT had passed, and again was Becky Starr in her grandparents' room. A great change had come over them; an invisible power had urged them on to study and reflect, till at length they became firmly convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion. A few days more, and the saving waters of baptism were to be poured over their silver locks; they were to be received into the true Church. Becky's eyes beamed with happiness, but, as ever, she was calm and thoughtful. An open book lay on her lap, from which she had been reading, but now she had paused, to listen with respectful attention to her grandfather's words.

"Becky, child," he said, "now that our eyes are opened, I cannot help wondering that there is any sectarianism in religion; either the Catholic religion is true or false; if true, then all others must be false, for there cannot be two true religions. If false, then all the religions which sprang from it, or separated from it, must be false too, for no true religion can be based on a false foundation. Consequently, in the latter case there can be no religion left to man. His only resource is to sink into feeble deism or utter atheism.

"And, grandfather," asked Becky, "was there not a time that you felt tempted to embrace the former of these alternatives?"

"Child," he replied, "for a short time in our struggles,

mother and I trembled over the brink of this terrible chasm, but a merciful Father drew us back; we were saved." He raised his eyes, and an expression of intense gratitude lit up his venerable features.

"Becky," he exclaimed, after a brief silence, "mother and I have lived many years, and now looking back on the wastes of a long life, we feel what a mockery is this infallible guide, this boasted reason. Who can calmly sound the depths of the soul, and believe that God—a God of wisdom and mercy—would create man, and place him in this sin-cursed world, with no other guide than his own delusive reason to govern and direct him? We know the stars rise and set; we know the genial rays of the sun melt down the icy stores of winter, and make earth yield her golden harvest to man; we know the seasons, why they change. But can reason, boasted reason, tell us when or how the boundless worlds around us were created? where the sun obtained its renovating power, or when earth first commenced her revolving course around it? Can reason tell us when sin came into the world, or why death holds dominion over man? No, she cannot answer a single question the eager, panting soul puts to her. She only knows that man is here, a feeble, weak, and sin-bowed creature; she cannot lighten his burden, if she attempts it she only crushes him still more. When he cries for bread, she gives him a stone; when, faint and thirsty, he turns to the fount of faith, if she could she would dash the cooling draught from his parched lips. Reason, the finite reason of man, is weighed in the balance, and found wanting." He paused; a dignity sat enthroned on his lofty brow, and his eyes beamed with the brilliancy of youth. Raising his hand, he swept the thin locks back, and in a voice trembling with intensity of feeling, exclaimed:

"And as to atheism, who does not shrink from the very thought of it? What is it but a degrading of the soul down to the level of the brute creation? To believe nothing; to know and feel no higher instinct than man is here, placed by some inexplicable chance, in a world, created, moved, and governed by chance, and that here he is to remain, till by the same chance he is again hurled back to his original nothing. Such a belief, or rather such a non-belief, how utterly antagonistic to the human heart. Among all nations, even the most barbarous and uncivilized, the belief of a Supreme Being marks the fundamental principle of their various forms of worship. Out of punishment to man, God hides himself from him, and lo! does he cease to worship? No; the soul that has the impress of the Deity stamped upon her cannot wholly forget her divine origin. The glorious anthem the morning stars sang together when, the creation finished, God rested from his works, comes back to her from the dim ages of the past, filling her with a strange joy, and inciting her on to some goal in the future. She looks above, around, no God can she see, and unable to contain the worshipping feelings that well up within, she bows down to blocks of marble, and brass, and wood, and makes to herself deities, always remembering that above all, though she cannot see Him, is a Supreme God, great, and powerful, and to whom all the lesser deities, her deities are subject. The soul of man *must* have something to worship; hence, if God removes himself from her, she bows down to worship gods of her own making. Deism and atheism refuted, where shall we find the true worship of God? where find the laws He has formed for the guidance and protection of man? In the repository in which He placed them! in the Holy Catholic Church." His whole face was lighted up, and a joy and happiness not of earth seemed

resting upon it. Becky listened with wonder. Who would have once thought that her stern old grandfather would ever use such words 'nowhere but in the Holy Catholic Church were the laws which God formed for the guidance and protection of man to be found? Oh, the ever-enduring mercy of God! the wonderful power of prayer.' 'No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.'*

After the lapse of a few moments, grandfather again spoke: "Child, you were reading a book that has for mother and I a peculiar interest. We, who have passed through similar trials, can fully appreciate the difficulties that rose up before Ramsay, when he attempted to solve the mysteries around him. He could not be an atheist; he was too sincere and honest to remain an infidel. In the struggles that rent his soul, he suffered the most intense agony. Oh, child, those who have always enjoyed the light of the true faith, know nothing of the anguish that bows down one when he finds himself in an unknown waste, with an impenetrable darkness around him. As the wrecked mariner longs for the land, so he longs for light; and oh, Becky, child!" he exclaimed, with great feeling, "mother and I know just how he felt, just how he suffered; and we know too,—blessed forever be God!—how his heart throbbed and ached with the intensity of joy when the light burst upon him, and the darkness comprehended the light." Tears suffused his eyes, and in a thick tremulous voice, he added: "But, dear child, let me interrupt you no longer, and, if you are not too weary, you may go back to the first page."

"No, dear grandfather, not at all weary."

She went back to the first page; leaf after leaf she turned, occasionally pausing and glancing at her grandparents,

* Eccles. ii., 11.

when, by an impressive inclination of the head, they would signify their desire for her to go on.

At length, no longer able to restrain her feelings, grandmother exclaimed: "How beautiful, how lucid, the Catholic religion!"

"And above all, mother, how sensible—how suited to the wants of every one! She is not religion merely for the great ones of earth; like her Divine Founder, she embraces in her maternal arms the lowest, the humblest." He paused and musingly added:

"Strange, strange! that we should have been so blind!"

To remove the unpleasant reflections, Becky hastily asked: "Grandfather, will you not hear me, further? I long to read more, that you may see the subtle sophistry of infidelity fade and die away in the powerful light of Catholic reasoning."

"Yes, yes, child; read on."

Jane glided noiselessly in, and seated herself on an ottoman at her grandmother's knee. Many times had she read these same soul-struggles; yet, now, she listened with unabated interest. There are pieces which, like the melodies of childhood, ever charm and delight the ear. Such was the account of the conversion of this truly great and good man. Grandmother softly passed her hand over Jane's golden locks, and bent on Becky an eager glance, fearful of losing a single word. A long train of past events arose before them; the prophecies contained in the ancient books fulfilled; the Jewish religion passed away, and a new form of worship instituted in its place, the Lawgiver enforcing this new form by miracles the most public—the most wonderful.

Unweariedly Becky read on; when she came to where it speaks of this life as being infinitely short, an obscure night

where the pleasures we meet are but transient dreams, and the sorrows we feel but wholesome bitterness, to make us loathe the vanities of the world, and thirst only for the pure, unchangeable joys of heaven, grandmother said:

"Becky, dear, pause here, and lay the book aside. These words are particularly addressed to those yet in the spring-time of life; reflect upon them, and let them not pass easily from your mind."

"But why, grandmother, do you think they are addressed to the young more particularly than to the old?"

"Because, child," answered grandfather, "the old, by experience, already know them to be true; but to the young they seem strange and out of place; pleasure to them is the only good—pain, the only evil. They are told this is not so, and before they can fully realize the truth of the statement, they must, as mother says, reflect upon it, and let it not pass easily from their minds. But blessing on thee, Becky; now go, Jane, too; we, mother and I, have more reading before us, and we wish to be left alone."

"But, grandfather," said Jane, gliding up to him, with a tear in her large blue eye, "won't you say blessings on me, too?"

He looked up surprised into her young face, over which sixteen summers had not yet passed, and raising her hand, exclaimed:

"Yes, yes! blessings on you too, my fair-haired angel; now go." Arm-in-arm, the cousins left the room, and repaired to their little oratory, where, on bended knees, they thanked the God whose mercy endureth forever.

It was in the afternoon of the next day that they again called on their grandparents. As they entered their room, grandfather took off his spectacles and, pointing to them to be seated, he said:

"Becky, child, I have just been reading a volume which, in days gone past, afforded me great satisfaction."

"What is it, grandfather?"

"Rasselas. I have again read that chapter where Nekayah continues her remarks on private life."

"And, grandfather, a painful picture of life Johnson draws."

"Yes, child; and in the great majority of cases, a very true one; but now, turn to the chapter where they converse with an old man. There, now, read the old man's experience. Mother, that always goes home to my heart."

Becky read, "'Lady,' answered he, 'let the gay and the vigorous expect pleasure in their excursions; it is enough that age can attain ease. To me, the world has lost its novelty; I look around and see what I remember to have seen in happier days. I rest against a tree, and consider that in the same shade I once disputed upon the annual overflow of the Nile with a friend who is now silent in the grave.'"

"How true!" exclaimed grandfather, "how true! The face and form of many a friend who has long since faded from earth often and often come back to me just as they looked in the olden time. Sometimes 'tis in their gay uniform on the training ground, and again, 'tis as they appeared at the pleasant little gatherings in our eastern homes." He paused a moment, and then resumed with a sigh, "As to those who lived on to old age, they changed so much that they seemed not the happy, light-hearted beings our memory treasured up. No; years had so completely changed them, that it was impossible to trace a single resemblance to their former selves. Mother, you remember Nathan Howell?"

"Yes, father, a generous, impulsive boy, and an intelligent and enterprising man."

"Becky, child, we parted with him in youth, when his cheek wore the rough, ruddy glow of the farmer-boy; when his thick mass of dark hair was carelessly brushed from off a smooth, handsome forehead; when his clear gray eyes shone with all the fire of youth, and when his buoyant step, broad chest, and rounded limbs told of a long lease of life stretching on before him. Such he was when we parted. Years passed, and again we met. What changes! what changes had come over him—over me too! We who had parted in the full vigor of youth met and shook hands in all the feebleness of age. His cheek was pale and shrunken, his hair thin and silvered, his eye dull and faded, his form bent and contracted. As I held his hand in mine, it seemed impossible that he could be the Nathan Howell of my youth. His voice, all broken, sounded not like the rich, manly voice of the boy I had known and loved so well. Long, long we gazed in each other's faces, trying to recall some resemblance of the past, but in vain; the outward form was all changed—only in memory did it remain."

"Becky," said grandmother, "it would have made your heart ache to have seen those old men fall on each other's shoulders, and weep like children."

"But he is gone, he is gone," said grandfather, in a trembling voice; "'tis three years since he too went." Grandfather mused awhile, and then suddenly raising his eyes from the carpet, exclaimed:

"But we are forgetting, child, that you did not read the whole of Ramsay for us yesterday; we would like to hear the rest to-day."

"Sure enough, grandfather." She arose, walked to the table, took up the little volume, and reseating herself, said:

"Where did I leave off?"

"You left off," replied Jane, "where it speaks of this life as infinitely short."

"Ah yes, now I recollect; thank you, Jane, for reminding me." She turned to the page, and in her singularly clear and musical voice read to them. With the deepest attention they listened; the shades of evening were gathering fast around them when she closed the book. Jane quietly left the room to assist her mother in the evening meal.

"What sensible reasoning!" exclaimed grandfather: "none of the wild vagaries of the philosophers, who seem to think it a wondrous display of intellect to enwrap themselves and readers in the murky folds of doubt and uncertainty. Becky, child, I am an old man, and have looked around with the eyes of one who knows he has but a little longer to stay, and I see the spirit of infidelity which is so widely spread throughout the length and breadth of the land is nothing more than the prophesied and expected changes of error. The Holy Fathers have truly said that error is forever changing. How could it be otherwise? Way down in the depths of the soul, is an ever-yearning thirst for *Truth*. She seeks it, she hopes she has found it; she takes the semblance, and makes much of it. Presently she sees it is not exactly what she wants, there is something lacking; then she begins to correct, to remodel. For awhile she is pleased with the new form, but it soon loses its charm, it is not *Truth* after all, let her color and patch it as she will. It cannot satisfy her; and at last sickened and disgusted, grown reckless with constant disappointments and ever-yearning desires, she plunges headlong into the seething whirlpool of infidelity."

"Grandfather," rejoined Becky, and she spoke with

great earnestness, "were it not for the promise extended to the Catholic Church, that the Spirit of Truth should always remain with her, and that the united powers of hell should never prevail against her, I would tremble at the wide spread of infidelity, and fear it would never pause till it had swept all traces of Christianity from the face of the earth, and brought it back to the grossest, blackest paganism; but, assured of the protection of Heaven, I rest secure and fear not, for the Catholic Church 'is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.'"

Her grandparents turned their faces to the fire, and, gazing on its glowing embers, dwelt for a while on her words, and then with grateful hearts meditated on the great mercy that had been shown them.

CHAPTER XXII.

AGNES HILTON was seated at her desk. Of all the house, her own room, since little Mark's adoption, was the only one she liked to be in. Sometimes she would pause for a while in the parlors, but felt uneasy and restless till she was back to her sanctum. This morning, as she sat with her arms thrown over the desk, and her head bowed down upon them, a painful feeling of loneliness oppressed her. An open letter had fallen from her lap, and was lying on the carpet at her feet. It was from Walter Starr, telling her he would soon be with her. There was a time when a letter from Walter, bearing such glad news, would have thrilled her with joy; but now she read it with a strange feeling of dread. In the wretched loneliness of her heart, with all the intensity of her nature had she longed to see him; but now, when he might at any moment appear before her, she shrank from the thought of meeting him. She could not help feeling that he would not sympathize in her grief, might even recoil from her for the cause of it, and she determined he should never know it. With lover-eye keenness he had perceived a great sadness under the forced gayety of her letters; her very mirth had in it something caustic and bitter; her expressions of unchangeable affection, something reproving and fearing; and in his answers, which breathed the most unalterable devotion, he had

begged to know why this brooding spirit of doubt and sadness. With the fair, unsullied page before her, she had carefully avoided any direct reply; but when the melting tones of his voice fill her ears, and his kind and pitying eyes beam full upon her, as if they would read her very soul, could she dissemble then? She feared she could not, and as much as she longed for some kind friend to whom she could unburden her sorrow, she shrank from the thought of ever revealing it to him. Raising her head, she opened a book and read several pages; closing it, she sat for some time buried in thought, injured feelings of pride rankled in her heart. Her aversion to Martha had deepened into hatred; she could not look on the pale face of the gentle girl without a deep, settled anger lighting her eye. How terrible is pride! With her pride, came jealousy; with jealousy, hatred and anger; peace was swept from her heart, and nursing her passions, with every thing around her to make her happy, she was wretched, truly wretched. Unable to solve the mystery of her mother's words, she forgot to take the warning they were intended to convey. Mark she treated with cold, distant reserve; Martha with absolute rudeness. The latter would have left, but Father Joseph advised her to stay awhile longer. Alfred and her mother still dwelt on the great good fortune of little Mark, and not a word of her sorrow did she breathe to them; she could not cloud their happiness, and bravely she strove to appear cheerful whenever she was with them. Mr. and Mrs. Hilton seemed more than ever attached to her, and very frequently bringing in her sewing, Mrs. Hilton would spend a half-day with her, telling her scenes of her early life, and drawing pleasant conversation from her in return. She dearly loved them, but for Agnes she still had to struggle hard to keep down all harsh and angry feelings; but

she did struggle, and so far success had crowned her efforts. When she would feel her cheeks burn and her heart throb at her taunting remarks, with the silent "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" for herself, went up another little prayer for Agnes, that God might pardon and convert her. She knew a mystery was connected with little Mark's adoption, and Mr. and Mrs. Hilton's insisting on retaining her in their service, and she patiently waited for time to solve it.

Agnes looked with a listless eye upon her drawings; she took up her crayon, gave a few light touches to an unfinished picture, then laid it down, and opening her manuscript turned to the eighth chapter.

"It was with an oppressive feeling of loneliness that little Joe awoke early the next morning, dressed himself and knelt down to his morning prayers. All the bright hopes of his life had faded away, not a ray broke through the darkness that enveloped him. Alone! all alone! no kind face to smile upon him, no gentle voice to speak soothing words to his desolate heart. Bowing his head in mute sorrow, the waves washed over his soul. The gray light of morning came in through the chamber window; raising his tearless eyes, he saw the crucifix lying on his pillow. That blessed emblem reminded him of the love God bore to fallen man—and would the good God, who died for him, leave him alone without friends—without comfort. Had he not given him an angel to have a tender care over him? Was he not at that very moment looking with pity on the sorrows of his young charge, and trying to instil into his mind peace-giving confidence in the Father? His parents had been called from him, he had been parted from his dear friends, and only a little boy sent out into the world—but was he sent alone? No; as God gave his angel to

guide and protect Tobias when he left his father's house, so now he felt an angel had been given him; throwing his arms up over the pillow he bowed his head upon the crucifix, and alone, all alone in the world, knew that the God of the orphan would order all for his good. Strengthened and comforted, he arose from his knees as Mr. Crushford called him. Hastily descending the stairs, Mr. Crushford said:

"You may take the pails and milk the same cows you milked last night."

"Joe took the pails and proceeded to the cow-yard. After milking he was told to feed the pigs and clean out the stable. This done, he went back to the house, breakfast was not yet ready, and, in a tone which made her order seem despotic, Mrs. Crushford bade him fill up the wood-box. As he opened the wood-house door, Douce flew upon him, and laid his great shaggy head lovingly upon his cheek; he stopped a moment to caress him, and Mrs. Crushford's hard tones sounded in his ears.

"Come away from that dog, and do as I bid you."

"He tore himself from Douce, and carried in the wood. The little boy and girl were up, and, with the keen interest of childhood, they watched his every movement. At last the little boy crowded up to him, and timidly putting his hand in his, in a low voice asked:

"Be you bound out to my pa?"

"A box on his ear from his mother answered him.

"Didn't your father and me tell you you wasn't to have any thing to say to him?" The child drew back, and little Joe looked up astonished.

"Whatever question she read in his face she took no notice of it, but sharply ordered him, 'if the wood was all brought in, to go and bring in a basket of chips; idle

boys never come to good.' As he lugged in a great heavy basket, she lifted the breakfast to the table. In the same order as the night before, they seated themselves round it. Douce, in the mean time, sensible dog that he was, fearing his breakfast would be neglected, as it most assuredly would have been, went to a large kettle of mashed potatoes and sour milk, standing near the pig pen, and bountifully helped himself. The meal over, Mr. Crushford and Joe went to the corn-field and husked till noon. Several times Joe strove to engage him in conversation, but the most he could get from him was: 'He didn't like to see little boys have quite so much to say, and if he stayed with him he'd have to learn to hold his tongue and mind his work.' This, little Joe could not doubt; if for a moment he stopped, to pat Douce on the head, or speak a kind word to him, he would be instantly reminded: 'He didn't get him to fool away his time with his dog,' and once he even went so far as to tell him: 'He know'd such a thing as shooting dogs when there wasn't no other way to get rid of them.'

"Joe husked away with all his might, and though he could not strip the ears as fast as Mr. Crushford, he could not help thinking how delighted Mr. Connor would have been, and what kind words of encouragement he would have received from him, but Mr. Crushford only looked coldly and said something about boys not being what they were when he was young. At dinner he took especial pains to tell Mrs. Crushford that Joe only husked three baskets to his five. Directing a severe glance at the orphan, she remarked: 'He might have expected it; she knowed just how it would be the minute she saw his good-for-nothing dog.' It was very evident poor Douce was to be no favorite in his new home. And how the Connors loved him! What glo-

rious frolics he had had with them all, with Bernard, Mike, and Hughy, and even Maurice! Returning from the fields in the evening the same programme as the night before, chores, supper, and sent to bed. Day after day the same routine. When the corn was all husked Mr. Crushford began getting up wood for his winter's use, and little Joe was bitterly complained of, because he could chop but three quarters of a cord a day. How dreary a time to the orphan boy. Not a ray broke through the gloom that hung around him: remembrance of the kind tones and loving smiles of his early home only made his young heart more sad and desolate. Let him toil as he would, no friendly word of encouragement did he receive. The children were sedulously kept from him, as if he were a tainted thing. Douce was his sole companion; but only on Sundays, when the family were gone to church, did he get a moment to caress him.

"Mr. Connor had exacted a promise that his religious principles should not be infringed upon, and though Mrs. Crushford thought 'it looked more respectable for folks to go to meeting Sundays, than to be hanging round home,' they never insisted on his going with them. Joe would have been glad if they had been as faithful to another promise made to Mr. Connor, which was, that he should be sent three months to school in the winter. Winter-school commenced, but he was kept busy; and if, at any time, he ventured to remind Mr. Crushford of this second promise, he would pause from his work, eye him from head to foot, and sneeringly remark:

"'A great deal of good book-learning would do you, I guess.'

"A family lived quite near, but they had no intercourse with them. Mr. Bonner had a large family, worked land on

shares, and lived in a log-house. Mrs. Crushford looked down upon them with great contempt, and would not have let her dog, had she owned one, associate with such. Mrs. Bonner, it seemed, more than any of the rest, excited her particular aversion. She had three grown-up daughters, and when either of these were not out at service, they helped her so much that she was able to take in a great deal of weaving, and got thereby the name of a thrifty, hard-working woman; and it was prophesied, when John Bonner's children all grew up, John Bonner would have a farm of his own, and in his old age find himself a comfortable, well-to-do farmer. Now all this exceedingly annoyed Mrs. Crushford. In the first place, to say Mrs. Bonner was an industrious woman, and helped her husband along, was just as much as folks knew; she guessed if she had three such stout girls as Ruth, Sarah, and Huldah to do her work for her, she could take in weaving too, and she wouldn't make such a fuss about it, and boast and brag as they did either; and as to John Bonner's ever having a farm of his own, she only hoped she might live to see it. There was one trait in her character that, more than any other—even more than her dislike for the Bonners—amazed little Joe. She professed the utmost abhorrence of a lie; was constantly reminding him where liars went, in a peculiarly grating tone, that told she suspected that he was one. If, in speaking of the Connors, he happened to relate any incident of the year he was with them, she would look hard at him, and ask if he had been taught to know how wicked it was to lie. And yet, after all this, he often saw her show the squire's wife, who frequently visited her, yarn that she had spun and garments that she had made, when he, from being the very one to go with them and carry them home, knew they were spun and made by the despised Bonners. When

Mrs. Mason would express astonishment how one with three little children, and no one to help her, could possibly find time to do so much, she would gravely tell her she did it by economizing every minute, and not forgetting the duties she owed her family. Ruth Bonner was hired to make a ruffled shirt for Mr. Crushford, and a worked cap for Mrs. Crushford, and on Squire Mason's wife's next visit they were brought out and shown, not only as proofs of Mrs. Crushford's great industry, but as samples of her exceeding taste and ingenuity. Joe often felt tempted to ask her if *she* knew how wicked it was to lie, and where liars went; but this would never have done, and so he contented himself with wondering what Mrs. Crushford called a lie.

"How different was his gentle mother! How shy of taking praise to herself! When Mrs. Connor extolled the make of a neat little suit her slender fingers had put together, how careful she was to tell her that it was one of her neighbors who had cut and basted it for her, and when his father declared he had no doubt she could have done it just as well without any assistance, she was so ingenious; how she blushed and told him he was wrong; that she would have spoiled it, only Mrs. Gaylard came in just in time to save it. And then Mrs. Connor, too, how in her good-natured way she scolded Mr. Connor when he blundered and said she had made six hundred pounds of butter when she had made but five hundred and fifty—and then to ask Joe if he had ever been taught to know how wicked it was to lie! Bitter feelings rankled in his heart, and he could hardly say that part of the 'Lord's Prayer' where we beg to be forgiven as we forgive others. With Mr. Crushford it was quite the reverse. He was likely to have two hundred and fifty or three hundred bushels of corn, but he looked dismal; told his neighbors he did not expect more than one

hundred and fifty, or at the most two hundred, and drew from them how much they would have. Where it was more than his reported number, he would tell, on reaching home, how hard he had worked; and yet, after all, such and such a one was more favored than him, and then he would grumble, act disconsolate, and unmercifully drive little Joe, as if to revenge it all on him. If, on the other hand, it was less, he would insist they might have had as much if they had only taken care of it, and this was a lesson for him to see to his; and little Joe would be ordered round, as if on him depended the whole success of getting in his fall crop in time. The same with the wood; he knew there would come such a snow-storm that there would be no getting into the woods; and if they did not stir round pretty briskly, they'd find themselves overtaken like the sinner on his death-bed.

"Not a moment's rest was allowed him, although the expected overwhelming snow-storm made not its appearance. After the wood for the family was got up, then he began to grumble because he knew Joe was so shiftless, that he would be good for nothing just when he needed him the most. Now he had forty cords of wood to draw to the village of Amstara, three miles from there; must have it to help make out the spring payment on his farm, and what help would Joe be, he would like to know? The laziness of the boy was enough to drive any other man to thrash him every day of his life.

"Poor Joe! many and many a time he wished for death, but death came not to his relief. No; his labor was not done, he must yet toil on; and he must not despair—a kind Father watched over him, and the clouds would by-and-by break away. These were the whisperings of his good angel.

"Christmas, day of sanctity and bliss, came, but Joe was not allowed a holiday, was not even granted time to read Mass prayers. Before it was yet light he was hurried to the barn to do the 'chores,' and after breakfast sternly ordered to drive the team, laden with wood, to the village, and see he didn't hang round and waste his time. With tears dimming his eyes he took the reins in his hands, and thought of the happy Connors on that blessed morning, gathered in their little parlor, kneeling before a picture of the 'Infant in the Manger,' and offering up to God their heartfelt prayers. Although away from them, and in sorrow, he tried to join them. He repeated the 'Litany of Jesus,' and tried to sing 'Adeste Fideles,' but it was more than he could do, his voice died away; stepping on to the runners, he threw his arms up over the wood and sobbed in very abandonment of grief. Douce crowded close to him, and moaned, as if he knew what sorrow his young master was in, and felt his inability to lighten it. Often and often was he tempted to leave them and go back to the Connors, but the hateful remark of Mr. Reed, that 'His father and mother dying when he was young, wasn't no reason for his always a hanging on to other folks' skirts and not knowing what his own limbs was made for,' rung in his ears. No, no; he would not go back to them—he would not hang on to their skirts.

"The sun shone down on glittering snow and ice-bound creeks; he could not help thinking of the last Christmas his father was with him. Mr. and Mrs. Connor, with little Miles, had come over the day before, and, though his father had sat up quite late, talking of the green land of his birth, he rested better that night, and the next morning rose, feeling stronger than he had felt for weeks. As soon as the 'chores' were done at the barn, they all knelt to Mass

prayers; Mr. Connor being the one to read them. How deep and fervent his voice; and his father, how reverently he folded his thin, white hands, and bowed his head till the thick mass of raven hair fell over his pale, lofty brow. His mother and Mrs. Connor knelt beside each other; what earnest piety shone on their countenances; and his mother, how frequently her eye, full of tender solicitude, turned to his father. Little Joe remembered it all, and the cheerful breakfast that followed. Mr. and Mrs. Connor and his father talked of the bright Christmases at home—of the Easters, Whit-Sundays, and other festivals of the Church, and told many a pleasant anecdote of their respective parish priests—Father Brady and Father Gillen.

"He was a little boy, and not expected to take part in the conversation; but, how happy he was sitting there listening to it, and glancing every now and then through the white-curtained window, at the bright sunshine and glittering snow without. Oh! how different; how different a Christmas was to-day? The sun shone the same; the snow was just as pure and white, but all else, how changed! no parents, no friends, no Mass prayers, no kind words. Tears filled his eyes, wiping them away, Douce rubbed his great shaggy head against his knee; he tried to speak to him, but his heart was too full.

"He had now reached the village, and soon unloaded his wood before Mr. Stanley's door. As he turned the horses' heads homeward, George Bonner opened the door, and came out.

"A merry Christmas to you, Joe Harny," he said.

"These were the first pleasant words he had heard for days, in truth, from the time he had taken home the last piece of sewing from the Bonners. Mrs. Bonner always spoke kindly to him, as if she pitied his loneliness, and

had such a hearty, good-natured way about her, that she always reminded him of Mrs. Connor.

"A merry Christmas to you, Joe Harny; why don't you speak?"

"But, poor Joe's self-command was all gone; leaning against the stakes of the empty sled, he sobbed violently.

"What's the matter?" asked George, in a kind voice, coming up to him, and laying his hand affectionately on his arm.

"Don't ask me; don't ask me," he sobbed.

"Yes, tell me, Joe; mother says hidden sorrow eats away the heart. Tell me, and you'll feel better; and, if you don't want me to say any thing about it, I won't."

"Joe felt so lonely, so wretched, that the kind words of George fell all unheeded on his ears.

"Again laying his hand on his arm, in a low voice he said, 'Joe, the folks in the store are looking at you; if you can't help crying, come to the shed, yonder.'

"Joe now looked up and stoutly rubbed his cheeks.

"Come, Joe, come," George had taken hold of his hand.

"No, no, I can't," he said, withdrawing it, and taking up the reins, 'Mr. Crushford will scold if I am not back in the right time.'

"George's face reddened. 'He's always fault-finding, ain't he?' he indignantly asked.

"I can't please him," Joe admitted.

"To be sure you can't. Who could please *him*, I'd like to know? He don't never let you have any time to rest, does he? talks of little boys growing up in laziness, and drives you all the time, as if his life depended on grinding all the work out of you he can? You needn't tell me; I know all about him; I guess I haven't worked six weeks for him, without finding out what he is.'

"Joe looked into the frank, open countenance before him.

"I tell you what it is,' said George, warming with the subject, 'I wouldn't stay with them. I don't care; if you be bound out to him, I'd run away.'

"But I am not bound to him.'

"Aint? well, then, he lied to father; he said you was.'

"Said I was bound to him?'

"Yes, said you was bound out to him.'

"Don't believe it. Don't believe it. Mr. Connor wouldn't do it.'

"Then why, in the name of wonder, do you stay with him?'

"Because I don't want to be hanging on to other folks' skirts, and not know what my own limbs are made for.'

"Extremely nice that, I declare. But how did it get into your head that you must be hanging on to other folks' skirts, if you wasn't killing yourself for him. I suppose that's some of his lessons, ain't it?'

"No; he didn't say it, it was Mr. Reed.'

"Mr. Reed, his brother-in-law?'

"Yes.'

"Ah ha, ah ha! that's it.' George looked particularly wise, and then remarked:

"You was to go to school this winter, wasn't you?'

"Yes; three months.'

"Three months! You won't see the inside of a school house this winter.'

"Oh, oh!' groaned little Joe, as hopes of getting a brief respite from constant fault-finding, keeping ahead of Bernard Connor, and meeting pleasant companions, faded away.

"You won't. It's a fact, you won't. He promised to send you, but he don't mind breaking his promises.'

"They had now got opposite Mr. Bonner's, and jumping off the sled, George said:

"Come over to our house some Sunday, when they've gone to meeting.'

"Oh, I can't; he'd find it out and be so angry.'

"Joe Harny, you're a fool!' and, with this complimentary remark, George crammed both hands into his pockets, and went whistling up to the house.

"Poor Joe! he hardly knew what to do. Should he write to the Connors? Mr. Reed would say he was going to hang on to their skirts. No, no; he would bear it; he would never let them know it.

"As he drove into the yard, Mr. Crushford asked him if he knew how long he had been gone. Joe told him he did not.

"Well; you was two hours.'

"But I had to walk the horses all the way there.'

"And I guess all the way back,' he sneeringly replied. 'Now load up, and see if you can't be two hours again.'

"The horses sweat going.'

"And you did, too, didn't you?'

"Joe made no reply to the taunting remarks; he only thought of George Bonner's words.

"And George was right in saying he would not see the inside of a school-house that winter. When the wood business was finished, then came the threshing of wheat, with heavy flails; and after that, the corn, with horses; and then it was time to prepare the spouts and buckets for making sugar, and school was out. Day after day he passed in the sugar-bush, from before light in the morning till nine and ten o'clock at night, carrying, with a heavy, clumsy neck-yoke, two large pails of sap from the scattered

trees. When the sap ran slowly and a moment's rest might have been given him, Mr. Crushford would have him haul up some fallen limbs, and set him to chopping and breaking them up, to feed the fire, while he would sit in the little shanty he had erected, smoke his pipe, and skim the kettles. A small piece of pie and a thin slice of bread and butter—the butter so lightly spread that Joe never had the good fortune to be able either to see or taste it—frequently formed his dinner and supper. Douce was wholly neglected, and went hungry, unless he gave him a part of his own scanty meal; or was able, before he left the house in the morning, to steal a dry bit for him. After the sugar-making, and before commencing the spring's work, Mr. Crushford had promised to let him make his Easter visit to the Connors; but, like his promise of sending him to school, he forgot it. Perhaps they were ashamed to have the Connors see his new coat and the clothes they had so carefully mended, all in rags. Working hard all winter for them, Mrs. Crushford had never sewed even the slightest rend. His stockings were all out and his boots leaked shockingly; the roses that Mrs. Donnell had remarked on his cheeks, were faded away, and his face was lean and haggard.

"It was Saturday afternoon; Mr. Crushford and his family were going to a sister's, living about six miles from them, to visit some relatives from the West. Before starting, to insure no laziness on Joe's part, during his absence, Mr. Crushford gave him a task, to plant, before he got back, seven rows of corn, thirty rods long. It was more than he could possibly do, and so he told him.

"I guess, if you start your boots, and not stand as if you wanted the grass to grow under your feet, you can do it."

"No, no; Mr. Crushford, I can't. You couldn't do it yourself."

"You want me to give you two rows, so you can play all the time with them ere good-for-nothing Bonners, don't you? You see that ere stump yonder?"

"Yes."

"Well, from the fence to that ere stump is seven rows, see that! you have it done when I get home." With that he deliberately turned and walked into the house. Joe saw them start, taking with them their children, and hopeless of accomplishing his task, he worked on.

"An hour or two had passed, when a cheery voice called him: he looked up and saw George and John Bonner standing by the fence, which lay between Mr. Crushford's farm and the farm their father worked.

"And so Mr. Crushford's gone?"

"Yes."

"How much did he leave for you to do?"

"Seven rows."

"Seven rows! And do you expect to do it?"

"No; I told him I couldn't."

"And he said you must?"

"Yes."

"Of course he did. I know him like a book; the only thing he thinks little boys are made for, is to grind work out of them. Father hired me out to him last summer, for six months, at four dollars a month. I stayed six weeks, and father said I shouldn't stay any longer, and so he took me away."

"Did he pay you for the six weeks' work?" asked Joe, without stopping his hoe.

"No, not the first red cent; but father said he had better lose that than lose me, for if I stayed with him the whole six

months, 'twould be the death of me. You see he haint got no heart, where the heart ought to be, is only a big stone; but what time do you expect him back?

"Not till night."

"Gone to see them folks down from the west?"

"Yes."

"So I thought, and if they like him as well as I do, precious glad they'll be to see him!"

"George stood awhile watching him, and then abruptly said: 'We've just finished our corn, and if John and me comes over and helps you with the five rows you've got yet to do, we three could do it in a jerk.'

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Joe, looking up with a brightening face, 'then they'd be done when he gets back.'

"If it was only to have them done by the time *he* gets back, I'd let my hoe-handle all rot, and my hoe all rust, before I'd plant the first hill. It's not for that I tell you, Joe Harny, it's not for that.' Again he watched Joe awhile, and then suddenly exclaimed:

"Yes, we three could do it, and have a little time besides; say, Joe, if we help you, will you and Douce then come and play with us?"

"Yes, yes," answered Joe, without a moment's thought.

"Done," said the boys, bounding, hoe in hand, over the fence. When with hearty good-will they set about helping Joe, and when the sun was yet an hour high, the seven rows were planted. 'Hurrah! hurrah!' they shouted, throwing down their hoes, and pointing to the western sky, 'see, we've some time for fun before they're back.'

"Yes, and there's a squirrel at father's corn already," exclaimed John, 'and now for Douce.' And away went boys and dog.

"They had killed one squirrel, and 'treed' another near

the road; Douce was barking with all his might; little Joe and the Bonners were shouting and clapping their hands, when who should come upon them but Mr. Crushford. The boys at once became silent, but Douce, unconscious of any harm, only barked the louder.

"Did you finish your stent?" asked Mr. Crushford, stopping his horses.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the Bonners, anxious to propitiate him for Joe's sake, 'we helped him, and it's all done.'

"All done," he slowly repeated, while a smile they did not like, played round his features.

"What did I say, Joe, about you being with them ere Bonners?" Joe's heart almost ceased to beat. Sure enough, what had he said?—that the first time he caught Joe and Douce with the Bonners' children, he would shoot Douce.

Joe's eyes wandered to his dog. He was still barking his short, quick bark, at the foot of the tree, every moment leaping up, as if nothing would delight him more than to be able to jump right into it. Oh, he couldn't, he wouldn't kill Douce. He didn't always keep his promises; indeed, so far as related to Joe, with the one exception, already mentioned, he didn't keep any. Joe stooped and picked up his hat, which, in his wild chase after the squirrel, had fallen off.

"Leave them ere Bonners, and go after the cows," said Mr. Crushford, starting the team.

"But you won't shoot Douce, you won't," he cried, running after him.

"I said I'd do it, and you don't catch me telling a lie."

"Liars go to the lake of fire and brimstone," called out Mrs. Crushford.

"And so will somebody else," loudly replied George and John, no longer able to restrain their anger.

"Joe could not keep the tears back; sobbing and crying, he called Douce to him, determined not to let him out of his sight. He went for the cows; Douce went with him; he fed the pigs, Douce was still at his side; he went into the house for the milk-pails, and when he came out he missed him. He whistled, he called, but no Douce answered. Mr. Crushford came, and sternly ordered him, if he knew what was good for him, to go to milking.

"But you won't hurt Douce?" he entreatingly asked.

"You don't catch me telling a lie, I can tell you that."

"Joe sat down his pails: 'If you touch Douce, I won't stay with you another day. I'll—I'll'—Poor Joe did not know what he would do.

"You'll tear a board off the hog-pen, won't you?"

"Oh, Mr. Crushford, don't kill him, don't!" he entreatingly cried, "he's the only friend I've got."

"Well, well," he said, shaking him off, "go about your milking, and don't be caught with them ere Bonners again."

"Joe felt he had not pleaded in vain; with tears of gratitude dimming his eyes, he took up the pails and went into the yard. He thought, the further to propitiate Mr. Crushford, he would milk five, instead of his usual number, four. He had carried the pails, full, up to the house once, and was going up with them again, when he heard the sharp report of a rifle. The pails fell from his hands; uttering a piercing shriek, he rushed into the barn, whence he thought the sound proceeded. It was, by this time, so dark, that he could not see, with distinctness, any object; again he whistled and called, but, as before, no Douce came. Hurrying out, he met Mr. Crushford.

"Why didn't you carry that ere milk to the house?" he asked.

"Because I heard the report of a rifle, and I was afraid you had shot Douce," he boldly answered.

"Take that, and that, and that, for your fears," said Mr. Crushford, soundly boxing his ears. "Now, carry them ere pails to the house, and don't let me catch you screaming round these ere premises again."

"With a stinging sense of injury goading his heart, he took up the pails and carried them into the house. Mrs. Crushford gave him a little kettle of warm milk to carry to the calf in the cow-shed. At the door he stumbled over something; it was the bleeding, inanimate form of Douce! His brain whirled, and a frenzied feeling of anger burned in his heart; rushing back to the house, he burst in and, confronting Mr. and Mrs. Crushford, wildly exclaimed:

"You've killed him! you've killed him!"

"I haven't done nothing else. I said I'd do it, and I've done it. You don't catch me telling a lie," replied Mr. Crushford, with provoking calmness.

"Poor Joe! He felt how weak and powerless he was to wreak vengeance on them; for a moment he stood before them trembling with rage, then he rushed to his room. His first impulse was to fall on his knees and curse them; but something held him back. 'Leave them. Go back to the Connors. Don't stay another day with them,' seemed whispered in his ears. 'I will—I will!' he exclaimed, rising. 'I'll go to them. I'll tell them all.'

"This resolution so softened his anguish, that tears forced their way to his eyes.

"They are gone. They are all gone, now," he sobbed, wringing his hands. Hour after hour, he sat on the side of the bed, too miserable even to think. 'Alone,—all alone! he kept repeating to himself,—'alone, alone.'

"At length, rising, he went to his father's old trunk,

bowed his head upon it, and again tears came to his relief. They calmed his sorrow and enabled him to think. Yes, he would go away; he would not stay with them; that trunk, as much as he loved it, for having been his father's, he would have to leave behind; but his beads—his father's beads—and the little tear-stained prayer-book, that had been his mother's, and the Catechism that Father John had given him—these he would take with him. Lifting the lid of the trunk, he removed them to his pocket, and again seating himself on the side of the bed, listened till the clock struck two. Softly he descended the stairs, but the door had been fastened; carefully retracing his steps, he looked out and saw, from the window, he could safely reach the low roof of the wood-house, and from that slide down to the ground. The next instant he was out under the star-lit dome of heaven. Hastening to the cow-shed, he threw his arms round the dead Douce's neck. 'Poor, poor Douce,' he cried, 'never will you come to me again; never lay your great head on my knees; and with your mild brown eyes look up sorrowfully into my face and try to say something comforting to me—never, Douce, never! Oh! why did I take you with me? Why didn't I leave you to the Connors? Oh, Douce, Douce! why didn't I?'

"Once more he hugged the faithful creature's head to his heart; once more pressed his lips to his forehead; then, hastily rising, darted out of the yard, gained the road, and without a backward glance, was on his way to the faithful Connors. But he was not going to hang on to their skirts. This dreadful expression of Mr. Reed's constantly haunted him. No, no, he would not go to trouble them; he only wanted to reach his parents' graves, and, lying down in the little hollow between them, forget his sorrows, his loneliness. It was but seven months since he and Douce started out

into the world, and now Douce was dead, and he was flying from it. He thought of Father John, and the good advice he had given him; he had been patient, industrious, and had never forgotten to say his prayers; but he hated the Crushfords, he couldn't help it; hadn't they killed Douce? Father John had told him he must forgive every injury, and he had told him there wasn't any thing in the wide world that he couldn't forgive; but he didn't know the Crushfords then; he couldn't, and, what is more, he wouldn't forgive them. He would hate them as long as he lived, if he lived to be a hundred. Angry feelings burned in his heart. He was five miles on his way by the time the stars began to fade, and an ambient light streaked along the eastern sky. Perhaps Mr. Crushford would miss him, and hasten after him; this gave fresh energy to his steps. He had nineteen miles yet to go, and his head pained him so, that at times he feared he would have to stop; coming to a creek, he stooped, drank, and freely bathed his temples; this relieved him, and enabled him to proceed with greater ease. At length it ached so bad that he was obliged to sit down; remembering his morning prayers, he took out his rosary, said them, and rising, resumed his toilsome way. As he walked along, he thought of the day he came with Mr. Crushford the same road; how Douce jumped up by the side of the wagon every time he whistled; how sad he felt; and, how bravely he forced the sadness back. No wonder his heart sank within him; from that day to this, he had not known one hour's happiness. Oh! what would Mr. and Mrs. Connor, Maurice, Bridget,—what would they all say, when they should hear Douce was dead—had been shot? But his head grew so heavy that he could think no more; pressing his hands to his throbbing temples, he hurried on. At length, the terrible fear that Mr. Crushford would hasten

after and overtake him, so wrought upon him, that he left the road and went through the fields. Again was he obliged to sit down; a darkness came over him, and the pain became so severe, that he began to fear it might be death. Death! could he die with his soul possessed with wild anger and hatred, and determined never to forgive? 'Sweet Jesus, pity a poor orphan,' he sobbed. 'Holy Mary, pray that I may have power to say I forgive.' He bowed his head, and it seemed a heavenly ray pierced the darkness of his brain; his temples throbbed less wildly; in a low voice he murmured: 'Thank you, thank you, blessed Mother; I do, yes, I do forgive,' and devoutly kissing his crucifix, he once more arose and walked on. Coming out on the road, he found himself in the village of Stanton, only seven miles from Mr. Connor's. A kind-looking elderly gentleman, in a one-horse wagon, drove up; if he could only ride a part of the seven miles, it would help him so much. He raised his hand, and the gentleman at once stopped.

"Are you going in the direction of Stockton Mills?"

"I am going direct to within one mile of them."

"Will you please let me ride with you?"

"Yes, my boy, jump right in."

"With difficulty he lifted himself into the wagon. The gentleman asked him several questions, as to what was his name, how old he was, and where did he live, and then was silent the rest of the ride. When he got out, he could hardly walk; his head ached worse than ever, he would have to sit down; but no, he would wait till he got to the great elm, from there he could see Mr. Connor's house, and he knew the sight would do him good. When he reached the elm, he thought he would go a little farther, to the large moss-covered stone, and then he could see the spot so dear to him. He reached it, but now he could not stop;

great tears rolled down his cheeks; with eager, trembling hands he opened the gate, passed through the yard, the meadow. The Connors were all there, reading the Litany for the dead. Unmindful of their presence, he hurried on, and with a wild cry of anguish, sank down in the little hollow between the graves.

"Little Joe Harny! Joe Harny!" they all exclaimed; but a darkness came over him, his desolation, his loneliness were all for the time forgotten. When he returned to consciousness, he found himself on the bed in the little bedroom; Mrs. Connor was bending over him sobbing and crying.

"Don't cry, Ellen," said the kind voice of Mr. Connor, 'we thought it was all for the best to let him go.'

"No, James, I didn't, I feared it. Feared it when he didn't come to us Easter—feared it when they told Maurice when he went to see him, that he was off to some of their relations."

"So it seemed Maurice had been to see him, and the Crushfords had never let him know it. He started up, and throwing his arms round Mrs. Connor's neck, sobbed:

"They've killed Douce! they've killed him!"

"Killed him, child, killed him?"

"Yes, killed him."

"Mr. Connor uttered an angry imprecation against them. Mrs. Connor, drawing the orphan closer to her heart, exclaimed:

"And pray God they haven't killed you too!"

"Again the room grew dark, and, falling back on his pillow, he heard and saw no more."

As Agnes concluded the chapter, the little Swiss clock on the mantel struck three.

"The very hour I promised to be with Edith Carter!" she exclaimed. Arising, she hastily slipped the manuscript into the drawer of her desk, and glanced out. It was a beautiful day, and, concluding not to wait for the carriage, she assumed her cloak and bonnet, and was soon on her way to her sick friend.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON Christmas, the Church celebrates the birth of the Redeemer; on Easter,—the redemption accomplished, the handwriting of sin washed away in the precious blood of the Saviour, and heaven once more opened to man,—she celebrates His glorious resurrection from the dead, and His victory over the powers of darkness.

We turn again to the Grahams. Joyously the sun ushered in this, to a Christian, day of reconciliation and forgiveness; and as, coming from her little oratory, Becky Starr paused before the window, and gazed up into the far stretching blue, she clasped her hands together, and strove to express in language the gratitude of her soul, but words died on her lips, tears washed over her cheeks. She felt man's debt had been paid at a great price—that the love of a Father girded him around. Oh, blessed, blessed Easter! soul-calming, peace-giving Easter, how many holy memories are enshrined in thee! Who can pronounce the word Easter, without thinking of the little praying band in the house of John? of the holy women, with their precious ointments, hastening, before it was yet light, to the sepulchre; of the consternation that seized them when they found the great stone rolled back, and the body of their Lord not there? of the grief of Magdalen, who, when the disciples had turned sorrowfully away, remained beside the empty sepulchre, the rays of the newly-risen sun playing on her tearful face, and the early breeze of the morning waft-

ing the golden locks back from her pale brow, as, with clasped hands, she gazed down on the clothes that had so lately wrapped the sacred limbs of her dear Lord, in the abandonment of her grief, not perceiving he stood near, till, in his own thrilling tones, he pronounced the name "Mary;" of the wild, exultant feelings which filled her soul as she fell at his feet and said, "Rabboni!" Master! She would have clasped those feet to her throbbing heart, and bathed them with her tears, but Jesus said: "Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father; to my God and to your God." Oh, love inconceivable! not only is the fearful edict against man annulled, but Jesus becomes our brother, and we are raised to the dignity of children of God! "To my Father and to your Father; to my God and to your God!" O Easter, Easter; full of holiest and most consoling memories to man! well may the Church celebrate thee as the first and most solemn of her festivals; well may she lay aside her garments of mourning, and, putting on her garments of rejoicing, incense her altars, and send up glad, exultant "hallelujahs" to the Lord—for Christ has risen, has triumphed over death and hell; and heaven is once more opened to man!

A light step was heard along the passage, and the next instant, throwing open the door, Jane breathlessly said:

"Becky, we are all ready, and grandfather and grandmother say you are to ride with them."

"And mother and father?"

"Oh, aunt and uncle will ride with us. Walter goes with you too."

Jane assisted her in putting on her shawl and bonnet, and they quickly descended to the parlor.

Walter and Becky Starr, Mrs. Graham, grandfather and grandmother occupied the first carriage; Mr. and Mrs. Starr, Jane, her two brothers, and Mr. Graham, the second.

Becky seated herself beside her grandparents, and grasping their hands, exclaimed:

"Oh, grandfather and grandmother, what a blessed, blessed Easter is this! If I live to be a century old, I shall never, never forget it." Tears sprung to her eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Yes, child, yes," said dear grandmother, in a tremulous voice. Grandfather made no reply, but, with his disengaged hand grasping his knee, his lips firmly compressed, sat gazing fixedly before him, stern and immovable as a rock.

Becky saw at a glance she was not to speak; taking out her coral rosary, she ran her fingers over the beads till the carriage stopped before the gate of St. Mary's Church. Her heart strangely fluttered, and a trembling seized her limbs. Walter tenderly lifted grandfather and grandmother out, then Mrs. Graham; and, lastly, Becky herself.

As she walked beside her grandparents to the church door, she could not help thinking of their first visit to the church on Christmas morning, and more than ever she felt the wonderful efficacy of prayer. Of a proud, unyielding disposition—unyielding even to obstinacy—would the arguing of his children have ever converted grandfather? No! the very fact they were his children, would have added to the difficulties that stood in their way. How could he yield to those who owed a natural obedience to him? Their having passed beyond the years of parental authority, made no difference; they were his children, and as such should ever respect his feelings. And in this the old man was right. 'Tis a sad, sad sight to see children arraign their parents

before the family tribunal for holding this or that belief. No good ever comes of it; it may at first arise from a zealous, enthusiastic desire to see them enjoy the same light that they themselves enjoy. But at the first contradiction, how quickly the spirit of pride enters the heart and swells it up with an insufferable arrogance; all tender, gentle recollections die away; they look upon their parents with ill, uncharitable eyes, and their parents, seeing them turn so cold and tyrannical, hug their error all the closer to their hearts, and in very bitterness learn in their old age to hate the children that had once been the light and promise of home. No, no; prayer is the all-powerful arguer in the family circle; no dissension arises from it, no bitter feelings are engendered; as it springs from a spirit of charity, so charity ever guides and directs it. All harsh and angry feelings are subdued, and a gentleness and tenderness that is more powerful than the most burning eloquence quietly works its way, till the strongholds of obstinacy yield, and then we may gently lift the veil from their eyes and show them the great things God has done for us, and is ready and willing to do for them.

The little church was crowded; not only were all the Catholics of the village and surrounding country present, but many Protestants, hearing of the approaching baptism, had gathered in, to witness the ceremony. Although their demeanor was grave and respectful, as is usually the case with American Protestants when attending Catholic places of worship, several among them looked upon the aged couple's conversion as the effect of dotage, forgetting it was in his old age God demanded of Abraham his great sacrifice, and because Abraham obeyed the Lord and was willing to offer up his only son, God blessed him, and declared that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Of

grandfather and grandmother in their old age God demanded the sacrifice of their will; they offered it to him, and he blessed them with the ineffable gift of the true faith.

Becky and Walter walked up with them to the railing; the roses faded on Becky's cheeks, and as she held her grandmother's cap in her hand, she looked pale as the marble statue of the Madonna standing on the right side of the altar. A holy calmness rested on the venerable countenances of her grandparents; and their answers were clear and distinct—no tremor, no feebleness of age was there; it seemed new youth and vigor had been given them. As they bent their heads, and the waters of regeneration were poured over their silver locks, large tears rolled slowly down Becky's cheeks, but not a muscle of her face relaxed; with pale, immovable features she stood there beside them, while many an audible sob arose from the kneeling congregation around.

When grandfather and grandmother handed the light back to Father Williams, and received his parting injunction: "Go in peace, and the Lord be with you;" she gently tied on her grandmother's cap, adjusted her shawl, which had partly fallen off her shoulders, and then walked back with them to their pew. Immediately the second Mass commenced, and till the time of the *Communion* she remained with her head bowed down upon her hands. At the first Mass she, her parents and brother, and uncle's family had approached the Sacred Table, but now she raised her head and glanced at the eager throngs with downcast eyes and reverent steps hastening to the heavenly banquet. A smile of love and gratitude lit up her thoughtful face. The prayers of her family had been heard; their mourning was turned into joy; her aged grandparents were gathered into the true fold, and now she remembered "the vow

which her lips had uttered, and her mouth had spoken in the day of her trouble;" with the Psalmist she exclaimed: "Thou hast held me by my right hand: and by thy will thou hast conducted me, and with thy glory thou hast received me. For what have I in heaven? and beside thee, what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."*

So rapt was she in her devotions, that when the congregation rose at the last Gospel, she remained kneeling, till Walter touched her on the shoulder; then, with a calm, resolved countenance, upon which shone the peace and innocence of heaven, she arose.

'Twas evening; the events of that day had been recorded in the angel's book, and with hearts throbbing with the holiest feelings of gratitude and love, again the family were gathered in the sitting-room. Grandfather and grandmother occupied their easy-chairs, Becky was seated beside them. Grandfather raised his eyes, and saw all his children around him.

"Mother," he said, addressing his aged partner, "they are all here—here with peace and happiness smiling upon them. No discord jars the meeting; we are joined to them, they are joined to us; one in faith, one in love, and one in gratitude and adoration to the good God who has safely brought us through our trouble." Tears hung on his silver lashes, but dashing them away, and forcing himself to calmness, he asked:

"Children, would you like to hear how the change came about?"

"Yes, father," they replied, "we would surely like to know when you first began to doubt the truth of your religion."

* Psalm lxxii.

"Say, rather," he rejoined, "when I first began to doubt the justice of my extreme dislike to yours—now happily ours, mother's and mine—for one followed the other. You recollect, Becky, the first night of our last visit to Sarah's, you wanted to sing 'Ave Maria stella?'"

"Yes, grandfather."

"And I would not hear it?"

"You thought it was time for you and grandmother to retire to your room."

"I did, Becky, I did. In very bitterness of spirit, I thought so." He paused a moment, and then resumed:

"Well, on reaching our room, mother sank on her knees by the bed; but I seated myself on a chair near the smouldering fire, and, gazing on the dying embers, gave myself up to reflection. I thought of all the lessons of hatred to the Catholic religion, or Popery, as it is ignominiously termed, that were instilled into my mind from earliest memory; the terrible slanders against it; the hostile spirit ever shown against it, and it still going on and increasing; and it occurred to me that something more than human intelligence must help it along. My prejudice attributed this something to the machinations of the enemy of man, and at once a voice seemed to whisper in my ear, 'In like manner did the perverse and unbelieving Jews attribute the miracles of the Saviour to the power of the prince of darkness.' I started, looked around me; no one was near, and stirring up the fire, I listened for your hymn; but no sound came to our room. I knew your tender regard for my feelings hindered your singing it; and oh, my children! my heart ached more than ever at the barrier between us. '*By their fruit ye shall know them.*' What piety, and patience, and filial devotion had you shown! '*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and all thy strength,*

and thy neighbor as thyself,' were the two commandments our Saviour gave; and how faithfully you obeyed them! Walter and Sarah, you need not speak; I, your father, saw it and know it, and that night it all passed before me. But I could not give the credit of it to your religion; it was your own inherent goodness. Popery, that sum of all villainies, had nothing to do with it. I arose, and walked up and down the room. I heard the murmur of your voices, and I knew you were engaged in evening prayer. The waters of bitterness washed over my soul, and covering my face with my hands, I groaned aloud. Mother arose from her knees, and tried to comfort me, but I sternly ordered her away. Oh, my children! my children! the more I saw your worth, the more I mourned your fatal perversion. What had I ever done, that so great an affliction should come upon me? Why had not you been called away in your infancy and childhood, like the rest of our little ones? Tears, long strangers to my eyes, washed over my cheeks. In the calmness that followed, for the first time came up the question: 'Have you ever read any thing of their religion, but what its enemies have written?' Could my pure-minded, noble-hearted children remain so long in its communion if it was really the impure, defiled faith its enemies declare it to be? I paced the room; strange feelings came over me. Christ dwelt on earth eighteen centuries ago; 'twas then he founded his Church, which he promised should last to the end of the world—that the Spirit of Truth should always be with it, yea, that even he, himself, should remain with it to the consummation of time. And, moreover, he declared that the world which had hated and persecuted him, would hate and persecute his Church—that it was a city set upon a mountain, a candle set in a candlestick to give light to all. I paused

in my walk, and sat down. Mother saw I was troubled in mind, and spoke kindly to me; but I waved my hand for her to be silent, to disturb me not. What do the various denominations of Protestants say of the Catholic Church? A part admit that it was the church Christ founded, and for four or five centuries it remained faithful; but then that errors began to creep into it, till at last it became wholly corrupted, an ally of the devil, helping to inthrall the souls of men. Could Christians believe that Christ's Church would sink so low? that God would forget his promise? No! heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word never. If the Catholic Church was the church Christ founded, it could never have fallen into those shameful excesses which now disgrace it. Others, among them my own denomination, stoutly denied it. That thing of abomination to lift its head and pretend to be the depository of God's holy law! Perish the thought! I wiped the glistening drops from my forehead, and tried to rest; but other thoughts crowded fast upon me. At what time was Presbyterianism established? Sometime in the sixteenth century. When did Christ found his Church? I started at the question; but the ready reply came: only in the human heart, not openly did it exist, till Calvin was chosen to raise it up from its hiding-place. Fears and doubts began to gather round me—from its hiding-place! Could that Church, which for fifteen hundred years lay concealed in the heart, or was only dimly shadowed forth in some of the feeble, perishing sects that early rose and died, be the church Christ likened to a city set upon a hill, a candle set in a candlestick to give light to all? A horrible truth flashed upon me; my heart was steeled, and, like an immovable statue, I sat in my chair. I saw all Protestantism rise up to falsify the words of the Saviour of the world!

No wonder, Becky, your cheek blanches, and your lip trembles; it was awful to contemplate; and yet it is incontrovertible, that all those sects which declare the Catholic Church to be at first the Church of Christ, and accuse it afterwards of falling into error, and those that say Christ's Church lay buried for fifteen hundred years, till it was exhumed and resuscitated by Calvin and others—both equally falsify the words of Christ. On the one hand, his Church was not to fall into error, but was to last pure and undefiled to the end of time; on the other, it was not to be hid, invisible, unknown to the world, but as a light on a mountain, seen from afar off. I paused; I could go no farther. My God! my God! had I been following a shadow all my life? I wrung my hands, and again mother spoke: 'Father, rise from your sorrow, and turn to God.' 'Rebecca, leave me!' I exclaimed. But she seized my hand, and a tear from her eye fell upon it. 'Kneel with me, Zachary,' she said. There was such a pleading tenderness in her tones, I could not resist them; and with her hand clasped in mine, I knelt. Praying calmed the wild tumult of my soul, and when we arose, I told her all. She was greatly troubled in mind, but advised diligently searching the Scriptures, and comparing the existing churches with them; and if, after a careful search, we could find none agreeing with the sacred text—no trace of a revealed faith, to break free from Bible, Church, and all, and, in the recess of our hearts, still adore God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. The clock struck one, and we went to bed. The next day our search commenced; carefully we read the Scriptures, chapter after chapter, and day after day we recoured to them again; but the more we studied them, the more the doubts of the first night resolved themselves into certainties—the more unsettled we

became in our faith. Finally, we closed the volume with the conviction that Protestants, who falsify one part, and deny another, cannot, in justice, found their existence on the Bible; and that the Catholics, after all, had more consistencies in their pretensions than any of them. Christ declared his Church should always exist—they date back theirs to the apostles' time; that his should never err—they insist theirs is infallible; that his should fill the whole earth—they triumphantly ask, in what part of the known world is the Catholic Church not found?"

Grandfather suddenly paused; he could not go on; the remembrance of the struggles through which they had passed, even now shook his soul. Rising, he walked up and down the room, till becoming more calm, he reseated himself, and with a deep-drawn breath exclaimed:

"Thank God, my children, thank God, 'tis past—the fearful struggle is past."

"But, father," said Mrs. Starr, kindly, "if recalling it gives you pain, we will not ask to hear it."

"No, Sarah, no, I wish my children to know all God's great mercy to us." Laying his hands on the arms of his chair, he resumed:

"In saying the Catholic Church was more consistent with the Bible than the Protestant, I did not intend to imply that we upheld it; so far from that, we turned loathingly from it. Neither the Protestants nor Catholics had any claim to it. The Protestants, as I said before, had cut themselves off from it; the Catholic, notwithstanding its vain boast of infallibility, we knew, or had been taught to believe we knew, was a sink of utter abominations, and consequently could not be the pure, undefiled Church of Christ. Where, then, was the Church that was placed upon a mountain to give light to all? Clearly, there was

no such church at all; the Bible was void, and we turned from revealed faith, and church restraint to worship God according to the dictates of reason. Here we would have rested, but mother was not satisfied. Carefully we pondered the subject in our minds, and found that reason offers no safe anchorage for the soul to rest upon. Would reason always keep one in the right? in other words, would it always dictate an infallible course? would it never be blinded by interest, slighted by caprice, or contemned by passion? If reason is to be an unerring guide, what need of laws human any more than divine? Why should not the reason of every man be allowed to govern him? Why should one be obliged to submit to the laws framed by the reason of another? The answer is, because all men are not alike. Laws are framed to restrain the vicious, and protect the innocent! Oh, my children, darker and darker grew our way. If reason is insufficient in temporal concerns, how could we trust our immortal welfare to its frail guidance? In breaking from a revealed faith, we thought it useless to pore over the mind-benumbing philosophers. We had read them in days gone past; among the children of our early friends, go where we would, we found their libraries stored with them. Philosophies, eh! It seemed to mother and I, they might better be termed Babels of unbelief, for all about them is 'confusion worse confounded.' I have read them till my head has ached, and then laid them down, with the conviction that their whole business is not to guide the inquiring mind into the channel of truth, but each to refute the mystified notions of the other, and lead the poor soul who trusts to their guidance further and further into the quagmire of doubt and uncertainty. No; no, mother and I wanted nothing to do with them."

Grandfather rapped the carpet with his cane and ex-

claimed, "How proud a tyrant, how lofty a fool is man! Because to his lilliputian intellect all the wonderful works of the Creator cannot be made perfectly plain, he turns away, forgetting he cannot even understand himself. Who can unravel the mysteries of the human heart? who unfold the workings of the brain? who make known the wondrous inspirations of the soul? Man is the greatest mystery to man; unreasonable in his wants, ungrateful for his gifts, restless in all his undertakings, unsatisfied after all his researches."

Grandfather spoke with bitterness; the stern waves of memory washed over his soul. After a somewhat lengthened pause, he again exclaimed:

"But the philosophers, with all their cry of liberty, and disenthraling the human mind from slavery, and opening for it a brighter day, what have they ever done for man? I shudder to think of it; but it was after the mind of France had become imbued with the poison of Voltaire and Rousseau's writings, when infidelity had become, I might say, the fashionable creed of the day, that the world was led to see the most horrible spectacle that ever appalled the human heart. The most wanton barbarities, the most cruel butcheries were daily committed. France flowed with the blood of her people; the Christian religion was to be entirely annihilated, and the worship of a deity, whom they styled Reason, instituted in its place. The Sabbath was abolished, and bloodshed and riot became the order of the day. The feebleness of age, and the helplessness of childhood pleaded in vain with these disciples of reason. In the fury of their madness, they insultingly boasted of 'dethroning the King of Heaven, as well as the monarchs of the earth!' Oh, my children, and this was the boasted Utopia reason opened to man! first, by denying a revealed faith,

still holding on to the belief of an over-ruling Providence—next, to rejecting this belief, and casting aside all laws human and divine, debasing the nobility of the soul, by inspiring her with hatred to the living God, and making her bow down to the worship of demons.

“The sceptic may deny it was reason led to all this, but the very name of the new form of worship, ‘Reason Worship,’ proves it past a doubt. Sickened at heart, we turned from the deceitful paths of Infidelity, but where now should we go? Darkness encompassed us around, but humbled and abashed at the weakness of man, when left to himself, we bowed down and offered up earnest, heartfelt prayer to the God ‘who brought his children out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.’ The heavy clouds rolled back; we felt a heavenly Father’s protection over us, and assured that, by faithful labor, we would yet find the Truth our souls thirsted after, we arose and again commenced our search. From the pages of history we saw the prophetic denunciations contained in the old Bible, in a fearful manner fulfilled—those powerful nations of antiquity, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, and Carthaginians, utterly destroyed, leaving scarce a vestige behind. A few long-buried and lately exhumed relics, bleaching pyramids, hieroglyphic columns, and rising mounds, are all that are left of them. Their exceeding pride and wickedness, the prophet tells us, excited the anger of the Lord; his word went out against them, and in their power and might they withered and died away.

“But while these proud nations were entirely swept from the face of the earth, a remnant of the Jews, a weak and feeble nation, but yet the chosen people of God, were to last to the end of time, to be scattered over the whole earth; and go where we will, the presence of the fallen descendants

of Israel proves the truth of the prophecy. The proud nations under whose tyranny they once groaned, have passed away, but they still remain. A Saviour was promised, the time of his birth, his poverty, and the price for which he would be delivered up to death—all were foretold. Jesus came. He suffered and died, and now, seeing the prophecies of the old law fulfilled, could we doubt that He who unfolded the future to his faithful servants, would allow his own words to come to naught? No; he said he would leave a lasting, incorruptible Church. He said it; it must be so, and with firm, trusting hearts we toiled on to find it.

“The Church which is Christ’s, must agree with the Bible. We looked around and saw them all founding their belief on this sacred volume; all professing to be the Church of Christ, and yet as we carefully examined each, we found they could not, in any way, substantiate their claim. Luther tells us in coming from the Catholic Church he stood alone in the world; alone, ready to combat for the Lord, and in spite of all opposition establish his Church wherein every one might be saved. He speaks of the trials he suffered in those days of his loneliness, those days in which he was the only man on earth to whom a knowledge of the Truth had been vouchsafed. This looked to us preposterous; it looked horrid. What had the apostles done with that commission Christ gave them to teach all nations, if, after fifteen hundred years, Luther awakes to find himself the only one that has been taught? We turned from his insufferable pride and arrogance, and still clinging to the Bible, examined the claim of others. Calvin’s word we could not take: the church that was set upon a mountain to give light to all, could not be buried for fifteen hundred years in the human heart, invisible to the great majority of mankind. The Light that came into the

world to give light to all, could not have been so long hid to that world it came to enlighten.

"With Calvinism, the Baptist, Methodist, and the churches which have, for the last two or three centuries, sprung up, are to be ranked. Their commissions came too late, and are too muffled in obscurity to be able to lay any just claim to that commission which the apostles received from Christ. They came without being sent, and passing them by, we turned to the Episcopal; this professed to have always a visible being, to be able to trace itself back to the apostles' time. But how? Through what channel? Through the Catholic Church, appropriating the name Catholic to itself. Yes, through that Church which it solemnly declares was, for eight hundred years and more, sunk in abominable idolatry and all manner of wickedness! Was ever any thing so utterly inconsistent? Can a whole body proceed from a corrupt one? Can vice produce virtue? Oh, my children! after all our weary search, we found ourselves as far from truth as ever. Still we were not discouraged; God's word we could not doubt. He left a church, and though all was darkness around us, we felt sure He would yet lead us to it. Purposing to rest awhile, we laid aside our books and entered the sitting-room. It was Christmas Eve, and the conversation naturally turned on the approaching festival; thoughts rushed upon us, and we had to return to our room. Labor was before us, and we could not rest. The next day we accompanied the family to church, and on our return, in the afternoon, we sent for Becky; she came; we told her how far we had got; that we knew Christ had left a church, but with so many claiming to be that particular one, we were bewildered, and knew not which to choose. In reply, she spoke to us of four marks which were to distinguish Christ's Church from all others. It must

be one in faith, in communion, and in worship; it must be holy in doctrine and in practice; it must be universal in time and in place, and it must be apostolic in being able to trace itself back to the apostles' days.

"All this was reasonable to us. Without unity, how could it preserve pure its doctrine? Without holiness, what would that doctrine be worth? Without universality of time and place, how could it prove itself the church that was to last throughout time and extend to all nations? and without apostolicity, how could we know that it was the church Christ founded, and promised to be with to the consummation of time?

"Becky left us, and with these four beacon lights we again commenced our search. In the Acts of the Apostles we found the Church opened to the Gentiles, and His disciples everywhere preaching Christ crucified, and counting it a happiness to suffer reproach for His name's sake. Turning over the page of history, we saw the infant church gradually extending itself from country to country, weak and feeble in worldly importance, but strong and powerful to suffer and to triumph. In the mean time, while this was going on, other prophecies were being fulfilled. Christ predicted the temple of Jerusalem should be so entirely destroyed that not one stone should be left upon another. The reign of Titus saw this accomplished to the exact words of the Saviour. After suffering an unparalleled series of persecutions, Julian rose up in his power and might totally to extinguish the Christian religion. Jesus had said the 'Jewish temple should be destroyed;' it was destroyed, and Julian, in his hatred to the Saviour, determined to rebuild it. He caused edicts to be put forth, declaring his intentions; the Jews, elevated with the prospect of seeing their temple restored to its ancient glory, remembering the aid granted to

Esdras by the Persian monarch, and contemning or forgetting the words of Christ, flocked from all quarters to Jerusalem. Their insolence 'knew no bounds.' Bah to the worshippers of a God, who died the death of the cross! they should be swept from the face of the earth, and no longer left to contaminate, by their presence, the city of the Lord.

"The first step towards rebuilding, was to remove the rubbish. This done, what followed? Historians, of undoubted veracity, hand down accounts of the visible interposition of Providence to prevent the Deicide Jews accomplishing their object. And how much soever the infidel may sneer at the mention of these miracles, the very fact that after a lapse of over three hundred years, a powerful monarch, with immense means at his command, a stranger to the Jews, unsolicited by them, of his own will, in the midst of a thousand cares, should lay them all aside, and purpose to renew the glory of the ancient faith, and having gone so far as to prepare the site for the new temple, be unable, with all his might, to proceed another step, proves the greatest miracle of all. The temple was utterly destroyed, another was not erected on its site, *'for their house was to be left desolate.'*

"Another prophecy of Christ's was, that the world would hate and persecute His Church as it hated and persecuted Him! But that, notwithstanding the hatred and persecution it should meet with, having the divine promise to sustain it, it would extend to all nations and last till the end of time. In defiance of this prophecy the whole world rose up to crush it out of existence. Christ was crucified; His apostles martyred; His doctrines most grossly slandered; the pride of the Pagan world rose up against it; it seemed the very demons, fearful of losing the worship they had so long exacted, inspired their votaries with the most diabolical

methods of torture and persecution. But all to no purpose; the seed that was put into the ground was to grow up and fill the whole earth. Paganism, with all its pride and insolence, was to bow before it; quietly and surely the work went on, till the whole face of the world was changed and a new order of things introduced. Christ surely had left a Church; and could we longer disguise it from ourselves that the Catholic Church hated, persecuted, and prosperous, extending everywhere, and its very triumph exciting the envy and malice of its enemies as Christ's sanctity excited the envy and malice of the Jews, is that Church?

"During the course of our readings, when weary we sent for Becky; she explained to us the doctrine, forms, and ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and referred us to works where we would find them all more fully treated than she was capable of treating them. All the doubts cleared away, rejoicing in our new-found treasure, humble and penitent, we knocked for admittance into the true fold—into the true church. You remember our going to Mass on Christmas morning?"

"Yes, dear father;" they all replied.

"Well, now you see, children;" he exclaimed, reverently folding his hands, "that was only continuing the work already commenced; and to-day the work is consummated—to-day our eyes have seen thy salvation, O Lord, and now thou mayest dismiss thy servants according to thy word in peace."

His eyes were raised, and a light seemed to play round his venerable features. With one impulse they all knelt and begged the aged couple's blessing; it was given, but like Jacob blessing Joseph's children, their right hand rested on Becky's head. The clock struck ten, and evening prayers were said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON the sofa in the parlor sat Agnes Hilton, beside her was Walter Starr. He was of a tall, commanding form, with a fine intellectual countenance. Agnes had been listening to his animated account of the conversion of his grandparents, and although she smiled and tried to appear joyous, he could see in her changing countenance an uneasiness she vainly strove to hide. She glanced down on the diamond on her finger, the seal of her betrothal, and the long silken lashes rested on her marble cheek. Walter followed the direction of her eye; a vague fear crept into his heart; he looked earnestly at her; she raised her head and their eyes met. Placing his forefinger on the ring, in a hoarse voice he asked:

"Agnes, for the love of heaven, tell me, has that ring any thing to do with the change that has come over you?"

A moment's reflection, and he would not have put the question so bluntly; he would have waited, watched, and judged by appearances, but now it had gone forth, he could only wait to hear his doom. Agnes paused before answering; she did not dare to trust herself to speak; tears hung heavy on her lashes; she could not force them back; could not control her feelings.

"Oh, Walter, Walter!" she sobbed, leaning her head against his shoulder, "I look to the day this ring points to, as the only sun of my life. You don't know, you can't tell, how more than ever I have learned to prize it."

The ashy hue left his cheek; hope once more beamed from his eyes. Folding his arms around her, he pressed her to his heart.

"Thank God! thank God! Oh, Agnes, that day has been a beacon light, urging me on, filling me with grand resolves, and giving me strength to battle with every opposing difficulty. Blot it out, and my life would be a dreary blank."

"Not more dreary, Walter, than mine." She shuddered as she spoke.

"Dearest; will you not then confide in me what troubles you? I fain would drive the shadow from your brow, and bring the smiles back to your cheek."

"You can't, you can't," she again sobbed.

"Why, Agnes; why can't I?"

This, she had dreaded; this had made her shrink from the thought of meeting him. Under bright smiles and gay repartees, she had hoped to be able so completely to hide her sorrow, that he would not dream of the eating canker within. Alas! how had she succeeded? The first time of their meeting, he had seen it all; and now, beside her, in tender tones, was begging to know the cause of her hidden grief. Could she tell him, risk meeting no sympathy from him, and seeing it all transferred to those her dark passions had taught to hate? The very thought steeled her nerves to calmness. Taking out her pocket handkerchief, she wiped the tears away. A note fell from her pocket upon the carpet.

Walter stooped, picked it up, and placed it in her lap.

"From Edith Carter," she said, glancing at it, "she is failing fast."

Walter would have preferred confining the conversation to herself; but, finding her affections unchanged, he

thought it indelicate and unmanly to urge farther confidence."

"Do her physicians," he asked, "say nothing encouraging?"

"Ah, no; they have long since ceased to hold out any prospect of her recovery; they say she is liable to drop away any moment."

"How long since you saw her?"

"I was with her all day yesterday; her feet are badly swollen; that, you know, heralds in the closing scene."

He gravely bowed his head.

"Dear Edith, how I love her, and must she go?" Her lip quivered, and a tear fell upon her hand.

Walter gazed on her with a feeling of reverence. How gentle and loving, he thought, must that heart be which is thus moved by death. Others had loved Edith as well as Agnes; but, did they mourn as she mourned? Did their cheeks grow pale, and their lips forget to smile? Did their eyes lose their light and grow heavy and sad? Oh, the depth and tenderness of that loving heart! He passed his hand softly over the wavy folds of her hair.

"I am afraid," said Agnes, taking the note from the envelope, "unless Becky soon comes home, she will not see Edith again."

"Becky will return in the course of the next week."

"Could she not come sooner?"

"I fear not. Grandfather and grandmother are coming with her, and they are too feeble to leave uncle's till the weather becomes more settled."

"Then Edith and she will never again meet in this world. Before this day week, Edith will have passed to her reward."

"Has she expressed a desire to see Becky?"

"She speaks of her very often, and feels grateful for her kind letters, but I have not heard her say any thing about seeing her. Becky has been too piously employed this winter, for one like Edith to wish to call her from her scene of action."

"I suppose she sees no visitors."

"Ah, no. I am with her almost every day. Father Joseph also calls on her frequently; but she is too feeble to have many. I saw your mother there yesterday, but she did not go up to her room. With her usual consideration, she thought it would weary her."

Becky had told him it was Edith's approaching death that had so affected Agnes; and now, as he gazed down on her face, so sorrowful in its matchless beauty, he felt how truly had his sister judged—how unjust had been his fears.

Agnes, tenderly attached to her friends, loved them with a love that went beyond the tomb; death could not blot them from her memory. Others, with a grave countenance, would refer to Edith's early death; and, the next instant, dismissing her from their minds, laugh and talk as thoughtless as ever. Not so with Agnes. Day after day, she passed with her sick friend; and when away from her, the remembrance of her sufferings chased the smiles from her face, and made her sorrowful and sad. How priceless the affections of such a one! How wrongly the world judged! How little it knew of the depth and tenderness of her loving heart! Raising her hand to his lips, he fervently kissed it.

"Where is there such another friend?" he exclaimed, "where such sympathy and love? To think Edith's sufferings should be your suffering too! Oh, Agnes, pray God I may be worthy of you!"

Paler and paler grew her cheek; she strove to speak, but

only her lips moved; no sound came from them. Not for the world would she have Walter know the real cause of her sorrow; but, still, she could not bear to hear him attribute it to sympathy for Edith; alas! she knew well how little Edith's sickness had to do with it. She wished to tell him he had come to a wrong conclusion; but the fear, if she did, he would want to know the real cause, her desire to hide it from him, and the thought that she was receiving credit for kindness she did not possess, was playing a false part, so powerfully wrought upon her already excited feelings, that she hid her face in the sofa pillows, and sobbed as if her heart would break. Walter spoke kindly and soothingly, but his every word added to her shame and grief.

"Oh, Walter, don't call me good, and kind, and gentle; I don't deserve it!" she at last said.

But he only thought that this was still another proof of her worth. True merit always seeks to hide itself, and she shrank from even receiving praise from him. He arose and walked up and down the room; he would not annoy her by any ill-timed words; by-and-by, she would become more calm, and then he would introduce some pleasing topic; he would congratulate her on having so beautiful an adopted brother; he would speak of his glorious future.

At length raising her head from the pillow, she wiped her swollen eyes and said,

"Walter, you must not mind these tears. I have been miserably weak this morning, and you have kindly borne with me; but leave me now, leave me, I will see you again to-morrow."

"Dearest, I cannot bear to leave you thus. Now that your tears are dried, come, tell me of little Mark. I know you must be proud of him, he is so beautiful." He had again seated himself beside her, and taken her hand. It

grew deadly cold in his grasp, and her lips became firmly compressed.

"No, Walter," she said, "not to-day; to-morrow I will see you again." She walked to the mantel-piece, took from it a handsomely-worked watch-case, and placed it in his hands.

"There, Walter, is a trifle I made for you; in it you will see your initials and mine." With many fond words he accepted her present, and, reminding her he was to see her the next day, left.

Immediately retiring to her room, she sank, weak and helpless, into her chair. That she had deceived him, caused him to think her better than she really was, made her more wretched than ever. Never had she harbored a thought of imposing on his trusting nature, yet it looked so much as if she had intentionally done it, that she almost despised herself. But no, she had not! she would be incapable of such meanness; he had come to his conclusions from the natural kindness of his own heart—not from any thing she had said. Then she ought to enlighten him, and not leave him laboring under a delusion. But if she ventured an explanation, he would not rest till he knew all, and then he would only look upon the outside matter of the fact, and not consider the unkindness of her parents, and how successfully they had managed to make home hateful to her. As to Martha and Mark, the innocent cause of her trouble, she entertained for them the strongest feelings of dislike. Walter might pity them, and think her hard and unrelenting, and this she felt she could not bear. No, no, she would never tell him a word; she would die with the secret locked up in her own heart.

She opened her drawer, and tried to finish some of her sketches, but the crayon fell powerless from her hand; she drew her tapestry frame to her, but the stitches all swam

before her eyes. Pushing it from her, she seated herself at the piano and tried to play, but her fingers ran carelessly over the keys, evoking no pleasing sound. Bowing her head upon the instrument, she remained for some time buried in vexed and painful thought. Bitter waves washed over her soul ; pride, jealousy, and hatred tugged at her heart-strings. Dark temptations whispered in her ear, so dark that, fearful of remaining any longer under their spell, she arose, and, pressing her hands upon her hot brow, commenced walking up and down the room. Her eye rested on the manuscript on her table ; it had more than once calmed the tumult of her passions, and she would try it again. Drawing up an easy-chair, she seated herself, and turned to the ninth and last chapter :

"For days little Joe's mind wandered over the sorrows of the last few months ; no kind word, no gentle ministration of the faithful friends around him could woo him from the painful subject. Wildly he would start up, look staringly at them, and piteously call on his father and mother to save Douce, or Mr. Crushford would shoot him ; then falling back on the pillows, he would draw the bedclothes over his head and sob, 'alone, all alone in the world.' A short time and he would be quiet, then the thought that Mr. Crushford was coming for him—had already come, and was going to tear him from his friends and carry him back to his hateful home, would fill him with such terror that he would throw himself into Mr. Connor's arms, and, with beseeching earnestness, beg him to save him—not to let him go back.

" 'Oh, save me ! save me !' he would scream, 'Don't let him come near me. Don't ! don't ! He shot Douce, and he'd kill me. Oh, save me ! save me !'

"In vain Mr. Connor assured him he was with friends, and no Mr. Crushford near ; the poor child would only shudder and cling closer to him.

"At last his fever turned, the painful visions passed away, and sleep, refreshing sleep, revisited his weary eyes.

"It was a calm, peaceful morning ; the early breeze, laden with the perfume of sweetbrier, lilac, and rose, stole in through the open window ; the still sunshine lay on the whitewashed walls ; fluttering from the meadow to the orchard, and from the orchard back again to the meadow, the gay bobolinks filled the air with wild, exulting melody. Every thing spoke of peace and happiness, when little Joe opened his eyes and looked around him. Mrs. Connor came in with a light step, holding a pitcher in her hand ; glancing at the bed, she quickly laid it down, and hastening to him, exclaimed :

" 'Praises to God ! little Joe, you know me.'

"He reached out his emaciated hand, and a smile lit up his pale face. Bending over him, she smoothed the dark locks from his forehead, and tenderly kissed him ; he tried to speak—to thank her for being so good to him, but he was too weak ; all he could do was to press her hand, and look his thanks. Fearful of wearying him, she placed a cooling draught to his lips, and was turning away, when Fanny and Bernard, each carrying a handful of flowers, came in.

" 'Here, mother,' they whispered, 'are some more lilacs and roses to put on the stand by Joe's bed.' They glanced at it as they spoke, and suddenly dropping their flowers, exclaimed :

" 'Oh, mother ! mother ! Joe's come to his mind, he knows us again.'

" 'Come right away, children, come right away ; he isn't

able to be bothered with you now.' She took them by the arms and forcibly led them from the room.

"'Here, Joe,' she said, coming back and pouring some medicine from a vial into a teaspoon, 'the doctor left this for you.'

"She gently raised his head on her arm.

"'How long,' he asked, handing her back the spoon, 'since I got home?'

"'To-day is Friday, and it will be a fortnight, Sunday. There, now,' she said, smoothing the light spread over him, 'you must shut your eyes and go to sleep. I will soon be in again with some nice breakfast for you.'

"He pressed his cheek against the pillow and tried to sleep, but sleep was impossible. He felt weak, wretchedly weak; and, more than ever, he longed for his gentle mother's presence. When Mrs. Connor returned, bearing on a large bake-tin, which served for a salver, his breakfast, the tears were forcing their way through his closed lids.

"'What,' she said, setting it down on the stand, and bending over him, 'you aren't crying?'

"'Oh, Mrs. Connor,' he sobbed, 'if I had only died, I should be with them now.'

"'Come, come, Joe, you mustn't be thinking of that. Here's some nice toast and a good cup of tea; let me help you up.'

"She raised him to a sitting posture, arranged the pillows so he could lean back upon them, and, wiping with her apron the tears from his eyes, said:

"'See, how much better you are than you were yesterday. Sure God has been very good to you, and you mustn't repay him by turning against his holy will.'

"'Oh, my father and mother,' he sobbed.

"'They are in heaven,' said Mrs. Connor, as Doctor Blessington came in.

"'Bravo! my little fellow, bravo!' he exclaimed, coming up to the bed and taking one of Joe's hands. 'So you have conquered the fever; but what, crying? Come, come, none of that; or I shall have to give you some more bitter medicine. Mrs. Connor, just let him have a taste of the stuff in that cup,' he said, pointing to the bureau, 'or, no, we will let him have his breakfast first.'

"Joe looked up into the kind face of the physician.

"'There now, that's right, don't cry any more, and drink this.' He held the saucer to his lips. Joe drank it off, and then turned his face away.

"'No, none of that; here's some nice toast, and you must tell us how you like it.'

"Joe saw it would be vain to refuse it, and after taking a few mouthfuls, the kind physician rearranged his pillows, and carefully laid him down.

"Weeks passed on, and once more he was able to visit the cemetery; Fanny, Bernard, and Hughy were generally with him; but their presence could not lift from his heart the weight of loneliness pressing upon it. His cheek was still pale, and a sad, weary look shone from his eyes. Throwing himself down in the little hollow between the loved graves, he would sit for hours, with his head resting on his hand, and his eyes fixed on vacancy. It could not be said he thought—thought was asleep; a dreamy abstraction was over him. Mrs. Connor coming out, he would passively take her hand, and follow her into the house; once there, sinking into a chair, he would fix his eyes on the floor; or, bowing his head upon the table, close them to every object around.

"Something must be done for him, or he would fade away

like his gentle mother. They wanted counsel; and to whom does the poor Catholic, in doubt and perplexity, go but to his priest. Yes, to Father John they would go; he would tell them what to do.

"It was a bright sunny day after the wheat harvest, just such a day as we all can well remember, when the early flowers have passed away, and others, more gorgeous, lift their heads in proud beauty; when the hills seem more silent, and a soft hazy wreath rises from them, and when the sky, as far bending as ever, whispers a something soothing and comforting to the heart, that little Joe was to be taken to see the priest.

"'Child,' said Mr. Connor, tenderly lifting him from the graves upon which he had sunk, 'you are now going to see Father John.' With the greatest indifference, he had heard the arrangements for the visit made; but now, when he saw the horses standing by the gate, ready harnessed, a great flush swept over his face.

"'To Father John's! and shall I see him again?' he asked.

"'Yes, Joe, you shall see him again.'

"He stood a moment lookingly fixedly at Mr. Connor, then falling against him, murmured:

"'Father John; dear, dear Father John.' No more did he say; and Nellie putting on him a new coat they had made for him, and Fanny bringing him a new hat, with a green ribbon round it, once more he started to see the good priest. How different his feelings to when he visited him before! Then, although a lone orphan, the gladness of childhood gathered around his heart. Now, after the first surprise, he sank back silent and abstracted, and neither felt nor expressed a desire to see his friend. All day long they rode on, and when they pressed him to partake of the luncheon they set before him, he

turned his face from it, and gazed up at the light embroidery of clouds spread over the calm cerulean sky. At last the wagon stopped before Mrs. Donnell's. Carefully they lifted him out, and, leaning on Mrs. Connor's arm, he walked into the house. Great was the astonishment of the kind-hearted Mrs. Donnell expressed at the changed appearance of the orphan; when she listened to the hardships he had suffered at the Crushfords, her cheeks burned with indignation; but when she heard how sick he had been, and how drooping since his sickness, her eyes softened, and she turned and spoke kindly and soothingly to him; but he made no reply; crossing his arms upon the table, he laid his weary head upon them.

"'That's just the way he acts all the time,' whispered Mrs. Connor, 'the life, I fear, has been worked out of him. Oh! it was wrong, it was wrong, for James and I to let him go.'

"'But, sure, Mrs. Connor, you thought it was for his good.'

"'They said it was; but I feared it.' She sorrowfully shook her head.

"'It's no use to let your heart down, Mrs. Connor, you aren't in any way to blame; his own mother might have made the same mistake.'

"'True for you, Mrs. Donnell; but still, if it had been Bernard instead of Joe that went to the Crushfords, and came home looking so worn, I wouldn't feel so bad as I do to think it was the orphan intrusted to our care. God knows I wouldn't!'

"She hastily wiped a tear from her eye, and glancing out saw Mr. Connor coming.

"'Joe, dear,' she said, 'put on your hat; James has come. And now, Mrs. Donnell, as you are sure Father John is at home, we'll just step over to see him.'

"He is at home, Mrs. Connor; he is just back from Littleton. I saw him myself when he rode past the door."

"As Mrs. Donnell said, Father John was at home. He looked still more worn than the year before, but kindly and affectionately received them.

"God bless you, my children; God bless you!" he fervently exclaimed.

"It was not Mr. Connor's nature to go round a subject before commencing it, so sitting down, he at once told his errand. Kindly, Father John looked at little Joe; he had shrunk to the window and was gazing out with a sad, fixed expression of countenance.

"In a kind, gentle voice he called him to him.

"Kneel down, Joe," said Mr. Connor, as with a languid step he approached, "and get his Reverence's blessing."

Joe knelt, and when the hand of Father John was laid upon his head, he covered his face with his hands, and sobs convulsed his frame.

"Arise, my child, arise. And so you have been very sick, they tell me."

"Yes, Father," he timidly replied, wiping away the tears.

"But you are better, now, and will soon be well again."

"I don't know about that, Father," said Mr. Connor.

"Father John, James is only expressing his wishes."

"Well, Ellen, we all wish the same, but something besides wishing must now be done. He's going like his own mother."

"True for you, James. Ah, Father John, if you had seen his mother after his father's death, your heart would have ached. She strove to be resigned, and was resigned, but a weight pressed upon her heart till it pressed her into

the grave. Ah, poor thing! may the Lord rest her soul! many's the time she told me waking or sleeping that weight was there."

"Joe surely is greatly changed," said Father John, looking at the pale orphan, "and we must see what can be done for him."

He leaned his forehead on his hand and remained for some time buried in thought. Suddenly turning to Mr. Connor, he said:

"Did not Mr. Harny leave a small farm? I believe you told me he did."

"Yes, Father; seventy-five acres."

"And what became of it?"

"When Mrs. Harny died, there was quite a little debt on it for the doctor's bill, funeral expenses, and such like. I rented it to a Mr. Randall these two years. The rent has paid the debt, and now it is free."

"And the child's clothes?"

"Oh, we found them. We thought it was the least we could do for Francis Harny's son till his own little place would be out of debt. And, indeed, Father, aside from the farm, we thought he'd soon be able to get them by his own labor."

"And so he has been," said Mrs. Connor, "if the Crushfords were honest."

"What! will they not pay him?"

"Not the first ha'penny; James went over to see him, but he declares he didn't do enough to earn his board, and you see how he looks. The hard-hearted villain almost worked him into the grave."

"Yes, yes," said Father John, thoughtfully.

"I suppose if I was to go to law with him," said Mr. Connor, "I could make him cash over, but the expense of

the lawsuit would cost more than the little we could get, and that's why the rascal's so bold.'

"Did you not tell me something about his having another guardian?"

"Yes, Father; a Mr. Reed."

"He would not object to any disposal of the property that would be for his ward's benefit?"

"Oh no, Father. He is brother-in-law to this Crushford, and is so ashamed of the way he used Joe, that he'll not say the first word against any thing you propose. Although close-fisted at a bargain, he's no such man. If Joe had been hired to him, he would have had enough to eat, and not been over-worked."

"You say the farm is now unencumbered?"

"Yes, Father. Doctor Blessington's bill—the doctor that carried him through the fever—will be considerably more than set-off by the cows I put out to double for him."

"Put out to double?"

"Yes, Father. Mr. Randall took four; they were left on the farm when Mr. Harny died; and for the use of them for four years, he will return eight."

"When did he take them?"

"The next spring after Mr. Harny's death—most a year and a half ago. In two years and a half more, Joe will have quite a dairy."

"Yes, yes; now I see." Again he was buried in thought.

"I will tell you, Mr. Connor, what we must do," he said, rising up and placing his hand on Mr. Connor's arm, "we must place him to school—listen, do not interrupt me—his farm that you say is now unencumbered of debt, must be sold, and its price placed in some safe bank, where we can draw from it to pay up his educational expenses. How much will it bring per acre?"

"About twenty dollars."

"Seventy-five acres, twenty dollars per acre, that will just amount to fifteen hundred dollars. He can be placed in Georgetown College for two hundred dollars a-year; and with the interest arising from his money, he will have sufficient to carry him through a regular course."

"But his clothes," said Mr. Connor, "you forget them, Father."

"As to them, James, it will go hard with us, but we can find them, and when he's through, if he feels delicate about it, sure, he can pay us."

"Just so, Mrs. Connor."

"They'll not be very fine, Father!"

"So much the better, he will not need them fine; if they are smooth and comfortable, that is all that will be necessary."

"But will he be able to stand the studying?"

"It's the only thing, Mrs. Connor, that will save him. He is now, you see, sunk into almost a hopeless apathy. He must be removed from the scene of his sorrows, from the graves of his parents, and then the emulation of keeping up in his class, the society of those of his own age, the pleasant recreations—all will rouse him from this numbing lethargy."

"How soon, Father, do you think he ought to be sent?"

"The sooner the better. The vacations are just closed, and the new year commenced. I will write to-morrow to the president, and as soon as I get an answer I will let you know."

"You think there is no danger, Father?"

"Take my word for it, Mrs. Connor, it's the best thing that can be done for him. At the end of seven years he

will have an education, that will be more to him than three farms.'

"A new era dawned on little Joe. A few weeks found him a student in Georgetown College, away from the loved graves, the Connors, and Father John, away from home and the scenes of his childhood. How embarrassed he felt when he found himself the magnet of some four hundred eyes, their owners whispering: 'And so that's the orphan boy, that's pining himself to death!'

"Some way or other, every one seemed to know his history. On the first night when he was taken to the dormitory, a little boy, two or three years younger than himself, leaped over his narrow bed, and whispered:

"Joe Harny, I heard Father Paul say, you were to be in my class, and let me tell you, you will have to study to keep up; Father Paul never takes an imperfect lesson.'

"What will he do if I miss?"

"He will make you learn it over in a trice. And if you keep missing, I won't say what he'll do; but there's such things known as his sending boys to be ratanned for laziness. So you will have no time for grieving, you will just have to rouse up and be somebody.'

"And if I know them all the time?"

"Oh, he will like you, and think every thing of you. Father Paul loves smart boys.'

"The kind Father had spoken very gently to him, and laid his hand so softly on his head—just like Father John—that Joe had been greatly impressed with him, and he determined if perfect lessons would gain his esteem he would surely have it; and with this resolution, he said a little prayer, closed his eyes and went to sleep.

"For the first three or four weeks his resolution, however, wavered; he could not fix his thoughts on his studies;

many a time in the study hall, with an open book in his hand, they would wander back to the dear graves, and the morning he awoke from the fever! Why didn't he die then? Why was he left to be forever alone? He was not like those around him; they had friends, homes, every thing to make them happy;—he had no home, no father or mother, sister or brother; he was alone, all alone in the world. Only the recitation bell could arouse him from these painful memories, then starting up, with flushed cheeks and fluttering heart, he would repair to his class, conscious of having no lesson prepared. Father Paul on these occasions would look grave, but no reproachful word passed his lips. He pitied the poor orphan, and chose rather by kindness than harshness to win him to exertion. His plan proved eminently successful, and proved, too, that dear Father John was right. Desire to gain the approbation of his kind teacher, study, keeping up in class, and pleasant, cheerful association in a few months restored a healthy tone to his mind.

"Seven years passed quickly away, and Joe, a young man, left college. Father John, dear, kind Father John, and the faithful Connors, received him with all joy. In a few weeks, through Father John's influence, he obtained a lucrative situation in one of the largest mercantile establishments in the city of A—. Here he remained three years, annually visiting the Connors, and bringing little presents to each member of the family. The clothing bill in due time was liquidated, with an interest that almost offended their generous hearts. Every thing was prosperous with Joe. To see him now, no one could hardly have believed he was the same ragged, pale-faced boy, that a few years before ran away from the Crushfords. Health bloomed on his cheek, and hope beamed from his eye. On the third year of his

being with Mr. Evans, he paid his usual visit to the Connors. Maurice had just married an amiable and intelligent girl, lately arrived from his parents' native place, and with his bride was about emigrating to the West; the locality he had not yet determined upon, but spoke favorably of Indiana. With pain Joe perceived a marked change in the bearing of the whole family toward him; Fanny, who had grown up a beautiful girl, was at home on a visit from Stanton, where she had been learning the tailoring business. With her was a young gentleman whom, in an agitated manner, she introduced as Mr. Fleming, at least that was the name Joe understood it to be. She appeared greatly changed, no longer gay and cheerful as of old, but cold and repellent; Mrs. Connor spoke kindly to her, but Fanny, gentle Fanny, sometimes forgot to hear her, and again answered in a sullen, disagreeable tone. Mr. Fleming had but little to say, but that little proved him a person of education and refinement. It was very evident he felt quite a contempt for the plain, simple manners of the Connors, and it was also evident, that they, in return, looked on him in no favorable light. But if they disliked him, why treat Joe, who knew nothing of him, with such unkindness? Pained and chagrined, he determined the first time he should see Mrs. Connor alone, to learn from her what it all meant; but the opportunity never came. Unexpectedly he received a letter, urging his immediate return.

"Mr. Evans had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill; there was no time to lose: he hastened back, resolving, as soon as possible, to get leave of absence, and visit them again. Mr. Evans's sickness proved fatal; he died soon after Joe reached home; and Mr. Gray, his partner, concluded to close up the affairs of the firm. Joe was kept

very busy, but at last he got leisure to write; it was to Bernard he directed his letter; he begged him, by the memory of the past and all its endearing ties, frankly to tell him the cause of the seeming estrangement. With almost feverish anxiety he waited for an answer. In the meantime the business of his late employer closed; with a warm recommendation from Mr. Gray, he went to fill the same situation in a large mercantile house in Rochester that he had filled in the firm of Evans and Gray. Time passed on, and he heard nothing from the Connors; once established in his new place he wrote to them again. No answer came to his letter; and as soon as he could obtain leave of absence, which was not for several months, he went to see them. What was his astonishment to find them all gone; their farm sold, and strangers in their place. He learned from the present owner, that Mr. Connor had moved to Ohio with Maurice, what part of Ohio he did not know; having paid him all at once, and having no farther business with him, he had taken no pains to learn the name of the place they would settle in; that, a few weeks before they moved, Fanny had eloped with Mr. Fleming, and married him; that this had greatly incensed her parents; but why they should object to him as a son-in-law, as he seemed a perfect gentleman and far above them, he could not tell; that, soon after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Fleming also moved West, but not to Ohio; he believed it was to Illinois. This was all he could obtain from him or from any of the neighbors, except that among the latter some positively declared it was not to Ohio the Connors had removed, but to Indiana. He then hastened on to A——, hoping, that, with Father John, they might have left a letter for him; but here greater sorrow, greater disappointment met him. Father John, the faithful, zealous, and fatigable Father John, was dead, and another priest was

in his place. He kindly received him, and looking over his papers found none for him. If they had left a message, it must have been a verbal one. Bewildered, pained, and grieved, Joe went back to his employers. Let it not be said because shame rarely mingles in the grief of childhood, because pride and vanity hold not over them their blighting power, that their grief is less bitter than the grief of after years. No! theirs is a wretchedness, an utter abandonment, a writhing anguish, that no after life can feel. In the strength of mature years we have faith, and hope, and strong resolves to battle with or against the storms of life; not so in childhood; the storms come, and, weak and helpless, like tender plants, they are beaten down. Then, if kind and pitying ones raise them up, and with soothing and gentle ministrations bind up their bleeding wounds, are they ever forgotten? No! they are the white-winged angels of the past, and a halo, like the halo the old masters threw round their pictures, ever surrounds them.

"As before remarked, from the time, by the advice of kind Father John, he was placed in college, a new era dawned on him. No more away from the Church, no more so friendless and lone, his path lay among pleasant places; 'tis true here and there thorns appeared, but what path is wholly free from them? The fairest flowers have, beneath their leafy folds, many a sharp point. Conscientiously he strove to forward his employer's interest; his fidelity was well repaid: a few years found him raised to the dignity of partner; a few more, married to the wealthy merchant's only child. But, in all his prosperity, one cloud hung over him—the sudden disappearance of the Corners. Had they parted from him in anger? Could they have imagined that he had grown up proud and ungrateful—unmindful of the past! He became morbidly sensitive on the subject; for

years this part of his life was a closed leaf on the book of memory, and even now he could not have turned to it, but a father's strong, imperative duty urged him on. With an aching heart he commenced the task; as he progressed, heavier and heavier it grew. At times the pen has fallen powerless from his hand, and, bowing his head upon the desk, an unvoiced prayer has gone up that he might hear from them before he died. That prayer has been answered; ere the pages of this manuscript are brought to a close the mystery has been unveiled—he has heard from them. Nay, more, he has seen and conversed with Fanny—Fanny, whom he ever loved with the tender love of a brother; and now how it pains him to find his only child turn from her—and why? because she is poor, and sorrows and afflictions have gathered around her. Is this the return——"

Agnes was turning over a leaf when a servant came in and placed a note in her hand. It was from Mrs. Carter; hastily opening it, she read:

"Dear Agnes:

"After you left yesterday, Edith was much worse; in the course of the night she became so low that we sent for Father Joseph. He came and administered to her the holy Viaticum with the last benediction. She revived towards morning, is easier now, and begs to see you.

"Affectionately,

"MARIA CARTER."

There was but one more page of the manuscript, but she could not think of finishing it then. She slipped it into her desk; her carriage stood at the door; entering it, she was soon at Mr. Carter's.

CHAPTER XXV.

GIVING her cloak and bonnet in charge to Johana, she immediately ascended to Edith's room. She found her lying propped up with pillows; her golden hair, brushed from off her wan face, lay in gleaming folds upon them. Her large eyes looked larger than ever, and a weary, but hopeful expression shone from them. Extending a white, emaciated hand in a hoarse, hollow voice, she said:

"Last night, Agnes, I thought the messenger had come."

"And you would have been rejoiced had it been so?"

"Rejoiced! Oh, Agnes, you do not know how impatient I feel! Constantly is ringing in my ears these beautiful words: 'Heaven is my true home, and death is the path that leads to it. Oh, heavenly Jerusalem! Oh, beautiful city of God! when shall I arrive at thy sacred tabernacles?' and then, Agnes," she said, still keeping hold of her hand, as Agnes seated herself on a chair at the bedside, "comes the comforting answer: 'Take courage, my soul; thy hour approaches; thy miseries and sorrows will soon have an end. Thou art going to the nuptials of the Lamb: thou art going to the land of the living;'"* and oh, Agnes, I long, oh, how I long to go!"

A severe fit of coughing nearly exhausted her, but it dispelled not the eager, joyous look from her countenance.

* "Devotions for the Sick."—*St. Vincent's Manual*, p. 654.

As Agnes gazed upon her, she thought, how different is her heart to mine; hers all heaven, mine all earth; in pain and suffering she is happy, in health and strength I am miserable. She speaks of her inward joy; I hide my inward sorrow. The world would pity her and envy me.

"The world would be blind to envy you, Agnes," said Edith, setting her large blue eyes full upon her. Agnes started, and a deep flush spread over her face.

"You have your sorrows, dear Agnes; be not offended if I speak what I long have known." With the keen perception of sickness, Edith had read her friend's thoughts.

"I have often wished," she said, "to speak of them, but I knew it would be disagreeable to you, therefore I have been silent, but time is short with me now. I must be silent no longer."

"Oh, Edith, Edith!" sobbed Agnes, laying her head down and burying her face in the pillows, "then you know the cause of my sorrows?"

"I do." She paused a moment, and impressively asked: "Shall I tell you? Shall I risk your displeasure?"

"Oh, Edith, how could you risk it?"

"By simply telling you the truth, Agnes; it is pride, deep, subtle pride that is wrecking your happiness, and making you, even here, have a foretaste of the miseries of those wretched spirits forever shut out from the presence of God. Instead of feeling a tender affection for little Mark, your adopted brother, you have allowed the demon of pride to harden your heart against him, for no other reason than because his poor sister is a menial in the house. Is it not so?"

Agnes groaned. From no other person, not even Becky Starr, would she have borne this, but to the dying girl before her her anger was all powerless.

"But let me tell you," continued Edith, a slight flush mantling her hollow cheek, "this is a changing world; those who to-day are up, to-morrow are cast down. Have him expelled your home; give your parents no peace till they listen to your hardened counsel; rejoice in your power, and twenty years hence, in very bitterness, you may rue it—may see yourself cast down from the pinnacle of wealth, poor, shunned, despised, and the fatherless boy you hated for the poverty of his family, an honored member of society."

Agnes raised her head, and the haughty lines around her mouth once more disfigured the beauty of her face. "Edith," she said, "you only look upon the poetry of the affair."

"Poetry, Agnes; please tell me its prose."

In at times a freezing, and again a sobbing voice, Agnes poured into her ears the tale of her grievance.

"It might have been pride," she said, in conclusion, "that prompted my dislike to the adoption at first, but if so, it has served to teach me how little dependence can be placed on the boasted love and tenderness of parents. Pride has all left my heart now. I don't care if they adopt the whole family; I only know that I, their child, have been cast off like a toy they had tired of."

"Pride left your heart! Oh, Agnes, Agnes, pride is all there, with its foolish jealousies and inconsistent reasonings. Now that you have told me what you are pleased to term its prose, look how very absurd it is. Here you have been all winter shutting yourself up in your own room, spreading an icy barrier between you and happiness, goading yourself with foolish fears and ridiculous comparisons—all because your parents have insisted on retaining in their service the sister of your adopted brother."

Agnes made no reply; she felt Edith did not realize her situation, and it would be useless for her to attempt to enlighten her. One thing was very certain, she should not, while remembering what belonged to others, forget what belonged to herself. She looked up, her eyes rested on a picture, opposite to where she was sitting. It was "The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds." With the delicacy of a Claude Lorraine, the artist had painted the soft moonlight gleaming over mount and vale; in the distance the buildings of Bethlehem, partially buried in the gloom of night; the ambient sky, bending serenely down; the still, quiet air of night, pervading the whole; the gentle flock gathered together; their faithful keepers resting on their crooks, and looking with wonder and awe upon the bright angel enveloped in glory, bringing tidings of great joy to man. It was most skilfully executed, and she sat gazing upon it till all the harsher feelings of her nature were subdued; she only thought of God's great love to man; the sublime strains of Handel's Oratorio rang in her ears; she longed to open Edith's melodeon and give utterance to his glorious "And lo! the Angel," but her friend was too feeble to bear it. Edith had been watching her countenance.

"You love that picture?" she said.

"Yes, it is very beautiful."

"To me it is more than beautiful. While gazing upon it, I often feel as if I would like to go back with the angel, when his wonderful message is delivered. It seems I can hardly wait; you think I am too low to bear music; but no, I would like to have you sing, in the soft voice in which you sing for me, 'Jerusalem, my happy home, how do I sigh for thee.' My whole soul goes with every word of that."

Agnes seated herself before the instrument, and after a short prelude, in a low, sweet voice, sang the beautiful

lines. Edith clasped her hands, and a seraphic smile played round her features.

"Thank you, Agnes," she said, as Agnes again seated herself beside her."

"Edith, shall I not change your pillows? you look weary."

"I do not care if you do."

She carefully removed them, shook them up, and laid the invalid so comfortably upon them, that she said:

"Now I think I may sleep. Do you stay with me to-night?"

"Yes, dearest, I will not leave you till morning."

With a grateful pressure of her hand, Edith closed her eyes. Soon she slept. The shadows of night gathered around them; carefully leaving her side, she approached the window, and glanced out. The night was brilliantly illuminated; world on world appeared before her. Her sick friend, Walter, little Mark, her grievances—all were forgotten. She only felt that those far-distant orbs, rolling on in the boundless sea of space, speak to the soul of the vast omnipotence of God. We behold them as the scroll-work of his almighty power; and as earth, since the bright morn of her creation, wheels on in her unseen course around the sun, so those millions of distant worlds have each their allotted path marked out to them—this much we know—but why they were created, how governed, and whether the residences of mortal or immortal beings, remains an insoluble mystery to man. Dreadful are the penalties Eve entailed on her race by her insatiable desire for knowledge; and yet, what hath this knowledge taught us but the pitiful lesson, how little man may know! We gaze on the star-gemmed night, till we can almost persuade ourselves we hear the hymnings of the distant worlds; we bow down

in blissful adoration, when presently awakes within us the desire to know what is not granted for man to know; we rise up, we struggle and contend with our own weakness, and at last sink back utterly exhausted, with the withering sense of our own nothingness pressed heavily upon us. She bowed down, and laid her head on the window-sill: in presence of the wonderful works of the Creator, the scales fell from her eyes. No longer could the sophistry of pride shield her from the searching stings of remorse. How wretched had she made her home. Her mother, so gentle and loving, so attentive to her every want; her father toiling and wearying himself out for her; Martha faithfully fulfilling the duties of her station; little Mark, so anxious to please—and she to make them all so wretched. Why should not her parents, if they loved Martha, be allowed to keep her? Why should Mark, because his sister was employed in the family, be sent home? Does not God resist the proud, and give his grace to the humble? Was not her very desire to hide her sorrow from Walter, proof convincing that deep, cruel pride was the cause of it? But how could she return to her parents' love without too much compromising her dignity? She was no longer a child, and they must not look upon her as one; she was now a woman, with all a woman's sensitive feelings. Once more she looked up; the unnumbered hosts of heaven still shone down upon her; she thought of the prodigal son in the Gospel: "I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy child." Completely overcome, she buried her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Agnes!" Edith called her.

She arose, and, turning to the bed, perceived the room had been lighted, but so absorbed had she been in her own

thoughts, that she had not heard any one come in or go out. Edith held the rosary in her hands, and pressed the crucifix to her heart.

"Agnes, you are not now offended at what I said this afternoon?"

"No, Edith, no. You only said the truth."

"But you did not think so then. I saw it, and thought it useless to contend with you farther. I would do more, I would pray for you."

"And have you been praying for me?"

"Yes, Agnes. You have been kind, very kind to me; and I thought the least I could do in return was to pray for you, and I have asked, nay, I have begged, of our blessed Mother to intercede that God might shed one ray upon your darkened soul. I knew one ray would be enough to let you see all its deformity."

"And he has; oh, Edith, he has!"

"Yes, I know it. When I saw you fall upon your knees, and raise your pale, tearful face, I felt my prayer had been heard."

Agnes bent over her, and kissed her brow. "Then you were not sleeping when I left you?"

"Yes, I slept, but soon awoke. And now tell me, Agnes, do you not feel you have been unjust to your parents and to little Mark?"

Agnes was silent, but her head went down.

"And you will be reconciled to them? Oh, Agnes, promise me this before I go."

In a low voice from the bowed head came the reply:

"Edith, like the prodigal, I will go to my father—and—and—say—" She could not go on; tears choked her utterance.

With her disengaged hand, Edith signed herself with the

sign of the cross, and again her lips moved in prayer. A calmness like the dew of heaven came over Agnes's troubled soul; the tears dried from her eyes, and, comforted, she arose. Neither had yet spoken, when Johana came in, bearing a tray. Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Murray followed her.

"Agnes, I knew, would prefer having her supper in your room, darling," said Mrs. Carter, as Johana placed the tray on the table.

"Oh, Mrs. Carter, do not ask me to eat now."

"But you must, dear; you look pale and exhausted, and need some refreshment."

"Then give me a cup of tea, that will do."

Mrs. Murray handed it to her; she drank it off, and hastily walked to the window. When she came back, Edith had partaken of her slight repast, Johana and the tray were gone. Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Murray sat beside the invalid, each buried in her own sad thoughts. Agnes was the first to speak.

"Edith, how do you feel now?"

"Easier, thank God, than I have felt for months. Last night I suffered so much, and to-night every pain has left me." After another brief silence, she looked at her mother and said:

"Mother, you and Bertha must get some rest; Agnes will be with me."

"No, darling; we will not leave you."

"But I wish to see Agnes alone."

Mrs. Carter looked up inquiringly.

"She is in sorrow, mother, and I would comfort her."

"We are all in sorrow, darling." Her lips quivered and tears welled up to her eyes.

"But, you will go for a little while?"

"Yes, darling ; we will do any thing to please you."

"If any change comes, Johana is in the next room, and Agnes will at once send her to you."

With these foreboding words, mother and daughter left the room.

For some time Edith conversed with her friend, and it seemed, in her great desire to place before her the hideousness of pride, she rose triumphant above her weakness, and the hoarseness, which had for weeks troubled her, left, and she spoke in her own clear, musical voice. Agnes listened with wonder and awe ; she felt the truth of her every word—felt, too, it was her last expiring effort to save her from impending ruin. She saw the messenger the angelic Edith longed so much for just at hand, ready to bear her away when her loving mission was accomplished.

"And now," she said, in conclusion, "I die happy. We soon part, but you will ever remember my words."

"Oh, Edith ! Edith ! never will I forget them. Never forget this night."

"And now you may again shake up my pillows. I feel I could sleep a little."

Agnes shook them up, arranged them, and gently laid her on them.

"Please give me my crucifix." She handed it to her.

"And please shade the lamp so that its light will fall on the Madonna and Child at the foot of my bed." Agnes shaded it as desired.

"Any thing more, dear Edith ?"

"No ; but as I shall not see Becky Starr again, please tell her I thanked her for her prayers and beautiful letters, and rejoiced to hear of her grandparents' conversion. And now sit down beside me ; I would rest a little."

Agnes seated herself, while, with a prayer upon her lips,

the invalid sank into a light sleep. Agnes watched her countenance ; the peace and innocence of childhood were there. Hour after hour passed, but yet she slept on. Agnes bowed her head to listen to her breathing ; it was calm as an infant's on its mother's breast. Several times Bertha and Mrs. Carter came to the door, peeped in, and then noiselessly glided back—still the invalid slept on. The dark curtain of night was just lifted in the East when a change came over her countenance ; she started up.

"Agnes ! bring father, mother, Bertha, all—quick—the message has come."

She flew to Johana's room. Mr. and Mrs. Carter, Mr. and Mrs. Murray hastened in. Agnes held her up, supported in her arms. She reached forth her hands.

"Bless you—bless you all !" Mr. Murray took Agnes's place. Although at any moment this change had been expected, it now, as death always does, took them by surprise. Pale and speechless they stood around her ; Agnes glided to the table, took up a prayer-book, and again approached the bed.

"Let us not forget our duty. Kneel with me," she said.

Mechanically they knelt ; she handed the open volume to Mr. Carter ; he took it and tried to read, but his voice was gone. Handing it back, in a firm, clear voice she read aloud the prayers for the dying. Johana threw open the windows, and drew aside the thick, heavy curtains, so that the sufferer might breathe easier. Mr. Murray wiped the cold drops from her brow, and administered a potion, but the power of swallowing was gone, it gurgled in her throat ; partially turning her head, the liquid flowed out. Agnes raised her voice, so that the last sound of earth might be that of prayer, to the dying girl. Her struggles became

less violent, a smile played round her features, and the spirit of Edith Carter was with its God.

Agnes quietly turned a leaf, and commenced the beautiful prayers of the Church for a soul just departed. How lovely the Catholic faith! it strengthens and supports us in life; it leaves us not in death, but ascends to the judgment-seat praying for mercy, and reminding the Saviour of the blood He has shed for repentant man. Carefully they laid the remains of Edith back against the pillows, and retired to another room while the sad office of draping her for the tomb was performed. Wearied and exhausted, Agnes saw her carriage drive up to the door; promising to come and see them again in the course of the day, she descended the steps. As she seated herself and drew her cloak around her, Terence, standing at the carriage door, in a hesitating manner asked:

"Will you tell me, Miss Agnes, how your sick friend is?"

"Terence," she said, in a kinder voice than she had ever before spoken to him, "she is gone—gone to her God!"

"Dead!" he exclaimed, wildly opening his eyes; then, with a pious "May the Lord have mercy on her soul!" turned and mounted the box.

Leaning back against the cushions, she again thought of her sorrows, and the misery and wretchedness pride had thrown around her home. Leaving the death-bed of her friend, she felt how sinful this raising one's self above the poor is in the sight of God. What mattered it now whether Edith had been the flattered child of wealth or the toiling daughter of poverty? Perhaps, from the populous city, the soul of one equally pure and good had ascended from some bare garret or damp cellar to her home of bliss. Their poverty, what mattered it now? Death is the great leveller of all: as St. Liguori says, "In the sepulchre we

cannot distinguish who has been servant and who master." How foolish had she been, listening to pride! How had she let its maxims harden her heart to every generous feeling! Weighed down and oppressed, she longed to throw herself in her parents' arms and beg their forgiveness. As the carriage stopped before her own door, her father hastily descended the marble steps and assisted her out.

"How did you leave Edith?" he kindly asked.

She could not trust herself to speak there in the open street, and he thought it was her old obstinacy. With a suppressed groan, he led her in. Once in the hall, and the door closed, she suddenly threw her arms around his neck, and, attempting the words of the prodigal, sobbed:

"Father, father!" but she could say no more.

"What, dearest?" he asked, drawing his arm around her, and supporting her weeping form.

"Forgive me, forgive me!" she sobbed. "I have sinned, I have sinned—forgive me."

"So far as you have sinned against me, I do, darling; I freely forgive you."

He opened a door, and led her into one of the parlors; seating her on the sofa, he tenderly removed her cloak and bonnet, and the long dark ringlets, released, fell over her pale face.

"And, Edith, darling?" said her father, seating himself beside her.

"I have just come from her deathbed."

He started, raised his eyes, and offered a prayer for the departed soul. After a somewhat lengthened pause, he said:

"Agnes, you, some time ago, found a manuscript on your table?"

"Yes, father, and much I wondered how it came there."

"You have read the life of little Joe Harny?"

"Yes, father, I read to within the last page of the volume; then I was hurriedly called to see Edith."

"You pitied his sorrows, and felt the Connors were faithful to him?"

"Yes, father," she said, curious to know to what his questions would lead.

In a tone of deep solemnity, he said:

"Agnes, see how heartless and blind is pride—how unjust your dislike to Martha and Mark! Little Joe Harny and your father are one and the same person."

"You! father, you!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Agnes."

"And you never mentioned it—never spoke of it before."

"No, Agnes, I never spoke of it. I cannot, even now, look back on the loneliness that oppressed my young heart, without feeling an unmanly weakness coming over me." A great gravity rested on his face.

"But the Connors," he exclaimed, starting up, "they were faithful friends, you say?"

"Yes, father, they were well tried, and not found wanting."

"Well, what think you, when I tell you, the widow Clement is Mr. and Mrs. Connor's daughter Fanny?"

Agnes covered her face, and groaned.

"I understood the name," continued Mr. Hilton, "to be Fleming, as I stated it in the manuscript; a few months since, I learned my mistake."

"Oh, father, is it possible?"

"Yes, Agnes, it is possible, and Martha and Mark Clement, are their grandchildren."

A step was heard along the hall, and Mr. Hilton could only say, "Another time, and I will tell you all," when the door opened, and a servant came in.

Agnes arose and retired, not to her own, but to her mother's room. Mrs. Hilton was on her knees; she did not hear the light step, but as Agnes knelt beside her, she looked up. A flush swept over her face; opening her arms, she pressed to her heart her repentant child. Neither spoke,—theirs was an emotion too deep for words; together they knelt, together offered up their prayers. Arising, Agnes clasped her mother in her arms, kissed her, and hastened to her room. In the passage, she unexpectedly met Martha. She suddenly stopped, looked at her for a moment, and reaching out her hand, said:

"Martha, your brother is my brother; we will be friends."

Poor Martha! her cheeks flushed and paled; grasping the extended hand, in a thick, tremulous voice she replied:

"We will be friends, and though he is my brother, you will yet be proud of him. Oh, if father had lived, strangers would not be spurning his child."

"I do not spurn him." Her lips quivered, and tears appeared in the depths of her eyes.

"Oh, my father!" groaned Martha, leaning her head against the wall.

"May we meet him and Edith in heaven!"

"Then Edith is gone?" she said, starting.

"Yes, she is gone."

"May the Lord give rest to her soul; she was so kind, so gentle! She did not despise me because I was poor."

"Neither do I." There was a sorrow in Agnes's voice, that touched Martha's heart, and she regretted the way she had spoken. Agnes raised her eyes, stood a moment irresolute, then, throwing her arms around her, kissed her, and hastened to her room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE afternoon found Agnes again at the house of mourning. As she entered the parlor, and glanced at the shrouded form, lying on the table in the centre of the room, a weakness came over her, her limbs trembled, and, leaning against the door, she paused, to gain strength and composure, to gaze once more on the face of the early dead. No gloomy crape veiled the pictures and furniture; none of the usual insignia of bereavement marked the aspect of the room. Flowers, beautiful fragrant flowers, lay profusely scattered around; on the snowy cushion, supporting the head of the pale sleeper, there they were, mingling in the golden curls; on the breast, never more to be racked by pain; round the slender fingers grasping a crucifix, on the white velvet pall spread over the slight form—everywhere, the hand of affection had profusely scattered these beautiful emblems of her own sweet life; and at the head and feet burned two large tapers, emblematic of the faith and hope which guide the Christian through life, and support him in death. She laid her hand on the marble brow, and the thrill of that touch went to her very heart; sinking on her knees, she bowed her head on her open palms, but no sobs, no tears came to her relief. Again she gazed on those calm, fixed features, beautiful even in death, and the words of the poet occurred to her:

"There is no death! What seems so is transition;
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian
Whose portals we call Death.

* * * * *

In that great cloister's stillness and seclusion,
By guardian angels led,
Safe from temptation, safe from sin's pollution,
She lives whom we call dead."

Again her head went down, and her lips moved in prayer. There, beside the cold remains of her friend, she resolved, with the help of heaven, to banish from her heart the bitter feeling of pride, and nourish, in its place, the virtue of humility. She arose, and bending over, kissed the crucifix in the rigid fingers; raising her eyes, she saw Martha on the opposite side, arranging a cluster of heliotrope with a few snowy buds, and here and there a myrtle leaf. The flowers dropped from her hands, and a deep flush suffused her cheek; no change passed over Agnes's countenance; but reaching out her hand, 'twas clasped in Martha's. For a moment, she stood calm and collected; then tears gushed to her eyes, and over the corpse of the gentle Edith the two girls wept together.

As they were leaving the room, Agnes said:

"My carriage is here, Martha, you must ride with me."

"Oh, no, no, Miss Agnes!" The timid and sensitive Martha shrank from accepting a favor, the granting of which might afterwards be repented.

"Will you, Martha, wait for me a few minutes till I see Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Murray?" she asked.

Martha looked up surprised. "Certainly, if you wish me," she replied.

Agnes ascended the stairs. Martha, again entering the

parlor, knelt down beside the corpse and prayed till her return.

As they met in the hall, Agnes grasped her hand, and kept a firm hold of it till they reached the carriage door.

"Step in," she said, "I will not take no for an answer; you must ride with me."

Thus constrained, Martha sank reluctantly upon the soft cushions. Agnes, drawing her cloak around her, silently seated herself beside her; not a word was spoken during the short ride home; but Martha thought never had she seen a cold, proud look changed to so tender and sorrowful a glance. Mr. Hilton stood at the parlor window, as Agnes and Martha alighted. A great joy shone from his eyes; hastily leaving the room, he repaired to his library, and, on bended knees, thanked God, the proud spirit of his child had been subdued, before she left her father's home. Now he dared to look upon her future; now he felt, in resigning her to another, he was not, thereby, endangering the happiness of both.

The next day was the day of the funeral. A long line of carriages followed the remains of Edith to the church, where a solemn Mass of requiem was chanted for her soul. After the Gospel, Father Joseph ascended the pulpit, and gave as his text: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors." *

With breathless attention, she listened to his eloquent and affecting discourse. He dwelt on the piety and gentleness of her who had so early been called to her reward; he spoke of the patience and meekness with which she had borne sorrow and affliction; and he exhorted all so to live, that, like

* Apocalypse, xiv. 13.

her, they might have their lamps trimmed and burning, ready when the Bridegroom cometh. His words sank deep in her heart, and strengthened the resolutions she had made. When the body of Edith was lowered into the grave, she leaned for support on her father's arm, and he led her, pale and weeping, back to the carriage.

On reaching home, little Mark followed her to her room; with the touching kindness of childhood, he twined his little arms around her, and softly said:

"Miss Agnes, don't cry any more. Edith has gone to God, and now she'll see father."

She looked down on him, and, in a trembling voice, said:

"Mark, don't call me Miss Agnes; call me Sister Agnes."

Drawing him to her, she sealed her request with a kiss.

"Call you sister! my new father and mother say you are my sister, but it has never seemed so to me."

"Well, let it seem that I am, from this day." He did not speak, but drew back timidly, looked wonderingly into her face, then, with the intuitive perception of childhood, feeling her heart was open to him, he rushed up and threw both arms around her neck.

"Yes, yes; you will be my sister, my dear, beautiful sister. And you will love me just as much as sister Martha."

"Yes, Mark, just as much."

It was the evening of the third day after the funeral, that Agnes and her mother were seated with Mr. Hilton in his library.

"But, father," said Agnes, "you recollect you promised to tell me all!"

"Yes, Agnes, I did." You have frequently heard me refer to my college days; to Father Paul, Father Francis, and others, but you have never heard me mention Father John, or the Connors?"

"No father, never."

"Well, the reason was this : I could not speak of Father John without thinking of the Connors ; and, as to the Connors, having so suddenly lost sight of them, it always seemed to me, they went away laboring under the belief that I had grown up selfish and ungrateful. I had never, to my knowledge, given them any cause to believe so, but I was pained and grieved. Years passed ; I heard nothing of them ; and, like a criminal, who strives to bury in oblivion the memory of his fearful deeds, I shrank from ever mentioning their names ; never even to Ellen, did I speak of them."

"And, Joseph ; to me you should not have been so reserved."

"But what was the use of clouding you with a sorrow you could not lighten ? All your kind words would have only made the longing to clear up the mystery more intense, and I thought it best to bury it in my own heart. But when I saw our Agnes so proud and imperious, I changed my mind, and concluded I would write it down ; that, seeing the sorrow and wretchedness that had gathered round her father, how poor and dependent on the kindness of others he had been, she might learn to curb her proud spirit, and know that, although surrounded by wealth and refinement, there had been a time in her father's life, when, but for the faithful friendship of an humble farmer's family, he would have sunk under the hardships of his lot. Only on that part of my life did I intend to dwell, and only on that part have I dwelt. With a heavy heart I commenced the task, but before it was finished I heard from them. Judge of my surprise, when Father Joseph came into my counting-room one morning, and told me the widow Clement was Fanny Connor ! I hastened to her, and begged to know why her family had so deserted me ? And then, with tears in her eyes, she told me of her acquaintance with Mr. Cle-

ment ; how they objected to her marrying him ; and how, in utter defiance of their wishes, she had brought him home. In the midst of their vexed and irritated feelings, I made my visit ; they strove to give me a warm welcome, but the fear that she was about to elope with Mr. Clement, and their great dislike to his presence, prevented the reception being what they intended it should be ; and my so suddenly returning, they concluded I went back in anger. Bernard, soon after, wrote me an explanation of the whole affair ; receiving no answer to his letter, they all came to the conclusion that, getting along pretty well in the world, I was glad of an excuse to shake them all off. Of course, my two letters they never received."

"But why, father, should her parents object to Mr. Clement ?"

"It was some time before I had courage to ask her the same question myself. After some confusion, she said she believed they thought him proud, that he was distant, a person of few words ; and when he did speak, had a way, unfortunately, not to attract people to him. In a moment I understood all. Agnes, he was proud—coldly, scathingly proud ; and you see how it ended."

"But how came he, father, to choose one out of so unpretending a family as the Connors ?"

"Fanny, in her youth, was strikingly beautiful. Away from her family, she would grace his home. He married her ; they moved West ; there he lost all his property, moved back again, and opened a school in Stanton. You know her history since then. I asked her if they ever strove by advertisements to learn the whereabouts of her parents. She said yes, often, but always without success. Poor, poor Fanny ! how fearfully had she been punished. I looked around the desolate room, and thought of her

father's comfortable home; I gazed on her pale, sorrowful face, and could hardly persuade myself she was the beautiful, merry-hearted girl I remembered as Fanny Connor. All my offers of getting them in easier circumstances, she firmly rejected; after a long talk on the past, in my great desire to do something for her, I entreated to be allowed to educate little Mark. The child had wrapped himself round my affections, and, having no son of my own, I even begged to adopt him. She at once consented to my first request, and, after a little hesitation, also to my second. Ellen here, afterwards ratified them; and now, Agnes, you see why I was so firm in retaining Martha in our service, at the same time that I adopted her brother."

The blood mantled Agnes's cheeks, and tears filled her eyes. With the tender regard of a mother, to relieve her embarrassment, Mrs. Hilton hastily said:

"But, Joseph, we must not forget to tell Agnes that in your advertisements for the Connors you have been more fortunate than Mr. Clement."

"Yes, oh yes. A few days ago, I received a letter from Bernard and Miles. Years ago, they all married—all but Nellie; she died young."

"Are old Mr. and Mrs. Connor living?" she eagerly asked.

"Yes, they are still living, but quite feeble. Hugh lives on the home farm, and his wife is very kind and attentive to them. Bridget and Michael have large families, and live on farms adjoining their father's. Bernard is a grain-merchant in St. Louis; Miles became a physician, and is now a wholesale druggist in the same place."

"And Maurice?"

"He resides about forty miles from his father, on a large, well-improved farm. He has three children, two sons and a daughter. One of his sons he called Francis, in memory

of my father. Bernard has four children, and Miles two; Hughy has none. Bernard and Miles, ere this, are on their way here."

"Oh, shall I see them—see those who were so kind to my father?"

"Yes, Agnes; and Mrs. Clement and her family are going back with them. Her parents count the hours till they clasp to their hearts their long-lost and lately-found child."

"Is Mark going too?"

"No; Hughy, having no children of his own, wishes to take him. The old spirit that once reminded me Miles was no brother of mine, still shines forth; he says he thinks he has a greater claim to him than I, seeing he is his uncle. But Mrs. Clement is firm; she asserts she ever remembered me with the same feelings of sisterly affection she did either of her brothers, and she will not go back of her word. If he wishes to adopt Ellen or Clara, he can."

"Does Martha know of her uncles' intended visit?"

"No; I advised her mother to say nothing about it to her children for a few days longer. Oh, Agnes, Agnes, I could not bear to reveal to her how averse you were to having Martha in the house; and I prayed God this happy change might take place before they arrived."

A look of deep pain passed over her countenance, and again her kind mother came to her relief.

"But, Joseph, have you never heard from the Crushfords?"

"Yes, Ellen, several times. Mr. Crushford still lives on the same farm; he paid for it, but has never added an acre to it. One son is a shoemaker, the other early ran away from home, and the last heard from him he was on the sea; the daughter married a shiftless man, and is very poor."

"And the Bonners?"

"Well, Mrs. Crushford had the mortification of living to see the day, that John Bonner owned a large, well-stocked farm of his own. George and Stephen are wealthy farmers. One of the daughters married a miller; another a comfortable farmer; Ruth an enterprising country merchant; and the two younger Bonners emigrated West, and are there doing well. And now, Agnes, I believe I have told you all. We will repair to your mother's room, and, darling, you will play for your father his favorite air."

"Yes, father, but first let me send for Martha and Mark!"

She touched the bell-rope as she spoke. They soon made their appearance, and, repairing to Mrs. Hilton's room while Martha turned the leaves, Agnes played *Stabat Mater*. On the second stanza, Martha's rich voice joined hers, and together they sang that hymn, so full of tender and plaintive melody.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MARTHA CLEMENT, through fear of grieving her mother and Alfred, had never mentioned to them Agnes's coldness and aversion to herself and little Mark, and generous as she was sensitive, she now refrained telling them the change.

"She was cold and haughty to me at first," she said, communing with herself, "but how gentle and affectionate she has been since, and how much she loves Mark. No, no, I will not mention it; it would be ungrateful." And so the widow and Alfred never knew but that Agnes's close attention at the bedside of her sick friend, and her love of retirement, were the cause of their having seen so little of her the whole winter. Mrs. Clement, 'tis true, considered her naturally proud and distant; but then, we all have our natural infirmities. Among the friends and acquaintances of the family, it was remarked what a change the death of Edith had wrought. Her parents knew better—knew whence it came. "Every one that asketh, receiveth."* Yes, they had asked for their child grace to rise above her besetting sin, and grace had been given her. They had asked that light might be granted her to see the heinousness of pride; and now, with the heavenly rays piercing the darkness of her soul, she shrank back in terror at the sight presented, and, humbling herself in the sight of God, her con-

* Matt., vii. 8.

trite prayer went up for pardon and mercy. The prayers of Edith, her parents, and poor Martha had been heard; her eyes were opened, she was converted. Great was the joy of Mr. Hilton at again meeting Bernard and Miles Connor. It seemed he would never weary speaking to them of the olden time, and, with true brotherly affection, they rejoiced in his prosperity. Bernard could not help remarking how strong a resemblance Agnes bore to her grandmother; she was not so pale and thin, but she had the same sorrowful, subdued expression of countenance.

"Indeed, Joe," he said he had to call him by the old familiar name, "she seems the same person, the same rich dark hair, the same brow and eyes, the same soft, gentle voice. Oh, Joe, she brings your mother up plainly before me!"

Mr. Hilton could not speak; he only pressed Bernard's hands.

Poor Mrs. Clement! she could hardly wait the end of their visit, so anxious was she to see her parents. Every thing their affectionate hearts could suggest would be pleasing to her, and assure her of their forgiveness: they sent locks of their snowy hair, daguerreotypes, and dried flowers from Nellie's grave. How she wept, how bitterly she wept, as she pressed these gifts to her heart; every feeling of loneliness that had at times well-nigh bowed her to the grave rushed upon her.

"Oh, my father, my mother!" she sobbed, "take me back! take the wanderer home. Oh, the day I left you—left Nellie—left happiness!"

All were affected, all shed tears. Agnes was the first to regain her composure. Softly gliding up to the widow, she threw her arms around her, and spoke so kind and soothingly that the tears dried away, and ere she knew it,

she found herself calmly conversing with her brothers, asking them numerous questions, and telling them how many times she and her husband had tried to find them.

One day Mr. Hilton took them into Agnes's room, and walking to the picture called "The Cemetery of the Woods; or, By-gone Days," quietly pointed to it. Quickly over their faces came and went the color; for several moments they stood silent before it. At last, turning to Bernard, Mrs. Clement said:

"Oh, Bernard! our own, our early home!"

"Yes, Fanny, yes," he huskily replied, wiping away a tear.

"Oh, Joe," he exclaimed, grasping Mr. Hilton's hand, "this is more than I can bear. You loved us, and cherished the past, while we thought you proud and ungrateful."

"Say no more of it. Say no more of it. Thank God, we have at last met!"

"Thank God; thank God," they fervently responded.

"And now," said Mr. Hilton, "I will tell you the history of that picture. But come, we will sit down. Ellen and Fanny—you look pale, Martha and Agnes too. How strong we men are; joy and sorrow may rush tumultuous to our hearts, but, except a momentary change, like a light cloud flitting over the sky, leaving all as calm as before, our cheeks betray no outward sign of the inward struggle."

He wheeled up a couple of arm-chairs for Mrs. Hilton and the widow, and, pointing to the sofa for the others to be seated, drew up another chair for himself, and commenced:

"Several years ago, business called me within twenty miles of Stockton, and I could not resist the desire to see once more the old place. One morning found me there searching for my home; there was the land, but all else,

how changed! The wood that lay between our house and yours was gone, and only fields of grain stretched on before me; the little house in which I was born, and in which my father and mother died, not a trace of it was to be found. A large, awkward building, that seemed intended for any thing but beauty or convenience, stood on its site. With a heavy heart I went over to your place; here I was more fortunate. The farmer to whom you sold, had made some slight improvements, but the whole had, notwithstanding, the old home look; the little cemetery was in no way changed. Taking out my portfolio, I seated myself on the great moss-covered stone a little this side of the house, and roughly sketched it all, leaving out the improvements, and making it just as it was when last I visited it. On my return to the city, I placed the drawing in the hands of a skilful artist. When it was first sent home I had it hung in the library, but it brought back the past too painfully. I could not write, or think, or study, while that picture, with all its associations, was before me; one longing, overpowering desire to unveil the mystery that hung around the estrangement was all I knew or felt. Agnes's birthday was near at hand, and knowing how partial she was to rural scenes, I ordered it to be carried to her room. I told her when I had leisure I would tell her all—and now, Agnes, I have.”

She smiled at the abruptness of his conclusion, and replied:

“And more than ever shall I prize it, dear father.”

“Before we go back,” said Bernard, starting up, “we, too, must visit the old place.”

“You need not now, at least, not with the hope of finding any of the old appearance around it. The farmer who owned it died; it fell into other hands, and has been completely changed. The old barns have been removed, and

where the peach orchard was, now stand the new ones; the house, the garden, the fences, the wood, every thing around it is totally changed.”

“But the cemetery,” said Miles, “surely that has not been touched. You know when father sold the farm he reserved that, and had an iron fence built round it.”

“Yes, I know it; so the farmer himself told me. But here is a bit of news that will do the heart of your mother and father good. You remember, Bernard, how rejoiced they were when they heard dear Father John was going to build a church in Haughton, *only sixteen* miles from them.”

“Yes, Joe, right well.”

“Well, what will they now say to hear there is a church in Stockton?”

“In Stockton of Stockton Mills?”

“Yes, in Stockton of Stockton Mills, only one mile from the old place.”

“Wonderful! wonderful! who would have thought it?”

“Stockton has become a flourishing place. They have beside the two famous old flour-mills, several factories, an academy, a bank, several stores, a foundry; a dépôt for the railroad goes through it, and every thing about it speaks the world—in fact, it is a metropolis in miniature. Well, when all these public buildings were going up, and in the time of laying the track for the railroad, a number of Irish families moved in, and of course you know the rest. Can an Irishman live without his church? At first a poor little structure was put up; that, as they got means, was replaced by another, and now the finest building of public worship in the place is St. Joseph's Church.”

“Praises to God!” exclaimed Bernard, “but this will be joyful news to father and mother.”

"But the cemetery," said Miles, "you have not told us of that."

"Well, when they built their church they could get no place near it for a cemetery; hearing of our little cemetery of the woods, they came, looked at it, liked the location, bought four acres adjoining it of the new proprietor; our little cemetery merged into a large one, and there now repose the remains of many an active and pious Christian."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" exclaimed the brothers. A short pause followed, when Mr. Hilton said:

"So you see, as I told you, you would find none of its old looks around it. But I will tell you what we will do; we will have a copy of this taken to carry home to your parents. The original I would not part with for its weight in gold."

The brothers grasped his hands.

"Joe! our own Joe!"

The tea-bell rang, and Agnes and Martha led the way to the dining-room.

Mr. Hilton offered Alfred a lucrative situation in his counting-house, but Miles would not hear of it; he wanted him himself. Martha was to have a home with Bernard. Hughy, seeing he could not have Mark, begged to have Ellen; only Clara was left to the widow. At length the visit ended. Fanny and her children accompanied Miles and Bernard to their Western home.

About a year after the death of Edith, Agnes and Walter were married. It was a beautiful morning, the clouds seemed rolled back, that a fair sky might smile down upon them; the cold winter was past, and the balmy air of spring was over the earth.

Except the two families, Jane Graham, and Father Williams, no one was present. As Agnes stood before the

altar, and pronounced the vows which made her the wife of Walter Starr, every particle of color left her face, and she became white as the snowy veil on her head. She felt how weak she was, of herself, to render another happy. Since the morning she first resolved to rise above her besetting sin, how many times had she fallen; how many times had the scornful glance returned to her eye, and the cold, haughty words escaped her lips! How had she wept and prayed, and, alas, after two or three trials, again fallen! Could she depend on herself? No; of herself, she was weak, wretchedly weak. But, as Father Joseph had often told her, God was strong, and all powerful to sustain her; she must throw her burden on him, he would support her, and carry her safely through every trial; the sin of years she could not expect to conquer at the first struggle, but God in the end would conquer for her. As the bridal ring encircled her finger, and hand in hand she knelt with Walter, to receive the nuptial benediction, she placed her weakness before the Lord, and besought him to be her strength and support, when temptation and trial gathered around her. Assured and comforted, she arose, and, although still very pale, with a calm, subdued bearing, received the congratulations of her friends. Warmly, Father Williams grasped her and Walter's hands, and wished them all happiness. To Walter, Father Williams was inexpressibly dear. He had known him from earliest childhood. Being the eldest of the children, he remembered well the morning he poured over his own, and his parents' heads, the saving waters of baptism, and, he, too, had been chosen to receive into the Church grandfather and grandmother. Dear, very dear to the Graham and Starr families, was the kind, venerable Father Williams.

Immediately after the ceremony, Walter and Agnes, ac-

accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Hilton and little Mark, started for the West, on a visit to the Connor family. On their return, Walter settled in New York, and, as had been anticipated, from his talents and energy, soon rose to the highest distinction in his profession. The year following, Mr. Hilton retired from business, and, so as to be near his daughter, he removed to New York.

Fourteen years have passed, and again we glance at the characters of our story. Alfred Clement, choosing the profession of his uncle, became a physician; Martha and Ellen married well. Old Mr. and Mrs. Connor, and Fanny, or the widow Clement, were called home, the second year after Mr. Hilton's visit. Three years after their baptism, grandfather and grandmother were also called home, and Becky Starr, having piously closed their eyes, felt no longer a tie bound her to the world. Resigning wealth and station, she became a Sister of Charity, and is known in religion, as Sister Mary Joseph. Jane Graham married a pious Catholic, and settled near her parents. Of her brothers, one became a farmer, and remained on the homestead, the other entered his cousin's law-office, and was just admitted to the bar, and settled in New York, as Walter was appointed Minister to Naples. Agnes accompanied her husband to Europe, and on her return, found another tie linking her to the Connor family. Henry Graham, her cousin by marriage, was married to Clara Clement. From her mother's death, she had found a home in Mr. Hilton's family, and there Henry became acquainted with her. But little Mark—you are not forgetting him? certainly not. Mark, so pious, so gifted, so full of love to God and man, rejoiced that he had been chosen to serve at the Tabernacle, to extend that faith, which, eighteen

centuries ago, Christ founded, and his apostles preached. On his twenty-third birthday, he was ordained. Listening to his eloquent and affecting discourses, many a wavering one has been confirmed in the Faith, many a sinner called back from his evil ways. And, true to Martha's prophecy, Agnes rejoiced, and was proud, that the gifted and indefatigable young Father Hilton was her adopted brother.

THE END.