

"And this is to be our home."

REPRODUCED FROM THE COPY IN THE
HENRY E. HUNTINGTON LIBRARY

FOR REFERENCE ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION

HOME SCENES;

A Family Story.

BY AMANDA WESTON.

SYRACUSE:
PUBLISHED BY L. C. MATLACK,
60 S. Salina-Street.
1853.

Entered according to Act of Congress by
LUCIUS C. MATLACK,
In the clerk's office of the Northern District of New-York.

JOHN J. REED, PRINTER.
16 Spruce street.

PREFACE.

A simple, truthful story is now opened to the reader. The sacred circle of the family, is herein described by a gentle hand; not as it always is, but as it might become, if the possession and exercise of the christian graces were made a chief pursuit, the great study of the fathers and mothers of our land.

Parents and children will be helped to the better enjoyment of the life that now encircles them, and perhaps some may be prompted to correct various domestic errors by the modest suggestions of the story.

We will not presume to forestall an opinion, nor detain the reader by a prosy preface, but at once allow you to pass on and enjoy, as here you may, a cheerful, truthful view of scenes at home.

PUBLISHER.

CONTENTS.

THE COTTAGE HOME,	-	-	-	-	9
THE FAMILY CIRCLE,	-	-	-	-	14
THE GUIDING INFLUENCE,	-	-	-	-	23
PERSEVERANCE—SELF-CONTROL,	-	-	-	-	37
CHRISTIAN CHARITY,	-	-	-	-	47
AUNT SUSY,	-	-	-	-	59
COURTESY—SINCERITY,	-	-	-	-	74
SCANDAL,	-	-	-	-	84
THE OUTCAST,	-	-	-	-	97
PLANS AND PURPOSES,	-	-	-	-	108
A LOVED ONE CALLED HOME,	-	-	-	-	114
ADVERSITY,	-	-	-	-	122
WILLING HEARTS AND ACTIVE HANDS,	-	-	-	-	131
LETTERS,	-	-	-	-	141

Illustrations.

FRONTISPIECE,	-	-	-	-	6
A MERRY GROUP,	-	-	-	-	14
I'M COMING, BROTHER CHARLEY,	-	-	-	-	27
WHAT ARE YOU THINKING OF ?	-	-	-	-	49
AUNT SUSY'S COMING,	-	-	-	-	62
THE SITTING ROOM,	-	-	-	-	87
THE OUTCAST,	-	-	-	-	102
OUR LITTLE AMY IN HEAVEN,	-	-	-	-	121

CHAPTER I.

THE COTTAGE HOME.

"AND this is to be our home!" said Charles Melrose to his young wife, as they stood, one pleasant summer evening, at the open door of their dwelling, a low, lonely cottage, sheltered among green New England hills, and almost hidden by vine leaves and spreading branches. "This is to be our home, Mary, shall we not make it a happy one?" The wife did not speak; but she laid her hand upon her husband's arm, and looked up into his face with eyes beaming with hope and love. "You are right, Mary," said the husband, replying to her look: "It is a happy one now. We will try to keep it so."

There is a great deal of meaning in that little word happy. Many a son and daughter of wealth,—many a heartless votary of fashion and folly, nurtured in the lap of luxury, surrounded by the wonders of nature and art, would smile at the thought of finding happiness in a little, humble home among the

hills. Yet it often hides there; and it would do so oftener still, if the quiet inmates of such secluded spots did but know how to welcome and how to retain it. Charles Melrose had toiled for long years to purchase the little domain which he now called home; and the very fact that it was gained by patient industry would have made it beautiful and valuable to him. But this was not all. It had been the home of his parents—parents who went to their rest long years ago, leaving their orphan boy, their only one, to the care of strangers—no—to the care of God. The little homestead was sold, when they died, to meet the demands of creditors; and their boy was thrown, friendless and alone, upon the world. A few years of dependence and neglect—a few more of ill-requited toil—and the boy stood upon the threshold of life, ready to enter upon the duties, and assume the responsibilities of manhood. It was well for him that he was old enough, when his parents died, to treasure up their counsels in his heart. The remembered glance of his father's eye—the gentle pleading of his mother's voice, had strengthened him for many a conflict, and restrained him from many a sin. The morning and evening prayer at the family altar, the sweet "good night," the ready participation in all his childish joys and griefs,—these were never forgotten. And when the thought of a new home, a home of

his own, began to mingle with the dreams of early manhood, his heart went back to the green, quiet valley, and vine-wreathed cottage, with bee-hum and bird-music and sunlight and flowers, and dark trees and pleasant meadows all around it; and the new home seemed to him but a transcript of the old.

He visited that old home once, during a pleasant summer ramble. The house was vacant, and he readily obtained permission to enter it. The sunlight, stealing through the vine-curtained window, beamed brightly upon the floor, where his mother would sit, with her needle, in the long summer afternoons, while he played before the door, or leaned, with his book, at her side. He remembered where his father's arm-chair stood, in the Winter evenings, beside the fire. He glanced at the corner where the large Family Bible used to lie upon the stand. He opened the door of the little bed-room, where he had slept the peaceful sleep of childhood. He looked at the vines, trailing, neglected, on the ground. He saw, with a moistened eye, a few of the flowers his mother had loved, blooming among the weeds. He looked round at the green hills, and up to the blue sky. "Home! home! and why not *my* home?" he said, thoughtfully. He left the cottage and crossed the hills and fields, directing his course towards a white spire, rising, in the distance, against the dark firs. A few years make great changes. The

old village church was gone, and a new structure occupied its place. The fence around the burial ground was new; and there were many new monuments within the enclosure. With strangely mingled emotions he sought a well-remembered corner of the churchyard. Those two grass-grown graves! How many, many memories came thronging into his mind, as he stood beside them. Tears—the tears of strong, stern manhood fell upon the turf ere he turned away, murmuring tremulously the words, “Father! Mother!”

There were hints among the good people of the little town of Woodbury, that the cottage among the hills was about to have a tenant; but no one knew, as yet, who the tenant was to be. Farmer Norton, into whose hands the place had fallen, said that the price was agreed upon and the deed was ready, waiting only the payment of the money, the insertion of the name of the purchaser, and the signature of himself and wife. On such a day the purchaser was to be there; and on such a day he came. The money was paid, the deed signed and witnessed, and the little homestead of the father passed into the hands of the son. Then the mystery was explained, and the wonder, that a young gentleman should wish to buy such a little, out of the way place as that, ceased at once. Farmer Norton shook the stranger’s hand most cordially, and welcomed him back to

his boyhood’s home; and friends and neighbors, all round rejoiced that the son of a former friend was to take his father’s place among them. The few necessary repairs were completed: a few improvements, which, without taking away the home air of the cottage, would add to its convenience, were made; and the first month of summer found the owners in possession of their new home. Why might it not be a happy one? It might be, surely; for a bright eye and a bounding step ever met the husband on his return from his daily toil, with a welcome which made him forget his weariness. It might be, surely; for the well trained vines hung in graceful festoons from the trellis; and the bees hummed merrily from morning till night, among the woodbine and honey-suckle that mantled the little portico. It might be, surely; for the butterflies and humming birds, danced among the violets and roses; and the robin sang sweetly from the crooked bough of the old apple tree. It might be, surely; for sunlight and verdure were all around it; and loving and grateful hearts throbbed beneath its gray, moss-grown roof. The arm-chair stood beside the hearth—the Family Bible lay upon the stand in the corner—the voice of prayer ascended, at morning and evening, from the family altar—and happiness, pure as ever dwells upon earth, might be found in that cottage home.

CHAPTER II.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

YEARS, long years—how swiftly they fly! And how many changes, and cares, and sorrows they scatter in their flight. Twelve times the spring violets had opened their blue eyes on the green bank before the cottage door, and the robins had warbled their song from the old apple trees;—twelve times the summer roses had sent forth their fragrance beneath the latticed window;—twelve times the golden fruit had clustered on the orchard boughs; and twelve times the Winter snowflakes had descended, with their spirit-like tread, to the still earth, since Charles Melrose and his bride first entered their peaceful home. Their faces were graver now; for they had more cares. Their hearts were larger and warmer; for they had more to love. Half a dozen rosy little ones had gathered around them; and the names of father and mother—those sweet household words—always bring deep thoughts as well as joyous ones.



"Mary had just returned from school."

It was a bright, sunny afternoon in early spring,—such a one as sometimes comes in the changing month of April—half making us believe, in spite of our sober senses, that Winter is gone at last, not to return. The children, a merry group, had gathered in the sunshine before the door. There stood Charley, a manly little fellow of ten years, with his ball in his hand. Mary, the next in age, had just returned from school; and there was a pleasant smile on her young face, as she held up to the gaze of the other children the "Reward of Merit" received, that night, from her teacher. Ellen, a little one of six summers, clapped her dimple hands and shouted applause; and Arthur, a chubby rogue of three, joined, with hearty good will, in the shout. The children's glee brought their mother, with an infant in her arms, to the window. Her face lighted up, as she looked at the little party; but a moment after, a deep shade passed over her brow, and she turned away, with a sigh upon her lip, and a tear in her eye. What was there, in that joyous group, to bring sorrow to the mother's heart? Her glance had fallen upon her little Amy, who was standing apart from the rest, with a quiet smile on her pale, sweet lip, and a subdued expression of suffering blending with her smile. But for that sad, dreamy expression which sometimes stole over Amy's face, a stranger would have cal-

led her the fairest bud in the household wreath. Her sweet temper seemed to shed sunlight all around her, and her clear voice made rich heart-music from morning till night. And yet her parents never looked upon her without a sigh, never caressed her without a repressed thrill of agony. Poor little Amy was blind. Her dark beautiful eyes were clear and cloudless; but she lifted them to the bright summer sun, and saw no light. She mingled, at times, with a look of thoughtful gladness, in the sports of the other children; and then, again, she would steal away from them, and sit silently in her little chair beside her mother, with her head resting lovingly upon her knee. And then Mrs. Melrose knew that Amy was ill, though she never complained; and not unfrequently, a tear would fall upon the soft brown hair of the child, who wondered much what could so grieve her mother.

There were some little peculiarities about the other children. Charles united to a hasty and violent temper, a generous affectionate heart. Mary was gentle and forbearing, and timid almost to a fault. Ellen seemed a very tolerable example of perpetual motion; and Arthur's ruling passion was curiosity. As for Georgie, the baby, he was unanimously acknowledged (by every member of the family,) to be the fattest, the prettiest, and the best baby that ever was in the world. Had

not our friends reason to rejoice in the possession of such a treasure?

Rich—the meaning of the word depends upon the mind that defines it. The world would have called Charles Melrose poor, and pitied him for his poverty. He called himself rich, and felt his heart glow in the consciousness of his wealth. He went forth, at morning to his toil, with a prayer for a blessing upon his lips; and he returned again, at evening, with a silent thanksgiving for the blessings that had been accorded him through the day. To labor for those whom we love is not a burden, but a pleasure. Charles Melrose felt this; and his heart was cheered and his hands were strengthened, many a time, during the sultry hours of his harvest toil, by the pleasant picture of his sheltered home, that rose, with almost the vividness of reality, before him. Labor for those whom we love is not a burden, but a pleasure. So felt that gentle mother, as she fed, and clothed, and lulled to sleep her little ones. And so, with hopeful hearts and busy hands they toiled on, day after day, and year after year, one, not in name only, but in purpose and in hope. Mr. and Mrs. Melrose, though not highly educated, were intelligent; and they were anxious that their children should improve the advantages which they themselves had never enjoyed. Economy was indispensable in

their little household. Their clothing was plain, and their table though abundantly supplied with healthful food, offered little to tempt the appetite of the luxurious. But where mental or moral improvement was in view, money went freely. The children were sent to school regularly and punctually; and their teachers had no reason to complain of deficient books or neglected lessons. Their places in the village church and the sabbath school were seldom vacant; and their home training was such as to deepen and confirm any good impression received there. Prompt and cheerful obedience to parental authority, love to each other, and strict truthfulness, were required, and usually rendered by all. An occasional departure from the narrow path of duty was of course, to be expected and provided for; but such departures were rare; and the remorse attendant upon them was, in most instances, an all-sufficient punishment. A little incident, which occurred a few days after our first view of the family circle, will serve to illustrate the effect of correct moral training upon the childish mind. Charley had been pleading with his mother, for some days, for permission to take off his shoes and stockings, and go, barefooted, to school. His mother met his repeated requests with repeated refusals. She knew that the ground was still damp and

cold; and she knew, too, that Charley was subject to a cough and hoarseness, whenever he took a slight cold; and this knowledge made the fact that other boys were splashing in the mud-puddles, and running through the fields, with their feet uncumbered by superfluous coverings, a fact of little weight with her.

One night, Charley came home from school hoarse, and with a cough. Mrs. Melrose was surprised, for the day had been a pleasant one; but, as she stood beside his bed, at night, a thought flashed through her mind; and she said, half-doubtingly, "My son, have you had your shoes and stockings off to day?" Charley hesitated for a moment, and then replied in the affirmative. "I know it was wrong mother," he said; but the other boys all had theirs off; and it was so pleasant, I thought I should not take cold. I only had them off a little while at noon. I will never do so again, mother, never." Pleased with the boy's frank confession of his fault, and moved by his sufferings, the mother reproved him gently, not dreaming of the repetition of the offence. Charley was at school the next day, and was soon as well as usual. But, not more than a week after, he came home again, at night, with the cough and the hoarseness as before. "You have not had your shoes and stockings off again,

Charley, have you?" said his mother. "No, mother," said Charley, quietly; and his mother never once thought of doubting his word. Why should she? He had never deceived her. Charley went up stairs early that night. The other children soon followed; Mr. Melrose went out, to call on a neighbor; and the mother sat alone, with her sewing, beside the cradle. She looked up from her work as the clock struck nine; and, as the last vibration ceased, she heard a light, stealing step upon the stairs. She listened. Down it came, slowly and cautiously, step by step; and then she heard a rustling in the passage, and saw the latch of her door lifted, slowly and noiselessly. What could it mean? The door opened a little way; and some one looked in. Then it opened wider, and Charley, in his night-dress, crept timidly to his mother's side. "Why, Charley, what is the matter? Why did you come down stairs?" she exclaimed in surprise. A stifled sob was the only answer. "Are you sick?" she inquired, anxiously, as she laid her hand upon his hot forehead. "No mother;" and again Charley stifled a rising sob. "What is the matter, my son?" said Mrs. Melrose in alarm. "Have you been asleep?" "No mother;" and this time Charley spoke more firmly, as if making a resolute effort to conquer his emotion. "No mother, I could not sleep.

Mother, I told you a lie. I *did* have off my shoes and stockings to-day, and I told you I did not." Poor Charley! The confession once made, his self-restraint was at an end; and, with his face hidden in his mother's lap, he sobbed as if his heart was breaking. Mrs. Melrose laid her hand gently upon that young head; and tears, warm tears, fell upon the boy's bright curls. For some minutes neither spoke. "Mother," said Charley, at last, raising his head suddenly, and looking up, earnestly, into her face; "Mother, will you ever believe me again?" His mother answered with a kiss. She could not yet command her voice sufficiently to speak. Charley saw the tears upon her cheeks, and sobbed again, almost as bitterly as before. "There, there, my boy;" said his mother, soothingly, at last—"that will do. I shall not be afraid to trust you again; for I do not think you will ever forget this. I think you have suffered enough to make you more careful in future." Charley's sobs ceased; but he did not raise his head from his mother's lap. Tenderly and seriously that mother talked to her boy; and when her counsels were ended, she gently raised his head from its resting-place, and kneeling, with her hand resting lightly upon his forehead, she sought, from above, pardon and peace for the erring one. At the close of that simple prayer, Charley threw his arms around his mother's neck, and pressed his

lips to her moistened cheek. Then he stole away to his pillow; and when his mother, ten minutes after, softly opened the door of his little chamber, he was slumbering calmly and deeply, with a smile on his lips, and a bright tear glistening on his closed eyelids. Poor fellow! It was his first falsehood—and his last.

CHAPTER III.

THE GUIDING INFLUENCE.

THERE is a guiding influence in every family. Unseen, unthought of it may be; yet it is *felt*; and its effects are obvious even to the eyes of strangers. Some families are ruled by fear. The children creep timidly about, anticipating reproof at every motion, and dreading correction for every mistake. Unnaturally restrained at home, they long for freedom, and rejoice when a temporary absence from parental care gives scope to all the extravagance of long-repressed merriment and mischief. It is well if no bitter feelings mingle with their mirth—if hatred does not spring up in their hearts instead of love—if deception does not become their refuge from injustice and oppression. In some families, avarice is the ruling motive. The parents do not call it by such a name—do not suspect that it is worthy of such an appellation; and yet, what else is it? You see the little ones hoarding up pence and

half-dimes—looking forward eagerly to the time when they can place their first five dollars at interest, and calculating how much they can add to it, year by year—denying themselves toys—relinquishing long-anticipated pleasures—doing anything, or refraining from anything, for money. Who can wonder, if the little economist of four years, become a miser at four score? Children should be taught economy; but I very much doubt the expediency of encouraging a child to hoard up money. There is no danger of any want of selfishness in the human heart, after all is done that can be done to exterminate it. Some parents govern by the love of praise. Their children are taught to do right, in order to appear well, and gain the good opinion of others. Is it very strange that, thus taught, they should, in after years, sacrifice principle to acquire popularity?

No such motives as these found a place in the family government of Mr. and Mrs. Melrose. Love was the guiding influence in their little circle, and its power was all-sufficient. When the husband and wife bent over the cradle of their first-born; they resolved that no harsh or impatient words should ever fall from their lips upon the ear of their little one. That resolution was never broken. Its observance was comparatively easy for Mrs. Melrose. She was naturally of a mild and equable disposition; and a mother's loving

heart is ever ready to find excuse or palliation for the errors of her children. But Mr. Melrose was naturally hasty; and his wife smiled, more than once, as he turned silently away, with a compressed lip and frowning brow, leaving her to administer reproof or prescribe punishment, as the case might demand; and returning, five minutes after, to approve of her administration of justice, and laugh with her, at his own power of self-control. Gradually, however, that power was attained, and by the time that his assistance in the management of the family was requisite, he was prepared to afford prompt and efficient aid. Discipline was not often necessary. A gentle word of caution or of reproof was usually enough. When punishment was deemed advisable, it was of such a character, and administered in such a manner, as to leave a deep and permanent impression upon the mind of the offender.

Charley's hasty temper was a cause of considerable anxiety to his parents. They had reasoned with him in vain. He was ready to acknowledge it was wrong to indulge in anger; he sincerely regretted the effects of his outbursts of passion; and always endeavored to atone, as far as possible, for any injustice or unkindness into which he had been betrayed. Mary's favorite doll, a birthday present from her father, was broken one day, in a fit of anger. The poor child gathered

up the fragments from the floor, and sat down to cry over them in one corner of her little bed-room. Before night, Charley's store of money was exhausted in the purchase of another doll, larger and handsomer than the one he had demolished ; and his arms were around Mary's neck, and his tears dropped upon her bosom, as he placed the peace-offering in her hands, and begged her to forgive him. Mary told her mother afterwards that she always loved Charley best after he had been doing wrong.

Mr. and Mrs. Melrose, looking thoughtfully forward, feared for their boy. It seemed to them that his irritability increased, instead of diminishing, as he grew older. They were satisfied that admonition was not enough ; and they resolved that the next offence should be followed by a suitable penalty. The offence soon came. The children were at play in the orchard, one Saturday morning, and Amy, who had been allowed to accompany them by Charley's special request, was sitting on a green bank in the shade, laughing at their merry shouts as they scampered around the enclosure, and amusing herself by fingering over the toys with which they had filled her lap. Suddenly, Charley took a fancy that a game of ball would be better than the race which they were running, and he called to Amy to throw him his ball. Amy very quietly commenced

taking the toys, one by one, from her lap. The ball was beneath all the rest. It was almost school-time, and Charley was in a hurry. "Make haste Amy!" he called, impatiently, "throw me the ball!" Amy had taken the last toy from her lap, and was holding the ball in her hand, ready for a throw, when, all at once, the thought of going to carry it entered her little head ; and she rose from her seat, and crept slowly towards the voice that was now calling loudly and angrily. "Throw it, Amy! *Throw it!*" "I'm coming to bring it to you, brother Charley," said the little one, pleasantly ; as Charley, losing all patience, darted forward to meet her, exclaiming, "The little blind snail ! she will not be here in an hour ! Why didn't you throw it, as I told you to ?" he added, angrily, as he snatched the ball rudely from her hand. Amy was near one of the old apple-trees, with the hand containing the ball stretched out, and one foot lifted for a step forward, when Charley met her. The shock of meeting her brother, and the sudden snatching of the ball from her hand, caused her to lose her balance. She fell, striking her head, in the fall, against the rough bark of the old apple-tree. The moment Charley saw her fall, his better nature triumphed. He sprang to raise her ; and when Mrs. Melrose, alarmed by Amy's cries, hastened to the spot, she found the repentant

boy holding his little sister in his arms, and striving to repress his own tears and wipe away hers, while he showered upon her every endearing epithet. "There! there! Amy! darling precious little sister!" he said, in a low, soothing tone; and then, turning suddenly, as his mother's voice struck his ear, he exclaimed, "Oh! mother! mother!" Mrs. Melrose comprehended the scene at once. Without a single word after her first mild, sorrowful, "My son!" she took the child, and led the way to the house. The application of cold water soon relieved the pain; and Amy, with a bandage around her forehead, and a large settled spot on her pale cheek, was laid tenderly on her little couch, asking only that her mother might sit beside her, and sing her to sleep.

"Mary!" said Mrs. Melrose in a low voice, after the child's eyes were closed in slumber, "where is Charley?"

"In the orchard, mother," was the reply. "He has not been in since Amy fell."

"Tell him to come to me," said the mother calmly; and Charley came, with his eyes swollen with weeping; "It is school-time my son;" was the remark addressed to the little culprit; and the kindness of the sad voice made his heart throb with new anguish. "It is school-time, my son; go and wash your face and hands, and brush your hair. Mary is all ready. She will take your books with



"I'm coming to bring it, brother Charley."

hers ; and you can easily overtake her by running a little way. There will be no dinner to carry to-day, you know." And then, as Amy moved uneasily upon her pillow, the sweet sound of a simple song lulled the child to her rest again.

That was a sad forenoon for Charles. He walked slowly and sadly to school, thinking of Amy's bruised cheek and bleeding forehead all the way. His mother's mournful eyes looked from the pages of every book he opened ; and Amy's sob rose above the busy hum of the school-room. He anticipated a reproof from his father on his return home, and the loss of his half-holiday ; and his conscience told him that he deserved both reproof and punishment. But his father, who sat tenderly holding Amy in his arms, and bathing her forehead with water, when Charley entered the house, said not a word upon the subject, though it was evident, from his shadowed face, that he knew the whole. No one spoke to Charley ; no one looked at him. His mother's face was pale, and his father's brow was stern. The noon-tide repast was a silent one. When it was over, Charley wandered out around the house, and finally sat down, alone, at the foot of the tree against which Amy had fallen. He had wept bitterly there, in the morning ; but he did not weep now. Proud, angry thoughts were in his heart. Was he so very much to

blame, after all? He had told Amy to throw the ball. Why did she not throw it instead of creeping along so very deliberately to bring it? He knew he had spoken harshly to her; but he was in a hurry. He did not mean anything. He did not mean to throw her down, when he snatched the ball from her hand. He was sure he was very sorry for it afterwards. But they would not give him a chance to tell them so. They would not speak to him nor even look at him. He did not think Amy was hurt much. She always cried for nothing. He never meant to have her near him again, when he was at play. But, above all these bitter thoughts were a still, small voice, a voice that *would* be heard, accusing Charley of cruelty and sin. He tried to silence it in vain; and when Mary called from the open door, "Charley, mother wants you;" he was almost glad to exchange the accusations of his own conscience for the low sad tones of his mother's voice. Yet he dreaded to hear her speak; and he crept slowly along to her pleasant little room, with the feeling of a criminal, about to receive the sentence of condemnation for his crimes.

His mother was sitting in her rocking chair, near the window. She looked up as he paused at the door. "Come in my son;" she said. Her voice was perfectly calm, though a little lower than usual. Charley

approached, and stood beside her chair. She motioned to him to sit down on the cricket at her feet; and he obeyed, without speaking, without even looking up once into her face. She took both his hands gently in one of hers; and placed the other on his head. "Now, my son," she said, "tell me all about Amy's fall this morning." "Has not Mary told you?" said Charley, looking up in surprise. "No, Charley;" was the reply; "Mary commenced telling me at the time; but I stopped her. I wished to hear the story first from you." Charley was silent. "I am waiting for you, my son;" said Mrs. Melrose calmly. Charley commenced.

"We had been leading Amy round a while mother; but we thought we wanted to have a run round the orchard, and Amy could not run with us, you know. So we led her to the green bank, and gave her all our play things to persuade her to sit still while we had our race."

"That was all right, my son;" said Mrs. Melrose, as Charley paused in his narrative. "How long did you run?"

"We ran round the orchard three or four times, till we were tired; and then I said we would have a game of ball. Amy had the ball in her lap, and I called to her to throw it to me. I was in a hurry, for it was almost school-time; but it seemed as if she never would find it. She must take all of the things

out of her lap, one by one, and the ball was the very last. I kept calling to her, and she lifted her hand to throw it; but then, all of a sudden, she said, 'I am coming to bring it to you, brother Charley;' and came creeping along towards me. I ran to meet her and caught the ball out of her hand; and she fell, and struck her head against the tree. If she had only thrown the ball at first, as I told her, she would not have been hurt. I am very sorry I did hurt her, mother; I did not mean to do it; but I do not think all the blame ought to rest upon me."

"Charley," said Mrs. Melrose, in the same low, calm tone; "last week I saw a little one just the age of your little sister Amy, in her coffin. How would you feel if Amy were to die to night?"

Charley hesitated a moment, and then answered, bursting into tears, "As if I had killed her. But Amy will not die, mother?"

"I hope not my son, though she has been sick all day in consequence of her fall this morning. Now, Charley, what was the first thing wrong about this?"

Charley thought a while before replying. "Was it my running to meet Amy, mother? If I had waited for her to come to me, she would not have fallen."

"That is true," said Mrs. Melrose, "but was there nothing wrong before that?"

Charley hesitated. He had not told his mother how harshly he spoke to Amy, or what he called her. But perhaps Mary had told her. His mother noticed the expression of his face. "You are thinking of something that you have not told me," she remarked; "what is it?"

"I did not speak pleasantly to Amy," said Charley, looking down—"—and"

"And what, my son?"

"I called her a blind snail," whispered Charley, with his eyes fixed upon the floor. If he had looked up, he would have seen tears in his mother's eyes; but she controlled her voice, as she said, "Was there nothing wrong before that, Charley?"

"Oh! now I know what you mean, mother," exclaimed the boy; "it was wrong to feel angry. That was the first wrong thing, was it not, mother?"

"Yes, my son. If, when you saw that Amy could not find the ball immediately, you had gone to her, and found it for her; if you had said, pleasantly, 'Please throw it, Amy;' instead of commanding angrily; if you had walked gently to meet her, or waited till she could reach you, and taken the ball from her hand with a 'Thank you, sis;' only think how much better it would have been."

"I know it, mother," answered Charley; "but I never can think till afterwards."

"If you had just paused a moment," con-

tinued his mother, "and said to yourself, when you saw Amy coming with the ball: 'Amy has been sitting still all the time that we have been running. She must be tired of staying there, alone;' you would not have suffered your angry feelings to rise so high; and the little blind sister that God has given you to love so tenderly, would not have said to me as she did this afternoon,—'Brother Charley didn't mean to hurt me, mother; but I don't want to go in the orchard with him again. I would rather stay here, with you; for you never speak cross to me; and you love me just as well as if I could see, don't you, mother?'"

Mrs. Melrose paused; and Charley felt her warm tears falling upon his hands. He had not often seen his mother weep. "I am sure mother," he said, "I do love Amy dearly; and I will try never to be vexed with her again. Will you forgive me this once, dear mother?" and Charley's eyes were running over with tears, as he looked up into his mother's face.

"I have forgiven you a great many times, Charley; but you have not succeeded in govern your temper. This time I think I must punish you." Charley said nothing. He knew that remonstrance would be useless. He wondered what the punishment would be. He hoped something to make him remember to do right, next time; but he did not mean

to care much about it, if he could help it. Mrs. Melrose went on. "I think I shall not trust Amy with you any more, till you have given me some proof of self-control. It will be some days before the bruise will be gone from her cheek, and the cut upon her forehead healed. I hope that, by the time she has quite recovered from the effects of her fall, you will have improved so much, that I shall feel safe to leave her in your care again."

Charley had never dreamed of such a punishment. He had taken a great deal of care of Amy, not only because she was blind, and needed care; but because he loved her, and loved to make her happy. He was older and stronger than the other children; and he could lift her over slight obstructions, and sometimes carry her a little way, when she was tired. He had delighted in doing this, and in hearing her say, when the rest wanted to lead her. "I'll go with brother Charley." Now, he was not to lead her any more for a long time; and then came the thought of what his mother had said about the little child in its coffin, and the fear that Amy might die,—that he never should play with her, and teach her to love him, any more. Poor Charley was very miserable. He sat thinking, silently, till his mother said, "you may go now my son." Then he crept very quietly down stairs. The door that led from

the passage to the sitting-room was open; and he saw Amy, sitting in the great rocking-chair, with her head leaning back against a pillow. She looked very pale; but she was smiling languidly at something Mary was saying to her. Charley did not want her to hear his step; so he stole along very softly, and passed out into the orchard again. He had no heart to play, that afternoon. He sat thinking, under the old tree, till Mary came to call him to supper. The sun was low, then; and before it was quite dark, he went, without saying good night to any one, to his chamber.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSEVERANCE—SELF-CONTROL.

"I DECLARE, it's no use to try. I can't do it," exclaimed little Mary Melrose, as she laid down her slate, and closed her arithmetic.

"What is it, Mary?" inquired her Father. "Oh, an old, hateful example in Long Division; the last and the worst one under that rule. I've done every one in to-morrow's lesson but that; and I've been trying on that ever since I came home from school, but it will not come right. It's no use; I do not mean to try any more."

Mr. Melrose smiled. "Come here, Mary, and take a seat on my knee. I want to talk with you a little," he said. Mary very readily obeyed. A seat on father's knee was a sure sign of something pleasant. Mr. Melrose passed his hand gently over her head, and said quietly, "I will tell you a story, Mary." Mary's face brightened. The other children gathered around, to listen. Mrs.

Melrose looked up from her work, and smiled at their eager faces ; and Mr. Melrose smiled too, as he commenced his story.

"Once upon a time——"

"Is it a true story, father?" interrupted Ellen.

"You may tell me what you think about that, when it is finished," replied her father, "but please not to interrupt me again. Once upon a time," he commenced anew, "a poor man undertook to build a house. He had been working and saving money for it, a long time. At last he thought he had enough to pay for building. So he bought a piece of land, and hired a team to draw the timber, and boards, and shingles, and stone that he would want about the house. Then he went to work to dig the cellar ; and stoned it up all around, nicely. It was hard work, and he was tired a great many times before it was done ; but he finished it, and went to work on the timber for the frame of the house. When the frame was all ready, the neighbors came to help him raise it. But he had made some mistake about it, and the timbers would not fit into their places. So they could not raise the frame. Then the man was discouraged, and said he would not try to build. So he never had any house."

"What a foolish man, father!" said Mary.

"I do not think the story is true, father," said Ellen, "for I do not believe any one would be so foolish."

"The man must have been a carpenter," said Charley, "or he could not have built his own house. I do not think he had learned his trade very well, though, or he would have done it better." Mr. and Mrs. Melrose looked at each other and smiled.

"Is it true, father?" inquired Ellen a second time.

"It is a fable," replied Mr. Melrose ; "and there is a second part to it, and then a moral."

"Tell us the second part, father, please!" exclaimed all the children at once.

Mr. Melrose smiled again, as he commenced. "Once upon a time, a little girl undertook to study arithmetic."

"Oh, father! father!" exclaimed Mary, placing her hand upon her father's lips, to silence him ; "I know what you are going to say, and I know the moral, too. Please to let me get down, father."

"Finish the story, first, and give us the moral ;" said her father, laughing.

"The story is finished," said Mary ; "and the moral is that I must try that puzzling example once more. Please let me go, now, father."

The other children laughed. Mary slid down from her father's knee, and took her book and slate out into the shade, in front of the house. Half an hour after, she returned, with an expression of triumph on her face,

and laid the book and slate upon the table, without saying a word. "So the house is built, is it, Mary?" said her father.

"Yes, father," replied Mary, laughing; "and it will never want building over again." In fact, from that time, whenever Mary felt discouraged about anything she was trying to do, she would say to herself, "Once upon a time a poor man undertook to build a house," and concluded to "try once more." The other children remembered the story and the moral; and, all things considered, Mr. Melrose might call his attempt at story-telling a very successful one.

But what about Charley? And little Amy, where is she? If you had looked into the pleasant home among the hills, as I did, one week after the unhappy Saturday whose misfortunes formed the subject of our last chapter, you would have seen Amy and Charley left, for a whole day, in sole possession of the cottage; and you would have been delighted by the tender brotherly care of the boy for the helpless little one, entrusted, for the first time since the scene in the orchard, to his protection. The settled spot was gone from Amy's cheek, and only a slight scar on her forehead remained to tell of the fall against the old apple-tree. Charley's whole heart was given up to her, that day; and he afterwards said that he never passed a happier half-day than the Saturday morning

spent in the care of Amy. There was a reason for Charley's happiness. He had been striving, through the entire week, to control his hasty temper; and he had succeeded, beyond, far beyond his hopes. Little trials had come; and his cheek had flushed, and his eye had flashed with anger; but he had thought of Amy, and triumphed. A single moment's pause was enough to enable him to control his irritation; and his mother's glance of approval, at the close of one of his silent struggles, was an ample reward for the effort.

But the greatest trial was at school. At home, all tried to encourage and aid him; but among his school-fellows were some, who, aware of his passionate disposition, took delight in teasing him,—hoping to provoke him to an out-burst of angry words, or a violent attempt at revenge. They had brought him into disgrace with his teacher and his parents more than once. Was it strange that his mother looked a little anxious, when he came home from school on Friday afternoon, later than usual, with his hat torn, his face bruised and bleeding, and his books covered with mud? "Where have you been, Charley?" she exclaimed.

"To school, mother," was the quiet reply; and Charley smiled, as he saw his mother's eye fixed upon him with an inquiring glance. His smile reassured her.

"You must have studied very hard," she said, pleasantly, "for you come home looking worn and weary. But seriously, my son, what have you been doing? How did you hurt your face, and tear your hat, and soil your books, in such a manner?"

"I did not do it," replied Charley; "but I am glad it is done. Let me tell you why, mother, before you blame me about it;" and Charley seated himself on the floor at his mother's side, and placed the dilapidated hat upon her lap, as he commenced his recital of the adventures of the afternoon. "You know, mother," he said, "Ned Williams and Tom Brown have been teasing me, every day, for a long time."

"Edward Williams and Thomas Brown, you mean, Charley;" suggested his mother.

Charley laughed. "I never shall remember that, mother. All the boys call them Ned and Tom. Why, I do not believe they would know their own names, if you were to call them Edward and Thomas."

Mrs. Melrose smiled. "Perhaps they might learn them, if you were to call them so for a while;" she remarked. "But what have Edward and Thomas to do with your torn hat, soiled books and bleeding face?"

"Why, mother, that is what I was going to tell you. To night, as we were coming out of school, Ned—Edward I mean—caught my hat off the nail, and ran out into the play-

ground with it. I followed him, with my books in my hand; but I could not overtake him. So I laid my books down on a post; for you see, mother, I wanted both hands to run with."

"Why!" said little Ellen, who was listening very attentively; "I always run with my feet!"

"Mother knows what I mean;" answered Charley; and he went on, without stopping to explain. "I soon overtook Edward, and he gave me the hat; but, as I was going away, he caught at it again. I kept hold of it. He pulled; and the hat tore. I had half a mind to be vexed; but, upon second thoughts, I concluded it would not pay. So I went back to where I had left my books. Thomas Brown had been there before me; and the books were lying in a mud-puddle at the bottom of the post. I *was* vexed then, mother, for my new arithmetic was among them; but I did not say anything, and the bad feeling went away again. I picked up the books, and was smoothing the leaves, and trying to wipe the mud off the covers, when one of the boys—(I thought it was Edward, but I was not sure,) threw a stone at me, and hit me on the face. If I had not happened to think of you, just that minute, mother, I surely should have been angry. But the thought came, just in the right time, and I was so glad! I started for home. Mr. Nelson was standing in the

school-house door, as I came by. He called to me, and asked me what was the matter. He said I looked as if I had been fighting. I laughed, and told him I had not. Then he wanted to know again what the matter was. I did not like to tell him, for you know, mother, we boys always think it's mean to tell the master any such thing; but he questioned me till I did not know what to say; so I stood still and said nothing. Then he smiled, and told me to come into the school-room. I went in. Edward and Thomas were there. They looked very sober. I could not think what it all meant, till Mr. Nelson told me. He had been looking out of the window, and had seen the whole. He said he thought Edward and Thomas deserved to be punished; but I begged him not to punish them, and he finally let them go." Charley paused, and looked up, with a questioning glance, into his mother's face. She smiled, and he went on. "Mr. Nelson talked with me, after they were gone. He wanted to know how I could bear such things so patiently. And I told him how passionate I had been, and how much it had troubled you and father; and how hard I was trying, now, to govern my temper, and not grieve you any more. And then he wanted to know what made me think of it so much, lately; and I told him about dear little Amy. The tears came in his eyes when I told him about her. And then he asked me about my father and



A.C. HOLCOMB.

"What are you thinking of this evening?"

mother ; and I told him that I had a good father, and the best mother in the world."

"Why, Charley!" exclaimed Mrs. Melrose in surprise, "what did you mean by saying so? Mr. Nelson must have thought you a very foolish boy."

"I said just what I thought mother;" said Charley, laying his head upon his mother's knee.

"But what *did* Mr. Nelson say?" inquired his mother.

"Oh, he smiled, and said if I had the best mother in the world, I ought to be the best boy ; and I told him I meant to be. We were under the old tree, by the lane, then ; and I bade him good evening, and ran home, to tell you all about it. Can you mend my hat for me, mother, so that it will do to wear again?"

"I presume so. I will try, certainly;" said Mrs. Melrose, quietly.

"And will the mud come off my books?" queried Charley, a little doubtfully.

"Let me see them;" said his mother. "I think it will rub off, now it is dry, leaving the covers nearly as smooth as before;" she remarked, after a moment's survey. "And I think you had better go and wash your face;" she added, smiling. "Then the damage will be nearly repaired—will it not?"

Charley laughed, and bounded away. He returned a few minutes after, with a sober face, and inquired, rather timidly ; "Mother,

do you think you can trust Amy with me again, now?"

"What do *you* think about it, my boy?" replied his mother, drawing him towards her, and affectionately kissing his bruised cheek. "Do you think you can be gentle, and patient, and loving with her always?"

"I think I can;" said Charley, after a moment's hesitation, "will you please let me try, mother?"

It would not be hard to say to whose heart the boy's trial and success imparted the most happiness. Charley could have told, himself, at once. Though his father's face had more sunshine in it than he had seen there the whole week before; though little Amy warbled like a bird in her childish gladness; though the other children gathered around him with new merriment; Charley knew that there was one whose lip had uttered no word of gladness or of praise, but whose heart was filled with joy and thankfulness for him. Mrs. Melrose did not often praise her children. They read her approval in her eye; and felt it in the approval of their own consciences. Her approval was precious to them; but she taught them to look higher for a motive of action. She taught them to do right, because it was the will of God, their Heavenly Father; and because it was their duty to love and obey him. After all, Charley was not *very* much mistaken, when he told his teacher that he had the best mother in the world.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

It was a pleasant autumnal evening; and Mr. and Mrs. Melrose were sitting on opposite sides of the little round table drawn up before the fire, both earnestly engaged, though in very different occupations. Mrs. Melrose was seated in her low rocking-chair, with one foot upon the rocker of the cradle, and a large basket, filled with a miscellaneous assortment of articles, at her side. There was a jacket "out at the elbows" belonging to Charley,—a pair of pants "out at the knees" that looked as if they might fit Arthur,—a dress with a rent in the skirt for Mary, and another, with half the seams ripped open for Ellen;—there was a little, well-worn apron that looked remarkably like Amy's, and a blanket that could not possibly belong to any one but Georgie. There were stockings of all sizes, from the thick blue woollen pair, too long for any feet but "father's," to the tiny red ones toed with white,

and with a hole in each toe, proof positive of the activity of the baby feet that wore them. On the table were rolls of patches, spools of cotton, and balls of yarn; a needle-book, a piece of wax, a pair of scissors; in short, all those et-ceteras which a good house-keeper calls into such frequent requisition, in repairing the ruins Time or childish activity and manly toil may have wrought. Most industriously Mrs. Melrose plied her needle, pausing only, from time to time, to cut and adjust a patch, or exchange a ball of yarn or a spool of cotton for another of a different color, or to glance, with a look of maternal love, at the children grouped together in a quiet game in the corner, or to lift her eyes to the shadowed face of her husband, who sat, with his elbow leaning on the table, and his head resting on his hand, absorbed in thought. He had been reading aloud in the early part of the evening, but the book was finished and laid aside; and, judging from the expression of his features, the contents of the volume had passed from his mind as its last words fell from his lips. His brow was thoughtful, almost sad; and the shadow upon it seemed to deepen, hour by hour. Mrs. Melrose said nothing; but in her heart she wondered what he could be thinking of so earnestly. Eight o'clock came; and with it came good-nights and kisses enough to awaken any common muser

from his dreaming. Mr. Melrose mechanically echoed the good-nights, and returned the kisses in so abstracted a manner, that Arthur ran up stairs laughing merrily, and shouting, "Father kissed me on my nose! Father kissed me right on the end of my nose!" "Hush! hush! Arthur! you'll wake up the baby;" whispered Mary, vainly trying to silence the noisy little urchin. But baby was happily too much accustomed to noise to wake for such a trifle. Mr. Melrose, partially recovering from his abstraction, smiled at the little fellow's merriment; and Mrs. Melrose, returning the smile, placed her work on the table, and followed the children up-stairs, leaving the cradle and its occupant in her husband's charge till her return. When she came down stairs again, she found him sitting in the same position in which she had left him, as if the one thought pervading his mind was too absorbing to admit of word or motion. Her first thought was to peep into the cradle, to see that the sleeper there was not awakening, and her next, to arouse her husband from his moody reverie. "My dear husband," she said, cheerfully "what are you thinking of, this evening?"

Mr. Melrose started. "Did you speak to me," he inquired, as if half-doubting the evidence of his senses. Mrs. Melrose smiled, and repeated her question. "Oh," he replied, arousing himself, with a very perceptible ef-

fort, from his musings, "I was thinking how hard it is to excuse Christian charity."

"And what made you think of that, to-night?" said his wife.

"A conversation that I had this afternoon with a professed infidel," returned Mr. Melrose,— "one who believes in nothing higher than a refined system of morality—and who, I am ashamed to say, lives a purer life than most of our church-members,—leaving professors of religion in general altogether out of the question."

"Who is he?" said Mrs. Melrose.

"You have often seen him;" was the reply. His name is Jarvis. He is an intelligent and kind-hearted man; but I do not think he will ever be a Christian."

"Why not?" inquired Mrs. Melrose.

"Because," replied her husband, "he looks at the dark side of religion; and founds his contempt for the faith, upon the inconsistency of those who profess to be guided by it. And I must say," added Mr. Melrose with something of bitterness in his tone; "he has ample materials for a broad foundation."

Mrs. Melrose sighed. Mr. Melrose went on. "I have argued with him many times, and have thought, in a few of our last conversations, that he seemed somewhat impressed by the truth; but this afternoon, at the close of the political meeting in the Town Hall, he came to me in triumph. An unfor-

fortunate incident had completely confirmed, in his mind, the correctness of a position which I had hoped he was beginning to doubt. You have heard of the unkind feeling between "Squire Ellwood and his brother-in-law, Deacon Wilson?"

Mrs. Melrose replied in the affirmative. "Well. They are both church-members, you know; though they belong to different churches. I think Deacon Wilson much the more honorable of the two; though 'Squire Ellwood is connected with us in church-fellowship. They were both at the Town Hall to-day; and, of course, they were on different sides, 'Squire Ellwood supporting the Whigs, and Deacon Wilson the diminutive Liberty party."

Mrs. Melrose smiled; she did not mingle much in politics; but the names and purposes of the different parties were familiar to her; and, in her opinion, 'Squire Ellwood stood, and had long been standing, on the wrong side. Mr. Melrose continued his narrative. "'Squire Ellwood spoke, and Deacon Wilson replied. Some portions of his reply bore rather heavily upon his antagonist, who rose to explain. When he resumed his seat, Deacon Wilson rose a second time. 'Squire Ellwood stepped up to him, and in an insulting manner, commanded him to sit down and hold his peace. Of course the Deacon had too much independence to obey;

and the disgrace of the insult fell back upon the irritated 'Squire. But the occurrence produced a most unfavorable effect upon the mind of Mr. Jarvis. He said to me, on our way home, "If that is the influence of Christianity, I have no wish to be a Christian." I could not wonder at it. I have been asking myself, this evening, "Is it possible that such men are Christians?"

Mr. Melrose paused, his eyes sparkling with excitement. Mrs. Melrose plied her needle, slowly and thoughtfully, in silence. In a few minutes Mr. Melrose resumed the conversation. "'Squire Ellwood is the richest member in our church, I know. He does a great deal of good; but it is all done in a showy way. He subscribes largely to benevolent objects;—his name is often mentioned as that of a public benefactor; but in private business,—in the little, every-day affairs that make up life—he is mean,—contemptible. His irritable temper is a source of trial to every one whom he employs. There is nothing lovely or amiable about him. Can such a man be a Christian?"

"Allow me to say," replied Mrs. Melrose, after a quiet pause of perhaps a minute; "allow me to say that I think your portrait a little too deeply shaded to be correct. I think, if you will let me take the pencil, I can soften some of the tints, and throw a different light upon the whole."

"Try;" said Mr. Melrose.

"To begin, then, with the family disagreement. This is undoubtedly an error, and a serious one. But there may be excuses for it, which we cannot see. In such affairs, there is always blame on both sides. What provocation 'Squire Ellwood may have had, or what palliating circumstances might be offered as an excuse for him, we shall never know. Still, it is true that nothing can wholly excuse him. We will set this down, if you please, as a sad fault, a stain upon his christian character, and let it pass. The incident which took place this afternoon, I think perfectly natural, and quite excusable. 'Squire Ellwood is passionate. He has never been taught to control his temper. He was probably neglected in this respect while young, and it is not probable that any one has dared, since his boyhood, to intimate to him the importance of self-control. I do not doubt he would have given thousands, half an hour after, for the power to recall that burst of passion. We will call this a weakness, and forget it."

"You are very charitable;" remarked Mr. Melrose, with a smile; "but you will permit me to observe that you have omitted one thing—large subscriptions to benevolent objects, and private meanness."

"All in good time, my husband. I shall refer you to early education and early exam-

ple again, here. 'Squire Elwood's father was a rich man,—rich, as any one may be who makes wealth the chief aim of existence. He rose from poverty to wealth by a system of rigid economy—of what *we* should call meanness, though I presume he never thought of any one's calling it so. Would it be strange if his son received some lessons from him, to be remembered and practised through life? 'Squire Elwood wishes to do good. He wishes to do it upon a large scale. He gives liberally, and suffers his name to go forth with his gift, that the influence of *his* example may not be lost upon the world. And, in looking forward to the large amount of good which he hopes to accomplish, he forgets the little acts of generosity which would spread so much happiness around him. It is unfortunate; it is wrong; but still, I think it should be considered as a misfortune, rather than a fault."

"Really, I had no idea you were such a pleader!" said Mr. Melrose, evidently in some degree impressed by his wife's reasoning, as well as amused by her earnestness. "Is that all?"

"Not quite. I think you said that 'Squire Ellwood had nothing lovely or amiable about him.' I shall set that down as a mistake. He loves little children. I do not think that any one who is totally depraved can love them."

"Well," observed Mr. Melrose, as his wife

resumed the work which she had laid down in the earnestness of her defence, "the next time that Mr. Jarvis puzzles me, I think I will send him to you. But tell me what you think of *him*? Is he not very uncharitable to judge of Christians and christianity as he does?"

"What can you expect of an infidel?" said Mrs. Melrose, sadly. "It is strange, very strange, that Christians think so little of the value of consistency. I do not wonder that Mr. Jarvis judges as he does. I remember, when I was very young, watching professed Christians with something like the feelings with which he watches them now. I often saw them do things that I would not have done, even then; and then I said to myself, 'I do not see that they are any better *with* religion than I am *without* it.' But, since I have called myself a follower of Christ, I look upon these things in a different light. There are so many things to be taken into the account—parentage—early influences—unconsciously formed habits—constitutional infirmities or peculiarities—there are so many things which the eye of God alone can see, that I think, when I see a Christian doing what I think wrong. 'Perhaps, in the same circumstances, I should have done the same. God alone knows the measure of his temptation and his sin.' And my dear husband, I am so far from doing right myself, even when

I try the most, that I feel as if I, if any one, ought to be charitable to others."

Mr. Melrose sat, thoughtfully, for a few minutes, and then said, "If *you* ought to be charitable, Mary, I am sure *I* ought. But, allowing all that you have said to be correct; and I see no reason why it may not be so; there is still one thing that troubles me more than all the rest. It is something, too, for which I see no remedy." The brow of Mr. Melrose grew dark again, as he spoke.

"What is it, my husband?" said Mrs. Melrose.

"A fact to which Mr. Jarvis alluded to-day. 'Samuel Elwood,' said he, 'is a member of a church professedly anti-slavery. He contributes for the relief of fugitives from oppression. He has even been known to entertain a run-away slave at his own luxurious home;—but—he votes the *Whig* ticket. He goes with his party, for any candidate they may choose to nominate. How is it that you have such men in your anti-slavery church?' It is a mystery to me. I hesitated. What could I say? He went on. 'I account for it in this way. Elwood is the leading man in your church, because he is the richest man in it. Most of your church members know what the man is. He is not much beloved or esteemed among them. But he has the money—he helps pay the minister's salary—he does what no one else could do—the church could

hardly live without him. If *I* were a christian, he continued, vehemently, 'I would never enter a church controlled by such a man.'

A shadow passed over the serene face of Mrs. Melrose, as her husband commenced the repetition of Mr. Jarvis's remarks. It deepened as he proceeded; and when he ceased speaking, she was silent. Mr. Melrose waited for her reply, but he waited in vain. "Now, Mary," he said, at last; "if your charitable spirit can remove this mountain, I will be thankful."

"This is all wrong;" answered the wife, sadly, "these things ought not so to be. Either our church should not call itself anti-slavery, or such men should be excluded from it."

"But what could we do without Elwood?" demanded her husband. It is just as Mr. Jarvis says,—the church could not live without him."

"Let it *die*, then!" said Mrs. Melrose, energetically. "But it would not die;—it would live as it never yet has done;" she added, hastily. "Oh! if our church-members had only independence enough to speak the truth—only self-reliance enough to dare to try to stand alone—only faith enough in an over-ruling Providence to do *right*, and leave the consequences with God,—this should not be so. We might be poorer—our minister's salary might be less—but the blessing of God would rest upon us, as it never yet has done."

Mrs. Melrose paused. She had spoken longer and more earnestly than she had intended. Mr. Melrose moved his chair back from the table, and thoughtfully paced the room. Then even your charity cannot cover this, Mary?" he said, after a pause.

"Charity cannot cover sin;" returned Mrs. Melrose, gravely. "A church cannot prosper, while members are admitted or retained from such unworthy motives. If our church is pro-slavery, let it call itself so. If it calls itself anti-slavery, let it be so."

The clock said nine. Mrs. Melrose folded her work and laid it in her work-basket, placed the basket upon the table, and gathered up thimble, scissors, spools and balls of yarn, as if her evening's work was completed. Mr. Melrose quietly removed the little round table from the fire-side to a corner of the room; and the conversation ended.

CHAPTER VI.

AUNT SUSY.

"GOOD NEWS?" said Mr. Melrose, as his wife smilingly pointed to a letter on the top of her heaped-up work-basket.

"Between ourselves," answered Mrs. Melrose in an undertone, "I hardly know whether to call it good or bad. Aunt Susy is coming."

"Aunt Susy!" repeated Mr. Melrose, and something of a comical expression passed over his face at the name, "oh! that is good news, of course."

"Prove it;" said Mrs. Melrose, playfully; "Otherwise I shall take the opposite side of the question."

"Well. Aunt Susy can sing finely, and tell amusing stories by the hour together. She is as good natured as the day is long, and as industrious as the busiest bee in our hive. Is not my position proved to be tenable?"

"I hope it is so," replied Mrs. Melrose, "I have not seen Aunt Susy for years; but

I remember that some of her ways, when I last saw her, were not particularly agreeable to me. I am not at all anxious on my own account, however, or on yours. What I was thinking of was, her influence over the children."

"True; I had not thought of that;" said Mr. Melrose. "She has some peculiarities, I know. We must be a little watchful, at first; and if we see any tendency to imitation, we must guard against it. I do not think there will be any trouble about it. When is Aunt Susy coming, and how long does she intend to stay?"

"She writes that she intends being here next Wednesday or Thursday; and that, as she has never been to see us before, and may never come again, she means to make us a good long visit, this time. Rather indefinite information, I allow; but it is all that I can give, at present."

"I believe," said Mr. Melrose, musingly, "that Aunt Susy's 'good long visits' when she used to come to see my mother, extended from six weeks to six months or more. She was quite young then, a mere girl. I used to love dearly to have her come, for she was lively and pleasant; but she was somewhat peculiar then, and it is likely that she is more so now. We will give her a welcome, however, if it be only because she is my mother's sister."

"Surely we will. But she must have been much younger than your mother."

"Yes. She is only a few years older than myself."

"We must fit up the little room for her;" said Mrs. Melrose. "Shall we tell the children she is coming?"

"Certainly."

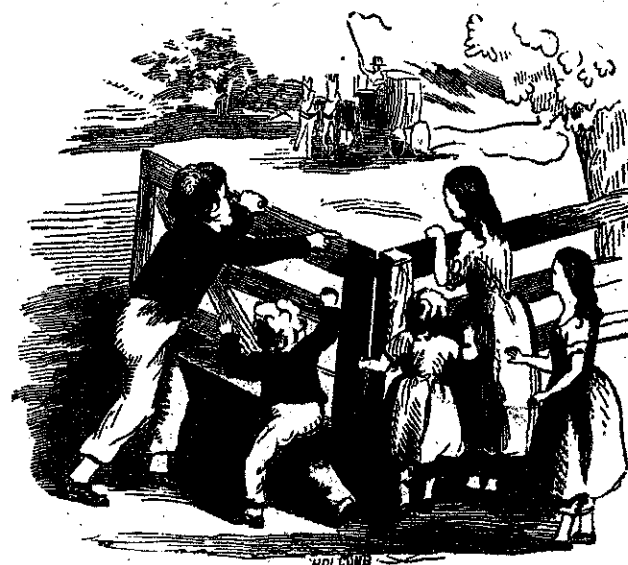
"They will want a description of her. I shall leave you to give that, husband."

Mr. Melrose smiled. "I will give it," he said; "but I cannot promise that it will be a correct one. Is it best to say anything about her peculiarities?"

"I think not. They will develop themselves rapidly enough; and we can guard and guide better when we know what they are."

The announcement of the intended visit, and the description of the intended visitor, given by Mr. Melrose, interested the children exceedingly. Their curiosity was excited by the mischievous expression of their father's face, an expression which gave them a vague idea of something that he had not told them—something odd and amusing—and they talked about Aunt Susy, and wished she was there, and wondered if she would look any as father said she did, till Mrs. Melrose almost wished Wednesday would come, and bring the ~~real~~ Aunt Susy to banish the imaginary one.

Wednesday did come ; and about an hour before sunset, the old mail-carriage came rattling over the hill, a welcome sight to the eager eyes of Charley, who had been standing sentinel on the gate-post for at least half an hour. "Hurrah! Aunt Susy's coming," he shouted to the children at play in the yard. "Arthur! run in and tell mother. Aunt Susy's coming!" and down Charley leaped from the post, to open the gate for the rapidly advancing carriage, while Arthur scampered in, to convey the welcome intelligence to his mother. Mrs. Melrose came to the door, as the carriage entered the yard ; and Mr. Melrose, who had been at work in the garden, left his work in time to assist the visitor to alight. Aunt Susy accepted his assistance, and then turned to the driver. "Walk directly into the house, Aunt Susy ;" said Mr. Melrose ; "I will see to your baggage." But Aunt Susy had no idea of doing any such thing. She stood resolutely beside the carriage till every article was safely landed on the door-step ; and her nephew thought, when he saw the number and variety of the articles comprised under the name of baggage, that she acted wisely and well in inspecting the removal of her property with her own eyes. First came a heavy traveling trunk from the outside of the carriage, then a smaller one from within ; then a band-box, then an umbrella, then a parasol, then a



"Hurrah! Aunt Susy's coming."

basket, then a well-filled carpet-bag, and last, but not least in number, sundry little parcels and packages, which the owner seemed to consider of priceless value. "That's all;" said Aunt Susy, drawing a long breath and speaking with an accent of relief, as the last package touched the door-step,— "Here's your money, and good bye to you;" she added, addressing the driver; and then, turning to Mrs. Melrose, who stood smilingly awaiting an opportunity to greet her, she said, shaking hands most cordially, "Now I'll go in; for I've been traveling all day; and I'm tired enough."

"Come in, and rest;" said Mrs. Melrose, quietly; and leading the way into the sitting-room, she drew the large rocking-chair to the window, and, seating Aunt Susy in it, called Mary to take the bonnet and shawl, which her guest, without waiting for ceremony, threw off at once.

"I never wait for compliments;" she said, carelessly, as she brushed back her hair, and arranged her dress. "I've been about enough to feel at home almost anywhere. I don't believe in treating people like strangers. Just make own folks of me while I stay with you. That's all I ask."

"And that we will do, Aunt Susy;" said Mr. Melrose, smiling.

A very few days sufficed for the complete domestication of the visitor. "The "little

room" prepared for her reception was too small a sphere for her. "She is all over the house at once," Mrs. Melrose laughingly said to her husband, "and never idle anywhere;" he laughingly replied. In truth, Aunt Susy's hands were always busy. Naturally active and energetic, and trained to habits of industry, she proffered willing and efficient aid in household duties and family cares. "She is really very useful;" said Mrs. Melrose, one week after her arrival. "I like her better than I thought I should, too. One does not mind her peculiarities so much, after becoming a little acquainted with her."

The children all liked her. She took very little notice of any of them, for the first two or three days; but after that time, they all clustered around her. Tops, kites, balls, dolls' dresses, and baby-houses were articles in the manufacture and improvement of which Aunt Susy was deeply skilled; and well-trained children were her especial delight. The demands upon her time and talents in this line soon became so frequent, that she found it necessary to regulate affairs, as she expressed it, by assigning a certain hour, each day, for all applications of the kind. She good-naturedly informed the little troop of her plan; and they readily admitted the correctness of her view of the subject, and promised to try to remember not to come to her at any other time. "You see, children,"

she said, "there's another rule that I go by, besides the one 'A place for everything and everything in its place;' and that is, 'A time for everything, and every thing in its time.' Now, I can always find enough to do, for myself or somebody else. I'm willing to do something for you, every day; but I'm not willing to mend balls, or make kites, or dress dolls, all day long. So I'll tell you what I will do. I'll give you an hour, every day—the hour after tea—and you must not come to me with any such thing any other time. That's fair, is it not?" The children gave a unanimous assent; and the hour after tea was prized quite as highly as any hour in the day.

"You're managing wisely with your children;" said Aunt Susy to Mr. Melrose, one evening, after the little ones were safely out of hearing; "most people spoil their children, now-a-days, but I really believe you don't intend yours shall be spoiled."

"I certainly do not, Aunt Susy;" returned Mr. Melrose, with a smile.

"I watched you pretty closely, for the first two or three days after I came;" continued Aunt Susy, "for when I go into a family, I always make it a rule to have nothing to do with the children, unless they are trained as they should be. If you want to get into trouble in a family, across a spoiled child a few times, and then be no need of doing

anything more. I've been in families where the children fairly ran over their parents heads. I kept them far enough off so that they didn't run over *me*, I can tell you. Most children ain't governed at all. Our family was governed; but not as you govern yours. Mother loved her children and meant to make them mind her; but she was quick. It was a word and a blow, with her, and sometimes the blow would come first. It wasn't the best way; but 'twas better than no government at all. You never strike your children, do you?"

"Not after they are old enough to be governed by other means;" returned Mr. Melrose. There is a time when it seems necessary to govern most children by fear. The habit of obedience must be formed very early, before a child is capable of being influenced by reason; but, after the first few years, other modes of punishment are, in my opinion, preferable to this. For some children a single punishment is sufficient; others need more. Our little Amy has never been punished at all. We govern her altogether by love. An appeal to her affectionate disposition always insures obedience. Mary might be governed almost entirely by love of praise; but that would be dangerous policy. I prefer higher motives. Charley needed strong restraints, at first. He is learning to govern himself, now. He is gentle, and

easily controlled; but Arthur exercises our patience by his thoughtlessness, and his perpetual propensity to meddle with everything that does not belong to him. Georgie is the baby—hardly conquered yet, though he will be, soon. We are doing as well as we can with them all."

"I think you are doing as well as any one could," said Aunt Susy. "The best of it all is, that you work together. If father or mother says anything, there's no danger of its being contradicted. I know one family, where, if the children want a ride or a sail, they ask their father for it, and tell their mother, afterwards 'Father says we may go.' And another I know, where a little girl when her father tells her to do anything, looks up and asks him if mother said so. I've longed to tell people, a great many times, that they were doing wrong; but what's the use? Half of them would say I was meddling with what didn't concern me; and the other half would think the same. People will have their own way about such things. It's no use to try to turn them out of it;" and Aunt Susy rolled up her knitting-work, and betook herself to the shelter of her little room.

"I wonder that Aunt Susy never was married;" said Mrs. Melrose to her husband, as the door closed after their guest. "She must have been handsome when she young; for she is quite good-looking, now. I am

sure she might have made a good wife and mother. It is a pity that her life should be spent as it has been."

"She might have been married," replied Mr. Melrose; "but her parents injudiciously opposed her choice. She yielded to their wishes, and relinquished the obnoxious suitor; but a single step farther she would not go. All attentions, beyond those of mere civility, were afterwards quietly declined. Her life has been a very useful one; she finds a welcome in many homes; but it is not probable that she is as happy as she would have been in a home of her own."

A few weeks after the above conversation, Mr. Melrose returned, in fine spirits from a trip to the city. It was a cold winter day. The children, except Amy and George, were at school. Aunt Susy sat in the corner with the knitting; and Mrs. Melrose was, as usual, occupied with her needle. Mr. Melrose greeted them all, and seating himself before the fire, held out his hands to the blaze, glancing somewhat mischievously, meanwhile, at Aunt Susy. But Aunt Susy's face retained its usual expression of tranquility; and her knitting needles went on, obedient to her busy fingers, just as they had done before her nephew's return. Soon, the unheeded glance became a fixed, earnest gaze; so fixed and earnest that Aunt Susy involuntarily looked up from her work, and exclaimed. "Why,

what in the world are you looking at me so for?"

"Whom do you suppose I saw in the city, to-day?" was the indirect reply.—"A great many people, no doubt;" said Aunt Susy, "I saw enough when I was there; but there's no one there that I know anything about."

"Are you sure of that, Aunt Susy?" pursued Mr. Melrose, at the same time giving his wife a meaning glance.

"Why, yes. How should I know anything about people in a city two hundred miles from home?"

"Well—I think you are mistaken this time. Aunt Susy;" said Mr. Melrose. "I saw a gentleman there, who inquired for you. Let me give you a description of him. He was a tall, powerful looking man, with dark hair, slightly mingled with grey, a high, broad forehead, and the keenest pair of black eyes I have seen for a long time. Do you recognize him from my description?" Aunt Susy was very busy, picking up a stitch. Of course the question was unheard. And yet, it was a little singular that her cheek should flush, just at that moment, as it did. The fire was warm, though; that might have been the reason. Mr. Melrose smiled; but he said nothing more.

The Winter snows passed away; and the blue violets blossomed, as if they thought Spring had come again. The air was mild

and warm, and the children, all life and glee, bounded over the hills, and under the old trees, like so many frisking lambs. "Come, Aunt Susy," said Charley, one peculiarly pleasant afternoon; "it is warm enough to-day to spend our hour after tea out doors. Is it not, Mary?"

"Oh, yes," Mary answered. "You will, will you not, Aunt Susy?"—"Please do!" exclaimed Ellen and Arthur. Amy said nothing, but took hold of Aunt Susy's hand, as if she expected to be led out at once; and Georgie pulled her dress, and pointed to the door. Aunt Susy yielded to the general wish. The children were delighted with her acquiescence. Songs were sung, stories told, and races run, till the hour was nearly gone. All at once, Charley called out, "There's a chaise coming over the hill?" The children ran to the gate. It looks as if it was coming here;" said Mary. "There's a gentleman in it, all alone," said Charley; "but I do not know who it is. Do you, Aunt Susy?" Aunt Susy gave one look at the occupant of the carriage, and then, without saying a single word, turned from the group, and quickly entered the house. "Why, Aunt Susy! the hour is not up yet!" called the disappointed children; and then, as their call remained unheeded, they turned to watch the chaise again. "It is coming here;" said Charley; and the words were scarcely uttered, when

the traveler reined up his horse at the gate, and inquired for Miss Weldon. The children looked at each other in wonder. "Is Miss Weldon here?" repeated the stranger. "No, sir," said Charley. The stranger smiled. "Perhaps you do not understand me," he said. "I mean Miss *Susan* Weldon." "Aunt Susy?" interrogated Charley with a look of sudden intelligence. "Oh yes! Aunt Susy's here. Will you drive in, sir?" and carefully drawing Amy aside with one hand, Charley threw open the gate with the other. The gentleman thanked him, and accepted the invitation. "Is your father at home?" he inquired, as he alighted. "Yes sir," said Charley, please walk in, sir, and I will speak to him." But the stranger said he would wait there; and Charley ran off to find his father. Mr Melrose promptly answered to the call. "Ah! good evening, Mr. Berkley," he said, cordially. "I am happy to see you here. Come, walk in. Charley will take care of your horse;" and the stranger entered the cottage, leaving the children to wonder what it all meant.

Aunt Susy did not occupy her usual place in the sitting-room, that evening. Charley whispered to Mary that there was a fire in the parlor stove, and that the astral lamp was burning on the center-table; and Mary hoped Mr. Berkley would not stay long, if Aunt Susy must be kept shut up in the par-

for all the time he was there. "How's that, Mary?" said her father. Mary repeated what she had said. Her father laughed. "I imagine you'll be in no hurry for Mr. Berkley to go away, when he comes again;" he remarked. "Why, father?" said Mary. But Mr. Melrose only answered "I think so;" and Mary knew that he did not choose to tell her the reason; so she said no more about it.

Four weeks from the day of Mr. Berkley's first visit to the home among the hills, a traveling carriage was waiting at the cottage door. Trunks, carpet-bag, umbrella, parasol, bandbox and packages were all safely bestowed; and Aunt Susy, surrounded by an eager group of children, stood taking a last look at the quiet little room she had tenanted for so many months. Aunt Susy's cheek was pale, and her lip trembled. There were tears in her eyes, and on her cheek. "It's no use crying about it, I know;" she said, resolutely brushing away the truant drops; "but somehow, it's harder work to say good-bye to you all here, than I thought it was going to be. One more kiss, Amy, dear; there, don't cry, that's a good child; Charley, Mary, Arthur, Ellen, Georgie, dear little fellow, be good children, all of you,"—and Aunt Susy turned from them to grasp the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Melrose.

"May your new home be a happy one,

Aunt Susy;" said Mr. Melrose. "As happy as ours;" added his wife. "It will be happy enough, if it is;" said Aunt Susy. "Come and see how happy it is;" said Mr. Berkley, smiling. What right had he to say anything about it? What was Aunt Susy's new home to him?

"Here, Arthur!" called Charley, "if you'll hold the gate open, I'll run on and let down the bars at the end of the lane." The carriage rolled through the gate, and disappeared over the hill. Parents and children stood watching it in silence. "And so Aunt Susy's fortune is fulfilled at last;" said Mrs. Melrose; as, at her husband's side, she returned to the house. It was worth while to wait twenty years for it."

"Yes," replied Mr. Melrose; "but there are few who have Aunt Susy's constancy or Aunt Susy's trust. We shall miss her sadly here; but her life-long dream has come true; and she will be happy. So we must learn to do without her again, if we can."

CHAPTER VII.

COURTESY—SINCERITY.

It was Saturday afternoon. Mrs. Melrose and Mary were seated, with their sewing, in the room usually occupied by the family. Amy, in her little rocking-chair at the opposite side of the apartment, folded her doll in her arms, and tried to lull it to sleep with a song. Charley was at work with his father in the field. Ellen had gone to visit a playmate. Arthur and Georgie were at play in the orchard. So there was a very quiet time in the pleasant little sitting-room, where the mother and daughter plied their needles most industriously, setting everything in order for the coming Monday morning. Mary was usually social enough;—her tongue sometimes outstripped her needle; but, this afternoon, she was strangely silent. Mrs. Melrose wondered what the child could be dreaming about; and at last, after a long silence, she said, "What are you thinking of so earnestly, Mary?"

COURTESY—SINCERITY.

75

"I was thinking," Mary replied, "about the calls we made last evening."

"Well, what of them, my child?"

Mary did not answer immediately; in fact, she seemed to forget the question entirely; for when she did speak, it was to ask, "Mother, which is the most polite, Mrs. Carr or Mrs. Edmonds?"

"Which should you think Mary?"

"Why, that's what I've been trying to find out this long time, mother; but I cannot tell what I do think. I want you to help me."

"How can I help you tell your thoughts?" said Mrs. Melrose, smiling. "I think you will have to tell me what they are, before I shall know much about them."

"Why, mother, I was thinking that people would call Mrs. Carr more polite than Mrs. Edmonds, because she uses a great many more words; but I cannot make it seem to me that she is so, after all. She used so many compliments that I hardly knew what to say; and that made me feel very awkward, so that I did not enjoy the call much. I was all the time afraid that I should not move according to rule, or answer just as I ought. I should not think politeness ought to make any one feel so, mother."

Mrs. Melrose looked a little amused. "Perhaps Mrs. Carr would say it was want of politeness that made you feel so," she remarked. "I noticed your enbarassment."

Mrs. Carr probably thought it the timidity of a school girl, who had not yet seen enough of the world to know exactly how to act her part in it."

"But, mother, I did not feel so with Mrs. Edmonds. I could talk, and move, and act naturally there; for Mrs. Edmonds did not compliment me enough to puzzle me at all. I was beginning to feel a little awkward, once, but Mrs. Edmonds brought out those beautiful pictures, and I forgot all about it. The first thing I knew I was talking so fast, that I was frightened when I thought what I was doing. I stopped short, and blushed, and looked at Mrs. Edmonds to see if she did not think me very rude; but she smiled so pleasantly that I felt quite encouraged again, only I did not talk so much afterwards. We had a very pleasant call there, did we not, mother?"

"Very;" replied Mrs. Melrose. "What made it so pleasant, Mary?"

"Why"—said Mary, hesitatingly—"in the first place, Mrs. Edmonds seemed glad to see us. Mrs. Carr *said* she was glad; but I could not think she was, very. But Mrs. Edmonds looked and spoke as if she was glad; and that made us enjoy being there. And then, she seemed to know just what would please us; and she did not act as if it was hard work to talk with us."

"Mrs. Edmonds has a very happy power of

adapting her conversation and manners to the tastes of her guests;" remarked Mrs. Melrose. "She is not only polished, but benevolent. She loves to make others happy; and a little knowledge of character, with an almost perfect absence of selfishness, enables her to perform her duty to her visitors in a most pleasing manner."

"It seems to me, mother," said Mary after a pause, "that it is not very easy to be polite, always. It is easy enough when you have company that you like; for you are glad to see them, and it is a pleasure to wait on them, and do everything you can to make them enjoy their visit; but when people come that you do not care much about, or that you really dislike, it is hard work, I think it is unpleasant to receive calls from strangers. I never know what to say to them. If they ask me questions, I say 'Yes,' or 'No;' and that is the most I can do."

"And sometimes you say them in the wrong place," interposed Arthur, who, tired of his play, had seated himself in the door-way to listen to the conversation. "Once, when a lady invited you to come and see her, you said 'No;' and when another lady told you she was going home, you said 'O yes;' as if you were very glad of it."

Arthur was naturally mischievous. But Mary only smiled, and shook her head at him; so he did not gain much by his mischief. Mrs.

Melrose gave her daughter's remarks a more serious answer.

"Those people who say 'Yes,' and 'No,' and nothing more," she said, smiling, "are the very worst people in the world to entertain. I can converse with strangers, and enjoy a conversation with them, if they only have ideas to express, and words in which to express them; but to sit, hour after hour, inventing questions to be answered in monosyllables, is hard work for me. I very much prefer washing, ironing, or baking."

"I think Aunt Susy would be fine help at such times;" said Mary, laughing; "for she always has something to say about everything. And she says things so queerly, too, that I do not see how any one can help laughing at them. How I should like to see her again, mother! It does not seem as if it could be a whole year, since she went away."

"Aunt Susy is excellent, in that respect," replied Mrs. Melrose. "I remember leaving a party of silent guests in her care, for a few minutes, one day; and when I returned, to take the burden off her hands, to my surprise, they were all talking. Aunt Susy looked up with one of her peculiar expressive glances, as I entered. I think my glance in return, must have expressed gratitude; for I am sure I felt it."

"I think, mother," said Mary, "that people are very often rude in little things.

When I went to Julia Landor's party, last spring, there was one little girl there who was not dressed as well as the rest. Her name was Marion Lee. Julia scarcely spoke to her at all; and I saw her, two or three times in the course of the evening, whispering and laughing with the other girls. I did not hear what she said; but it was plain enough that she was talking about Marion. I had never seen the little girl before; but I went and sat down by her, and tried to talk to her a little. When Julia saw what I was doing, she came and invited Marion to go and play with the rest. But she did not go. She told me that she was very sorry that she came. She did not see why Julia invited her, if she did not want her, she said. I never pitied any one so, in my life."

"That was more than rude; it was unfeeling and unjust," said Mrs. Melrose. "Guests should always be treated with civility; but when we invite people to visit us, we are under special obligations to make the visit pleasant to them. I presume Julia did not think of this."

"Mrs. Landor is not polite," Mary replied. "Do you remember one afternoon when we took tea there? There was one old lady at the table, who used her own knife when the butter was passed round. Did you see how Mrs. Landor looked? I was amused and vexed too. But the old lady knew noth-

ing about it. I was very glad she did not."

Mrs. Melrose smiled; but said nothing. There was silence for a few minutes, and then Mary resumed the conversation.

"Is it right," she inquired, with sudden seriousness; "is it right to invite people to visit you when you do not want them? or to tell them you should be happy to have them stay when you wish they would go? or to say you should be pleased to visit them, when you do not care anything about them?"

"Why, Mary, how can you ask such a question?" said Mrs. Melrose in surprise.

"Almost every one does so, mother;" was Mary's unexpected reply. "Only last week I heard Mrs. Landor invite a lady to visit her; and afterwards she said she hoped she would never come. And Mrs. Carr thanked a lady very politely for an invitation to visit at her house, and said she should be delighted to accept it; and then, a few minutes after, she told another lady she was sure she never meant to go there. Are such things right, mother?"

"Certainly not, my child."

"You never do so, do you, mother?"

"No, indeed."

"But," said Mary, hesitatingly, "it must be very awkward, sometimes, not to return an invitation. I have returned them when I did not really mean what I said, because I did not know what else to do. I have been

afraid, too, that people would think me rude, or would feel slighted at my not inviting them. But I have never felt quite right about it, afterwards, when I have said what I did not feel."

"You can never expect to feel quite right, after doing what your conscience condemns;" replied Mrs. Melrose. "Strict truthfulness is best, in compliments as well as everything else."

"I thought you would say so, mother," said Mary. "But what do you do when people whom you really do not want come to see you, and invite you to come and see them?"

Mrs. Melrose smiled. "There are, happily, very few such people in our neighborhood;" she observed. "Did you notice what I did when Mrs. Downes called here a week ago?"

"You treated her very civilly, mother; but I thought you seemed rather distant. And I remember, too, that when she invited you to call and see her, you only said, 'Thank you, Mrs. Downes.' I see now."

"What do you see now, Mary?"

"A very easy way of telling the truth, mother."

"Not so easy as you imagine, Mary. To return a simple 'Thank you,' to an earnest and apparently sincere invitation, requires considerable firmness of purpose, sometimes. Besides, there are many compliments that cannot be answered in this way."

"Now, what can you do with them then, mother?"

"Answer truly, or not at all," was the reply.

"But, mother," argued Mary, "people say that compliments do not mean anything; that no one thinks anything of them, and so, no one is deceived by them."

"What is the use of them then?" inquired Mrs. Melrose.

"I'm sure I do not know," said Mary.

"Do you suppose any one does?" said her mother, smiling.

"People would not use them if there were no meaning in them, would they?" said Mary.

"Sensible people would not, certainly," replied Mrs. Melrose.

"But what is the use of them?" Mary inquired.

"The true use of them is, to express kind feeling in a graceful, pleasing manner. Where kind feeling does not exist, compliments become unmeaning, or deceitful, or both."

"How can they be both, mother?"

"Where they are used with the intention to deceive, they produce the same effect upon the mind of the person who uses them, as any other falsehood. Where they are used as a mere form, they become unmeaning. But if the person using them intends to deceive, and the person to whom they are addressed is too shrewd to be deceived by them, or the re-

verse,—then they become both unmeaning and deceitful. Is that plain, Mary?"

"Yes, mother," said Mary. There was another pause, and then Mary exclaimed, with a sigh, "Oh, dear! it is so hard to do right!"

"Would it be easier to do wrong, Mary?"

"No, mother, not if you knew you were doing wrong. But it does seem to me, that there are very few people who tell the truth always."

"I fear there are, indeed, very few who are strictly truthful," said Mrs. Melrose. "Few take a correct view of the subject; and fewer still have moral courage enough to act in accordance with the dictates of their consciences. To be strictly truthful, requires true independence of character. You are naturally rather deficient in this, Mary; but I hope you will acquire more of it as you grow older. It will be a very good idea for you to notice, carefully, every little deviation from the straight path, here; and endeavor to overcome little temptations, as they occur. It will be easier and easier for you, as you go on; and you will find a great deal of satisfaction in the thought that you are doing right."

Mr. Melrose and Charley came in from the field; the table was spread for tea, and the afternoon's work and conversation were laid aside together.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCANDAL.

"COMPANY, mother ;" said Mary, stealing into the sitting-room with Charley's hat on her head, and her work-basket in her hand—"where shall I hide?"

"In the corner, by me ;" replied her mother ; but who is coming ?"

"Mrs. Lewis and Miss Preston, I *should* like to hide, mother "

"They may be only coming to make a call ; said Mrs. Melrose ; and in her heart she hoped they were ; for she very much wished to finish the dress she was making for Amy, that afternoon. The reader who has been compelled to devote to uninteresting company time which other duties seemed imperiously to demand, will understand and appreciate her feelings.

"No hope of that, mother ;" said Mary. "Mrs. Lewis has a bundle that looks wonderfully like work ; and Miss Preston has her everlasting basket on her arm. They will

SCANDAL.

85

stay all the afternoon, and perhaps all the evening, too. It is too bad ; just as we were going to have such a pleasant, quiet time all to ourselves, here. And Amy's dress, too, that you wanted to finish, so much to night !"

"Never mind, Mary,—all we have to do is to make the best of it. We will give them a welcome ; and try to make their visit a pleasant one. Have they reached the gate?"

"Not quite" said Mary, "there—now they have. Shall I go to the door, mother?"

"Yes ; but take off your hat first, and hang it up in its place. And try not to look quite so uncomfortable as you do now ;" added Mrs. Melrose, smiling ; "or they *may* think you are not *very* glad to see them."

Mary laughed, and stood on tip-toe a moment, to listen. "There ! they have knocked !" she said, "I should know Miss Preston's rap anywhere. It is a regular freemason's rap—one ! two ! three !"

"You had better go, before they knock again ;" said Mrs. Melrose quietly.

"Oh yes ! so I will, I was only saving a half minute for you ;" and Mary danced lightly through the passage, to admit the unwelcome guests.

Mary's prognostications were correct. The bonnets and shawls were laid aside—the bundle and the "everlasting basket" were opened ; and visitors and visited prepared

themselves for a long summer afternoon's sitting. And now, while they are beginning to engage in conversation, consisting, as yet, of matters not particularly interesting to us; suppose we, (reader and writer) like privileged characters as we are and as we have a right to be, take a peep at the room and its occupants.

The sitting-room—(we have mentioned it a great many times; it is strange we never thought of describing it before)—is a pleasant, plainly-furnished apartment, with a home-made carpet on the floor, and neat white curtains at the windows. There are three windows—one looking towards the east, and half-covered with woodbine and honeysuckle—and two on the south side, open now, to admit the cool breeze. There is a small table between these two windows, near which Mrs. Melrose and Mary are sitting. Mrs. Melrose must be about forty years of age; but a stranger would sooner call her thirty. She is not handsome—she never was; but she is good and kind, and her loving heart looks out at her dark eyes, and smiles upon her parted lips. There are many, many threads of silver among the thin locks put smoothly back beneath her plain, snow white cap,—there are some deep furrows upon the high brow which they shadow; but not half as many as there would have been, if the gentle, trusting spirit enshrined in that matron-



"Mary sits beside her mother."

ly form, had not by the power of pure affection and holy faith, preserved its youth unfaded. Years leave traces upon the brow and cheek ; but sinful care, and bitter, unkind thoughts leave traces on the soul. Which are effaced most easily ? Motherly would be the true word to apply to Mrs. Melrose. Those who have had a dear, good mother to love, know what it means. No one else can know.

Mary sits beside her mother. She is fourteen now—a gentle, pleasant-looking girl, with her mother's hair, her mother's eyes, her mother's smile,—and we hope, as we look at her, that, one of these days, she will have her mother's high, noble heart, too. She is slender, and a little bashful—but not awkward. We love to see her color and look down when she speaks. Modesty is beautiful, in the young.

On a large, old-fashioned sofa, under the east window, sit the two visitors. Mrs. Lewis, the elder, is probably not far from fifty ; though her false hair—(how strange that any one will be so foolish as to wear it !) makes her look at least ten years younger. She has a pale face, with a good-humored expression ; but her keen blue eyes and quick motions denote considerable penetration and activity. She is plainly, but neatly dressed in black silk ; and her nicely wrought muslin collar is fastened with a modest bow of

green and white ribbon, studded with a small gold pin. Altogether, she looks quite well—very well, does she not?

Miss Preston—(we would not ask her how old she is for the world; but there can be no harm in whispering it between ourselves)—we should judge to be about five and thirty,—some half dozen years or more younger than our good Aunt Susy; though she looks a half-dozen older. Somehow, it is not easy to describe her. It seems as if she might be one of those people who give you an uncomfortable feeling when you come near them,—who repel rather than attract you. She is tall, slender, erect, and angular. Her hair is light-brown—her eyes are light-gray—her lips are thin—her forehead is low—her features are sharp and irregular. Her dress is rather showy than tasteful. She is employed on some light fancy-work, from which she looks up, frequently, to join in the conversation.

Near the sofa stands Amy's little chair—empty. It is vacation time. The children are having a merry game in the orchard; and Amy is among the happiest of the circle. In the corner is the stand, with a few newspapers and the old Family Bible upon it; and three or four chairs are ranged along the wall. The clock ticks busily upon the shelf, but not a single note of its music do we hear; and, if the hands did not move, we

might conclude it had stopped, in surprise, to listen to the unwonted conversation going on below. We will listen too; though, unlike the clock, we shall be compelled to give our undivided attention for the time."

"Have you called on Mrs. Clement lately?" said Mrs. Lewis, addressing Mrs. Melrose. Mrs. Melrose replied in the negative.

"I was there a few days ago," said Miss Preston. "The house did not look remarkably neat; and the children—I wish you could have seen them!"

"What was the matter with the children?" inquired Mrs. Lewis.

"Oh! such ragged, dirty, pitiful looking little objects as they were," replied Miss Preston. "They made me think of the Irish children that we see in some of the narrow, muddy streets of the city; only they did not look as strong and rugged."

"I believe they are not very healthy," remarked Mrs. Melrose. "Mrs. Clement must have a great deal to do, with her large family and feeble health."

"Oh, no doubt she has," returned Miss Preston; "but then, she might keep things a little snugger than she does, if she tried. Why, it was after nine o'clock when I called, and the breakfast table was standing in the middle of the floor. The dishes were not washed; and the room had not been swept. The children were about setting off for school,

and Mrs. Clement was putting up their dinner with one hand, and tending the baby with the other. I thought she seemed a little mortified by my call."

"Mrs. Clement ought to have help," observed Mrs. Lewis. "I wonder she does not. I should think Mr. Clement was able to hire."

"Oh, able! yes, indeed!" replied Miss Preston; "but some people feel so much poorer than they are! I do despise meanness in any one."

"Mr. Clement has a good trade, and is a good workman," said Mrs. Melrose; but he has been unfortunate. He has had a great deal of sickness in his family; and has met with some losses beside. I presume they are trying to live within their income, and think they cannot hire help without going beyond it."

"I called on Mrs. Carr last night," said Mrs. Lewis, dexteriously changing the topic before Miss Preston had time to reply. "Everything was neat enough there."

"Yes, and prim enough too, I presume," rejoined Miss Preston. "Mrs. Carr thinks herself very much of a lady; but she is not so extremely prepossessing, after all."

"Her manners are not so pleasing as those of Mrs. Edmonds," said Mrs. Lewis.

"I like them quite as well," replied Miss Preston. "Mrs. Edmonds seems very pleasant, but I imagine she can be out of temper

as well as other folks. People who speak smoothly and softly are not always the best dispositioned. I like to see people seem what they are."

"I like Mrs. Edmonds decidedly," quietly remarked Mrs. Melrose.

"I rather like her, too," added Mrs. Lewis; "though I am not much acquainted with her, to be sure."

"I am quite as well acquainted with her as I want to be," said Miss Preston.

There was silence for a few minutes. "Did you attend church last Sabbath, Mrs. Melrose?" inquired Mrs. Lewis, by way of resuming the conversation.

Mrs. Melrose replied in the negative. "It was stormy," she said; "and we have a wet way to go; So, with my girls, I kept the Sabbath at home."

"I did the same," said Mrs. Lewis; "but it was a long day to me. I do dislike to stay at home on the Sabbath."

"I prefer to attend church when I can do so consistently," replied Mrs. Melrose; "though the day does not seem long at home."

"Does it not seem long to you, Mary?" inquired Mrs. Lewis.

"Oh, no! not at all;" Mary said. "We are too busy to have it seem long."

"Busy," repeated Miss Preston. "Pray what do you do?"

"We have a Sabbath school at home," re-

plied Mary, "with mother for a teacher. We recite the lesson to her; and then she tells us Scripture stories, or explains passages in our next lesson. And we have our Sabbath school books to read, and a great many things to talk about. We think a stormy Sunday very pleasant, sometimes."

"Well," said Miss Preston, "I make it a point always to attend church, rain or shine. There were very few people there last Sabbath; but we had an excellent sermon, as usual."

"What was the text?" asked Mrs. Lewis. Miss Preston had forgotten the text, but the subject was Christian character. "I do think Mr. Weldon is an uncommonly good preacher," said Mrs. Lewis.

"I think him a very good man," replied Mrs. Melrose.

"Very good," remarked Miss Preston—"so good, that it is a pity he has not a better wife." There was no reply. "They say," continued Miss Preston, "that Mrs. Weldon is very passionate, and that she has not the least control over her children. I know nothing about it but what I hear."

"We often hear what is not true," remarked Mrs. Melrose.

"Very often," replied Mrs. Lewis.

"Lucy Evans was at church yesterday," said Miss Preston, "dressed as queerly as ever. She has worn that straw bonnet of

hers three summers before this; and it begins to look as if it had seen hard service. I'm sure I do not remember when she had a new dress. And her old fashioned shawl! It is strange that people love to be odd."

Mary innocently wondered if it was worse to stay at home from church than to go there to make remarks upon people's dress and appearance; and Mrs. Melrose said, "Miss Evans is certainly peculiar; but I think her very good. She is very kind and skilful in sickness."

"It is a pity that she is so singular;" remarked Mrs. Lewis. "I remember she watched with me one night last winter; and a better watcher I never had. She is very useful in the neighborhood—always ready to go when called upon."

"It is well she is good for something;" said Miss Preston. "She does not look as if she could do much good, anywhere. But who do you think was in the pew next to her?"

"Who was it?" said Mrs. Lewis.

"Alice Lane," replied Miss Preston, with a very peculiar sneer upon her lip.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Lewis. Mary looked at her mother, and saw that her brow was flushed, and there was an expression of pain upon her face.

"Yes, indeed!" continued Miss Preston. "I knew she was bold enough; but I hard-

expected to see her show her face there. I gave her one good, long, keen look, that made her blush and look another way. I should like to know what business she has among respectable people."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Melrose; and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke; "she has had no mother to guide her; and she is so young."

"Oh, mother!" said Mary, as the gate closed, that evening, after the departing visitors. "I am so glad they are gone! They have done nothing but talk about people the whole afternoon; and they have scarcely said any good of any one. I do hope they will never come again!"

"Why, Mary, you should not say so;" remonstrated Mrs. Melrose. "They are both neighbors; and besides, they have both good qualities. Mrs. Lewis has one of the kindest hearts in the world; and Miss Preston, though she appears very uncharitable, is not half as unfeeling as she appears. It is a very bad habit to talk about every one as she does, a habit which I hope you will never form; but she is probably entirely unconscious of it."

"How can she be, mother?" said Mary. "Very likely she is talking about us, by this time," she added, a little nervously.

"Probably she is," returned her mother, smiling. "I am sure I have not the least objection."

"But poor Alice, mother," said Mary; only think of that! How can any one be cruel?"

"That was hard," replied Mrs. Melrose; but even for that, there is an excuse. Miss Preston has probably been educated to consider Alice's crime unpardonable; and the prejudices of education are not easily removed."

"I do believe, mother, you can find an excuse for everything," said Mary, affectionately; and she thought, though she did not say it, "How I hope I shall learn to be as gentle and forgiving as my own dear mother."

And what thought Mrs. Lewis and Miss Preston? While Mrs. Melrose was excusing their faults and follies, they were speaking of her, not quite so kindly as she spoke of them. "Mrs. Melrose does love to be on the contrary side in everything," said Miss Preston. "I have scarcely said anything the whole afternoon, that she has not, in some way opposed."

"We have had rather a pleasant visit," remarked Mrs. Lewis.

"Perhaps *you* have," replied Miss Preston. "But I cannot say that I have enjoyed it much. I do not fancy being contradicted as often as I speak. Mary Melrose is awkward enough, is she not? She is old enough to talk, like other people, now, instead of sitting like a statue all the afternoon."

"She is rather bashful, certainly;" return-

ed Mrs. Lewis ; " but it will wear off as she grows older."

" They dress very meanly," remarked Miss Preston. " And what a plain tea-table ! Only one kind of cake. And the children all at the table ! What nonsense !"

A most unfortunate and unlovely thing it is, for man or woman, to select and dwell upon faults and blemishes, in the midst of harmony and beauty. How can such people love the bright sunlight ? Do they know that there are spots upon the sun ?

CHAPTER IX.

THE OUTCAST.

AND who was the Alice Lane of whom Miss Preston and Mrs. Melrose had spoken—the one so scornfully—the other so pityingly ? Alice was the only daughter of a gentle and pious mother, who, just before she died, called the little one of four years old to her bedside, and placing her wasted hand upon that bright young head, prayed God to bless and to keep her child. Did not God hear that prayer ? Most surely he heard it, and most surely did he answer it, in his own good time.

Mr. Lane, the father of Alice, was stern, haughty and passionate. Yet he loved his child ; and Alice though she shrank from him in his darker moods, poured out all the warmth of her young heart in return for an occasional word of endearment, or token of affection. He was all she had to love. And what if he was sometimes harsh or hasty ? He was her father, and she loved him still.

It was easy to forget and forgive, for her. Her mother, too—and the thought of that dear mother often brought the warm tears to Ally's bright blue eyes—her mother had loved him tenderly. Grief at her death might have shadowed his dark spirit still more deeply. But she was sure he loved her. He could not live without her love. Poor Ally! As she grew to womanhood, her home seemed more dark and lonely, year by year. She had no companions of her own age; for it was her father's pleasure to live in seclusion, almost in solitude. It seemed to her he grew sterner and harsher, day by day. She was beautiful, and he was proud of her beauty. She was gifted; and he encouraged and delighted in the improvement of her talents. But he forgot—perchance he did not know—that, in shutting her out from the world, in depriving her of social intercourse and kindly affection, he was committing an error that could never be repaired. The plant needs not only the air, and the dew, but the warm, golden sunlight. The human heart needs not only knowledge, but sympathy and love. Alice did not find these in her lonely home. Was it strange, that, when temptation came—when her heart seemed to have won the treasure for which it had unconsciously yearned so long—was it strange, that, naturally affectionate and confiding, she yielded—trusted—and was betrayed?

It is well that God can forgive those who err as Alice erred; for the world has little pity for them. Even the hearts that should seek to shelter and to heal, sometimes, turn coldly from them. Alas for the fallen! A curse from heaven may rest upon the betrayer; but the bitter scorn of earth is thrown, with its icy coldness, its crushing weight, on the torn and bleeding heart of the betrayed. God is great. God is just. "There will come an end to all things; and then all will be well."

Irritated almost to frenzy by the disgrace which Alice had brought upon herself and him, her father closed his doors against his child. She stood, alone, before the broad, smooth door-stone, on which she had played in her happy childhood, so many, many times—beneath the shade of the old elms, that had drooped mournfully over her mother's coffin she stood, and looked up to the soft, sweet stars, that seemed to look down upon her from their home of purity, with eyes of pity and love. Alice had shed many bitter tears that day; but when she heard the hall door close heavily behind her, and knew that it was for the last time—when she heard the bolts sent, with a sudden, hasty motion, to their places, and thought that it was her father's hand that barred the doors against her—something of the stern, haughty spirit that had filled that father's breast so long,

awoke in her gentle heart ; and without a word or a tear,—without even a farewell glance at the dear old home that was to be hers no more, with a compressed lip, and a clear, flashing eye, she turned away.

But whither could she go ? She knew not—she cared not. There was no aim, no purpose in her heart, as she turned slowly and calmly away from her father's door. Through the open gate, and down the green hill-side she passed, with firm and fearless tread, though the evening shadows were deepening around her, and the dew rested heavily upon the grass beneath her feet. What have they to fear, who have no hope ? Onward, onward,—no matter whither,—anywhere, away from what was once her home. Unconsciously, she turned aside into a little bye-path,—a path down which she had often bounded in her happy, innocent childhood,—a path that led, by a dim, winding course, into a small grove. A brook, crossed by a narrow foot-bridge, ran through the grove. Alice paused, as she stepped lightly upon the little bridge ; and, for the first time, a definite idea—almost a purpose, entered her mind. Did not the brook grow wider and deeper, a little further on ? And was there not, a little further still, a dark, silent pool, where the waters seemed to reach far, far down,—untroubled,—hidden ? Might there not be rest for the weary beneath their glassy surface ? For

one moment she paused, she shuddered. Then she looked up at the soft, pitying stars ; and thought of the mother whose eyes might, like them, be looking down upon her child ; and passed on. The temptation had lost its power. A new thought—a hope—a purpose,—was in her heart, as she passed on through the still grove, with hands clasped upon her bosom and lips moving in voiceless, wordless prayer—the prayer of unfathomed agony.

The village clock in the distance was striking nine, as Lucy Evans, after smoothing the pillow for the head of her aged and infirm mother, turned to the window of her humble cottage home, and drew aside the curtain, to look out at the cloudless sky. No one, who had looked into the plain, unexpressive face of Lucy Evans, in her sober, work-day moods, would have imagined, even for a moment, that she could be a dreamer. And yet—so it was. That pale face, as it was upturned to the sky, was glowing, almost beautiful—with admiring wonder. The beaming eye—the parted lips—the glowing cheek—all told of a heart filled with the idea of sublimity and beauty. Many such a heart beats beneath the coarse raiment that covers a form bending to its daily toil, and refreshed at night, in the sleep of weariness, by dreams ; bright, blessed, glorious dreams. But to-night, Lucy's dreams were of brief duration. There was a light, rustling step upon

the greensward beneath the window, and a faint, tremulous tap at the door. It was opened at once; for Lucy had caught a glimpse of the form flitting by the window. It was a form that she had seen before. "Alice Lane! dear child!" she exclaimed, as the light of the lamp fell upon the pale face of the poor girl; "you here, in the dew to-night! And how pale you are! What is the matter, dear? Come in, out of the night-air and the dew, and tell me what has brought you here."

Alice sank down in the chair offered by her humble friend, and buried her face in her hands. "Ally, dear Ally!" said Lucy, alarmed at her wild manner and disordered dress, "what has happened you? And how came you to be away from home, so late, alone?"

Alice raised her head, and, looking steadily into Lucy's face, said, in a low, calm tone, "I have no home, Lucy."

"No home!" echoed Lucy, in amazement.

"No home," repeated Alice, firmly. "My father," and her voice faltered for a moment, but became calm again as she went on—"My father closed his doors against me this evening, forever."

Lucy drew a chair directly in front of that in which Alice was seated; and the convulsively clasped hands of the girl in her own, as she seated herself before her, said, in a low, gentle tone: "Alice, I carried you in my

arms when you were a little infant. I loved you then; but I love you better now. Nothing will change my love. Is what I heard yesterday, true? Alice lowered her head upon her hands, while her whole frame shook with convulsive agitation. "Alice," said Lucy again, and her voice, though low and tremulous, was full of tenderness, "my home is a poor one; but you shall be welcome to share it with me. My poor, poor child!" she added, folding the silent girl affectionately in her arms, and Alice wept, as she had not wept before,—tears that seemed to relieve her aching heart of half its sorrow. Lucy would not hear another word that night. "Rest, rest," she said—to-morrow you may tell me all." And her own head did not press its pillow, till Alice, like a wearied child, had had sobbed herself to sleep. "Poor, poor child," murmured Lucy to herself, as she kissed the pale cheek of the sleeper. "May God forgive those who have wronged her. So young—so beautiful—so good—poor, poor child!"

Months passed on, and Alice became a mother. A new fount of love and anguish was opened in her heart. Her babe was beautiful, but of what a fate was it the unconscious heir! It was spared the misery of its heritage. It lived to recognize its mother's face—to smile at her voice—her footstep—her slightest touch—it lived to twine every fibre

of her crushed heart around it, and then, after a few hours of suffering, it died, and she was left alone—childless,—miserable. "Thank God! thank God!" murmured the wretched mother, as she closed the deep blue eyes, and folded the tiny hands, and pressed her lips on the brow, the cheek, the lips,—they smiled on her still—of her innocent babe. "Thank God!" Those were the only words she uttered. Her heart sank, from that hour, in the hopelessness of utter desolation. The little grave was made in a lonely corner of the churchyard—the tiny coffin was lowered into it—the damp clods and the green turf were piled above it—and Alice, silent, passive, apparently scarcely conscious of what had passed before her, was led gently home.

"Mother," said Mary Melrose, as she hastily entered the house from school, "Mother, Alice Lane is dying. Miss Evans wished me to ask you to come."

There were tears in Mary's eyes as she spoke. Her mother kissed her tenderly, but sadly, as she answered, "I will go at once, Mary."

"Alice sent for her father, this afternoon," said Mary, in a low, faltering tone, "and he would not go. It is so dreadful, mother."

"Dreadful, indeed, my child," Leaving a few simple directions with Mary, if she should



"I have no home, Lucy."

herself be detained through the night, Mrs. Melrose departed on her errand of mercy. It was not the first time that she had crossed the humble threshold of Lucy Evans, since Alice had been an inmate there. Lucy met her at the door. A silent pressure of the hand was their only greeting. "How is Alice," was her first inquiry.

"She is failing very fast," was the reply. The doctor says she cannot live through the night. But she is peaceful—so happy! One thing has troubled her, but that is over now. She wanted to see her father, and ask him to forgive her."

"And he will not come to her?" said Mrs. Melrose.

"No," replied Lucy. "We sent for him early in the afternoon. He said, when they told him she was dying, 'It would have been well if she had died years ago;' and when they told him that she wished to see him once more—to hear him say that he forgave her before she died,—he smiled bitterly, and said—'you may tell her that I forgive her, if that will be any comfort to her. I shall never see her again.'"

"They did not tell her what he said?"

"No, they only told her that he sent his forgiveness, but she understood it all. She wept bitterly, for the first time since her baby died. 'He will not come to me! If I could only see him once more!' But she is calm again now."

With noiseless steps they entered the chamber of death. Alice was lying, or rather reclining, supported by pillows. The fever-flush was gone from her wasted cheek, and her hand, as it feebly pressed that of Mrs. Melrose, was icy cold, but her eye was bright still, and there was a depth of meaning in its glance, as she answered, in faint, broken voice, the whispered question of her friend. "Calm—peaceful—thankful," were the only words uttered, but the look which accompanied them was eloquent with humble, trusting faith. Mrs. Melrose sat beside her, while the evening deepened into night. There was no apparent pain, but a gradual sinking—so gradual as to be scarcely perceptible—and so calm and gentle, that Lucy Evans afterwards said it seemed to her more like a tired child going to sleep, than like the approach of death. The clock in an adjoining room struck twelve, as Alice closed her eyes as if in slumber. The watchers bent over her, to listen to her quick, gasping breath. "She is dying," was the meaning of the glance they exchanged, as they gazed upon her still features, but they uttered not the thought in words. A sound like the sudden opening of a door below, made them start and listen. All was still, for a moment, then a slow, heavy tread ascended the narrow stair-case, and sounded along the passage leading to the chamber of the dying girl.

She opened her eyes at the sound of that well known footstep. "He has come—thank God," she murmured—and again the pale lids drooped heavily over the blue eyes, and a single tear—the last—stole silently down the white cheek. The door opened slowly, and a tall, dark-browed man entered, and advanced, with slow, measured tread, to the bedside of the dying one. He stood, and gazed upon her in silence. His bosom heaved—his lips quivered—his cheek grew ghastly white. "Alice," he said, in a deep, yet gentle tone, "Alice."

Once more those blue eyes opened—those pale lips parted with a faint, sweet smile, whispering the word, "Father."

"Alice, my child," and the stern, proud man folded his daughter to his bosom, and pressed his lips fervently, passionately, to her cold brow. She lifted her eyes to his face, and murmuring "Father! dear father!" clasped her arms about his neck, and laid her head upon his bosom. They could not see her face, but a moment after, her father silently unclasped her hands, and laid her gently back on her pillow. Alice was dead.

CHAPTER X.

PLANS AND PURPOSES.

THE wintry blast moaned fitfully without, sweeping the fast-falling snow-flakes, at intervals, against the cottage windows, but the lamps burned brightly within, and the family circle, all unbroken yet, gathered around the glowing hearth, to spend the long evening in social converse. A happy family group is a pleasant sight. Mr. Melrose though so, as he looked upon his children, who sat, variously employed, around the table. Charles had just finished reading aloud an article—"The Aim of Life," from the weekly news paper; and, as he folded the paper and laid it on the table, he said, "Is it not a grand idea, father, for every one—especially every young man, (Charley was almost seventeen,) to commence life with a definite idea—an aim that is lofty enough to awaken his ambition, and yet not so elevated as to be beyond his reach? It seems to me that he would accomplish much more in this way than in any other."

PLANS AND PURPOSES.

109

"Undoubtedly," was the reply. "Let us reduce the thing to practice. What aim have you in view, my son? What pursuit do you intend to make the employment of your life?"

"I have been thinking," replied Charles, earnestly, "that I should like to study medicine. Are you able to send me to college, father, or shall I work my own way?"

"I will send you through, my boy," said Mr. Melrose.

Mary looked up and laughed. "What are you laughing about, sis?" said Charley.

"I was thinking," replied Mary, and she laughed again.

"What were you thinking about," persisted Charles.

"About Dr. Melrose," returned Mary, with assumed gravity, "riding round in his sulky, distributing pills and powders. I shall be very careful not to be sick, after he commences practice."

Charley smiled for a moment, then he looked serious again. "What do you intend to be, Mary," he said.

"I?" replied Mary, "the doctor's sister."

"Come, Mary," interposed the father, "that is hardly fair. Charley's question was a serious one. It deserves a serious answer."

Mary looked thoughtful for a moment, and then said, "I intend to be a teacher."

"That is a good aim," remarked Charley; "but teachers are quite plenty just now. Where will you find employment?"

"Out West;" replied Mary quietly.

Charley started. Mrs. Melrose looked surprised. Mr. Melrose smiled. "That's a brave girl, Mary," he said, encouragingly, "teachers are sadly needed there."

"What, teach school in a log cabin?" said Ellen, lifting her large, blue eyes in wonder.

"Yes, Nell," Charley answered, "teach little white headed, barefooted urchins, coming through the woods and over the prairies, for miles around. Really, Mary, I think your plan quite as comical as mine." And Charley laughed in his turn. "How soon do you intend leaving, sis?" he enquired, when his merriment had somewhat subsided.

"About three years from now, or perhaps four," Mary replied.

"Just about the time I shall emerge from college," Charley remarked. "Perhaps we will go together. Come Nelly, tell us what aim you have in view. We'll go all round, now we've begun."

Nelly raised her head, tossed back her golden curls, and answered, with a sunny glance: "I mean to be a minister's wife one of these days." This time the laugh went round the circle. Nelly blushed a little, for a moment, and then laughed with the rest.

"A capital idea," said Charley, "only you'll have to look up the minister first. But there's plenty of time for that, Nell. I only hope you'll find a good one."

"I thought ministers were always good," said little Georgie. "Are they not, mother?"

"They ought to be, my son," said Mrs. Melrose.

"What will you be, Amy," said Arthur. Charley glanced at him, but too late.

"I should like to be a missionary, if I could only see," answered Amy, sadly.

"You are one now, Amy," said Charley, cheerfully. "You're a dear little home missionary—is she not, mother?" and Charley bent down and kissed the fair forehead of the sightless little one.

The eyes of Mrs. Melrose were full of tears, but she smiled through them as she answered, laying her hand lightly upon Amy's head; "Indeed she is, Charley. We should not know what to do without her."

"Well, Arthur," said Mr. Melrose, "it is your turn, now."

"I mean to be a traveler," said Arthur, "and go across the great ocean, and see all the wonderful places that we have read so much about. I mean to go to England, and France, and Germany, and Italy, and to Arabia, and Turkey—and—and—all over the world."

"And what will you do then?" inquired his father, smiling at the boy's glowing face.

"Oh! then I will come back again, and tell you all I have seen. And I will bring

you beautiful shells, and birds, and flowers,—and gold too, if I find any."

"Which will be rather doubtful," interrupted Charley. "But I am thinking it is time for you to be studying languages, Master Arthur, if you are going all over the world. You will want the French, German, and Italian, to perfection, to say nothing of the rest."

"I should think I might learn them all in eleven years," said Arthur, after a moment's thought.

"So you're not going to start till you're one-and-twenty," said Charley. "Well, that will be soon enough; and I really think you will learn something before that time. Georgie, what say you?"

"I am going to be a farmer, and settle down here with father and mother and Amy, and take care of them," said Georgie.

Mrs. Melrose felt her eyes filling again, as she kissed the round cheek of her boy, but the tears, this time, were tears of joy. Mr. Melrose patted his son's head as he drew him to his knee. Charley and Mary looked at each other. "Dear, loving little fellow!" thought they; "he has gone far, far beyond us all."

"Well, my children," said Mr. Melrose, after a quiet pause; "I do not see but your plans are all good ones—Nelly's *not* excepted," he added smilingly, as he saw the mischievous

glance that Charley directed towards her; and then he went on in a graver tone. "We will remember this night, and if God spares our lives a few years, and permits us all to meet again, as now, around our happy fire-side, we will see how far your early purposes have been realized." And Mr. Melrose bowed his head, and murmured, as if unconsciously thinking aloud, "A few years makes great changes—great changes."

CHAPTER XI.

A LOVED ONE CALLED HOME.

GREAT changes, are, indeed, wrought, not by a few years only, but by a few brief, fleeting months. So must any one have thought, who looked in upon the circle gathered around the hearth of that happy cottage home, ere the snows of another Winter had begun to fall. They were all there; but one of their number was passing away—fading, day by day, like the rich-hued autumn leaf, more beautiful than ever in its gorgeous mantle of decay. Amy—the “dear little home missionary,” as Charley had lovingly called her, was closing her brief, bright mission upon earth. Her gentle spirit was folding its dove-pinions here, to be outspread again—oh! how joyfully, in the pure atmosphere of the sinless land. Dear, as she had ever been to them—for her very helplessness had drawn her more closely to their hearts, till love for her seemed inwoven with every fibre of their existence—they felt, as they

looked upon her gradual decline, that they had never loved her before as they loved her now. Week by week, month by month, they had watched the slowly, surely advancing shade of death. They knew, from the first, that it must fall darkly around them, but now it seemed so very near, that they involuntarily shrank, shuddering, from the thought. Yet every hour brought that shadow nearer; and their eyes were dim and their hearts faint, as they saw the hectic flush on the wasted cheek, and felt the quick throbbings of the loving heart, so soon to be “hushed and motionless for ever.”

It was late in Autumn. Mrs. Melrose had been alone with Amy through the afternoon, and, for the first time, impelled by that strange sense of duty which every Christian mother, under similar circumstances, must feel, she had spoken to the child of death. She was not prepared for her reply. “I knew it long ago, dear mother,” she said, as she twined her slender arms more closely around her mother’s neck. “I knew it long ago, and if it were not for you, dear mother, and father, and all the rest, I should be very glad. You have thought, sometimes, when I have been better for a day or two, that I might be well again, but I knew that I should not. I feel better to-day than I have for a long time. I am glad, for I have a great deal to say to you before I go home.” The child paused,

and nestled her bright head nearer to her mother's cheeks. Then she spoke. "You must not think I have been unhappy, mother, because I have been blind," she said. "I have been very happy, because you have been so kind to me. I have wanted to see things that they said were beautiful, sometimes. I have tried to think how the stars looked, and the flowers, and the sea, that we hear so often. But I have wanted to see your face, mother, and father's, more than anything else. Do you remember, mother, one day when I was sober, thinking that I could not see, and could not learn anything, as Charley, and Mary, and the other children could, what you told me? You said that some children could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, and I thought how pleasant it was to hear and speak, if I could not see. Why, mother, you know I can tell every one who comes in, by their step, or their voice, and I can talk, and sing too. I thought of all this, and it seemed as if it would be wrong to be unhappy, because I could not see. I have not been, since, mother."

Amy paused again. Mrs. Melrose did not speak. After a little while, Amy went on. "Every one has been very kind to me, and I have been very happy. But I think it is better for me to die, mother. You could not always take care of me, as you have done, and I could not take of myself. I was think-

ing of that, and a great many other things, last night. I was not in any pain, but I could not sleep, and so I lay and thought. It seemed as if my life had been a long, dark night, but I thought the morning was coming, and I knew it would be all light then. You told me, mother, that I should see in heaven, and I shall go to heaven when I die. One thing troubled me, at first. I thought I should not know, when you came there, because I had never seen you here. But then I remembered that I had heard your voice, and I knew I should not forget it, if I did not hear it again for a long time; and I thought—it was a strange thought, was it not, mother?—that when any one came, I should shut my eyes and listen; and the voice and the step would tell me if it was any one I knew, and at last I went to sleep, and dreamed of Heaven. It was a pleasant dream, mother, but I cannot tell it to you—I have no words."

The child was silent again, and leaned her head upon her mother's shoulder. "Are you not talking too much, Amy, dear?" said Mrs. Melrose, tenderly.

"No, mother," Amy replied, "I was thinking. How long do you suppose I shall live?"

"Not many days, my child," said the mother; and her voice faltered, in spite of her effort to speak firmly.

"When I am dead," said Amy, and her low voice seemed sadly, thrillingly sweet—"when I am dead, mother, will you give Charley, and Mary, and Ellen, and Arthur, and Georgie, each a lock of my hair? And take one for you and father. I know you will not forget me, but I want to give you something that will seem like me, and that will, more than anything else; will it not, mother?"

Mrs. Melrose felt that her voice would fail if she tried to answer. She passed her hand silently over the soft brown hair, and kissed the wan, wasted cheek, and Amy smiled, as she lay languidly in her mother's bosom. "Do I tire you, mother?" "No, darling," was the whispered reply.

Amy was asleep when her father came in from his work, that night. Her cheek was flushed, and her pulses throbbed with fevered quickness. Mr. Melrose bent over her, and took her thin, hot hand in his own. "She is not as well, to-night," he said, in a low tone, to his wife. She shook her head without speaking.

An hour passed. The clock was striking eight as Amy awoke. "Is father here," was her first inquiry.

Mr. Melrose was at her side in a moment. "Do you want anything, my child?" he said, tenderly.

"I should like to have you carry me a lit-

tle while, father, I cannot breathe very well," answered the child. Mr. Melrose gently lifted her upon a pillow, and walked the room with her in his arms. After a little while she said, "Please let Charley take me now, father, you are tired." The clock struck nine. "I think I can lie on the sofa now, while father reads and prays," whispered Amy to her brother. Mary arranged the pillow, and Mrs. Melrose seated herself beside the suffering child.

"Shall we sing to-night, Amy?" said Mr. Melrose, as he closed the Bible. "Will it not disturb you?"

"Oh, no, father, I can sing with you," Amy replied. And among the faltering voices that blended in the evening hymn, rose one, clear and sweet, singing, as the blest in the better land might sing, of rest in heaven. They knelt in prayer, and fervently rose the petition for strength to endure affliction, for faith to triumph when the hour of trial should come. That hour was nearer even than they thought.

For some time Amy had lain upon the sofa in the sitting-room during the day, and slept in an adjoining bed-room at night. But this evening, she said the air in the bed-room seemed close, and expressed a wish to pass the night in the sitting-room. Her request was granted. Charles and Mary sat up with her till midnight. Then her father and mother

took their places. Amy was very restless through the night. Once or twice her mind seemed wandering. "Did I bid them all good night," she inquired anxiously, just as the gray light of dawn began to make the lamp burn dim and pale. "I thought I forgot to kiss brother Charley."

"It is morning now, my child," said Mrs. Melrose, soothingly. "Try to rest."

"You do not breathe freely, Amy dear," said her father. "Shall I carry you?"

"Yes, father," was the reply; but at his second turn around the room, she said; "Please lay me on the sofa again, father. I think I can sleep now."

Her father complied with her request. She could not breathe. Her mother raised her, and pillowed her head upon her bosom. "Do you lie easily, Amy?" she said.

"Yes, mother," whispered Amy. "I am going to sleep now. Father, kiss me once—mother, good night." A change came over her pale face as she spoke. She laid her head back, gently, and closed her eyes. The mother placed her hand upon the heart of her child. It throbbed—more faintly—it was still. Mr. Melrose raised the white curtain. The first rays of the rising sun threw a rich light over the pale face of the sleeper. A brighter morning had dawned for her.

Very beautiful was that young head, as it lay, pillowed for its last rest, like a pale, sweet bud of Autumn, over which the storm-blast had passed but lightly, destroying its life, but leaving its loveliness unchanged. Tears and blessings fell mingled upon that calm brow; and burning kisses were pressed upon those still, cold lips, that never before refused an answer to their love. The smile had passed from then when she fell asleep, but deep, holy peace looked from every feature of that pale face; and even little Georgie's sobs were hushed, as he gazed upon it in childish wonder and childish awe. Charley gently put aside the brown hair from the white forehead, and kissed tenderly a slight scar that had lain concealed beneath those bright locks. His mother alone saw the act. it needed no explanation to her.

The family stood, for a little while, around the hushed sleeper, gazing upon her loved face, and weeping. Then Mr. Melrose slowly closed the coffin-lid, saying, in a clear, calm voice, "Our blest little Amy is in heaven. We will try to live so as to meet her there." And silently and tearfully, one by one, they glided from the room.

CHAPTER XII.

ADVERSITY.

It is hard for a man who has toiled through the best years of his life to acquire a competence for himself and those whom he loves,—who has met, unshrinkingly, the summer sun and the wintry blast, cheered by the thought of a comfortable and peaceful shelter—a *home* for his declining years—it is hard for such a man, when the silvery hairs of age are beginning to gleam among the dark locks on his brow, to see the earnings of long years of industrious labor swept away, at a single blast,—gone—like the bubble melting into air—leaving him to sink in hopelessness, beneath the blow, or nerved by despair, to begin anew his battle with the world. Such was the lot of Mr. Melrose. By persevering industry and strict economy, Mr. and Mrs. Melrose had been able, not only to feed, clothe and educate their children, comfortably and respectably, thus far, but to lay aside, yearly, a small sum to meet



"Our little Amy is in heaven."

the demands of any future day of need. They were not wealthy, but they were no longer poor. Mr. Melrose had already begun to think and speak of giving up the care and toil of his station, in a few years, to his youngest son, who, true to his early purpose, wished for no higher place than that which his father had filled; when an unlooked-for event completely changed, for a time, the current of affairs.

An early friend of Mr. Melrose, reduced by illness and misfortune to want, applied to him for pecuniary assistance. Mr. Melrose generously, perhaps imprudently, gave the required aid, and a note, which, without his endorsement would have been considered worthless, relieved his friend, for the time, from his embarrassment. Months passed; and the sudden death of that friend, a short time before the note became due, aroused Mr. Melrose to a startling consciousness of his situation. The property of the deceased was not sufficient to satisfy a tenth part of the demand upon it. The note endorsed by Mr. Melrose was presented to him for payment. The sum was not large—a few hundreds only—but it came at a time when payment was impossible. Recent loans and expenditures had left the family treasury, for the time, empty.

Mr. Melrose felt the blow keenly, but he met it like a man. His chief anxiety was

for his children. Charles half way through his collegiate course; Mary had but just left home to spend a year at a female seminary; and the other children were looking eagerly forward to the time when their ages and attainments would entitle them to higher and more extended advantages than they had yet enjoyed. The disappointment would be a bitter one to them all. Must they be disappointed?

The first step taken by Mr. Melrose was to consult his wife. Mrs. Melrose had seen the shadow upon her husband's brow, and seemed rather relieved than otherwise, by learning its cause. "Is that all?" she said, smiling, as he finished the recital of his misfortunes.

"All!" repeated Mr. Melrose almost bitterly, "is it not enough?"

"Certainly, my dear husband," replied Mrs. Melrose, affectionately. "But it is nothing to what it might be. Is there no way of meeting the demand?"

"None, that I know of. I see no way of raising the amount, except by sale or mortgage. Even if we had the money with which we fitted out the children, a few weeks ago, it would not half cover the debt."

"Must the note be paid immediately? Would not Mr. Blake allow you to renew it, or wait, at least, for a few months? He is rich, and does not need the money."

Mr. Melrose shook his head. "Mr. Blake is rich," he said; "But he is avaricious—miserly. I shall ask no favors from him."

"Could you not borrow the money?"

"Not without giving good security for it, and, in fact, I do not wish to borrow it. I should feel very mean, running round, trying to borrow money. Besides, I know of no one who would be likely to lend it to me."

"What will you do then?" inquired Mrs. Melrose.

"I was thinking," replied her husband—and he spoke with hesitation, as if the thought was an unpleasant one, "I was thinking of mortgaging our little place here, for a few years. I might raise the money in that way, and I could redeem the homestead before the mortgage was out—or lose it."

Mrs. Melrose sighed. "Would you mortgage it to Mr. Blake?" she inquired.

"No," replied Mr. Melrose with energy. "No. I should not like to give him a grasp on my home. I thought of trying Farmer Norton. If he has the money, I do not doubt he will advance it for me."

Mrs. Melrose thought for a few minutes, and then said, quietly, "It may be the best way. But the place is worth much more than the sum due."

"It is worth double," said Mr. Melrose. "I was thinking," he added, after a brief pause, "of the children. What with this

and two or three smaller losses, I shall have very little left. I shall hardly be able to carry Charley through—or to give Mary the education I intended. Yet, if I thought it barely possible, I would try to do both. What do *you* think, Mary? I have half a mind to let them know nothing about it; and send them right on, as if this had not happened.

"I do not think it would be best," replied Mrs. Melrose. "Indeed, I do not think it would be right. Our money is not ours till this debt is paid. It belongs to our creditors. And, besides, I think the children would be pained by the discovery, at some future time, of what might seem like want of confidence in them. I think they ought to know the whole."

"But what will they do," said Mr. Melrose, despondingly. "It will be a great disappointment to them both."

"Not so very great, perhaps, after all," answered the hopeful-hearted wife. "Charley will go right on—only he will depend upon himself instead of you. It may be the very best thing in the world for him. Mary will have to defer the completion of her studies for a year or two, till we can help her, or till she can find some way. In a few years the debt will be paid—the mortgage will be cleared off—and we shall be rich as ever."

Mrs. Melrose smiled, and her husband smiled also. It was next to impossible not to reflect the sunshine of her face. "As rich as ever," repeated Mr. Melrose, "only a little older, and perhaps," he added, playfully, "a little wiser also. Tell me now, truly, Mary, do you not think I have been very imprudent?"

"In one sense of the word, yes; in another, no;" replied Mrs. Melrose, smiling a second time. "The world would call you imprudent, no doubt, for paying the debts of a man who would, in all probability, never be able to pay you, but I would not give much for a friend who would not help me when I wanted help."

"Thank you, a thousand times, Mary. You do not know what a weight you have taken off my heart. Now I will go and see Farmer Norton."

Farmer Norton had already numbered three-score years and ten, but his heart seemed to grow younger every year. There are very few such hearts in the world; it is a pity that there were not more of them. Farmer Norton had the money on hand, and he did not hesitate to advance it. "Only be sure and make the time long enough so that you will be certain to pay the mortgage," he said smiling, "for I'm sure I don't want your homestead for half its value."

The mortgage was given for three years—

the money paid—and next thing was to write to the absent children. This Mrs. Melrose did at once, simply stating the facts and leaving them to draw the inferences for themselves. She expected a prompt reply, and she was not disappointed. Charles was nearer home than Mary, and his letter reached them first. It was written on the same day on which he received his mother's. Its style was characteristic of the writer. Cheerfully, almost gaily, he spoke of the sudden change, concluding in the following words :

"Never fear—never fear—the old homestead will not slide through our fingers in that style. It is worth too much to go for a petty debt, like that. Do not be anxious about me. I shall do now what I ought to have done long ago—work my own passage, as the sailors say. I shall go through—as many a poor student has done before me—triumphantly, and come home a man—with strength, and hope, and courage enough to remove mountains, and demolish giant's castles. I enclose the money father gave me for the next six months. Luckily, I had not quite spent my last year's supply. I shall learn to be economical, and make a little go a great way, now. Keep Mary at school, if you can. It will be too bad for her to be disappointed. Love to all. In haste,

CHARLEY.

P. S.—Tell father not to be discouraged. Do not think of sending back the money ; I have plenty for the present, and know where to find more when I want it. C. M."

Mary's letter came the next day after Charley's. She too, wrote cheerfully, though less confidently than her brother.

"I shall remain here through the term," she wrote, "because I have paid in advance for that time, and the money cannot be refunded ; but I should not feel right, under existing circumstances, to remain longer. There is a little district school-house here, sadly in want of a teacher. Perhaps I shall take it at the close of the term. At any rate, I will try to contribute my mite in some way, towards the removal of the burden. The dear old homestead must not go. We cannot spare it. I send you thirty dollars of the fifty reserved for the next three months. That will be the interest of the debt for one year. 'Every little helps.' I thought it right to keep a part of the money, as I might need it if I were sick. I am very well now. Do not suppose I am discouraged. I am not. I can educate myself, and help you a little every year, besides. Please write again, soon. Affectionately,
MARY."

"The dear children !" said Mrs. Melrose, with a faltering voice, as she kissed the let-

ters, and laid them carefully away in the corner of her husband's desk.

"We *are* rich after all! There's no denying it!" exclaimed Mr. Melrose.

Rich, indeed—as every *true* father and mother may be—in the best of all treasures—pure, precious heart-wealth.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILLING HEARTS AND ACTIVE HANDS.

It is, not unfrequently, "the very best thing in the world," for an active, intelligent young man to find himself thrown suddenly and entirely upon his own resources. A feeling of dependence fosters weakness. Self-reliance gives strength and stability to the mind. Charles Melrose felt this, as he sat thoughtfully in his room, after penning the reply to his mother's letter. During the last few hours, he seemed to have grown older by many years. The boyish feeling was gone. He was a man now. The path that had lain so smooth and plain before him, was hedged up all at once, and he must remove the barrier by his own unaided efforts. But how? That was the question. Charley set himself at work to answer it. We give the result in his own words—a quotation from a long letter written home, towards the close of the third year at college:

"Sadly puzzled was I to know what to do. I thought till I seemed to have no thinking powers left. I laid all the absurd and impossible plans imaginable; and then amused myself by laughing at their impossibility and absurdity. While I was in the midst of my meditations, my room-mate entered. 'Two heads are better than one,' thought I, so I called upon him for aid. But I found him no better at inventing ways and means than myself. After laughing heartily at the propositions which he gravely submitted for my consideration—most laughable ones they were certainly—I said, 'This is very fine, L., but it does not mend the matter any. What shall I do?'

" 'Consult Professor N.,' said he, quietly. 'That is the best advice I can give you.'

"The fellow had no idea of my following *such* advice, but I was at the point of desperation. So off I went, to consult our worthy President. I found him in his study, surrounded and almost hidden by a cloud of tobacco smoke, (but for that *one* degrading habit, Professor N. would be a *great*, as well as a *good* man,) and made known my errand at once. He listened very composedly, and when I had finished my story, took his cigar from his lips, and prepared to answer. I listened intently, expecting a volume in a sentence.

" 'Three years—only one more—no money

—bad—very bad,' cogitated the learned Professor, half to himself, half audibly. 'Have you ever tried school-teaching?' he demanded, turning upon me so suddenly, that I started.

" 'I have thought of that,' I replied, 'but I cannot leave the city without losing the medical lectures, which I must and will attend.'

" 'True! true!' said the Professor. '*Must and will!*' he added, smiling. 'You use strong language, my young friend.'

" 'I speak as I feel, sir,' I replied. 'The lectures are very important to me.'

" 'True! true!' muttered the Professor. 'Have you no friend of whom you could borrow the money?' he inquired, a moment after.

" 'No, sir,' I replied. 'Besides, I do not wish to *borrow*, but to *earn* it.'

"The Professor smiled again. 'Proud-hearted!' he said, or rather thought, for I imagine he had the least idea of my hearing it. 'How much would you need to go comfortably through the year?' I named the sum. 'Very little! Very little!' *thought* he again. 'Can you go through on so small a sum?' he demanded.

" 'I went through on less, last year,' I replied.

" 'Economical!' *thought* the Professor. 'Come, come!' said he quickly; 'just throw

away your pride, now. I will lend you the money.'

"I thanked him and declined.

"'Proud—foolish!' muttered he. 'Well, then,' he added, 'I will give it you.' I felt the blood mantling in my forehead as I again briefly declined the proffered favor. 'Insulted!' was the *thought* this time; and the words, as, laying his cigar on the table, he turned abruptly towards me, were—'Why will you not accept the money as a loan? You could repay it in a few years; perhaps sooner.'

"'I have no lease of my life,' I replied, smiling, 'and my father is poor.'

"'Why not accept it as a gift?'

"'I am too proud to enjoy dependence,' I said, and I felt my eye flash as I answered, for I began to feel as if the Professor was trifling with me."

"Professor N. laughed outright,—a low, silvery laugh—it was really most musical. It made me think of Nelly. I should never have thought of hearing such a laugh from him. 'Young man,' said he, 'rising, and laying his hand upon my shoulder, with an easy, yet dignified familiarity; 'Young man, I like your spirit. Call on me again to-morrow evening, at eight o'clock. I will find something for you to do before that time.'

"I called the next evening at the appointed hour. 'Punctual,' *thought* Professor N.,

as he bade me good evening. My call was a brief one, but I returned to my room grateful and happy. I have the prospect of employment, at good wages, through the vacation, and as much afterwards, as I can find time for without neglecting my studies. 'But this will not carry you through the next term,' you will say. 'No, but it will do something towards it, and something else will be found to do the rest. I am going through, and I am not coming out in debt.'"

Mary wrote more encouragingly. The extract from her letter should have been given first. The letter was written some months before her brother's.

"The term closed three weeks ago to-day. The district-school which I had thought of taking, was engaged before I had an opportunity of applying for it, and I was wondering what I should do, when Miss Wilmot, one of our teachers, came to me with a letter from the principal of the High School, Mr. Morse. Miss Wilmot had learned that he was in want of an assistant, and had been so kind as to recommend me. Three dollars per week for the present—perhaps more in future. This is my first week in school. We have about sixty scholars. Mr. Morse governs; I have only to teach. I think I shall enjoy it highly. The opening seemed providential—did it not? Please tell father he

may depend upon the interest of the debt from me, as long as I have employment. All that he can save may go towards the principal. I shall be able to *help* Charley a little, besides, if he needs help. He will not be too proud to accept it from me."

Charley was not too proud to accept help from his sister, nor was he too proud to tell her, long afterwards, that he bedewed the kind letter containing that welcome aid, with his tears. It was just enough, with his own earnings, to carry him through the term, and a similar letter, with his own earnings, carried him through the next. He went through triumphantly, and Mary declared he was not in debt when he came out.

There was a unanimous family vote that the earnings of Mary's next year should be devoted to the completion of her own education. Mary thought the matter over, and decided in compliance with their wishes. "Only one consideration," she wrote, "would induce me to do this; the fact that one year spent at M— would enable me to command much higher wages than I now receive. So that it seems, upon the whole, true economy to pursue the course which you have marked out for me."

The three years for which the mortgage had been given, were drawing near their close, and more than half the debt yet re-

mained unpaid. There were still three years of redemption, but the time seemed very short, and Mr. Melrose looked forward with a saddened spirit, to the day when the few acres that his hands had tilled so long, might become a part of the extended fields of his more wealthy neighbor. Mr. Melrose had been peculiarly unfortunate for several years. Unfavorable seasons and scanty crops on the farm—sickness in the family—loss upon loss from the dishonesty or misfortunes of others—all combined to baffle his efforts and repress his energy. "It is of no use," he said despondingly, at the end of the third year. "The place must go; we may as well give it up first as last."

"Why, father," answered Ellen cheerfully, "there are three long years yet. I shall earn enough, and more than enough to pay the interest yearly, and next year Mary will be able to help us again. And perhaps Charley can do something too. The debt is more than half paid, now. It will all be paid before the time is out."

Mr. Melrose shook his head, but made no reply. "I have no doubt we shall be able to clear off the mortgage if we are blessed with health," remarked Mrs. Melrose. "At any rate, we will try not to be anxious about it. We will hope for the best, and prepare for the worst."

"A letter from Aunt Susy, father," said Arthur, entering.

Mr. Melrose took the letter and read it in silence. Then, passing it to his wife, he remarked: "A chance for you to begin your travels, Arthur. Mr. Berkley wants help, and Aunt Susy has taken a fancy to send for you."

"I'll go, father!" said Arthur eagerly. "That is, if you can do without me here," he added in a graver tone.

"We should miss you, Arthur," replied Mr. Melrose, "but George and I can manage the farm easily, and if you really wish to go, we will not object. But it is not best to be in a hurry about it. Take time to think it all over, and then decide as seems best."

"It seems that Mr. Berkley has removed since Aunt Susy last wrote," Mrs. Melrose observed, as she handed the letter to Arthur. "He has gone farther back into the country. There will be hard work to be done there, Arthur."

"Yes," replied Arthur, glancing hastily over the letter, and giving a brief summary of its contents aloud. "One year—ten dollars per month—a chance to see the country. I think I'll go. The work will be hard, no doubt, but I am young and strong. The wages are small—I could make more to hire out here, but the opportunity to see a little of the world, beyond one's own chimney-corner, is worth something. I shall probably visit the White Mountains, and climb to

the summit of Mt. Washington, before I come home again;" And Arthur's cheek glowed, and eye kindled, as his old boyish love of adventure revived again, in all its force.

"How I should like to go with you!" Georgie exclaimed, but Mrs. Melrose sighed, and Ellen said, half reproachingly, "And you could leave us all so easily, Arthur?"

The boy's face was shadowed at once. "No, Nelly," he replied, tenderly, after a moment's silence. "No, Nelly, I could not leave you as easily, but I cannot stay here always, and it will be as easy going now as any time. Besides, I ought to be doing my share towards paying this paltry debt that is threatening to eat us out of house and home. It vexes me every time I think of it. I'm not gone yet, though," he added, laughing, "And that is not the worst of it."

"I am almost sorry for this offer," said Mrs. Melrose to her husband, when they were left alone.

"I am not," he replied. "Arthur will make his own way anywhere; and, as he says, he cannot stay with us always."

"I may be all for the best," said Mrs. Melrose. "We will try to think it is so."

Two weeks from the receipt of Aunt Susy's letter, Arthur left for Mr. Berkley's farm in New Hampshire. For a few days after he was gone, the house seemed very still and

lonely. Then they began to be more accustomed to his absence, and things went on in their usual course. For two summers past, Ellen had been engaged in teaching a district-school. Charley—"Dr. Melrose"—as Nell mischievously called him—had commenced practice, and was doing well. He had only commenced, however, and his income, for the few first years could scarcely be expected to do more than equal his expenses. Mary and Ellen had united in furnishing the requisite means for his entrance upon the professional career, and this demand upon their limited resources had been one among the many drawbacks upon the redemption of the dear old homestead. There seemed little probability, now, of its ever being redeemed. Even the hopeful heart of Mrs. Melrose was compelled to acknowledge that the prospect was a dark one. But still she said, with her own calm smile, "We will not be anxious, for that is wrong. If we *can* save our home, we *will* save it. If we cannot, we will be thankful that it has been ours so long, and give it up freely, without a murmur." A precious thing, in the hour of trial, is a Christian mother's holy faith.

CHAPTER XIV.

LETTERS.

AMONG the many gleams of sunshine on a shadowed path, must be numbered one, sometimes too lightly prized,—the privilege of interchanging thought and feeling with those whom we love, when absent from them. Letters—priceless gifts are they, coming from week to week, with their well-known superscription, and dear, familiar signature. They bring home near us in our wanderings—nearer than anything else can bring it. We read them—sometimes with moistened eyes always with a grateful heart, and lay them aside to be re-perused again and again, till their contents are as familiar as our own thoughts—those thoughts with which they blend so closely.

Letters came often to the home among the hills, after so many of its young inmates went forth from the shelter of its gray, moss-grown roof. Now a brief, hastily-written missive from Charley—now a long, loving letter

from Mary—now a lively, rambling chapter of notes by the way from the farmer's boy in the Granite State—they came, and they found a welcome. And letters—oh! how welcome! went forth in return, bearing greetings and tidings of home to the wanderers. Sometimes Ellen wrote, sometimes George, sometimes father, and sometimes (her letters were dearer than any of the rest,) mother's own hand-writing greeted the eyes and gladdened the hearts of the fondly-remembered children. People who sit down with pen, ink and paper before them, and think for long hours what to write, can have no idea how easily those letters were written, and how delightedly they were read. There was no study about them,—there was no attempt at choice phraseology and gracefully rounded periods. They came straight from the hearts of the writers, and they went, for that very reason, straight to the hearts of the readers, also. Ellen's letters were often a simple journal, written from day to day, and detailing anything and everything that would be likely to interest her absent brothers and sister. Home—the green hill-side—the orchard trees—the cottage-roof—the fireside group—all these rose to Mary's view, as she read those simple records of the daily life of the loved ones whose voices her full heart yearned to hear again. Charley declared that Ellen's

journalizing made him home-sick; and even Arthur, light-hearted rover as he was, would sometimes sigh over the memory of the quiet happiness of his boyhood's home. But the true way to give an idea of these letters will be, to unfold them before the reader—not fully—for who would wish his or her letters home to be spread before the world?—but just far enough to give a glimpse of such passages as we choose to submit to the public eye. We cannot, of course, give extracts from all; we have neither time nor space for that, but the extracts given will be such as to show the character and aim of the correspondence. First comes a portion of a letter from Arthur. We give this for two reasons: first, because the boy's spirit breathes from every line of it; and secondly, because it contains a sketch of an old friend, whom it may be pleasant to all to hear from again:

"Since I wrote last, I, like other distinguished travelers, have visited the White Mountains. But I shall not describe them to you. Why? Because it is impossible, without descriptive powers of a much higher order than mine, to give you the faintest idea of them. Therefore I prefer to tell you nothing about them. One thing I will tell you. On the very summit of Mt. Washington, with a view before me such as I never saw till then, I found myself dreaming—of

what, think you? Not of sublimity and grandeur—not of ambition and its reward—not of wealth and fame—not even of poetry and beauty—but of something a great deal dearer than them all—of home. And, really, the view from Mt. Washington was nothing in comparison with the sunny scene that my imagination conjured up at that magic word. Happily, I awoke to the stern realities of life, in time to save myself from descending the mountain, not as I had ascended—but 'with constantly accelerated velocity.' Aunt Susy laughed outright when I told her of the marvellous power of vision enjoyed by me upon the mountain's summit, and said she would accompany me in my next visit, if she could hope to share in the enchantment.

"Using Aunt Susy's name reminds me that I have never answered half your questions about her. I will try to answer them now—all at once—or as near that as may be. Aunt Susy has grown old since you saw her. Her hair is quite gray, and she begins to stoop a little. The color has faded from her cheek, and her high forehead is deeply wrinkled. She is not as active nor as strong as she was when with us. But she is Aunt Susy still. The same cheerful, even temper—the same originality of thought and expression—the same straight-forward honesty—and, better than all the rest, the same kind,

warm, *good* heart that made us all love her so much. My letters from home are almost as welcome to her as to myself. She seems to have a corner for everybody in her heart, and one of the very warmest nooks there is set aside for my own dear mother and our blessed little Amy. If I were half as good as Aunt Susy, with all her peculiarities—I should be—a great deal better than I am now. She seems very happy in her family cares and duties. Mr. Berkley, though as different from her as it is possible to imagine, is a good, kind husband. I hardly expect, in all my wanderings over the world, to find (excepting one,) a happier home than theirs.

"Many thanks to Nell for her journal. When I commence my travels in earnest, and have something worth writing about, I will write to her, *perhaps*. I am sorry father is so discouraged about the mortgage. I know the time is almost out, but who can tell what wonders we shall accomplish in a few months? 'Hope on! hope ever!' say I. A letter from the Doctor last week. I told Aunt Susy it tasted of the medicine-chest. Not more than a half-dozen lines in it. Tell Georgie I am coming home to see his famous white rabbits in a year or so, if not sooner. Mary has not written for a long time. Please, dear mother, write me a good, long letter, *soon*. We are very busy just now, clearing woodland. If you could see some of the trees that are

cut down! I thought I had almost finished my letter a long time ago. I believe it is finished now. Not quite, though. Mr. Berkeley has just paid me my wages for the last six months. I enclose fifty dollars for father. One hundred more and he will be rich again.

"P. S.—Do you remember the Spanish *olla podrida*? Is not this letter something like it?"

A page from Ellen's journal follows:

"Oct. 5th. The first heavy frost, last night. If you could only see the old woods this morning! They are so beautiful! I am glad my school has closed, for I shall be at home to help mother through the Winter. She needs help now, more than she did a few years ago. Father grows old very fast. He has gone to the village to-day, with a load of apples. Georgie—you cannot imagine how much he has grown within a few months—is going to attend school again next Winter. It seems but very little while since we were all children, and now, we are scattered every way. It makes me sad to think of it. Shall we ever live together again?"

"7th. Lucy Evans is very ill. Mother has been with her to-day. She thinks she shall not recover. Mother thinks there is hope, but not much. Miss Preston called here this afternoon. She has grown old and ugly very fast, lately. I do not think people can look good if they are wicked. What would she

say, if she should see what I have written? But Miss Preston *cannot* be good. If she were, there would certainly be something lovely about her. She was scolding, to-day, about Mr. Weldon's exchanging so, often. She always finds something to scold about. Mrs. Edmonds called after tea. What a contrast!

8th. Mrs. Clement died last night. She has been ill a long time, but she only gave up entirely about a week before her death. Mr. Clement is said to be in embarrassed circumstances. His children will be scattered—provided for by their relatives. Poor things! I pity them. How thankful we should be that our kind parents have been spared to us so long! We owe them so much! How can we ever repay them?

10th. We have had a little excitement in the neighborhood to-day. About two o'clock this afternoon, the old pine woods through which we have walked so many times, took a fancy to burn up. People who owned woodlots there, did not exactly approve of the fancy, so there was quite a war of the elements in the vicinity. The neighbors worked right manfully, but I thought, for a while, that the fire would come off conqueror. They finally subdued it. How do you think? By doing something I should never have dreamed of—ploughing a furrow. The fire did not cross it. I pitied the poor oxen—

they seemed so frightened. They ran, while they were ploughing. There are two or three houses in the woods. They were in imminent danger, but I never thought of them till afterwards. One barn was burnt. I could think of nothing but the fire. It was so near us that we could hear the roaring of the flames, and the cracking of the branches. And oh! if you could *only* have seen the fire, as it went flashing up the tall pines, and leaping, like a living thing, from tree-top to tree-top. It was a splendid sight. Mother thought it very terrible. But it was so grand, so magnificent! I longed to clasp my hands and shout 'Beautiful! Glorious!' I suppose they would have thought me crazy if I had. The dear old pine woods! They look desolate enough now. The underwood is burnt away in many places, but the tall trees stand—leafless—blackened—shorn of their beauty forever. One thing seems very singular to me. Our old oak-tree (how many happy hours we have spent in its shadow!) is left unscathed. The fire swept all around it; but its foliage is uninjured. I was very glad for the old noble tree. Mr. L. says he would rather have had his house, with its contents, burned to the ground. I thought it strange that he could feel as he seemed to about it. We were thankful that no lives were lost. A corner of father's wood-lot was burned—about an acre. It might have been worse, you know.

12th. You would have laughed, if you had been at home to-night. Father and Georgie have been at work among the burnt wood all day. They came home just the color of charcoal. Hands, faces, clothes,—no, you would not have laughed if you had thought of the hard washing it made for us. Georgie looked in the glass, and then danced around the room. Even father laughed. They will go 'armed and equipped as the law' of common sense 'directs,' to-morrow.

15th. A little bit of a call from Charley. I saw the sulkey coming, and ran out to open the gate, so that the professional gentleman might ride in style. He generously offered me a paper of bitters for my pains, but I said, 'No, I thank you.' Charley is prospering, but his expenses are not small, and his power to help us is not equal to his will. Only nine months more, and one hundred dollars due yet on the mortgage. Father is completely discouraged, but I think it will be paid. At any rate, we will try.

21st. Mr. Carr has failed. It must be very hard for Mrs. C. to be poor. Lucy Evans is recovering. Miss Preston is married. Do you not envy her husband? He is from the city. His name is Maynard. A letter from Arthur. Aunt Susy thinks of visiting us again, next Spring, when Arthur comes home. What a long time to wait for them! Is not my letter quite as good as a newspaper?"

A copy—entire—of a letter from Charley, written when the nine months had waned to three, and a concluding paragraph, will bring the present chapter to its termination.

“Enclosed please find fifty dollars, the reward of a successful experiment. Never fear for the old homestead now.”

The succeeding week brought a letter containing twenty dollars from Arthur—one containing ten from Mary—and the remaining twenty were made up by what Ellen called a “family subscription.”

Happy, thankful hearts throbbed beneath that lowly roof on the night that made their home their own again. It was saved, just saved, and that was all. The value of the old homestead seemed increased a hundred fold, from that hour.

CHAPTER XV.

RE-UNION.

“LIKE ‘Summer birds from far across the sea,’ come we home again,” wrote Mary Melrose to her parents, on the first day of Spring. Mary did not often quote poetry, but the thought of returning home, after an absence of years—the thought of seeing again those whom one loves as one can never, never again in this world love others—is it not enough to make any one poetical?

A blessed evening was that of the cold, snowy Spring day, which brought the last of three absent ones—Arthur—safely home. “We are *all* here,” sang Nelly, as she cleared the tea-table; and Charley echoed the words, “We are *all* here.”

“Why!” said Georgie, as he took his seat in the corner, with his dark eyes sparkling with animation,—“Why! I do not believe we know how happy we are!”

“We *are* very happy,” said Mr. Melrose. “God has given us much to be thankful for.”

It is a long, long time since we have met as we are meeting now—all here."

"It is a long time," replied Mrs. Melrose, "and many changes have taken place in that time. How many family circles have been broken by death! how many have been darkened by suffering or sin. Ours is yet an unbroken household."

"But not an unchanged one," said Arthur, smiling. Mr. Melrose smiled also, as he glanced around the circle. That smile told that the change had not been a sad one. "Let us see," continued Arthur, playfully. "I remember some half-dozen years ago, one evening we were here assembled, planning for the future. Now I move, that each one of us ascertain and declare how far his or her remain unchanged; and also if unchanged, how much progress has been made towards their completion."

"I second the motion," said Mr. Melrose; and the motion was carried without a single dissenting voice. "Well, Charley," said Mr. Melrose, turning to his eldest son, "your age gives you the right to speak first. What say you?"

"I will let the facts speak for me," answered the young physician, modestly, yet in a manner that showed his consciousness of success earned by persevering effort.

"Very well answered, Dr. Melrose," said Mary, smiling, "We are all ready to ac-

knowledge that you have carried out your plan nobly."

"And yours, Mary?" inquired her father.

"Mine is yet unfinished," Mary replied, "but not abandoned," she added, after a moment's thought.

"Only a little more varied," interrupted Charley, archly.

"I do not understand you," said Mary, with a look of surprise.

"Ah! then I will explain, replied her brother. "Your plan was, to be a teacher in the far West. The plan is not abandoned—but—the school will probably be a private one, commencing with only one scholar. Do you understand me now, sis?" Mary's eyes fell, and the bright glow that covered her brow, proved that she did understand; but she said nothing.

"Well, Nelly," said Arthur, "you come next on the list. Your plan is not yet reduced to practice,—is it varied, like Mary's or given up altogether?"

"Neither," replied Nell, laughing and blushing.

"That's a brave, honest girl," said Charley. "But when is your early dream to be realized, sis?"

"Ah! that is more than I can say," Nelly replied. "I bide my time."

"Well, do not wait too long, for Aunt Nelly would not sound quite as natural as Aunt Susy, that's all," returned Charley.

"Thank you for your good advice, brother," said Nelly, quietly.

"Well, Arthur," said Mr. Melrose, after a little pause, during which the slightly shadowed faces of the group showed that their thoughts were busy with the past. "Well Arthur, it is your turn now. What have you to say of your contemplated life of adventure in foreign lands?"

"My plan is somewhat like Mary's," was Arthur's reply, "and yet somewhat different from hers. It is not yet accomplished, neither is it abandoned, but it is varied, considerably. I still intend being a traveler, but I shall allow myself more time for preparation, and commence in a different manner from what I originally intended. My first tour will be through the New England States—then West—then South—and then over the sea, to countries far away. Whether I shall bring you back the gold that I used to dream of, is yet an undemonstrated problem. It is hardly probable that I shall, however, as knowledge, not gold, will be the object of my wanderings."

"And you, Georgie," said Mr. Melrose, as he laid his hand affectionately upon the dark locks of his youngest one.

"I, father?" replied the boy, with a glance full of trusting love. "Am I not becoming more and more of a farmer every day? And shall I not make a good one by and by?"

"A noble one, I hope, my boy," replied Mr. Melrose. "But will you be contented to spend all your life here? Will you not want to join Arthur in his wanderings? Or will not your brother Charley's sphere seem a wider and more useful one than yours?"

"I think not father," returned the boy, earnestly. "And even if it should seem so, what then? Aunt Susy used to say that some one must fill up the nooks and corners of the world, and I think we have a very pleasant little nook here. And, besides, father, I know you and mother would be happier to have me with you."

"We certainly should, if you could be contented to stay," replied Mr. Melrose.

"After all, my children," remarked Mrs. Melrose, your plans have not proved very wild ones. I did not think, when you first marked out your several paths, that you would pursue them so perseveringly."

"Perseverentia omnia vincit," quoted George.

"I should like to know what an agricultural gentleman has to do with Latin," said Arthur.

"Just the same that a traveler has to do with home," returned Charles, coming to George's aid at once. "Find in it rest from his fatigue, forgetfulness of his vexations, and amusement for his leisure."

"He must love it better than I ever did," remarked Arthur.

"But, seriously," continued Charles, "the fact that a man is a farmer or a mechanic, a laboring man, is no reason why he should be ignorant."

"No, indeed, exclaimed George, "and I know one, at least, who does not intend to be so."

"That is right, Georgie, said Mr. Melrose.

There was little sleep, that night, in the lowly dwelling of Mr. and Mrs. Melrose. Their hearts were too full for rest. The father's voice faltered, as he thanked God in his evening prayer, for the mercy that had permitted them all to meet once more, and the mother's eyes filled with tears as her children came, one by one, to claim a nightly kiss and blessing from her lips, as they had been in the habit of doing, long, long, years ago.

"Oh! it is such a blessed thing to be at home, once more!" said Mary, as she laid her head upon her pillow.

"And it is such a blessed thing to have you all here again," answered Nelly, nestling her cheek closer to her sister's as she spoke.

"Perhaps it is only a foolish fancy," said Mary, "but I have not slept a single night since I have been gone, as I used to sleep at home. There is a sense of perfect security and perfect rest here, that is not to be found anywhere else."

"But, at that rate, what will you do when you go West?" interrupted Nelly, a little mischievously. "You will be farther from home then, than you have ever been before."

"Oh, do not say anything about that to-night," Mary replied. "You know I have the whole long Summer to spend at home, with you."

"The whole long Summer!" repeated Nelly, "why it will be gone before we think, and we shall be scattered again, who knows where?"

"It does seem sad that families should be broken up," said Mary, musingly, "but I suppose it is all for the best. We can do more good by mingling with the world, than by remaining all our lives at home, and we certainly ought to try to be useful."

"I suppose that is true," answered Nelly, "but I do not love to think of it. Tell me some of your adventures in the wide world, and let me forget that you are going away again."

A happy Summer was that in the home among the hills—the happiest and the last that the unbroken family circle was to spend there. Mary and Arthur both at home; Charley near enough to see them almost every day, they felt that they were very happy. The Autumn came, and before its last flowers faded, the family group was scattered again.

Mary, with one to whom she had plighted her trusting heart, was on her way to a Western home; Arthur, as an agent for several of the publications of the day, was realizing his plan of journeying through New England; Charles was seriously contemplating following Mary and her husband to the far West; and Nelly, blue-eyed, golden-haired Nelly, was dreaming of a quiet, vine-shadowed country parsonage, some twenty miles from her childhood's home, which was waiting, as its lonely occupant said, most impatiently, to welcome her as its proprietress. "Not yet," Nelly said, "one Winter more at home, one Spring more among the flowers her care had trained and the birds her hand had fed, one Summer more with father, and Georgie, and dear, dear mother, and then, perhaps, but not before, certainly not before." And so the young minister was compelled to exercise the Christian virtue of patience, consoling himself with the thought that the daughter who clung so affectionately to her parents, could not but cling still more closely to her husband.

And how felt Mr. and Mrs. Melrose, as the children whom they had reared went forth, one by one, to return no more, except at long intervals, as casual visitors, to their early home? As a Christian father and mother should feel, who have trained a fam-

ily for usefulness on earth and happiness in Heaven. Tears fell upon Mary's dark locks, as she bowed her head upon her mother's bosom, in the anguish of a long—it might be a last—farewell; tears gleamed upon Nelly's bright curls, as she looked up, weeping into her mother's face, at the parting hour; but with the farewell tears and the parting blessing, tremulous as it was with unuttered tenderness, was the thought, "Not forever, for this life perhaps, not for eternity." Thank God, for that precious hope. Near and dear ties must be severed, it may be rudely, in time, but the parted links will be united again, in and for eternity.

REPRODUCED FROM THE COPY IN THE

HENRY E. HUNTINGTON LIBRARY

FOR REFERENCE ONLY. NOT FOR REPRODUCTION