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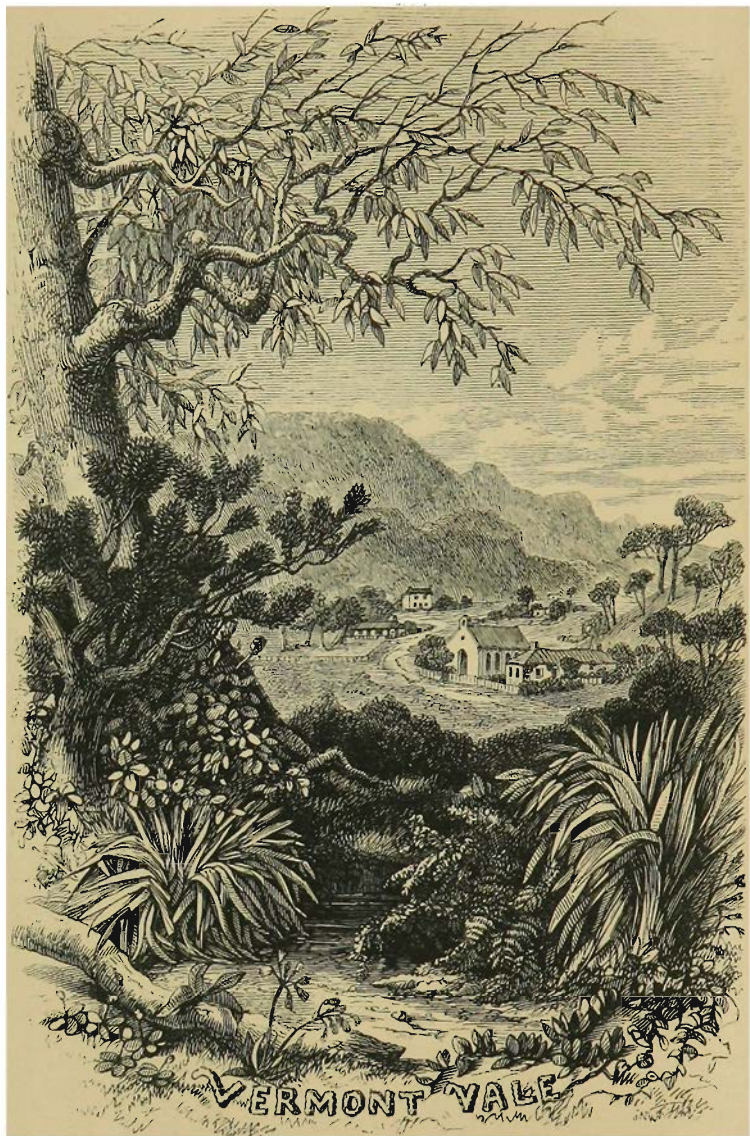
New Church Sunday School.

May 24th 1882.

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VERMONT VALE;

OR,

Home Pictures in Australia.

BY

MAUD JEANNE FRANC,

AUTHOR OF "MARIAN; OR, THE LIGHT OF SOME ONE'S HOME."

THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE.

THE kind reception accorded to "Marian," both by an Australian and English public, induces its Author once again to appear before them, trusting that the same lenient spirit that welcomed her former little volume may be willing as kindly to review the pages of "Vermont Vale."

With the simple details of every-day life, at least in some of its phases, the Author has endeavoured to blend a few of those clear gospel truths that are "able to make wise unto salvation," with the blessing of the Holy Spirit upon them; and if, indeed, this blessing be bestowed, if only a few of those who have hitherto sought vainly after happiness among earthly objects, shall be led by the perusal of "Vermont Vale" to discover the Fountain from which *true* happiness alone can spring, most deeply grateful will be its Author,

MAUD JEANNE FRANC.

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VERMONT VALE ;

OR,

HOME PICTURES IN AUSTRALIA.



CHAPTER I.

VERMONT VALE.

“ Even the green trees
Partake the deep contentment, as they bend
To the soft winds, the sun from the blue sky
Looks in, and sheds a blessing on the scene.”

It was not a village, nor even a hamlet, nor indeed were there any great number of houses visible, and yet it had been assigned a name. The real name our readers must permit us to conceal, and accept one we have thought fit to give it—“Vermont Vale.”

And a very sweet vale it was, with its surrounding heights, its unmolested antiquated old gums, fresh blooming wattle-trees, blackwoods, and cherry-trees. Few people would have guessed, as they passed along the winding road leading through the centre of the vale, followed by a mossy creek, how many hearts beat healthfully among those hills, or how many feet eagerly traversed the green sward as on each Sabbath

morning the soft tinkle of the bell reminded them of One who has pronounced the Sabbath His own !

In almost the prettiest place in the vale the little unpretending Sabbath-house was situated. It was only a wooden structure—rough wood too, and yet it was neat. Some one had superintended its erection, who knew how to make the best of rough materials, who had an eye for the picturesque. The painted window-frames were neatly set. There were very white blinds to the windows ; the walls were half-mantled in cape-ivy. Even a rose had wreathed the rude porch ; and some one had taken the trouble to clear and keep in order a straight and broad pathway from the door to the slip-panel, on either side of which some carefully-preserved young wattles formed a pretty avenue, especially when laden with the odorous yellow blossom. Their rich perfume penetrated even within the house of prayer !

Within ! Ah, it was a treat to look within ! So pure, so clean, so white, and yet so primitive. The simple desk of unpolished cedar, and its dark blue cloth cushion, on which reposed the large Bible, neatly covered up all the week in its brown-holland case ; the plain deal benches, with their one rail for weary backs. The one luxury of the place was a pretty harmonium, concealed behind a crimson curtain. Some lady, therefore, played in Vermont ; some lady awoke a concord of sweet sounds from its keys Sabbath after Sabbath. Even among the scattered population of Vermont Vale, fingers were found familiar with harmony. If rough without, the walls of the little chapel were smoothly plastered within, and white as lime could make them. The floor was

boarded, and pure, and clean. It was easy to see that some hearts dearly loved their little prayer-house—dearly loved the “Gates of Zion,” and believed in that trite, but true old proverb, that “cleanliness is next to godliness.”

To add to the beauty of the scenery, a hill, in spring-time covered with verdure, and pink with heather, rose abruptly behind the little chapel. A thick hedge of mingled kangaroo, yellow-blossomed furze, and multiflora roses divided the chapel-yard from a luxuriant garden, rife with fruit, vegetables, and flowers, and full of pleasant shady walks. More than half-hidden by a vine stood the pretty cottage belonging to the garden; a deep verandah encircled it on every side, and walls, roof, and verandah were covered with passion-flower and vine leaves, each striving which should hide most of the bare wooden walls. At every part of the verandah honeysuckle and roses united their foliage and fragrance, and before the door were arranged gracefully-curved flower-beds, rich with rare specimens of the gifts of Flora, and being deeply bordered with violets.

Every breath of air that wandered in through the open window must have been laden with health as well as fragrance—it could not be otherwise; and everything was sweet and pure within to do honour to their entrance. Nothing luxurious was there in the little room, excepting, perhaps, the deep easy-chair, the softly-cushioned sofa, and the round table deeply draped with a dark blue cloth. Perhaps, too, the delicate drawings on the walls, the transparent drapery at the window, and library of books, which nearly took up one side of the room, might have

assisted to give the air of refinement that most certainly was dominant there. Well, we have introduced you, dear readers, to the minister's study, for our pretty cottage is the residence of the pastor of Vermont Vale.

And will our fair readers believe it that, in spite of the order and beauty around, our pastor was a bachelor? Not, however, a confirmed one. Ah, no, dear reader! He had taken no vows—he was truly Protestant in his creed—on that point as on every other. In fact, he was just like hundreds more of the brotherhood, he was still a bachelor, because he had as yet encountered none with whom he felt he could go hand-in-hand in his round of holy duties. We will not surmise how many times as he passed from his little parlour to the simple room beyond, and sat down to the table with no other companion than his respectable old housekeeper, dreams of the future would arise in which younger hands were to preside, and younger eyes to beam back glances of affection, and younger, brighter thoughts be interchanged with his! But at present these were but dreams, and he was still a bachelor, and old Mrs. Norton the presiding genius of his home.

There are a dozen roads branching out of Vermont Vale. At the corner of one of these, close to the road, not even parted by a strip of flower-garden, and rejoicing in the shade of a deep verandah, stood a substantial stone house, a house with an upper story too, and green blinds at every window. That was refreshing for the eye to rest upon, and so were the glimpses one caught of snowy bed-furniture within. The crochet articles over the looking-glasses told of

the presence of feminine fingers, and for the matter of that so did everything else about the house, from parlour to kitchen. One little room told a different tale ; its atmosphere was redolent with the odour of drugs. Glass bottles in any number, pill-machines, drawers with Latin labels, and one or two instruments, the very sight of which was sufficient to cure the most violent toothache, betrayed the professional character of this mystic cell. Here, indeed, the only medical man in the district compounded his medicines. Every one for miles knew Dr. Moore, and his only daughter—Miss Fanny.

Up that same road, but farther still from the chapel, a rude slab hut, made charming by its jessamine drapery, and surrounded by a garden enclosing a few vegetables and many flowers, rejoiced in the title of the "school-house." Within it, day by day, sat a wee little morsel of a schoolmistress, giving instruction in A B C to boys who overtopped her many inches, and to girls numbering quite as many years as her own. Like many other things in this wide world of ours, there was more in that modest little dwelling than met the eye.

On the other side the "Vale," and yet farther from our starting-point, where three roads met, was another slab building, containing in one many useful branches of trade. Hither came the Vermonts for their letters, pins, needles, and tape. Mysterious-looking "lollies" attracted the halfpence from the pockets of Vermont's young fry. Huge joints of meat found their way from thence into the Vermont larders and beef-tubs. A yard of print, or a bonnet out of date, might be bought here for something less

than double the Adelaide price, and a motley assortment of common earthenware was generally displayed round the door, amidst brooms and agricultural implements of all shapes and sizes. This was decidedly the store of Vermont. Everybody within the Vale—ah ! and within four and five miles distant from it—found it convenient sometimes to wend their footsteps thither. Amongst other things, all the gossip for half a dozen miles around was related. Births, and deaths, and marriages, and the trips and failings of poor human nature, were the ordinary refreshment bestowed with the goods.

The other inhabitants of the Vale were chiefly farmers, scattered here and there, and of different standing and importance, but all cultivators of the soil. One of the best-farmed sections in Vermont was about half a mile or more from the little chapel. Of that and its owner, Fred Linwood, our next chapter will have something more to say.

CHAPTER II.

SUNNY HOLLOW.

“ Oh, yes ! I love the sunshine ;
Like kindness, or like mirth,
Upon a human countenance,
Is sunshine on the earth.”

RICH, green, velvety slopes, rife with young wheat ; noble gums skirting the corn-ridges, through which the sun shone softly ; barns, and stables, and stock-yards surpassing any in Vermont. Such was Sunny Hollow, the home of Frederick Linwood.

Beautiful for situation was Sunny Hollow, for, as its name betokened, in a hollow it lay, and at the very foot of a range of hills whose verdant heads were crowned with the first golden beams of morning, and blushed with evening's roseate. Beautiful for situation, from the topmost heights of those hills to the deepest hollow beneath them. Thither came the rain and pearly dew-drops in season. The creek ran bubbling along through part of the home section ; it was never dry. The sunshine stole in everywhere, for every part of its name was well merited.

Fine abundant crops that farm yielded ; nowhere finer. The straight, even furrows, faultless in symmetry and proportion, were justly the pride of the young farmer ; for, assisted by his brother Stephen,

Fred Linwood had turned almost all those furrows with his own plough. The wheat sprang up from thence as though it could experience the pleasure of growing symmetrically.

Yes, certainly, had that spot been chosen for mere beauty of situation, none more lovely could have been selected. The very barns were in picturesque attitudes, grouping themselves together in unstudied grace; but all this was mere accident after all, for Fred Linwood thought of the useful far more than the ornamental. The situation of his barns had been chosen for convenience and utility—not a thought of adding to the loveliness of Sunny Hollow even occurred to him—chance alone gave them their quaint beauty.

So with the house; it was, indeed, a regular bush residence, such as one encounters in South Australia everywhere. It possessed neither superfluity of beauty nor architectural proportion. When that house was built, Fred Linwood was but a beginner, and his father was principled against “doing too much for the boys.” “Let them work as I have done,” he would say, “they will enjoy the possessions more they have laboured for.” And so, spite of a few mild suggestions from his mother, Fred had gone forward on the path of life with his own energies, health, and spirits, and a right good will, for capital, backed by a fine section in as fine a valley as our southern land can boast.

The land was not even cleared for him, but what cared he for that! He set to work at once with axe and auger, not merely overlooking, but labouring as hard—and by far more energetically, because he was

working for himself—than the men he had to assist him.

The house, too, was yet to build : stone was out of the question. There was but little on his section, while timber abounded. Up therefore it went, clumsy enough, rough enough, but of such excellent dimensions that many a sly joke was passed at his expense. Many a prognostication matrimonial-wise issued from the wise ones of Vermont. Fred, however, thought of the present rather than the future. He remembered the complaint of the cobbler of old,—

“All that he wanted was elbow-room.”

And he felt determined, at least, not to expose himself to this want. Elbow-room! at least give him plenty of that. He understood but little of architectural elegance ; the plain matter of fact was more familiar to him ; it distinguished all his actions. Sunny Hollow Farm bore the impress of his mind everywhere. Plain, substantial, good, but symmetrical! No. Plenty of elbow-room was in the large kitchen, stretching itself almost along the whole front of the house. This was eating, cooking, and sitting-room in one, warmed by one enormous chimney, with a large stone hearth, and heavy cranes and hooks in any number. This room was lighted by three large windows, one at the side, and two in front of the house, affording a good look-out over the section. Fred loved light as well as elbow-room ; he chose to have both, and he had them. Yet though the walls were tolerably plastered, and thoroughly secured from wind and weather,—though the floor was neatly paved with brick, yet up to the rafters and roof you

might look, for the rooms in Fred's house were innocent of ceiling. Huge gum rafters stretching across from wall-plate to wall-plate, and thick thatch. Snug and warm and comfortable it looked, in comparison to the bare shingles of many houses, through whose crevices the sun sometimes looks too hotly,—the stars too coldly. Bush house as it was too, there was one advantage it possessed over many of its neighbours, we mean the advantage of closed doors. No curtains for Fred: give him good, substantial, solid wood, be it ever so rough. Those doors were chiefly of his own rude workmanship; yet clumsy and rude as they were, each room (and there were four of them) had one of its own.

We know not why there should be so generally in the bush an absence of the common decencies of society. We know not why there should be so little care for the closed door. Where lies the fault? Is it in the lack of wood, or the laziness of the master? Is it the dearness of labour, or the want of ingenuity? No door to one's bed-room! Shame on the dilatory, careless habits of our bush farmers! Shame on the women who submit to that apology for a door, a print curtain! Little wonder if even the curtain be forgotten. Gentle reader, we have even seen this!

Yes; good doors, and good windows; plenty of air, plenty of light, and all necessary seclusion Fred was principled for. The rudeness and roughness troubled him little. He did care, however, for the internal management of his house. He liked home comforts, and was not at all disposed to settle down to the everlasting succession of "damper, tea, and mutton," varied by "mutton, damper, and tea."

Besides, he had cows, and liked to turn them to account, so as he did not choose at present to take unto himself a wife, he engaged with a married couple, the one as farm labourer, the other as house-keeper, and thus he and his brother Stephen had contrived to get along pretty comfortably till the attraction of the gold-fields proved too great for the worthy couple, and one fine morning they made a clear exodus, leaving their young master to do his own cooking.

Miserable enough,—but what to do? Fred muddled on, with the help of Steve, till human patience could endure no longer; besides, he could not always expect the help of a neighbour's wife in making up the butter, and what was to be done with the milk?

So one night Fred opened a large old-fashioned desk that had once been his father's, and pulling towards him writing-paper and pen, commenced with unaccustomed fingers a letter home, detailing all his household trials, and concluding with—

“Dear mother, have pity on me, and spare Katie, and you, my darling little sister, come and keep house for me: I'll take all manner of care of her, mother, and I'm sure Sunny Hollow needs her badly enough, spite of its sunshine.”

And what said mother and Katie to this earnest appeal? Whatever was said, or whatever was done, gentle reader, will be related in another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

GRACIOUS RAIN.

“ The wind sunk away like a sleeping child’s breath,
The pavilion of clouds was unfurl’d,
And the sun, like a spirit triumphant o’er death,
Smiled out on this beautiful world.”

RAIN had fallen during the night, cooling, refreshing showers. Those trickling rain-drops made sweet melody in the ear of the farmer. Visions of withering crops and parched-up feed fled away from his dreams as the low murmuring of those showers beating above his head was heard. How many faces brightened as heaven’s face grew dark and lowering! How many heavy hearts beat lightly that evening as drop after drop pattered against the window-panes!

And the morrow—the morrow with its sunshine sending a thousand coruscations from a thousand depending drops, leaving rainbow tints on tree and flower, and drinking up the moisture from the saturated ground—from how many farm-houses issued eager glances! Those rainy nights were a boon to Vermont.

Sunny Hollow had as usual received the full benefit of every shower, and now the morning sunshine stole in everywhere. How beautiful the wheat

looked, with its vivid green ; on every shaded leaflet rain-drops, like seed-pearls or crystalites, were glistening. What a glorious promise of a future abundant harvest met Fred Linwood's eye as he threw open the house door, and sallied forth into the fresh morning air, leaving Stephen to the rather ungracious task of kindling the fire and preparing breakfast ! The whole face of nature wore a rejoicing aspect, the atmosphere was rife with the perfume of new hay, fresh, sweet flowers, and with wild, gushing bird-song. The very trees looked glad and smiling, bright as they were with the sweeping rain of the night, and under the full influence of a lovely sunshine. Fred felt the inward thrill produced by the beauty of the morning, though he would not have acknowledged it ; indeed, no doubt he attributed all his light-heartedness to his luxuriant crop of wheat which everywhere encountered his eye.

He stood leaning on the fence near the road, looking at some fine potatoes. The rain had washed every particle of dust from their dark green leaves. They formed a pretty contrast to the light green wheat that fringed them on every hand.

Fred Linwood himself was no unworthy addition to that morning scene. His tall, stout, athletic figure, laughing blue eyes, and light waving hair, thrown carelessly back from an ample brow, gave him a full passport to the society of the fair sex within a range of at least fifty miles of Vermont. A luxuriant growth of beard and whisker, and a soft, carefully-nurtured moustache, added not a little to the general admiration. But, after all, it was his frank, warm, kind manner, his bright, merry laugh,

his unceasing good-humour, that won the way to the ladies' hearts. Indeed, Fred was not only the favourite of the ladies—the men nearly courted him as much. His success in farming was the country talk, and many a farmer with grown-up daughters gave the promising young man the freedom of his house and hearth.

Fred was still standing, viewing with complacent eye his plentiful crops, when a loud greeting startled him out of his complacency.

"Good day ; good day, Mr. Linwood. Looking at your crops, eh ? Well, that is just what I've been doing. Fine, on my word ! Haven't seen finer the country round ;" and the speaker, a stout, fresh-looking, middle-aged man, again glanced over the wide section, or rather the slope where he had reined in his horse, and where the young wheat was certainly as near perfection as possible.

"Yes ; I rather think it will do, Doctor," was the quiet reply of Fred ; but with a merry flash from his blue eyes that belied his quiet words, "This rain was just what we wanted."

"What you wanted ? of course, you always do get that," said the Doctor, with a comical shake of his head. "I tell you, Linwood, if I had half a chance of such success as yours, I'd pretty soon quit my profession for the plough-handle—something free and invigorating to body and mind, this cultivating of the soil, drawing out its treasures and beauties ; while, for my part, I think it but sorry work living on the misfortunes and sorrows and afflictions of others, as is my lot to do."

"As to that," replied Fred, smiling, "though I

must say I never envied that profession of yours, Doctor, and would not give up my place at the plough-handle for the finest practice in the world, yet I think you are taking a very low view of your duties when you talk of living on the sorrows and afflictions of others."

"You do, do you? and how may I ask?"

"Why, to me the medical profession appears a very passable, fair, and, for that matter, creditable way of gaining a living—spending your time in going about doing good, in easing and preventing pain and suffering!"

"Bravo! bravissimo! Thanks be praised, the old profession has such an advocate! Though, by-the-bye, you do not patronize it much, Mr. Linwood. I do not believe I have *once* had the pleasure of administering to your relief since your sojourn at Vermont."

"No, you have not; thanks to the sweet air of heaven and the fresh breath of the upturned earth, the sun rarely finds me in bed, Doctor. Plenty of air, plenty of exercise, that's all the medicine I want. I have no need to touch your nauseous draughts."

"Ah! it's such healthy young fellows as you would ruin the profession if there were many of you. You have not even the conscience to break a limb out of pure friendship. If you ever do, I can promise you a treat. Setting bones is my hobby!"

"Thank you, Doctor; but while I can keep my bones whole I assure you I will," laughed Fred; "I am quite willing to forego the treat."

"More the pity; it's not a thing to be seen or felt

either every day, let me tell you. But, by-the-bye, I was down at the store last night. Mrs. Bateman has a cold, or fancies she has, at any rate; not much matter which, between you and I. However, she tells me you have parted with your housekeeper, and have been some time without any one. I wonder I have never heard of it before."

"Rather they have parted with me," said Fred; "unfortunately hands just now are by no means so plentiful as to be parted with for a trifle, particularly with the promise of a good harvest before me."

"Well, I didn't think Griffiths was such a fool. What new notion had he taken into his head, to give up so good a place?"

"Oh! the gold-fields were his attraction; if he chose to leave a comfortable place for mere uncertainty, that's his look out, not mine. He might have done well if he had stopped, but of course every one knows their own business best."

"It can't be very pleasant for you, though, to be left in the lurch. How ever do you and your brother manage without a woman about the house?"

"Oh! badly enough," laughed Fred; "neither Steve nor myself are much good at household matters. We have scrubbed along some way."

"But you surely don't mean to go on so? You should get married, Linwood. Why, when Fanny leaves me I mean to be married myself; I often tell her so. What's a house without a woman? Get married, man, and have done with it."

"Marry in haste, repent at leisure," laughed Fred.

"No, Doctor, I don't think I'll do that. But I perfectly agree with you that a house without a woman is a very miserable and uncomfortable affair. I told my mother so, and she has had compassion on us. I expect my sister Katie some time to-day."

"Indeed! your sister? An elder sister, may I ask? if it is not a rude question."

"Younger than myself; but the best, the quickest, most industrious little sprite you ever saw, Doctor. One of mother's servants is coming with her. She is attached to Katie. I think of doing rather more in the dairy now I have got the adjoining section."

"Yes, to be sure; that's the way with you all. Add barn to barn. A *sprite* did you call your sister? That positively don't sound sedate."

"Sedate! No, that word hardly describes my sister Kate. But you will see her, Doctor. We have a pretty house for her to come to; but I wager my hat she and Dolly will have it in apple-pie order to-morrow morning. Come any time to-morrow, and see if I am not correct."

"No, no; that won't be quite fair to the young lady;—the next day—the next day," said the Doctor, gathering his reins together. "You may expect me then," he shouted as he cantered off, "without some unlucky patient wants me. I have a little curiosity to see your *sprite*. My Fanny must become acquainted with her."

"All right, old fellow!" was Fred's not very polite though laughing mental rejoinder, as he turned towards the house from whence a distant "cooee" was summoning him to breakfast. Perhaps, as he thought of the pretty coquettish face with its glossy brown

hair connected with the name of Fanny, he viewed his sister's coming in a new and still more pleasant light. At any rate, there was a meaning smile on his lips, and a covert merriment in his eye as he turned home. Sisters are so very convenient sometimes.

CHAPTER IV.

SISTER KATE.

As fair a morning as heart could wish, and as bright a sunshine as ever tinted an Australian sky, greeted the opening eyelids of a fair young maiden, as its joyous light stole through the lifted curtain of a neat little chamber in as neat a stone house, some miles from Vermont, dispelling very roseate slumbers.

Eyes looking like very blue violets opened as the sunlight fell upon them, and as they did so a pair of wilful and determined little hands pushed back the ringlets from the fair face. Another moment and she was out on the floor, rapidly dressing, and merrily singing as she dressed.

"My birthday at last!" she exclaimed, as she stood at length before the glass, slowly brushing out her curls, literally tossing one after another from the brush, as though it was almost too much trouble to take, as she continued half gaily, half pensively, singing to herself, "My birthday," as though the acquisition of another year brought with it more of joy than sorrow.

And so it hitherto had with Kate Linwood. The flight of time troubled her but little. There was but little philosophy beneath those dancing ringlets; no amount of grave thought in those laughing blue eyes.

She was in the sunshine of life, and experienced so few clouds that she thought they never would come to her, if indeed she thought at all. And so her years were passing away, and the place of refuge from all storms was unsought and unfound. Katie, sweet girl as she was, was not a follower of Jesus.

But to this birthday she had looked forward for many a month, almost ready to fret at the tardiness of the wheels of Time. Passionately fond of riding, she had never yet possessed a horse of her own. She could ride two or three of her father's horses at any time, but she had long coveted most earnestly one over whom she might have entire control; one whom she could name as she liked, ride as she liked, and do just as she chose with. On that happy day her father had promised her a pony and side-saddle for her birthday present. This rendered the morning very welcome to her. Then there were two or three other little things making up the happiness of that day; but the one great happiness was connected with her brother Fred's letter. From that day she was to assume important duties, to occupy a pleasant though responsible position, to become the little mistress of a little household; in other words, Sunny Hollow was to be all the brighter for her presence.

Katie knew very well that her position would be no sinecure. She was quite aware of the number of cows to be milked; and that, in consequence, there would be plenty of cream to skim, and dozens of pounds of butter to make, not to mention cheese—and that a goodly portion of this same dairy work would have to pass through her own little hands.

What did she care for that? Active life was everything to Kate. She was no sedentary young lady, fond of bending from morning to night over costly embroidery, or delighting in the delicate formation of wax flowers, whose frail petals were the result of the devotion of many precious hours. Flowers she loved truly, but then they were natural flowers; flowers fresh from the garden, the creek, or the hill-side.

Yes; active life for Kate. She had learnt to milk many a year ago. Feeding the calves had been her earliest pastime; and there were plenty of those very calves at Fred's section, now full-grown, respectable cows. She was not afraid of the wildest of them.

"She milk'd the dun cow that ne'er offer'd to stir;
Though it frolick'd with others, 'twas gentle to her."

"Well, Dolly, won't you wish me a happy return of my birthday?" she exclaimed, merrily dancing into the kitchen where the girl she addressed was busily preparing breakfast.

"Sure, miss, and I will; and many of them," Dolly replied, with a bright smile, and then a little laugh.

"Thank you, Dolly. Are you not delighted that this charming weather has set in? How lovely it has been after the rain! I like to have sunshine on my birthday; it makes the whole year seem bright; at least in my estimation."

"I think you mostly do have sunshiny birthdays, Miss Kate."

Kate laughed merrily. "Ah, Dolly, that I suppose is because October is generally a bright month, and not out of compliment to my birthday! Still, I get the benefit of it. I am very glad it is fine,

though ; our journey to Sunny Hollow will be so much more pleasant. Are you ready to go, Dolly ?”

“ Shall be by to-morrow, miss.”

“ So shall I. Now, Dolly, please tell mother I shall not be home to breakfast. I must go down to bid Amy and her husband good-bye. I promised I would, and this is the only time I can spare. I shall be back before dinner ;” and snatching up a garden hat from a peg outside the kitchen door, she tied it down over her golden curls, and off she ran, her little dog Fly after her, leaping and barking for very pleasure ; sometimes rolling in the grass at her feet, sometimes far on ahead, leaping and frisking like a little wild thing—only a degree, however, more wild that morning than his young mistress behind him.

“ Down, down, Fly ! Down ! down ! you unmannerly little thing. Do you think I am gathering flowers for you to tear in pieces ? Not I, indeed ! There now, I believe you have spoilt the best wreath of pea-blossom I have seen this spring. You provoking little animal !” And Katie chased the offender with threatening finger, who scampered away, guilty creature as he was, and then, facing round, made a dead stand, wagging his tail and winking his eyes, as much as to say, “ I’ll just see whether you are in earnest or not ; and if I don’t think you are, expect me back again.”

Katie went laughing back in search of another scarlet wreath. She knew that if one was spoiled there were hundreds of the bright blossoms all over the sections through which her way lay ; she could have covered herself entirely with them had she been so disposed. As it was, she contented herself with a

wreath round her slight waist, and permitted the bright scarlet blossoms a hiding-place among her soft, sunny curls; for her hat was tossed to the ground as she twined her brilliant garlands; and Fly, presently finding nothing dangerous in his young mistress, came springing back, and took possession of it at once.

"Ah, well! carry my hat and welcome," said Kate, going on with her graceful employment, bestowing only a glance now and then at the little animal. She was not afraid for her hat. She knew, full of play and mischievous as he was, that her hat was perfectly safe with her *petit* friend.

A pretty picture they formed—the girl and the dog. The attitude of both was playful. Fly, crouched down in the soft grass which lay under him like a velvet cushion, had relinquished the hat for the pleasure of watching his young mistress, and watch her he did, intently too. His quick, bright eyes followed every movement of her baby fingers, the soft, curling ears moved restlessly about, and the tail beat a perfect tattoo on the ground. Katie was too much occupied with the wreaths to heed him, or she would have laughed at the comical little face upturned to hers. But at last the garlands were finished to her satisfaction, and snatching up her hat, she snapped her fingers at Fly, and the merry pair set off full speed onward.

CHAPTER V.

COFFEE AND CONVERSE.

“Beware lest thou from sloth that would appear
But lowliness of mind, with joy proclaim
Thy want of worth.”

THE morning sunshine passed on through low French windows to a very pleasant breakfast-table, round which an interesting group were seated. The house of which the said French windows and breakfast-table formed a part was a half-gothic building, surrounded by the never-failing verandah and a garden of sweet flowers. It was some little distance from Kate Linwood's home, and near the little township of E——. Indeed, the bed-room windows (they were upper ones) looked out upon three prominent objects—the wheat-store, the mill, and the Wesleyan chapel. We beg pardon; we might have added yet another, for where in all this wide southern land of ours can we go where there is the least semblance of a township and find no public-house? Pity is it that with them they bring too often so much sin and evil!

The house itself was no common building; that is, the house with the French windows be it understood. The large gate at the side led to snug stables, a chaise stood covered over with a white cloth in the neat yard; and, at a little distance under a shed, a

very pretty dog-cart peeped into view with its freshly-painted claret-coloured wheels, picked out, as the technical phrase is, with black. From the delicate drapery at the parlour windows, to the choice and lovely flowers that smiled in the garden, affluence and comfort were everywhere visible. In truth, Amy Linwood had done no foolish thing when she tendered her fair little portionless hand to George Henderson, the rich owner of the wheat-store before mentioned, and he, for his part, with all his wealth and education, had never been so happy as when he took to his home and heart our fair little Amy. She was a true and earnest Christian, and was made the happy medium of bringing salvation to her own hearth.

But with all this our tale has little or nothing to do; only in connexion with our little friend Kate should we mention them at all, though the scene that morning sunshine peeped in upon was a very endearing one. It stole in then through the French windows of that very pleasant home, falling on the snowy cloth and bright spoons, and clear breakfast china, with a wild and radiant gladness in its beams, leaving its glowing influence everywhere, just like those bright joyous natures that adorn our world, scattering gloom and darkness by the sunlight of their presence, sending out a thousand coruscations of joy into many a dark bosom.

But the faces grouped around the table, the sunlight also fell upon them, and they have yet to be introduced to our readers.

Something like Katie, just enough to point out the relationship between them, Amy Henderson's was a sweet, tranquil face, hardly ever bearing a ruffle.

Her soft grey eyes at times took almost a sad gleam, but sadness was far from her quietly happy nature. The little figure, so trim and matronly, was faultless in its blue morning dress. The soft fair hair lay in ripples under a tiny French cap. That was Henderson's fancy. It looked so wifely, he said, and she yielded, as was her wont, because he liked it ; and in truth, Amy Henderson, as she sat opposite her lord and master, with her circle of little ones round her, looked the very perfection of wifely beauty. Others could love and appreciate her besides her husband. She had comfort or advice for all who needed. Katie loved her dearly.

A happy fellow looked George Henderson as he sat with slippered feet and newspaper at the most perfect ease and enjoyment. The newspaper occupied but little of his attention ; his little home circle much. His brow and eyes, at all times thoughtful, were yet full of happiness. How could he help those eyes wandering many times from the pages of politics to those dear ones ? There was something beautiful to him in each. His eldest-born, Freddy, with his large dark eyes and curling brown hair, and the little pet of three summers, Emily, clinging so closely to his side, often laying her light curly head upon his shoulder, and looking into his face with a sweet, winning smile. There were roses of health on her cheek and lip and brow, and sunlight in her clear blue eyes. The baby was a little fairy creature, only a few months old, and yet he had already so many little winning ways that he daily won more love and cherishing. He was almost *too fair* and fragile with those blue eyes of his, and for that reason, perhaps,

the young mother held him more closely to her bosom, and gazed more earnestly in his angel face.

"How we shall miss Katie!" said Amy, with the shadow of a sigh, as she began to arrange the cups before she poured out the coffee, for breakfast was yet uncommenced. "She makes everything bright where she is," she continued, "we can scarcely spare her."

"That is true," said the husband, "we are sure to miss her; but then, dear, those boys must be very miserable with no female about them. I know I was wretched enough before I gained my little wife."

"Yes, I dare say they are," Amy smilingly replied, blushing a little by the way at the implied compliment; "I know it is rather selfish to wish to keep her when they want her so much. Then too," she added in graver tones, "I am a little afraid of her duties being too much for her."

"So am I. She is too young and thoughtless for such a responsible situation, I fear. She does not think so herself, I fancy."

"Oh, no! She is delighted to go. Indeed, I am not in the least afraid of her doing well in the house, and acting with perfect propriety, notwithstanding her excess of spirits. I know her better than you, dear. She has really excellent domestic qualities, as woman should have, and good moral ones too. For the rest, we must leave her in God's hands after all, dear George."

"After all—yet I wish she had experienced a change of heart—we could trust her the more completely; she would be of far greater blessing to her brothers. There is so much fun about Fred, and Stephen is no better, or, if reports are true, much

worse. It would have been better if Katie had been of a more sedate, grave nature."

"We must wait our Father's will for the change of heart, George," Amy replied, rather sadly; "but I am not sure whether she would suit her brothers so well, were she less light-hearted. Ah! I shall miss her, dear girl; but I ought not to be selfish, for I cannot help hoping that she may yet be the means of good. I comfort myself with that thought. God is in every place, dear, no one can hinder *His* work!"

"There's Fly, mamma! there's Fly!" exclaimed little Fred, springing from his chair. "May I go and see if Katie is coming?"

But ere he reached the door it was thrown widely open, and Fly and his young mistress stood revealed.

George and Amy interchanged glances as the pretty vision broke through the sunshine at the door still wreathed in rich scarlet pea-blossom, the colour in cheek and lip only more beautiful.

"Katie's birthday! I know it is by the crown," shouted little Fred, dragging her in with all his strength, while Fly danced and sprang round them, barking in very fulness of joy.

"This is like yourself, dear Katie; you have come to breakfast with us?" said Amy, with a close kiss. "Many happy returns, dearest. May your birthdays never be less bright! May God bless you!"

"Thank you, thank you, dear Amy; your birthday wishes are always good," said Katie, taking Henderson's proffered hand, and then the chair he placed for her at the table. "Now, Master Fred, come and sit by me. Don't you know I am going to leave you to-morrow—going to Vermont Vale?" she

added laughingly, "you must make much of me to-day, I can tell you."

Make much of her! I fancy they did. One with chubby arms thrown round her waist, the other nestled close to her bosom. What a picture that group would have made! How George wished at that moment for a power he did not possess—the power of the artist. But Amy was already taking up hot buttered scones from the fire, and the coffee was diffusing its rich aroma through the room—the prose of life had the mastery. So it is ever. Nature dispels some of our most beautiful visions and thoughts by her clamorous requirements; and so arbitrary is she, that the most delicate feeling, the most refined poetry, must yield to her sway.

A gay little meal was that morning breakfast. Katie sat with her fair curls still wreathed with scarlet blossoms, like a fairy queen with Cupid attendants; and, in spite of due respect paid to the light scones and fragrant coffee, many covert glances found their way from Henderson's eyes full of pride and admiration.

"And do you really like going up to Vermont, Katie?" he at length asked, as he pushed aside his empty cup, and dusted the crumbs from his knee with his handkerchief. "Are you not afraid of the duties there?"

"Not a bit, Mr. Henderson. There are no duties required of me that I have not been accustomed to from very childhood. Mother always wished me to be accustomed to them; and I love them for their own sake. You may laugh," she continued, tossing her head, "but I know very well I can manage a

house a great deal better than many of our Australian farmers' wives. Nothing sour shall ever come out of *my* dairy. No one shall ever surpass *my* bread and cake. Nowhere shall there be more real cleanliness and comfort while *I* have the charge there! Duties, indeed! *I* don't fear them."

Henderson laughed at the pretty, saucy, half-defiant face upturned to his; then, pushing aside his chair, he rose from the table, and giving an expressive glance at his wife, called the two eldest children after him, and left the room.

"I suppose Mr. Henderson never will be convinced that I am anything else than a baby," said Katie rather pettishly, after a few moments' silence, during which the little foot had beaten a furious tattoo on the carpet. "I believe he is the only one who thinks me idle."

"Oh Katie, darling! he thinks no such thing; he could not think so, for he knows to the contrary."

"One would not judge so from what he said."

"Perhaps there was more in his question than met your ear," Amy quietly answered.

Kate looked suddenly up. "What else could he mean? Why did he not say what he meant?" she asked impatiently.

Amy smiled as she answered, "Because, dearest, he thinks you will allow me to tell you. That you will like to hear from me best. That is the reason." She rose as she spoke, and, ringing a little bell for the removal of the breakfast things, passed her arm round her cousin's waist, and coaxingly drew her into the other room, shutting the door upon them.

"I see I am to prepare for a lecture," said Katie,

half smiling, half sighing, as she sank back into one of the comfortable large chairs, pleasantly placed near the window, commanding a view of the garden at the back of the house. There was affected resignation in the tone of the exclamation.

"No, Katie,—no lecture," said Amy, smiling. "Only a pleasant little chat together. You know you were anxious to hear what George means by your duties."

"Yes, I certainly am anxious to know what duties he thinks I shall neglect."

"Well, dear, I have told you that those duties are not *household* duties, as we accept the term; no doing work or pie-making. We know you are quite *au fait* in that sort of thing. But, darling, have you never felt there were higher duties devolving on you?"

"Higher duties? What are they? I know very well what I am going to Vermont Vale for—to make a very disorderly, uncomfortable house snug and comfortable, to give my brothers better fare than damper and mutton, and to make them and myself as happy as need be."

"All quite right, quite sisterly, quite pleasant, dear Katie; but there are higher duties still devolving upon you as a sister—as a woman. Have you never felt that a portion of woman's mission is to warn—to comfort?"

"I never tried my hand at either," said Kate, leaning out of the window and gathering a spray of jasmine from without. "I never tried either; at any rate, not in *your* way, Amy," she added energetically. "If I find sorrow will not yield to a jest, or a laugh,

I have done. I suppose that is the extent of *my* mission."

"Do you remember the Scripture comparison, dear Kate, 'As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart'?"

Kate was silent a moment or two—the jasmine spray suffered a little meanwhile from her busy fingers. At length, drawing a sigh of relief, she replied, with a smile of triumph,—

"Well, but, dear Amy, this is borrowing sorrow; enough when that comes. One would think I was going to two poor disconsolate fellows in the last stage of despair, instead of to two of the lightest-hearted beings Australia contains. Why, I verily believe we shall be the merriest trio you ever heard of. So, if that is part of the duty George thinks I shall neglect, or ought to be afraid of, you may tell him I have no fear on that score. The duty will prove a mere sinecure."

"Perhaps so, dear Kate; I admit that under the *present* circumstances 'comfort' may not be needed. But that is only part of woman's mission. Don't you remember the other?"

"To warn? Oh! I can make nothing of that, Amy. Much fitted *I* look to give warning!" said the merry girl, springing up and dancing before the mirror—the very impersonation of mischief. But Amy was quite grave, so she presently reseated herself, exclaiming,—

"Ah, I suppose *this* is the duty—the duty for which George thinks I am unsuited. Well, I don't know but he is right in that." She sat silently picking the leaves from the spray, one by one they

fell on the carpet. Amy did not care to interrupt her thoughts just then.

"Have you any reason to think there is much of this warning needed?" she presently asked in a low tone.

"Yes, dear Katie; I have an especial reason," replied Amy, the tears stealing into her eyes. "The gentle, warning voice of a sister will be invaluable to Stephen. We hear he is very unsteady. It must be yours to try and make his home attractive to him, to win him from bad company, to deal gently, discriminately with his faults—yet firmly still."

"Ah! now you give me a task indeed! I am so little suited for a monitress. I should not know what to say. Indeed, if Stephen ever comes home in a state of intoxication, I should be too angry for anything else."

"*Angry*, dear Katie! No, that surely would not be the feeling. Sorrow and shame are more akin to the womanly heart, to a sister's love."

"But I would not *own* a brother who could so disgrace himself. I would not own a drunkard for a brother!"

"Hush, Katie love! Hush, dear! The mild and gentle religion of Jesus does not teach this language. Sisterly affection *can* and ought to cover great faults; at least, should quench all ill-feeling in the hope of reclaiming. If the sad reports that reach us from time to time prove true, you will have this trial awaiting you. Oh! if you only knew on *whom* to cast your burden and look for strength! George wishes this for you as well, dear Katie, as I do."

Katie threw herself back in her chair, and rocked

to and fro in moody thought ; her elbow on the arm of the chair, and her little hand covering eyes that would fain have distilled bright drops, had not determined pride kept them back. To and fro, to and fro—a little, quick, pettish movement of the foot meanwhile. The clock on the mantel-shelf ticked loudly in the interval. How distinctly every one of the strokes sounded through the quiet room ! They fell like dead weights upon Katie's already quenched spirits. She could bear it no longer.

With a toss of the head that sent the ringlets flying back from her face, she sprang from her seat, exclaiming, " Well, Amy, I dare say you mean well, and intend all this for my good ; but if you and George have not succeeded in making me very low-spirited and miserable on my birthday, my name is not Katie Linwood ! "

" I am very sorry, dear Katie, but—"

" Oh, yes ! I know exactly what you are going to say, just as if you told me. You needn't. I tell you, I know you mean it all for my good ; and though I won't believe reports, I don't say your warning is not needed. May be it is ; but all this most decidedly affects my spirits ; and this birthday I meant to be so happy. Oh, Amy ! "

" Ah, dear Katie, if you only possessed the secret of *enduring* happiness ! "

" My dear Amy, you are only wasting words upon such a harum-scarum as myself. How can I feel them ? I am not a Christian, you know, and cannot trouble my head about it ; " and off she flew out of the door, calling gaily to the children to join her.

Amy turned off to her employment with a sigh, but the sigh would have been less bitter could she have seen the glittering drops dashed off by a very wilful little hand when out of both sight and hearing.

CHAPTER VI.

SOMETHING LEARNED FROM A BULLOCK-DRAY.

“Jewels and truths escape the careless eye.”

A RIDE on horseback, a wild scamper among the brushwood, creeks to leap, rocks to climb, anything rather than the eternal rumble of the old dray-wheels, and creeping, idle movements of the stupid bullocks, so thought Katie, but not so her father; at any rate he willed otherwise. So pretty little Hebe, the pony he had given her for a birthday present, was despatched by other roads the day before, and Katie was obliged most unwillingly to submit with the best grace she could. Perched up amid sundry articles of furniture of which her brother's house was innocent, she sat martyr-like, when sit she must, through sheer fatigue. The rest of the time she was off on the wing concealed from view by the tea-tree bushes, or wattle, or anything indeed that could come between her and the old jumbling, jolting vehicle, to whose tender mercies she resigned the more patient, the more easily-accommodated Dolly, who preferred any mode of carriage to the marrow-bone stage.

Have any of our readers escaped a ride in a bullock-dray—a genuine rough-and-tumble ride up hill and down dale, through dust, and mud, and

quagmire? Be he or she who they may, let me tell them they have missed some of the *real* experience of bush-life, some of the *positive* form of bush-travelling, and must not think of professing colonial knowledge. A ride in a bullock-dray? Yes, gentle reader, it reminds us of the experience of life, rough and smooth, turmoil and calm, bitter and sweet, a very Babel of a noise echoing in our ears all the way.

In fact, we have no manner of objection to a ride in a bullock-dray: a ride occasionally, be it remembered. We do not wish, dear readers, to give you an impression that we prefer that mode of travelling. Dust and mud, slow movements, and rough jolting; even a "bogging" now and then by way of change, we accept as the natural offering at the shrine of our *penchant*. Indeed, it is more than probable that the *penchant* itself arises from the variety of attending circumstances. The very slowness of a bullock-dray has its advantages—advantages unknown to the more rapid and elegant vehicle. The hill-side has often to be climbed on foot, and how many a flower has been discovered, while springing from rock to rock, which might have "spent its sweetness on the desert air." How many a treasure to add to the cabinet of minerals has peeped out of some quiet nook to greet the eager eyes of the pedestrian, which, but for that same old lumbering dray, coming slowly and surely, yet far behind, would have remained in its quiet nook still! What a pleasure, too, to mount the heights, and then look back through bush and scrub, and tree to that narrow, steep strip of road, up which the lazy-walking bullocks were making imperceptible progress! To them it is a very "Hill Difficulty,"

though your feet have so rapidly and easily accomplished it. May we not cull a lesson from this—a lesson of mild and gentle judgment? The burden overpowering to another, we, perchance, can lightly bear. Possibly, however, we are differently constituted, perhaps divinely supported. Let us not, then, despise our weak brother, or fail to sympathize in his sorrows. It may be ours to sink beneath a burden that he can easily sustain, and we may then be glad of sympathy and love. “Bear ye one another’s burdens” is the law of Christ; by so doing we fulfil that law.

Even another lesson may we learn from this same old rumbling bullock-dray—this tedious, time-consuming affair. A lesson it obviously teaches, a grace it naturally calls forth, even *patience*!—patience, so pure, so meek, so gentle a virtue, that it beautifies and softens the character; while, tempered with other graces, it elevates the mind. Endurance in minor matters strengthens the soul; habitual patience in small affairs prepares for weightier evils. Thus, even the tedium of a bullock-dray ride may do something towards the formation of character. Truly, all around us are engraven lessons of wisdom, that even “him that runneth may read!”

No such reflections as these, however, passed through the merry head of Katie. She possessed but little of the virtue of patience: perhaps hitherto she had had little to call it forth. As we before intimated, sheer fatigue alone induced her at all to submit to the slow movements of “Brandy” and “Tinker,” and their no less tardy *confrères*, rejoicing in as elegant appellatives. By-the-bye, fair readers, we

have often wondered—have you not?—why such frightful cognomens should be invariably attached to these poor hard-working animals, who are at least worthy of more euphonious names.

But of Katie. A bewitching little creature she looked, seated up in the old dray, fixed, as the Americans would have it, in a sort of throne, made *pro tem.* from a large easy-chair she had begged of her mother to take with her to Sunny Hollow; for, little sprite as she was, flying from place to place—industry personified—she yet loved, as dearly as any one, now and then, to creep into the deepest recesses of that old chair, reading or sleeping, or dreaming wild dreams, or what not, or looking out from its depths with those laughing blue eyes of hers—half saucily, half defiant; she was, in fact, more than half buried in it when she leaned fully back.

She was doing that now; but if a queen enthroned, it must have been a fairy queen. There was very little state, though, perhaps, a little power to win and command was betrayed by the way her tiny feet beat time to a song of her own humming, or impatiently urged on the bullocks with its furious but unavailing tattoo. She had shaken out most of the serious thoughts induced by Amy's conversation with her ringlets that morning; and though the rosy lips were just now compressed, it was with no troublous thought, but with a little internal satisfaction—with just a *petit morceau* of pride that the dimpled corners of the mouth struggled to conceal. Katie was secretly rejoicing still at the new sphere of life and action awaiting her.

“I dare say we shall have a pretty house to go

into, Dolly!" she at last laughingly exclaimed, after a rather unusual silence, tossing aside the sunny ringlets that had fallen over her face.

"La, miss! I expects we shall; but may be we shall soon make things straight."

"May be! no 'may be' about it, Dolly. I tell you we shall; that's positive," replied the wayward little mistress, springing forward from her more dignified position, and leaning over the arm of her chair, while she familiarly chatted to her companion. "No, indeed, Dolly. No 'may be's' about it. We will have a regular clearing up. 'Sunny Hollow' shall be truly *all sunshine* if I live there."

"That it will, miss, and not able to help itself," Dolly ventured coaxingly.

"I can tell you as well as possible how we shall find the place—as well as possible," continued Katie, bending her pretty head in mock reflection. "We shall find Fred's pipe and tobacco in close communion with the bread and butter, and Stephen's boots adorning the mantel-shelf; beds unmade, coats here and there, heaps of unwashed plates and dishes, rolls of dirty shirts tucked up, perhaps among the cheeses by way of improvement; guns, stock-whips, and farm implements on every available piece of furniture, and two or three large dogs in full possession of the chimney-corner. Bless your heart, Dolly, I can see it all in my mind's eye as if it was there. But don't it do you good to see what a change we'll make!" and Katie clapped her hands, and laughed merrily.

"And will Mr. Fred like it?" asked Dolly, rather dubiously.

"Like it? To be sure he will; or, if he does not,

he will have to submit. He did not send for me in vain, and no one ever saw Katie Linwood and disorder together. We cried quits since I gave over crawling. I haven't quite given up mischief-loving—everybody says so, at least; and everybody must be right, you know." Katie bent down her head to hide the merry, roguish glances that shot from her eyes as some old memory came flashing to mind.

"There's more than *one* will miss you at home," slyly suggested Dolly. "*One* in particular will be pretty mad when he finds you're off."

"I'm glad of it—heartily glad," said Katie, throwing herself back in her chair and crimsoning to her brow. "If there was no other reason, I should be glad to get out of the way of that horrid stupid, Albert Grey. I dislike his name, but I dislike himself more; and I don't know what he means by continually coming, as he has done the last few months."

"Easy to see what he means," insinuated Dolly. "Mr. Grey is a good judge; he knows where to look for the blue eyes and bright ringlets he likes so much."

The blue eyes flashed immediately, and the ringlets gave a contemptuous toss; but there was a tiny, tiny little curl of the lip the quick eye of Dolly detected, so she went on,—

"Poor fellow! I fancy I see him as he enters the house to-night, and misses some one from the fireside. You ought to have left him some message, Miss Katie."

"Have done, Dolly! You know very well I ought not; or, setting that aside, that I didn't choose

to do so. I don't like Albert Grey; he's a great deal too forward and confident. I hope I shall never see him again." And as she spoke, she sprang from the dray up the bank, and away on ahead, as though the very object of her dislike was behind her.

"Albert Grey, indeed!" she exclaimed to herself, when she was beyond the sound of Dolly's laughter; "I wonder if the stupid fellow really thinks I can like him. Why, he has not a bit more sense than myself, or so much, if it comes to that! No, no! if I ever like any one, he won't be like *you*, Mr. Albert Grey, or like any one in the least like you!" and with that conclusive resolve Katie leaped a creek that spanned the road, and flung herself, by catching hold of intervening branches, to the very top of a hill that skirted the roadside, ascending almost perpendicularly, but affording ample compensation for toil and weariness at its summit in the glorious prospect open to the view. Katie had, however, her thoughts too full just then of other things to admire anything. She gave, indeed, one slight glance, and then down she came to the dray-side, flinging herself from branch to branch like one of her own native opossums.

Mr. and Mrs. Linwood had been more ready to comply with Fred's earnest solicitations for his sister's company, because they were very anxious to put a stop to the evident pretensions of this same Albert Grey. He was a young man without a purpose, so far as the business of this life, and evidently aimless with a view to the next. A loiterer, an idler in the busy world, an unbeliever almost in the world to come. As such, the fond parents far from desired a union between him and their only daughter; and yet,

as Katie said, for months past they had never been secure from his visits. Morning, noon, or night, on most days, he might be seen walking up to the house, or galloping on horseback to their stables, with the most perfect freedom. He evidently liked it better than his own home, at least that portion of it that held Katie, though, sprite as she was, no portion of it held her long when he was near. He was the son of an old friend of Mr. Linwood's, or he would soon have had a dismissal. Indeed, had the parents known how he annoyed their child with his importunities for love, which she constantly declared she neither could, would, nor should give him, *that* would have settled everything. As it was, before consenting to Katie leaving home at all, her father contrived to see Fred, to warn him on the subject.

"So remember," he concluded, "remember, Fred, if Albert Grey comes to Vermont, just send him back again, for it won't be *you* he comes to see."

"I think," said Fred, slowly articulating, "he had better not come. If he does, he will find Sunny Hollow too warm for him."

CHAPTER VII.

KATIE'S WELCOME AT VERMONT VALE.

"You are welcome as the flowers of spring, or as the drops of dew to the parched earth."

It was all very pleasant this sauntering on ahead of the dray, gathering flowers, or peeping into creeks, or, seated on a fallen tree, to leisurely await its arrival: very pleasant for a time, and in the daylight; but when the sun sank down to his western home, leaving a pathway of gold and crimson to tell which way he went—when the night breeze arose keen and chilly, as it often does in October evenings, Katie was glad to creep into the dray, fold herself up in a large shawl, and from her snug cushioned chair to look dreamily at the spangled sky.

What a clear sky—such a deep, dark blue; and the moon—a silver crescent, pure and bright. One by one the little stars came peeping out: Venus rose fair and lovely and brilliant—the reigning beauty of the evening; there was the beautiful "Southern Cross," "Orion's belt," and Katie's favourite constellation the "Seven Sisters," all brilliantly visible. Unconsciously Bible words came to her memory—she had heard Amy often use them: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth His handiwork." And, as they came to her mind, a

conviction of their truth and beauty also stole in with them such as she had never felt before—they *were* glorious, those starry heavens, and spoke of the *greatness*, and loftiness, and glory of the Creator!

For the Christian, they had yet another voice! and told of mercy and love, and sustaining power.

“The voice that made the promises
Rolls all the stars along.”

But, alas! that was a blank page to Katie—she was not a Christian.

This travelling along by night was new experience to our young friend—at least in the present mode of travelling, the slow-moving dray. How dark the trees looked that belted them in on either hand: for as they got nearer Vermont Vale the road narrowed considerably—the thick scrub skirting it like a dense fringe, the denser for the pale moonlight from a moon but a few days old. Now and then Katie was startled up from a half doze by the sudden whirr-whirr of an opossum, as it shot across the road, and flung itself from branch to branch of some old gum. There was just moonlight enough to show her the little creatures as they scampered one after another along the thick boughs to the topmost heights. Once the distant hootings of an owl alarmed her: it was so like the cry of a human being in pain; but she had too much knowledge of the bush to think that long—her fears were soon dissipated by a repetition of the sound. Sometimes when her dreams were deepening and growing sweeter, she would be rudely aroused by the sudden jumbling of the dray-wheels over a stone or root of a tree that had intruded into the road—not

a very pleasant method of dispelling dreams—or perhaps the sharp crack of the bullock-whip, or a sudden loud exclamation to the tardy bullocks, put all sleep to flight.

On one of the latter occasions she was thoroughly awakened, and, sitting up, looked about her.

“How dark it is, Dolly! why, the moon is almost down! I am so tired, are not you?”

“Yes, miss, very; but not so bad as you,” said Dolly, suppressing a yawn. “You know I have been riding all day, and you have been running about.”

“I’m glad of one thing, Dolly; that mother had the goodness and thoughtfulness to put up that large basket of provisions, for I don’t suppose the boys have anything eatable, and it would be bad to have to make anything besides coffee to-night. How cold I am!”

“So am I,” said Dolly, shuddering. “I wonder how far off we are now?”

“I can’t say. Donald, are we near Vermont yet?” she exclaimed, addressing the driver.

“Yes, missee! wait a wee—ye’re no that far frae it the noo.”

“That’s comforting at any rate, Donald; but how far do you think?”

“Weel, ye see, I dinna just ken—half a mile may be.”

“Is that all? thank you, Donald. Come, Dolly, we need not give up just yet if the bullocks don’t, and even then we could foot it! Look out for the lights, we must be close on ‘Sunny Hollow.’”

“Ain’t I glad!” said Dolly, who always echoed

her young mistress, and she tried to peer into darkness for the expectant light, but vainly.

Katie meanwhile made better use of her own eyesight. A few moments more, and half rising in the dray, she joyfully cried, "Yes ! there's a light; that's it, is it not, Donald ? is it not my brother's house ?"

"Yes, missee, it's just a wee bittee down the road; we'll come to the slip panel in a wee."

"Don't you wish it was daylight ? I do," said Katie. "I don't feel tired a bit now. Ah ! there's the slip panel at last—I can just see it. Well, I wonder Fred or Stevee don't come to meet us !"

"The wind's getting up," suggested Dolly ; "perhaps they don't hear the dray."

But as the dray passed through the slip panel, some door was evidently opened, for a great stream of light fell upon the ground before the house, and in another moment the two brothers had passed the threshold, and hurried forward into the darkness.

"Well, Katie darling, here at last ! Why, we had almost given you up for to-night !" exclaimed Fred, taking her into his arms, for the moment the dray stopped, she sprang to the ground, and flew off to meet her brothers.

"Fortunate you were not in bed," laughed Katie. "Ah, you might have been sure I would come ! But don't you mean to welcome me to Sunny Hollow ?"

"With all my heart ; welcome a thousand times, dear Katie ; we have wanted you badly enough," said Fred, conducting her to the threshold of the door.

"You must not be too critical, Katie, in our

‘doing up’ of affairs,” laughed Stephen; “you know this has been ‘Bachelors’ Hall !”

“I’ll make no promises,” returned Katie, with a saucy toss of the head. “Well, I declare ! it looks very comfortable at any rate;” and she stood at the doorway, surveying the aspect of things within with a well-pleased eye.

Whatever was the condition of things “behind the scenes,” all looked orderly that was visible, and Katie was in no bantering humour that night. The floor was very cleanly swept—so was the large hearth, which was without a cinder, and a thick log of she-oak was glowing thereupon like a living coal, sending up now and then scintillations of flame and little jets of gas, and diffusing its ruddy glow and cheering warmth through the room. The long table had a new covering of oil-cloth, and at one end of this stood the lamp, throwing its pleasant light over a battalion of cups and saucers, a huge tea-pot, and other table arrangements, in any number and confusion.

“I tried hard to get a woman to come and do things up first-rate, Katie, but could not, so we’ve had to do the best we could,” said Fred, with gravity.

“It looks very comfortable and very nice, Fred ; don’t trouble about it.”

“Yes, but your room ; I didn’t know how to make up the beds and things.”

“Didn’t you, indeed ?” said Katie, half teasingly ; then laying her hand affectionately on her brother’s arm, she added, “Dolly and I will soon set that matter straight—please show us the way, and get the

things out of the dray. I've got all the furniture for my room that I shall want, I think ; if I want anything else I am to send to mother."

"I shan't unpack a thing till you've had some supper," said Fred decidedly ; "so off you go, and take off your things, and be back in a trice, little witch !" and he shut the door upon her.

"Now, Dolly, come here and help me to set table, if you are not too tired," said Stephen, as she re-entered the room ; "I don't understand much about these matters, I confess."

Dolly smilingly tendered her help, and a few minutes wrought a visible change ; the tea or supper-table became a very pretty affair.

"I declare mother's basket will go begging," exclaimed Katie, taking a surprised survey, for there was one dish of delicately sliced ham, and another of roast chicken, all prettily garnished with parsley. A raised pork-pie occupied another post of honour, and this again was flanked by a fine cheese, fresh watercress, and young radishes. A piece of transparent honeycomb was the gem of the table ; but still more, to Katie's bewilderment, flowers made up the *tout ensemble*. A vase of lovely garden flowers stood near the tray at the upper end of the table ; at the opposite side, another of wild blossoms in beautiful variety, many Katie had never seen before, formed a pretty contrast.

"Now, Fred, confess--this is not all your work !" she coaxingly exclaimed.

"Why not ?" he laughingly replied.

"But is it ?"

"Well, if you ask me positively, I suppose I must

answer positively, it is not. I suppose I may as well confess that it is the work of some of my lady friends, who took compassion on my dilemma, and came to the rescue," and he affected tones of supreme indifference.

"Your lady friends!" echoed Katie; "and how many of them have you, may I ask?"

"Oh! that you will find out by and by; meanwhile I may as well admit that the presents in question are a little homage done to you, Katie—a sort of welcome to Vermont. The ham and fowl are presents from Miss Fanny Moore, our Doctor's daughter, who persisted she knew I should not have anything fit to set before my sister on her arrival. The pork-pie and honeycomb come from an old friend of mine, Mrs. Ranger, who lives about five miles from this; and you may thank Miss Maitland for the flowers; she has also offered the young radishes and watercress at your shrine."

"I accept them all most graciously," said Katie, with mock reverence, at the same time covertly gazing into her brother's face—she read nothing there except a little concealed fun, and she left the scrutiny till another time. Then again exclaiming with admiration at the taste of the donors, and the real kindness betrayed in such a welcome, she took her seat at the table, fully prepared to do ample justice to her kind friends' providing.

Katie was neither critical nor particular that night; she was far too weary. The furniture and bedding were rapidly unpacked, and conveyed to the room appointed as her own. Fred and Stephen soon put up the iron bedstead, and other matters rapidly

followed, so that in a very little time after the "good night" was spoken, and her door closed, Katie was in the land of dreams.

The prayer bell had sounded vainly to her that night. Poor Katie!

CHAPTER VIII.

KATIE LINWOOD CANVASSED AT THE STORE.

“The consciousness of wrong, in wills not evil, brings charity.”

“Give credit to thy mortal brother’s heart,
For all the good that in thine own hath part.”

ANY one who has allowed many miles to intervene between him and Adelaide has also made some sort of an acquaintance with a country store—one of those genuine country stores where everything may be bought, or where at least you may expect to find most things from a needle to an anchor—from a cake of scented soap to a spade or a pick; food for the body, refreshment for the mind, outward and inward dressing of all kinds—we will not say of the most modern date, or of the most refined quality, or at the lowest rate of charge. No matter, our country store is a boon to the women folk, if the men will grumble at the money it attracts from their pockets. These very grumblers are no less rejoiced that they are able to replenish the empty tobacco-pouch or snuff-box, without the delay of a journey to Adelaide, or to some distant township.

Such a store had Vermont Vale to boast of; as voluminous in the character of its contents as any

store in our fair colony (any country store, be it understood)—where competition was out of the question. Possessed it was of due qualifications for supplying most of the requisites of life for money—with a choice dish of gossip into the bargain. What could transpire in any corner of the Vale and the thing be unknown at Mrs. Bateman's store? Wattle and dab, substantial slabs, nay, even stone walls, were of but little protection. Rather mortifying, after some little ridiculous episode, some unfortunate *faux pas*, which we had confidently hoped no one but ourselves was conscious of, to discover that it had already been retailed over the counter of the store with a pound or so of sugar, or a quarter of mutton, or a staylace, and that not without many embellishing additions.

As we have before said, all the births, deaths, and marriages that took place for miles round were regularly chronicled at the store, and many a nod, many a shake of the head added force to a few common-place words. Matches were often made as well as sold at the store; but then one could not always rely upon their reality—one could not always depend upon the final going off of either one kind or the other. Be that as it may, those who delighted in the regalement of hearing of the last flirtation were certain of finding satisfaction on that score at the store.

We do not mean to say that Mrs. Bateman was exactly a bad-meaning woman, given to malice or to a real love of scandal for scandal's sake, but her natural disposition was to think well of but few, very few; and however industrious with hands and feet (and we must do her the justice to say none were

more so), she had one very idle member, and that was her tongue. Not, indeed, but it saw more active service than her hands or feet ; but, alas ! it was but idle service after all—service that was worse than idle, inasmuch as it occasioned too often very mischievous results. And then it was too apt to run on without method or measure, to the waste of time, character, and womanly feeling.

Mrs. Bateman was a widow—a widow with two daughters the very counterpart of herself. The loss of her husband was rather gain to her, for during his life he kept her poor ; while freed from what she never scrupled to call an incumbrance, she had boldly started on her own track, and prospered. Perhaps it was as well that her own troubles, joys, and ailments, and those of Jemimy and Selina, entered largely into her conversational topics, though they might prove a little wearisome to some of her customers ; for certainly while she was discussing home subjects, her neighbours were, at least for a while, unmolested. “The tongue is an unruly member.” “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth !”

Mrs. Bateman was short, round, and stout—not sleek—oh, no !—hers was hard, solid fat—nothing unctuous or oily in its character. Many times have we heard and read the remark—that fleshy people are always good-tempered. We beg to enter our protest against that statement. Many have we now in our mind’s eye, fully entitled to the appellative “stout” or (permit it, gentle reader, for the term is more expressive) “fleshy,” but whose temper would not bear a breath, would not brook a contradiction. We know at a glance our good-natured fat friend : there are soft

dimples in her cheeks and chin—laughter-loving, kind, gentle, tractable dimples ; smiles are always lingering at the corners of her mouth ; there is a deep, earnest, loving look in her eyes ; she is one of those happy individuals whom a recent author has described as journeying through life on feather cushions. We know at one glance, we repeat, that a sweet disposition, amiable, easy manners, and a thorough good temper reign there predominant.

Mrs. Bateman, however, as we before hinted, was not of this downy, loving class : her very fatness was firm, hard, and solid ; there was nothing loving in her eyes, for they were grey, quick, and sharp. She had no other rapid movements, for she respected her own dignity too much for that, had not the “fat solid” interposed. When she did go out, and she made a rule to do so every Sunday to the little Vermont chapel, it was edifying to see her as she marched along, slowly and solemnly, with stately steps, between her two daughters, Miss Jemimy and Selina. Some of the simple farmers’ wives, who sat on the hard benches in clean but unpretending sun-bonnets, were awed at the stateliness and satins of the “store ladies !” others were not.

Miss Jemimy most resembled her august mamma : she had the same style of grey eye, the same thin-lipped, pursy mouth. She had, however, the art to hide the first, or shade them by a profusion of sandy-coloured ringlets, and to wreath the latter in smiles when any object worth conciliating or captivating was near. Like her mother she was given to *embonpoint*, and, though but sixteen or seventeen, had almost as womanly a figure.

Miss Selina (pray pronounce it with the full sound of the *i*, if you would not give offence), though as tall as mamma or sister, and bidding fair to match them in stoutness, was the darling, the pet, the baby of the establishment. She was a fine specimen of your colonial girls of thirteen : precocious in appearance as in manners. But mamma thought proper to keep her frocks short, beneath which any degree of lace or embroidery or crochet was visible. And pinafores, generally round ones, were an indispensable addition to her wardrobe ; the only wonder is that they did not add the bib, but perhaps Miss Selina herself kicked at that : for, like mamma, she had a will of her own, and fought determinedly and unwearyingly to attain a banishment of socks, and the reception of good, comfortable stockings. She had the sense, poor thing ! to see that her bare, over-fat ankles were not the most attractive objects to meet the gaze ; and fight she did, and conquered, too—the stockings won the day !

Miss Jemimy's place was behind the counter at her mother's side, but her sister's shadow was rarely seen there ; she was too young to employ in the business. All day long she went to school at Miss Maitland's. The honour she derived in having such a pupil was partly attributable to a disposition on Mrs. Bateman's part to patronize the widow and her pretty daughter, partly from a desire to get as much of their custom as she could, and partly because she was much too nervous to trust her dear delicate Selina from her sight at boarding-school. So Miss Maitland had the happiness of numbering this fair daughter of a fair mother among her pupils, little and

big, and Selina went regularly to school, for she rather liked her teacher, increasing meanwhile rather in inches than mental knowledge.

It was one morning about a week after the events of the preceding chapter, one of Mrs. Bateman's more distant customers stopped at the door of the store. Katie had been fairly established at Vermont Vale as mistress *pro tem.*, and with almost all the circumstances Mrs. Bateman was, or professed to be for the benefit of her customers, quite familiar, and through her, therefore, most of the Vale's inhabitants enjoyed similar enlightenment. Some few there were, however, who spent their time more profitably, minding their own household, and knew little or nothing of what had happened, and amongst their number was the lady in question, who, reining her horse up rather roughly to the door, sprang, or, if we give the literal rendering of the word, jumped to the ground.

Mrs. Ranger, the equestrian lady, the kind bestower of the pork-pie and honeycomb that welcomed Katie on her arrival, lived, as we before said, exactly five miles from the store; the distance had been ascertained by line and measure from doorstep to doorstep, so there was no gainsaying it. Mrs. Ranger was as little deserving her name as any individual on the face of the earth, so little was she given to range many inches from the last fence that bounded their "bit of land." A quarterly visit to the store to settle up for all the "oddments" the children had from time to time been commissioned to fetch, was the extent of Mrs. Ranger's leave of absence, excepting her visit to chapel, which was taken in the great waggon every Sunday. The day the quarterly

visits to the store were paid there was always trouble in the Ranger house; little desponding, tearful eyes watching mother getting ready to "go away," with fearful remembrance of former misdeeds, and strange and painful wonderings as to whether she would ever come back any more. Poor mamma! Nay, rather fond, true mother! There would be tears in her own eyes before she had passed the fence, and the sound of the plaintive little voices beseeching her to stop, compelled her to put her old horse to an uneasy trot, that she might be sooner out of sight and hearing.

Mrs. Ranger was not rich in earthly treasures, excepting in the many olive branches that surrounded her table. She had but little education—her chief study was her Bible—and that was a treasure worthy of all her energies, all her spare moments. For her it was enough! She loved her Bible, for it spoke of Jesus and of her heavenly home. Her husband and her children she dearly loved as His gifts, and gifts they were most precious to her. For all else she could sing most freely,—

"Content—obscure I'd pass my days,
To all I meet unknown,
And wait till Thou Thy child shalt raise,
And place her near Thy throne."

Mrs. Bateman felt she had far less in common with this earnest, simple-minded woman than with any of her other customers; and yet she always greeted her with a smile, for never did that old horse stop at the store, with his mistress on his back, but Mrs. B.'s fat palm felt that it was to be crossed with golden coins, unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly paid.

On the present occasion the cash was soon emptied on the counter, and Mrs. Bateman's signature, indifferently written, appended to the bill, when, unable to resist the temptation of a new listener for news that in Vermont was already becoming rather stale, Mrs. Bateman eagerly asked,—

"Have you heard the Vermont news, Mrs. Ranger?"

"No," responded her customer, quietly making room in her already crowded basket for lollies and cakes for the little olive branches at home. "No, Mrs. Bateman, I hear very little news; I am too fully employed to leave home much if I wished, and therefore I hear little of what goes on."

"You know Fred Linwood, any way?"

"Oh yes, he usually calls at our place when he passes our way; he has not been lately though; nothing has happened to him, I hope!"

"Well, no; not in the way you mean, certainly, though I don't mean to say but it may be considered a kind of misfortune. His sister is come, and is keeping house for him."

"Do you think that a misfortune?"

"Of course not, generally speaking, but in some cases a great one, Mrs. Ranger. When a young girl takes to flying through the village like mad on a pony with roses in its ears, with the brightest blue riding-habit, and a hat whose feathers droop on to her very shoulder, why then, I say, there goes a designing young creature, one who cares for nothing but attracting the young men. That's my opinion at least, Mrs. Ranger." And Mrs. Bateman gave an additional thump to the bag of rice she was in the

act of "doing up." Unfortunately her energy was too much for the strength of the paper bag—it rent from top to bottom, and the whole of the rice was deposited on the floor. She was fain to get another, and, to hide her chagrin, still talked on.

"Can that be Fred Linwood's sister?" asked Mrs. Ranger, rather gravely. "I am indeed sorry to hear such an account of a Linwood. Do you know anything of the rest of the family, Mrs. Bateman?"

"No, only the two brothers. Fred Linwood is a fine young man enough, deserving of a better house-keeper than that fly-away thing. For my part, I wonder he don't settle; it's not as if there ain't plenty of nice young girls to choose from." And the mother gave a furtive glance at Jemimy, who was rolling ribbons at the other end of the counter, apparently absorbed in her occupation, though really most attentively listening to the conversation near her. She caught a little of the glance directed towards her, and shook the ringlets from her brow by way of answer, displaying by the action a fat round face, like a full moon in its rotundity, if not in hue.

"I like Fred Linwood, I always did," Mrs. Ranger replied in the same grave tones. "There is something in his manner so winning one cannot help loving him. He likes his joke, but he is always ready to give a helping hand, and is always so fair, so straightforward in his dealings. I often think if God should be pleased to touch his heart, what an ornament he would be in God's house, what a temple of strength! I knew from the first that I saw him at our house I should like him."

Mrs. Bateman winced slightly at this, for Mrs.

Ranger too had a daughter, a meek, modest girl of Jemimy's age, or perhaps a little older. Was it possible that Fred Linwood, the prosperous young farmer of Sunny Hollow, was paying attention to Betsy Ranger? Impossible, surely! Mrs. Bateman repudiated the idea. Fred Linwood had more judgment than that, and, besides, Mrs. Ranger had just said that he had not been to the house for some time, so that point was settled.

"Have you seen Miss Linwood?" suddenly asked Mrs. Ranger, rousing from a reverie her last words had thrown her into.

"Seen her? yes, flying past like a race-horse or a shooting star, just a flash of blue, and then she was gone." And Mrs. Bateman's vixen eyes gave an additional twinkle as memory restored that little flying figure. "That's all I've seen, and all I am likely to see, I warrant," she continued. "No more butter or cheese either from Sunny Hollow now, I reckon. Feathers and the churn-work won't agree, depend upon it. I'm sorry, too, for those are fine cows of Fred Linwood's, and they do give nice butter."

"His sister has been here some time; then," said Mrs. Ranger quietly.

"No, only a week, but—" she would have added more, but a telegraphic sign from Jemimy stopped her, and at the same time an animated but sweet voice exclaimed,—

"Is not this Mrs. Bateman's store?"

Both the women started and turned round in confusion; Mrs. Bateman particularly could with difficulty command her voice to reply in the affirmative, for full in the doorway, holding up with one hand the

blue folds of the offending riding-dress, and with the other hand supporting a large basket closely covered up, excepting at one corner, which displayed rolls of the purest butter in any number, stood the delinquent Katie herself.

Katie with her drooping feathers, Katie with her sunny, dancing ringlets, Katie with her sweet, arch, Hebe face looking so fresh, so bright, so pretty, and none the less so because her little round arm was aching with the weight of her dairy produce, the work of those very little hands. Mrs. Bateman, most incredulous of women, see and believe!

"You have been in the habit of having butter from Sunny Hollow, my brother tells me," said Katie, advancing to the counter and extending her little gloved hand across the rude boards to the mistress of the store.

"Yes, miss," said Mrs. Bateman, a little relaxing her stern countenance, and just touching the tips of the gloved fingers; but that did not suit Katie, a slight compression of the under lip, a slight curl of the upper, and Mrs. Bateman found her own digits in a firm grasp; despite the tender fingers that clasped them, she was obliged to submit to a hearty shake of the hand.

"Well, I have brought you some," said Katie, laughing; "not quite so many pounds this week as I intend there shall be. My brother will bring home two or three cows from the run next week, and then I shall have my pans full. Bachelors don't manage these matters well."

Mrs. Ranger gave a meaning glance at the store-mistress as pound after pound of beautiful butter was laid side by side upon the dishes waiting for them.

She could not help thinking how happy were those who possess the charity that thinketh no evil, and wishing there was more of it in the world, and presently she said,—

“It does one good to see so much good butter; our cows are dry. You must spare me two or three pounds, Mrs. Bateman, to take home with me.”

Katie turned a very bright look on the kind face by her side.

“I am glad you like my butter,” she exclaimed merrily, “for I think you are a judge. I hope you will come and see my dairy; will you not?” she added winningly. “I want it to be the best in Vermont, and perhaps you can give me the benefit of your experience.”

“Do you know me, Miss Linwood?” asked Mrs. Ranger, in utter astonishment.

“Oh yes,” said Katie, with a laugh and a toss of her head that shook all her fair ringlets from her sunny brow. “People are often seen when they do not imagine it. My brother pointed you out to me as you rode past this morning. By-the-bye, you should not have done that, Mrs. Ranger, and I hope you never will again. You are a prime favourite with my brother, let me tell you.” And Katie laid her own soft little hand warmly upon the hard-working fingers that rested on the counter, and looked kindly into the calm, quiet face now slightly colouring with pleased surprise. Then turning away and addressing the bridling owner of the store, who had amused herself during this conversation by pursing her mouth, and exchanging glances indicative of contempt with Jemimy, she said,—

“And now, Mrs. Bateman, when you are quite ready to serve me, I have a long list of articles with which to reload my basket. I found out a number of wants in the household line that my brothers would scarce have dreamt of. And I knew,” she added, with a half-saucy smile, “you could serve me well here.”

Half propitiated, at least considerably mollified, Mrs. Bateman began with eager hands placing pound after pound of the tempting butter upon her dishes, preparatory to attending to the extensive order.

How far, sometimes, a little well-directed flattery goes in smoothing the rough surface of some people's tempers !

CHAPTER IX.

KATIE DISCUSSED AT THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.

“Go—lift the willing latch—the scene explore,
Sweet peace, and love, and joy, thou there shalt find,
For there religion dwells.”

A GARDEN—ah! we do love a garden, be it one abounding in Flora's costliest gifts, in groves and labyrinths, in shrubberies or summer grottoes, or the simple, unpretending, yet fragrant slip before a cottage door. There is sufficient in either to lift the mind from its low, grovelling tendency to those noble, exalted themes that, unlike earth and its whirlpool of bustle and confusion, know neither decay nor exhaustion. God shines forth as gloriously in the petals of the simple, unpretending field flower as in the most brilliant exotic of the greenhouse. The impress of His finger is as visible on the deep, dark velvet of the tranquil heartsease, or even more common wallflower, as in the horn of the harem lily, or the waxen bosom of the rose camilla, or of blossoms rarer still, still prouder in their matchless beauty and grace.

But the garden to which we intend conducting our readers this balmy October morning abounds in no exotic bloom. A narrow little pathway leads from the unpretending little gate, opening into the road, to the house. This pathway is bordered with fragments of

mica-covered rock, now firmly imbedded in the earth, and so very white that but for our knowledge of the nature of those fragments, we should almost feel inclined to accuse them of receiving an occasional visit from the whitening-brush.

Close behind this rocky border was another of living green, contrasting admirably with its whiteness—a closely-cut, neatly-trimmed border of leaves familiar to every lover of the copse, and wood, and meadowlands of Old England. Round green leaves, round full leaves, pressing here and there between the rocky fragments, refreshing for the eye to look on. But there were but leaves—no blossoms. They had gone, for the sun sometimes, even in October, looks down rather warmly from his throne. Perhaps indeed, if we search amongst the clustering leaves, we may find one or two stragglers unwilling to retire from their sheltering bed, one or two

“Gleaming through moss tufts deep,
Like dark eyes fill’d with sleep,”

for thus a certain author sweetly describes our fragrant little friend the violet.

But notwithstanding the farewell of the violet had been whispered, there were a few sweet roses, and over the rude slab front of the dwelling (for why should we call it a hut?) a jessamine had been trained, till but little remained between its glossy leaves and the firm clasp of a passion-flower to tell the tale of the brown old slabs. The passion-flower was a slip from the minister’s verandah. There was an archway at the gate enfolded with the same blossoms and leaves. What a power of beauty and grace is there not in the

simplest of Nature's robes ! Who would have recognized the bare slab cottage in which eighteen months had wrought so marvellous a change !

Ah ! there is something that pleases us, and we wonder it is not more generally adopted by our slab-building friends. The windows, larger than ordinary ones, are not hoisted up almost to the thatched eaves, like spectral eyes, for so they always seem to us, darting defiance at our *entrée*, but are only two or three feet from the ground. The breath of heaven could reach freely every nook and corner of the room. No dust could lie there concealed, and all without was plainly visible. The deep green hills with their swelling indenture, the creek with its tree-fringed margin, the grassy flat on which dozens of little bare feet found a soft carpet—yes, the eye could feast on these beauties, together with the loveliness of the little cultivated plot at the door, without the exertion of out-stretched neck or tip-toed feet. The inmates of our slab dwelling could sit quietly at their breakfast-table, and through the widely-opened casement take in all that was in the range of their house, even to the violet border, and the simple but luxuriant tuft of “Venus looking-glass,” that grew close to the ground near the gate.

We should scarcely have noticed the door had we not to lift the latch and enter. The shade of the jessamine porch hid its rough exterior from view, and some dark-brown paint had a little retrieved its character. The door-step was formed of smooth, round pebbles, cemented firmly into the earth, and always clean and glossy.

Forgive us, gentle reader, we must describe. We

love to make you acquainted with a spot we may, perhaps, often enter together. If we pointed not out to you the delicately-netted curtains draping the bright windows, the cleanly-swept floor, with its cloth knitted hearthrug, the bright dimity of the sofa, the white hearth, the neatly-arranged book-shelves (for books were plentiful there), we should feel you could not half so well comprehend the character of the inmates, or understand how there is an external as well as internal beauty in holiness.

Breakfast was set for two, and two were seated at the little round table. We could have joined that meal, so inviting looked the snowy cloth, the simple white earthenware cups, the bright spoons, the home-baked loaf, the yellow butter. So white were the eggs, in egg-cups almost as white; and to crown all, so fragrant was the simple glass of flowers resting between mother and daughter, for such they were.

How many times, in passing through this world of human countenances, have we been struck with some, upon whose brow appeared to us impressed as in legible characters what they were within. We do to some extent believe in physiognomy. We do believe that the passions, and desires, and feelings of the inner man will find external impression. Often as we have watched the calm, unruffled brow, the deep-searching yet placid eye, the nameless something that will betray though nameless, we have exclaimed, "There goes a Christian--there is a lover of our Lord Jesus Christ. That man is not of the world; he is a pilgrim passing through it. His treasure is not here; it is in heaven!"

This same impress was on the brow and in the

eyes of both mother and daughter. There was sweet calm in the pale thin face of the widow, for Mrs. Maitland was, indeed, a widow, and Annie her only daughter. She had two children; her son was absent at the gold-fields of Victoria, where, they knew not, and Annie alone was the comfort of the widowed heart. What could she have done without her? for Annie, too much of the snowdrop as she was, had life, and health, and energy enough; and still higher were her qualifications, those of true inbred Christianity.

Annie Maitland was Vermont's little school-mistress; to her the youth of Vermont went for knowledge, and, wee morsel as she was, she had much to impart. There were two apartments on either side that simple sitting-room,—the open door of one looked into a neat bedroom, chiefly inviting for its snowy draperies; the other betrayed the professional character of the dwelling, and from that room the name of "school-house" was derived. Well-worn forms of the rudest material and most primitive make, of red gum, time-polished into a hue almost rivalling mahogany; long narrow tables, by no means remarkably level, of the same material, and supported by heavy blocks driven into the floor, did service as desks; two or three maps hung suspended from the roughly-plastered, lime-washed walls, and a long shelf, from one side of the wall-plate to the other, held books and slates innumerable, only to be reached by climbing on the table. At present it was too early in the morning for anything but a streak or two of sunshine, and a soft breath or two from without, to seek an entrance. These two wandered about as they listed,—lighting up and uplifting Europe and its

many-coloured countries, and showing that at least order was the ruling monarch of the place.

"And so you have at last seen Miss Linwood, Annie?" said Mrs. Maitland, smilingly, as she handed her cup to be replenished from the bright little coffee-pot. "After all our expectations, does she quite come up to the standard we raised for a sister of Fred Linwood?"

"Yes, mamma, quite," replied Annie, with a quick blush that would come unbidden to accompany the smile. "Yes, quite—not in height, though; she is only about my own size, a little fair thing, with the brightest golden ringlets, and sweetest, merriest blue eyes you can imagine. They are certainly like her brother's—in merriment and colour, I mean. It was by mere chance we met, you know, dear mamma. I had gone for your cough mixture to Dr. Moore; she came in while I was there. I was nearly behind the door, and she did not see me when she entered, but commenced a running fire of conversation with the doctor, who persisted she needed his advice; that the colour on her cheeks was a decided sign of plethora, and that he should have great pleasure in bleeding her; while she, equally persistent, said she never had, could, would, or should require professional aid, for she had the most unwearying health imaginable, and that if she was troubled with anything, it was with an exuberance of spirits."

"'Bad, very bad, my dear,' said Dr. Moore, funnily; 'a bad disorder, depend upon't; wants nipping in the bud.'"

"Subduing by the grace of God," said the widow, quietly.

"Ah! but, mother, Dr. Moore did not mean what he said; he was only teasing."

"I do not doubt that, dear, but I do mean what I say; I think it quite possible to have too great an exuberance of animal spirits—spirits that lead one to say and do things that are regretted afterwards."

"I know, dearest mother, I know," Annie answered, in a subdued voice, playing with the spoon in her cup as she spoke. "From experience, dear mother, I know I have often regretted foolish words and foolish actions too, that a moment's excess of spirits has led to. But you do not think a very lively disposition wrong, dear mamma—do you?"

"No, darling, far from it: a buoyancy of spirits is one of the precious gifts of our heavenly Father. It is a source of happiness to the possessor and to all around. It is the excess that is hurtful, dear Annie, the excess that leads to foolish and even wrong actions. But it is not such spirits as yours I mean, dear Annie. I bless God, my child, for the share He has granted you, and that He has sweetly tempered all with His most precious gifts, the gifts of His Holy Spirit."

Annie bent over her coffee-cup for a minute or two, unwilling that her mother should see the bright drops sparkling on her lashes. Poor girl! there had, indeed, not been too much brightness in her path. From her tenderest years she had known sorrow, quite sufficient to tincture her after-life with its shade. But she had early learnt to look to the Refuge of the weary and heavy-laden; early learnt to love, to trust in Him who "feedeth the young ravens when they cry;" and the bright joyousness

with which her nature had been gifted, was not damped by reverses, or sobered by religious realities. These latter had only tempered and softened, not annihilated. Annie's free, happy nature had been the balm of her mother's heart.

"We have wandered from our subject, Annie," at last her mother said, smiling; "we must come back to the old theme—Miss Linwood."

"Willingly, mamma. Where was I? Ah! in Dr. Moore's surgery. Well, after a bit the doctor seemed suddenly to remember my existence, for turning suddenly round upon me, he exclaimed, in his usual abrupt manner, 'Ah! by-the-bye Miss Linwood, here is a little lady you have not made acquaintance with. This is Miss Maitland, Miss Annie, our wee schoolmistress; without whom, I apprehend, all Vermont would grow up in ignorance. Allow me to introduce you, ladies.'"

"And what said Miss Linwood?"

"Ah! she gave me the brightest possible smile, took both my hands in hers, and exclaimed, 'Thank you, Doctor, I was prepared to like Miss Maitland. We will be friends—will we not?' What, dear mamma, could I answer but an assent, though you know that my friendships are not so easily formed."

"Quite right, darling; but I think I thoroughly comprehend Miss Linwood, perhaps the more so from having had opportunity of judging of her brother. She is warm-hearted—impetuous—rather self-willed, I should think. What more, Annie? did you discover anything to lead you to hope that she is a Christian?"

"Nothing, mamma. I fear not, for she walked

with me to the turn of the road, and I just touched on the subject for a moment. She turned her merry blue eyes full upon me, and exclaimed with just a little toss of the head, 'Ah! that's what a certain friend of mine tells me. I do not understand these things, my dear Miss Maitland. If you could only talk to my cousin now. We will be friends, nevertheless. When may I come and see you? Will you be very angry if I peep in at your school-room door some day? I am busy as well as you, and you must come and see how busy I can be.'"

"And she is coming. Well, darling, I am not sorry. Who knows but that my dear patient Annie may be of use to her friend? She seems to be affectionate. We will hope better things still for her. But hark, dear, the clock is striking the half-hour; bring the Bible, and let us have a few refreshing words before we commence the duties of the day."

"Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," might have been written over the portal of that dwelling.

CHAPTER X.

SABBATH-DAY DOINGS.

“Go, man of pleasure, strike thy lyre !
Of broken Sabbaths sing the charms ;
Ours be the prophet’s car of fire,
That bears us to a Father’s arms.”

THE days passed pleasantly and rapidly away at Sunny Hollow, and brought with them the sweet Sabbath morning, lovely as any of the others had been, and quiet as Sabbaths in the country always seem.

Katie Linwood sat at breakfast with her two brothers ; they were a pleasant party to look at, having a very large share of good looks among them, and no inconsiderable amount of cheerfulness. Yet this morning some slight dash of quietude had even pervaded their usually merry chit-chat.

There had been a little silence for a time, and Stephen had quitted the table, when, as Katie poured out a third cup of tea for her brother Fred, she exclaimed, “Chapel, of course, Fred ; you go, I suppose ?”

“Chapel, of course, Katie,” repeated Fred, teasingly ; “it would be preposterous not to go. To see and be seen is what a woman lives for.”

“And pray what do you live for ? And why do

you go to chapel may I ask, sir?" bantered back Katie, in her sauciest tones.

Fred paid no attention to the question, but pursued his tantalizing with a provoking smile, "Not go, indeed, when there is such a nice young minister in the case! You have been trying all the week to get a glimpse of the clerical coat flap, or an end of the white choker."

"I try to get a sight?" echoed Katie, crimsoning between vexation and resentment; "not I, indeed! Ah, ah! Mr. Fred," she continued, rallying a little, "all very well to talk about me. Some one else, I fancy, goes to chapel for other objects than the right one; not to see the minister, or to listen to his sermon either. What say you to pretty Fanny Moore, or to my favourite little schoolmistress—my last introduction, Annie Maitland?"

Fred sprang up with a laugh, and pushed back his chair firmly against the wall.

"What do I think?" he echoed merrily, though with a slight accession of colour. "Why, the same as yourself, Katie—the same as yourself. They are both confoundedly pretty girls, and nice girls into the bargain. The mischief of it is, one don't know which is best."

"I know," said Katie, more earnestly than was her wont, as she pushed aside her cup, and threw herself back in her chair.

"You do?" exclaimed Fred, stopping short in his passage through the door.

"Yes; I was thinking of a text I remember to have heard or read some time or other; from Amy, I expect. It was something about distinguishing be-

tween him who serves the Lord and him who serves Him not. Of course, though we neither of us know much about these matters, Fred, we can guess which of these two characters is best. But, oh my! I shall be preaching a sermon next. How absurd! Me, Katie Linwood, quoting texts, and of all others to Fred!" And the giddy girl went off into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

Not so her brother; he walked slowly from the room. Such a speech to come from the gay little Katie, whom he believed had had even fewer serious thoughts than himself. He felt, as he went sobered to his occupation of watering the horses, that there was something more in the text than mere words. He knew that not one of the inmates of Sunny Hollow could answer to the description of the man in the portion of the text who served the Lord.

"You will go with us, Stephen?" said Katie, turning to her younger brother, who stood at the window, polishing his spurs to the last degree of brightness, an apparently inattentive listener to the breakfast conversation.

"Not I!" was the peculiarly intoned reply, and the polishing went on a little more vehemently.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I don't know; because I would rather be somewhere else, I suppose, or because I have nothing to go for. According to Fred, you go to look at the minister, a little of woman's curiosity, or what not. You say Fred goes to look at the gals. So much for his taste. For my part, I take no pleasure in either girls or minister, but prefer my old roan to the best of them, and so good-bye to you!"

"Well, we are a pretty set!" thought [Katie, as, rather sobered by the thought, she passed on to her dairy. "I am afraid, after all, Fred is right. To see, if not to be seen, is the greatest attraction chapel-wise. I have been so accustomed, too, to go, that I should feel strange at stopping away; so custom, I suppose, is another motive." There was a sigh struggling for escape, but at that moment Dolly entered, and the next instant merry laughter issued from the dairy.

Is my picture too highly drawn? Are there not many in this fair land of ours who can subscribe to its truthfulness? Alas! how little is the seventh day regarded; how few love the gates of Zion; how small the number of those whose hearts make sweet melody to the Lord of the Sabbath, who delight to keep holy day! The house of God, where He has promised to meet with His people, how often is it turned into a den of thieves! how often made a house of merchandise, and frequently desecrated by vain thoughts, foolish actions, and dishonourable motives! And yet God is in that house, for wheresoever two or three meet together in His name, He has promised to be there to bless them. Where He is, all hearts are disclosed to His view, all motives comprehended, all intentions revealed. The inmost recesses of the heart are laid bare to His omniscient gaze. Who can calculate the amount of condemnation resting among our congregations even for this offending in the house of God? Well might the Psalmist exclaim, "I hate vain thoughts." Happy, indeed, are those who can add with him, "But Thy law do I love."

The household of Sunny Hollow is but a sample

of many and many a household in our Australia, where the temple erected for the service of God is often of the homeliest description. The benches rude, the walls unplastered, and the bare rafters stretching above the worshippers; there is comparatively little to attract, little imposing, little to excite the numbers. Yet the heart is the same everywhere. Even among those rude benches it can form to itself idols, and upon these idols it can concentrate every thought, every hope, every aspiration, to the exclusion of the living God, who has proclaimed, "Me only shalt thou worship." "Give Me thine heart." Oh! how few there are who can sing with the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in reference to the house of God, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

No! and we say it with humbled heart for thee, O land of corn and wine; full of all God's treasure; full of His glorious works; bountifully spread as thou art with His rich bestowings—that household of Sunny Hollow was indeed no exception to the rule. Sabbath desecration is a sore, a prevalent disease, that knows no bounds of city wall. In the bush how seldom is it regarded! sometimes passing by entirely unrecognized, or, if recognized, uncared for.

Stephen Linwood had not been brought up with this entire disregard to the day of rest. Many of the years of his boyhood had been passed in the shelter of home, where at least he had been taught to reverence the Sabbath, and to attend the public worship of God; but not from love to that worship—not from

desire to serve Him, had he ever entered the simple prayer-house. And how plainly was this shown when beyond parental restraint! He at once broke through all bonds, and, choosing for himself, forgot that the seventh day was to be holy unto the Lord—forgot, or chose not to remember, the summons of the Sabbath bell, and at once stood boldly forward a determined Sabbath-breaker.

Poor Stephen! how carelessly he stood, polishing his last stirrup, the bit, and even the handle of his whip having an extra rub! How carefully he brushed and oiled his chestnut locks, and adjusted the blue silk neckerchief and white shirt-collar over his dark blue belted jumper! How jauntily he placed his blue-veiled cabbage-tree over his glossy curls; and with how light, how unconsciously graceful, how proud a step he sprung to the saddle of his fine horse "Roan," who, scarcely less proud than his master, trod the ground as though it was unworthy of such an honour, and bowed his fine head almost to the green sod with impatience at the restraining hand, bounding forward with a free, joyous spring the moment the slackened rein permitted. It was a fair picture, the proud and noble horse and the graceful rider in the saddle, so perfectly assimilating himself to every movement of the animal. But, alas! there was a sad blot on the fair picture—one sad sentence written on the uplifted brow; that sentence, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," robbed all of its beauty, tinctured all with sadness.

Stephen was off for the day; off with like-minded companions; off beyond the sound of the Sabbath bell that now softly echoed among the hills round

Vermont. There was no echo in his heart; the voice of prayer and praise had no charm for him. What to him was the tale of Jesus' love? The wine-cup beckoned forward with her flower-wreathed poison. "We'll quaff the ruddy wine," was the song that best accorded with his feelings at that moment. He was bound to a distant homestead, noted in Vermont for the extent of its vineyard, the beauty of its grapes, and the excellence and strength of its wines. God keep thee, young man, weak as thou art; thou art "that way bound to temptation."

Alas for the vineyards of our southern land! that with the gleanings of God's beautiful gifts should be also gathered folly and madness!—that the rich clusters of His bounty should be used to brutalize, to madden, to stamp with imbecility the image of God! Alas, that the bestowments of our heavenly Father should be thus perverted!

A little after Stephen's departure, Fred, with his sister at his side, left the house, and, passing the slip-panel, sauntered along the road in the direction of the still pealing chapel-bell. The morning was soft and balmy; spring seemed every day ready to emerge into summer. Flowers of every hue grew by the roadside, or spangled the green woodland. The scarlet creeper shone forth resplendently in the rich sunlight. Katie could not help gathering a little cluster of the brilliant blossom that peeped provokingly at her from under a fence full in her way.

"What a pity it is this lovely creeper is scentless!" she said, as she fastened the sprig to her waist.

"You want beauty and fragrance both, eh!"

laughed Fred. "Now, suppose you cannot have both ; which of the qualities would you prefer ?"

"Beauty or fragrance ! I don't know," replied Katie thoughtfully. "I love sweet things, certainly ; but then, beauty ! 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.' Ah ! I think I must say beauty, after that lovely, though hackneyed, quotation from Keats."

"I see you like your eye charmed as well as I do, Miss Katie, with beauty of all sorts." And Fred laughed significantly.

"Remember," said Katie, in answer to this laugh as they turned into the chapel-yard, "remember, Mr Fred, that I am speaking only of flowers, and mean what I say only in respect to them."

"All right, sis," was the laughing rejoinder.

Service had not commenced, for the people were yet assembling, and, with the usual custom of our country folks, were gathered in little groups all over the chapel-yard, that they might get as much of the sweet air of heaven as they could. Just clustered round the doorway were a knot of young men, half-grown boys, rife with health, spirits, and mischief, and only half solemnized into a degree of decorum by the close vicinity of the chapel walls. Some of these were farmers' sons in all the stiff discomfort of Sunday gear, who were infinitely better-looking in their everyday apparel, the jumper and rusty straw hat, because they were easier, and more adapted to their stalwart figures. Others there were, the boys of the labouring men—great, overgrown boys they were—whose Sabbath wardrobe was limited to a clean shirt and trousers. Some with their elf-locks laden with any amount of grease ; other heads as rough as a newly-

thrown heap of hay. Then there were others still, who claimed no home in Vermont, not even in the colony, but who rejoiced in the proud boast of being "on their own hook"—an expressive term enough, though not often a desirable position to occupy. Among these there was little appearance of Sabbath sanctity, little of the respect of those who call the Sabbath a delight.

Near them—at least, as near as country bashfulness would permit—stood a group of giggling girls, in all the finery their parents' means would permit, or Vermont store produce. Among them, fair and modest, and sweet-looking as daisies amid a bed of glaring poppies, two or three neat white sun-bonnets were visible, with spotless print dresses as an accompaniment. We needed scarcely to look beneath these snowy bonnets to convince ourselves that they chiefly concealed pretty faces, redolent with health and sweet natural blushes. Amidst them was one gentle face, ever dimpling into smiles. Her companions addressed her as Betsy Ranger, and surely the impress of the mother's teaching was visible there. She was not one of the gigglers. The ready smile came when spoken to, but her thoughts were evidently of a more reverent character, more consistent with the day and hour, than those of the others, who continued their sly laughter, and glances, and remarks on the knot of young men at the door.

Here two or three men, with elbows lolling over the fence, stood discussing the progress of crops and cattle, the probabilities of a good season, and the possibility of a continuance of the present weather. There, a like number of matrons, with babies at breast

or in arms, or hanging to their skirts, were deep in matters peculiarly their own ; and over the heads of them all came the soft tinkle of the prayer-bell. It fell on accustomed, and, therefore, unheeding ears.

And yet among even these were those who loved to keep "Holy day"—who would not have missed that Sabbath service, wet or dry, on any account. Mammon, with his golden stores, had not quite blunted the edge of the soul ; though, alas for his influence ! the business of the market too often stole into the temple. The tables of the money-changer too frequently occupied a position near the throne of God. Here, surely, was the whip of small cords needed, as in the temple of Jerusalem ; and here also, as there, were those who loved and feared God.

For our part we love not the gatherings in church or chapel yard. The quiet walk over hill and field, the silent influence of Nature's loveliness, the tranquil thought of our Father and our home above, is there obliterated. For us, we would turn at once into the little place of worship, calmly seat ourselves, and suffer the occasion, the hour, the solemnity of being in the presence of God, in a house expressly erected for His worship, to drive out the market, and the money-changer, and all else besides of worldly transactions. We would sing with heart as well as lip—

"One day amid the place
Where my dear Lord hath been,
Is better than a thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

But as Fred and Kate approached the place there was a sudden movement among the little social gatherings. One after another passed the threshold

of the prayer-house, till all had entered. The movement was simultaneous, and Kate, at first surprised into the belief that her own approach with her brother had occasioned the sudden exodus, was not sorry to discover the real cause betrayed to her by the shutting of the adjoining garden gate. The appearance of the minister of Vermont had sent his gathered congregation so hurriedly to their seats.

Not, indeed, that there was anything terrific in Graham Howard's *tout-ensemble*. About the middle height, with a face and brow, while indicating a high order of intellect, beaming with all gentle and benevolent feelings. His was a countenance to win love, and not create fear. Indeed, fear was not the feeling that dissolved the little gatherings of his people. Custom was with them the principal reason for those outside talks, custom also induced their rapid flight on the minister's approach; the sight of his figure passing down the garden being the signal for their departure to their seats. Perhaps it was a part of their life lesson that induced these singular actions—the necessity of making the most of their time. Be that as it may, when their pastor did enter, there was not the calm aspect the house of God should wear, but a confused hurrying to and fro, a push and struggle for places. Graham Howard had often felt grieved at this apparently irreverent conduct; often the quiet current of his thoughts had been disturbed. Fresh from his knees in the solitude of his little parlour, it had troubled him much to view the apparently prayerless aspect of his congregation. Yet he had never mentioned it, and custom and habit still held its sway.

Fred's expressive nudge of his sister's elbow nearly upset her gravity, as the young minister approached them, for they were so near when he turned into the chapel-yard, that they could not have passed onwards without being guilty of great rudeness. As it was, Katie was obliged to veil the merry glances of her eyes beneath their downcast lashes, while her brother introduced her. Whether or not Graham Howard noticed the action does not appear. If he did, he gave no sign, and Katie, as they passed into the little chapel and took their seat, had only time to give an expostulating whisper,—

“Oh, Fred!”

And this was Katie's first introduction to the minister of Vermont. Whether, indeed, as her brother intimated, she had really desired to see him, with the common curiosity peculiar to her sex, she did not betray. Certain it is that one of Graham Howard's most attentive listeners was our young friend Katie; and as certainly afterwards, when taxed with her absorbed attention by her teasing brother, she simply replied, with a slight toss of her head, a little augmentation of colour, and a contemptuous curl of her lip,—

“Oh, the sermon was passable enough!”

“And what of the Rev. Graham Howard?” asked Fred, with a provoking smile.

“On a piece with his sermon, to be sure,” laughed Katie, with a glowing face. To hide it, and escape further teasing, she ran from the room.

CHAPTER XI.

SABBATH MEMORIES AND THEIR RESULTS.

“Thou who scornest truths divine,
Say—what hope, what joy is thine?
Is thy soul from sorrow free?
Is *this world* enough for thee?”

HAVE our readers ever been aroused from a morning sleep by the soft splashing of rain-drops on roof or window?—aroused, and yet but half aroused, only in fact restored to such an amount of consciousness as to enjoy the soft pillow, and comfortable snug position in bed, with a deeper zest, for the musical murmur without. It was thus Katie Linwood's slumbers were dissipated, and a quiet, dreamy sort of feeling substituted. She lay for a long time unconscious of the lulling influence of the sounds without. But by degrees those sounds became familiar, and then she listened to the drops of rain with feelings almost akin to pleasure.

Splash, splash upon the window-pane—tinkle, tinkle, tinkle among the vine-leaves that clung to the window-frame. She fancied she could almost distinguish the difference in the sound as those drops swept vine or rose-leaf. Fancy, no doubt, but a pretty conceit after all. She lay a long time simply listening,

and then thoughts half defined came into being, and the sounds were presently forgotten.

Thoughts of the past day, thoughts of the future, strangely intermingled, and amidst all these were Bible words reverberating in her ears. She strove to shut them against the memory, but they came again and again, and would not be dismissed. She closed her eyes and laid her face on the pillow, but even beneath the closed eyes, in crimson characters she seemed to see the impressive language—

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

They were the words Graham Howard had chosen for his text on the previous day. His way of opening the subject was new to Katie; never before had she seen herself in the light that sermon displayed. Not that she felt any desire to seek after that better righteousness, that sure fountain of blood, which can

“Cleanse each spot;”

not that there was any coming to Christ as the all-sufficient atonement, able and willing to save men to the uttermost. Ah, no! this happy state of feeling was far from being the one Katie possessed, as she lay restlessly tossing on her pillow with those words ringing in her ears. Discomfort, uneasiness, consciousness of sin—these were some of Katie’s present experiences. She knew that in more points than one she had offended, she felt that but little portion of the divine law had been kept by her. But on account of offending in some points, to be accounted guilty of all! Human nature strove hard against the idea.

"What!" she thought, recalling some of the earnest words of the young preacher of the little Vermont chapel. "What! am I too to be classed with thieves and murderers? am I on no higher level than those who break through every law, human and divine? Will God think the same of one whose whole life is crime as of one whose sins are at least innocent, and chiefly the result of youthful folly? No—I will not believe it, I will not—will not believe it—God is not unjust, and those words can't mean that." She sprang from her pillow in angry haste, angry with herself and the attention she had bestowed on both minister and sermon—angry especially with Graham Howard for his determined language and unflinching assertions—angry with those words of Scripture which would still follow her—"Guilty of all"—for she could make nothing else of them, and against their real meaning she rebelled.

"What folly it is of me," she at last contemptuously exclaimed, "bothering my head about such things! what do I know of such matters? Why should I trouble myself about them? I am young enough yet, and these solemn subjects don't agree with this wild head of mine; and so, Mr. Graham Howard, farewell to your preaching." And off she ran with a merry song rivalling our old English lark for sweetness, and merry and joyous as our own magpie in its highest notes. There was no trace of sober thought in her gay little face, as at last she burst in upon Dolly in the large kitchen, waltzing round and round with her lightest step to a stave of the "Fairy Waltzes," till fairly exhausted with her effort.

Reader, has it ever been thus with you? Have you sought to quench the voice of the Spirit by gay frivolity? Have you ever tried to drown the sacred words that would remind you of another world, of other objects, of other things than those of earth? Do you, alas! with Katie Linwood, exclaim, "Time enough, I am yet too young for such sober thoughts; Christianity is so dull, and worldly things, and worldly objects, and worldly people are so much more interesting"? Beware! beware, young friend! the fairest flower is soonest faded, the bud is often cankered, the tiny leaflet often falls before the sudden blast. Oh! if the soft whispers of the Holy Spirit have come to you, quench not His aspirations.

"Wake! thou that sleepest in enchanted bowers,
Lest these lost years should haunt thee on the night
When death is waiting for thy number'd hours,
To take their swift and everlasting flight.
Wake, ere the earth-born charm unnerve thee quite."

Once bent on stifling the voice of conscience speaking within, and we shall have plenty of assistance from the world and its allies. Katie found this; a few brisk movements round the dairy to see that all was duly prepared for the reception of the morning's milk, a little laughing raillery with Dolly, who assisted her in her duties, and by the time she found herself seated by her favourite "Daisy," the white sweet fluid streaming from her nimble fingers into a pail whose brightness caught and emulated the sunbeams, all serious thought was forgotten.

"A pretty picture," thought Fred to himself, as he passed the end of the paddock where his sister and Dolly were milking, on his way to look at a few acres

of lucerne of particularly fine growth, "a pretty picture, I must say! Katie is just the daintiest little dairymaid one could meet on a summer morning; though I need not tell her that, for no doubt the gipsy knows it well enough already, without telling, most womenkind do. If they possess an atom of good looks, no fear but they will find it out."

Fred was tolerably right in some of his conclusions, though he might have extended his remarks to his own sex, who are by no means behindhand in like discoveries. Kate knew very well that she was pretty, but at that moment she was certainly not thinking about it. Indeed as she could not see herself from the point of view Fred did, it was impossible for her to tell how pretty she looked. Her pale blue morning dress sweeping the green carpet, the snowy sun-bonnet pushed back from her face, hiding in vain the light silken ringlets, and the rosy cheek itself leaning against the snowy side of Daisy—all this was a picture for Fred's eyes; she knew nothing about it.

Wholly engrossed with the large supply of milk her favourite was yielding, and quite unconscious of her brother's gaze, she sat there very quietly. The morning shower had given place to a cloudless sky, and soft, refreshing breezes, exhilarating to the spirits tempered the rather fervid sunbeams, before whose influence the drops of rain had quitted the grass, and with them all traces of Katie's chagrin and angry feelings. She had forgotten everything about the Sabbath, all she had heard at the little Vermont chapel, even its minister. The bright, beautiful morning, Daisy's gentleness, the perfume of flowers

blossoming in a small adjacent garden (very sweet though only common stocks), the playful breeze, the profusion of milk pouring into the bright pans, gladdened her heart. She sang at her work, but no songs of thanksgiving to the Donor of all these blessings. Alas, poor Katie!

Once past the paddock, and Fred's picture had vanished from memory. Other images took their place—images as fresh and fair, though no fairer, for that could not well be. His thoughts took somewhat of the same channel Katie's had taken that morning, at least they flew off in the same direction; the past Sabbath and the little chapel their halting-place, though not their theme. He had certainly heard the text, and had with becoming decorum found it out in his Bible; but the subject of the discourse was as far distant from him as though he had been miles away. He had joined in the songs of praise, but it was with the lip and not the heart. He was quite as conscious of his full, fine voice as Katie of her attractions; he knew well it shared admiration with the short, light curls that swept from his brow. No other thought, except perhaps the pleasure he felt in vocal exercise, induced him to join in the sacred song. Was it the prayer he remembered? Alas! no; its commencement indeed he heard, and the concluding "Amen," but the rest was lost in oblivion as far as concerned him.

No—neither sermon, prayer, hymn, nor even minister, had any share in Fred's Sabbath recollections; they had all other sources. Beside him, or nearly so, beneath a pretty white bonnet, were soft, brown eyes, a roguish mouth, and a dark, glossy head

of hair. Sometimes the eyes suddenly met his, to be as quickly withdrawn beneath their lashes ; while the mounting blush and half-smiling mouth told not of the utter unconsciousness those averted glances intended to represent. Sometimes the tip of a tiny little boot peeped out beyond the soft folds of muslin, or little daintily-gloved fingers trifled with the leaves of a rose or a cut-glass vinaigrette. Fanny Moore was certainly a bewitching girl, and Fred's looks fully acknowledged it ; though while he looked, Long-fellow's expressive lines would steal in,—

“ She has two eyes so soft and brown,
Take care !
She gives a side glance and looks down,
Beware—beware !
Trust her not, she's fooling thee.”

And Fred Linwood was not inclined to be fooled. Not he !

And so his glances dwelt longest in another direction. His position admitted him to a full view behind the curtain concealing the harmonium, and a very little figure seated there so quietly unconscious of his gaze, that her very unconsciousness provoked him. The modest, brown straw hat could not conceal her gentle face, eyes deep as violets, downward glancing, and jetty hair embracing a tranquil, peaceful brow. Fred wished she was not so insensible, his pride was aroused. Had she given all her attention to the minister ? Were those violet eyes only to be raised to lift them to him ? Fred was more than usually disturbed at what he called her apathy that morning. Watching her small white fingers as they glided over the keys of the harmonium, he almost lost

his place in his book. Annie Maitland's indifference proved more attractive than Fanny Moore's winning glances. It was memories such as these that occupied Fred's morning ride, and yet of the two young ladies he scarcely knew which to prefer. He knew he was far from an unwelcome visitor at the Doctor's, he knew also by the coquettish smile and blush that he was quite as acceptable to the daughter; and yet, spite of her winning glances, her pretty face, in spite indeed of even more attractive metal, her father's heavy bank-book, Annie Maitland was uppermost in his thoughts that morning.

And so he went to look at the lucerne. It was necessary he should that morning. At the very extremity of the section it was situated, and one point of it came so near to the school-house that the fence joined the hedge of the little garden.

The lucerne needed very particular attention for so fine a crop, especially the end bordering the garden. Its owner made a long stay there, but his eyes were not all the time on his own land; they wandered not a little to that of his neighbour's, to one window particularly through which he could catch a glimpse of a little figure gliding to and fro, in a simple print dress, and little black apron, and snowy collar; now with duster in hand, flitting from one article to another, now spreading a white breakfast cloth, and anon placing cups and saucers and all the paraphernalia of breakfast service for two thereon. She came at last to the threshold of the door, looking out on the clear morning sky, now soft and beautiful and unclouded, though bright drops yet lingered tremblingly on the leaves of the passion-flower. A rose-bush grew

near the door laden with a few choice buds, scarcely more than half opened, and some only faintly blushing through the enfolding green. That morning shower had brought out their fragrance. Annie gathered three or four of the choicest, and then advancing a little farther into the garden, stooped for two or three sprigs of mignonette, and a fragrant stem or two of lavender; a drooping stem of wax-like fuchsia next wooed her attention; she added that to her bouquet, and then returning to the door left her flowers on the seat in the verandah while she went in. Presently Fred saw her return with a little, coloured vase in her hand, and this time she went farther down the garden to the margin of the creek whose green and mossy bank divided the corner of the garden from the lucerne acres. How near to himself she came, and yet he stood perfectly still, watching every movement! Annie, secure in her fancied solitude, lingered on the bank of the creek. An insect floating on the water had attracted her attention. Then a few young watercresses temptingly green won her from the pursuit of the insect. How the little hand plunged in to gather the youngest and freshest of them; rinsing them again and again in the stream till no earthy particle adhered. It seemed to Fred she enjoyed the pure air of early morning that lifted away the jetty hair from her clear forehead, the soft, cool waters that ran murmuring over her hand, for she still lingered at her self-imposed task with the little vase yet unfilled. Should he speak, and disturb the dreamy, thoughtful expression of the violet eyes? No; it would then appear as if he watched her. That would not do. And while he hesitated she filled her

vase, and, turning back into the house with that and the watercresses, disappeared together.

What pretence could he make for a call? He had no message from his sister. "What a fool I was not to pay a visit to the dairy before I came away," he thought, "a little cream might have been acceptable: or to the poultry-yard—I might have made a mission, and secured my entrance too, with a nice plump fowl." He forgot what he had been saying to himself over and over again previously, that his visit was only to the lucerne crop, and that presents were out of the question there. So he turned away, and walked very, very slowly by the side of his unregarded lucerne, looking back every now and then, and wondering whether Annie Maitland was as heart-whole as she seemed, wondering at her happiness, wondering at everything, but chiefly at himself.

He did not return the same way as he came: he took the road past the Doctor's. Fanny was at the window, looking very naive and pretty, in a light pink, morning dress, with very wide sleeves—betraying fair, plump arms, and a small, graceful throat, clasped by a narrow velvet band and brooch, that rendered its whiteness more conspicuous. She smiled, and blushed, and bowed as she saw him, and, as in duty bound, he stopped.

"You up, Miss Fanny? really breathing the air so early?" he exclaimed teasingly.

"Yes! to be sure. I was just thinking with the American poet—

'Lovely indeed is morning! I have drunk
Its fragrance and its freshness, and have felt
Its delicate touch—and 'tis a kindlier thing
Than music, or a feast, or medicine.'

But I beg pardon, Mr. Linwood ; you are not fond of poetry."

"So far as mere rhyming goes, perhaps not," laughed Fred ; "but I can discern the truthfulness of your quotation, Miss Fanny, at any rate. The 'delicate touch' of the morning has left its impress on your fair cheek, if I mistake not : you are as bright as the rose in your waistband, Miss Fanny !"

"Nonsense !" said Fanny, blushing and laughing.

"Not at all, perfect sense : I speak as I see. By-the-bye, you may give me that rose if you like."

"May I, indeed ? And suppose I do not like ?"

"Oh, but you do ; I'm sure you will not refuse me !"

"Why, I dare say you will scarcely turn the corner before you will toss it away ; but here, you may have it if you like," and she placed it on the window ledge.

"So ungraciously ! no, I will only take it from your own fair fingers, Miss Fanny !"

She blushinglly held the rose towards him ; he took both rose and fingers.

"Mr. Fred !"

"Miss Fanny ! come, tell me when you are coming to Sunny Hollow to further acquaintance with Katie, and then I will release you."

"I won't !"

"Nor I either ; I am quite contented and happy in standing before your window, Miss Fanny !"

"Loose my hand, Mr. Linwood ! Papa is coming !"

"Very happy to see him," coolly replied Fred.

"Let me go—let me go ; what a tease you are !

There, then, I'll tell you ; some time this week ; Wednesday, perhaps ; now loose my hand."

Fred gradually did so, and, with one of his parting squeezes and laughs, turned away, and homewards. Three pictures that morning, which was uppermost ?

CHAPTER XII.

KATIE IN HER NEW SPHERE.

“A solitary blessing few can find,
Our joys with those we love are all entwined.”

KATIE was now becoming familiarized with her new home and her many duties. She liked it and them none the less because she was so entirely her own mistress. She had got on famously with her brothers ; for though she had now and then to give them a little scolding for the disorderly habits they had contracted, though she had at times to complain of boots, and hats, and spurs out of place, and occupying positions by no means improving to the symmetry of the room, yet all was generally taken in good part, particularly if the offender happened to be Fred.

Indeed, both brothers were ready and willing enough to listen to her playful reproofs and mock authoritative orders, for the sake of having their pretty little sister with them. They were very proud of her, and very thankful to have her company. It was no common pleasure they felt in the orderly arrangements, the punctual and well-appointed meals ; but the little “sprite,” as Fred called her, that flitted about the rough rooms of Sunny Hollow, gave the house, in his opinion, all the sunlight it needed—there was no other improvement necessary, he thought.

Not so thought Katie. She dearly loved her brother, but could not quite agree with all his theories; her nature had a trifle more poetry in it, spite of her being such a practical little maiden. She loved the beautiful as well as the orderly, and her spirit rebelled against rough exteriors. It was wonderful to see how her poetry prevailed over her brothers' rude prose.

She had scarcely been a week at Sunny Hollow before Fred and Stephen, under her supervision, were busily engaged in the erection of a broad verandah, extending not simply in front, but all around the house.

"This will serve two purposes, Fred," she exclaimed enthusiastically. "We shall have plenty of shade in summer, no fear of getting sun-struck in running round to the dairy: the dairy itself will be fifty times cooler. Then the same may be said of winter: ample shelter from the rain, to say nothing of the appearance—the superior appearance the house will have, particularly when the passion-flowers, and dolichus, and jessamine, that I intend to plant, shall wreath and twine their drapery round these rough poles; but for that I suppose you care nothing?"

"Absolutely nothing!" laughed Fred. "Well, perhaps not; I am glad, however, to gratify you, little Katie, who do so much to make us comfortable. And, besides, I do like a verandah very well; it is pleasant to sit in on a warm summer's evening."

"I wonder why you have never had one before, then," asked Katie, raising her eyebrows in pretty surprise.

"Oh, I've had plenty of work always on hand,

and, truth to tell, I never gave it a thought, sis ; it was left to your genius to develope the idea, I expect, though I suppose it will depend somewhat on mine to carry it out ;" and he shouldered his axe with a half-sly, half-proud smile, and walked to the door.

"Well," he resumed, "I suppose we may as well finish the thing at once ; we shall be busy enough by-and-by. And so, little Katie, if you have any orders or directions to give, better come and give them now, for you know very well I don't let the grass grow under my feet when I make a commencement, and I would rather you had the thing done to your fancy."

"Thank you, thank you, dear Fred ; and here I am, ready and willing to prompt. Grass don't often grow under my feet," said Katie, springing merrily forward.

"I should rather think not," Fred mentally responded, as he stood for a moment watching her graceful little figure, and then stepped after her into the fresh morning air.

This was Katie's first and pet improvement. Numbers of minor ones followed ; some with the aid of the brothers, some with only Dolly for assistant—an able and willing assistant she found her. Home with Katie, and home without her, both Fred and Stephen felt, was a very different thing. It was so pleasant, after a hard day's work, to come into that clean, bright, cool kitchen—the hearth snowy white, the floor red and spotless, the table spread with faultless bread and butter, and all the abundance of a good farm and dairy.. Pleasant it was to look out of those bright windows, through curtains of pure clean mus-

lin—pleasant to look up even to the rafters, and see hams and sides of bacon in goodly array, defying the entrance of famine. No less pleasant were the bedrooms—plain, to be sure ; but pure, and clean, and sleep-inviting. Katie was a little queen of a housekeeper ; so thought her brothers, and so thought all who took a peep in at Sunny Hollow and its internal arrangements ; though the better portion of Vermont society scarcely gave Katie time comfortably to establish herself before they intruded upon her. There were wonderful revolutions in those days.

Katie had nearly forgotten the conversation she had held with Amy on her birthday ; she seldom thought of the gentle, kindly warning then given, or, if she did, it was with a laugh at Amy and her husband's expense. "What duties had as yet transpired that were not easily performed ? It was a pleasure to make her brothers' home pleasant to them ; she enjoyed the very act of doing so. Was not that comfort enough ?" And she glanced complacently around the well-arranged rooms, forgetting that all these were merely external comforts, and could not minister to a mind diseased, should that kind of ministration be needed. Happily, at present, it was not. Then as to warning, what occasion had there been for that yet ? All had gone on straight with Stephen as far as she could see. She hoped it still would ; for her warning, she feared, would not be of the right sort. Indeed, she began to believe the folks at home had frightened themselves for nothing ; some false report had reached them. Stephen had his own way ; he always had done so ; and certainly now, when he had

grown up nearly to manhood, he would at least choose his own friends and companions. There could be no harm in that. She would not believe that that handsome, animated face could ever wear the silly, maudlin aspect of a lover of strong drink. At any rate, she had never witnessed such an aspect. What should she do if she ever did? Warn! no; there was happily nobody that needed that; there was nothing of that kind that she could discern to do. Occasionally, to be sure, Stephen, after one of his long absenteeisms, would look dull and heavy next morning; would scarcely touch his breakfast, and complained of headache; but all this was quite likely to proceed from his long ride. Katie was ready enough to soothe herself and her fears into quietness with this.

But was Fred as unsuspecting? He was not. To him these morning headaches were no mystery. The untouched breakfast he regarded with different eyes to his sister. While she besieged her gloomy brother with teasing, laughing jests, suggesting one or another fair lady as the cause of his failing appetite—the absence of her smile as the reason of his headache and depression (which she told him she should christen “heartache” at once), Fred could with difficulty, restrain a burst of indignation or contempt, though far from desiring to expose the delinquent till he had effectually exposed himself, and this, even, he had no wish to do before his little sister.

“You are a fool, Steve!” he exclaimed one day when alone, with more truth than politeness. “You are an arrant fool, and I have told you so again and again. Why will you drink to excess? Why cannot you be moderate, like I am? If you must drink at

all, no need for making yourself a sot, and that's what it will end in at the rate you are going on. I wonder Katie has not noticed it."

"A sot! Nonsense; I'm as moderate as you, for that matter—that is to say, generally; but somehow Horton's colonial wine is about the strongest and best I ever tasted; though it does get up into a fellow's head confoundedly."

"Why do you take it, then, or so much?"

"Why? For the same reason that I take anything else that is good—because I like it. That wine," continued Steve, forgetting his headache in the recollection, "that wine, I tell you, has a body in it such as no other wine I have tasted yet has."

"So it seems," said Fred drily; "a body and a spirit too, that appears to mount most inconveniently to your head."

"Ah! that's because, somehow or other, I manage to take a glass too much. With wine that flows like oil itself it is difficult to calculate the precise time to stop."

"Very likely; in that case I should make myself scarce in its neighbourhood. If I was Horton, before I'd have a drop of colonial wine in my house, I'd stave every barrel, smash every bottle, and pull up every vine; for I don't envy him that report about his wife."

"What report?"

"What report! now, Steve, that is rich; do you mean to tell me you have not heard of Mrs. Horton's occasional vagaries with the bottle? If you have not, I have, that's all. I suppose, like you, she finds the wine flows so smoothly, that she does not know when to stop!" said Fred contemptuously; and

then, shrugging his shoulders, he indignantly continued, "Before I'd see a wife of mine degrade herself and family like she does—before I'd see her drink like a beast rather than a woman, I'd—there's no knowing what I wouldn't do," said Fred, full of wrath, turning on his heel as he spoke.

"I tell you, Stephen," he added, turning back to his brother, who sat with his head between his hands and his elbows on the table, writhing between a terrible headache and a by-no-means quiet conscience ; "I tell you, Stephen, there's not a sight on earth more disgusting, more brutalizing, more abominable, than a woman the worse for liquor, no matter what that liquor be. Bad enough if a man lowers himself to a brute. But a woman—Faugh !"

"You can drink yourself, Fred," said Stephen, with a slight sneer. "I'm sure you profess to be quite a connoisseur in the taste of wines." And he leaned his aching head on the table over his extended arm.

Fred slightly coloured at the charge. "Well, what if I do ?" he replied, after a moment's silence ; "I know better than to exceed ; I know when I have had enough, and take care not to overstep the boundary ; I can take a glass or two of wine, now and then, of really good colonial wine. I don't profess to be a total abstainer ; though, by the way, if anything would induce me to become one, it would be the sight of yourself, Stephen, as you were last night, when Harry Horton brought you home in his gig ; or the tales abroad of such women as Mrs. Horton, who even only occasionally degrade the woman, the wife, the mother !"

Fred had worked himself up into as much temper

as he was capable of, and he turned to look at his brother as he said the last words, wondering whether he had any feeling yet remaining. He was scarcely surprised to find that he had fallen into a heavy sleep, and, turning once more contemptuously away, he left the room.

“I wonder how many glasses of wine I take in the course of the year?” he muttered to himself. “Stephen need not quote that, though I see no harm in moderation, not a whit; but for all the love that I bear to the juice of the grape, if it would prove the means of staying Stephen in his degrading course, not a drop more should pass my lips.” He struck the match rather energetically with which he was about to light the tobacco in his pipe, and, as he turned off towards the stock-yard, wondered to himself whether it would not be worth while at least to make the experiment.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN AFTERNOON'S VISIT.

"This world is but the rugged road
Which leads us to the bright abode
Of peace above!"

"HAVE you any message to send with me this afternoon, Fred?" asked Katie archly, one morning, as she sat with her two brothers at their pleasant noontide meal, engaged in friendly, laughing chat.

"Depends upon where you are going, sis. There may be a dozen places in your list of calls, to none of which I should care to send even a message, and there might be a few to whom I should be too happy to have a message to send."

"Indeed, sir! Permit me to ask who are those favoured few?"

"Oh!" laughed Fred, "you expect me to tell you, do you? Where are you bound for this afternoon, Katie? Tell me that, and perhaps then I can answer you."

"It would serve you right if I did no such thing, but as that would punish me perhaps as much as you, I won't withhold it. In the first place, then," said Katie, laughing, and looking very slyly into her brother's face, "I am going to pay your fair

friend Fanny Moore a visit. Have you a message there?"

"To Fanny Moore! Why, she was only here two days ago! What can you girls have to talk about again?"

"Oh! we find plenty of topics, without even introducing a certain gentleman who, at the present moment, shall be nameless," said Katie, tossing her head.

"I'll vouch for the quantity, at any rate," said Stephen, going on with his dinner very quietly.

"Well, I've told you where I am going first. Have you a message, I ask?" said Katie, feigning impatience.

"Yes," said Fred, laughing, and drawing something slowly from his pocket. "Give her this handkerchief. I stole it from her, when she was here the other evening, for a lark, and forgot to give it back. I'm sure I don't want it."

"I shan't tell her that, sir; so, if you have no better message, farewell to you. I thought you liked Fanny Moore!"

"So I do. She's a nice girl. Not quite enough in her for me, though. She's a trifle too tall for my taste. What besides is no matter."

"Why, Fred, she is a most graceful figure, and has quite a pretty, piquant style of face. I don't know what you want, sir."

"Something more than that," said Fred, helping himself to potatoes, and laughing at his sister's exclamations.

"Very well, very well! and so that is the extent of your message. I have a great mind to make you deliver your parcel yourself."

"Where else are you going, little Katie?"

"Farther along the road to that little bower of a school-house. I hope the fair Annie within is short enough for your fastidious taste?"

"Are you going there?"

"And why not, sir? I have, indeed, that purpose. I have packed away a most delicate cream cheese, some of my best butter, and a bottle of cream for a peace-offering. Mrs. Maitland's sweet, patient face, and the bewitching one of her little daughter, have taken my heart by storm. I don't know what they have done with yours."

Fred rose from the table with a slight accession of colour, which he endeavoured to conceal by a well-affected yawn and laugh.

"Have you any message there?" asked Katie, looking funnily at her brother.

"My respects," said Fred, now fairly outside the door, as though he were hurrying away from her words.

"To Mrs. Maitland, of course; but what to Annie?"

But Fred either was, or pretended to be, beyond hearing.

What a lovely afternoon it was! very warm though, making every little shadow welcome. Katie chose to walk instead of ride, and arraying herself in the coolest of cool lilac muslin dresses, with a thin gossamer scarf, and a pretty white hat and feathers—Katie was fond of feathers, drooping feathers especially—she sauntered off with her basket of cheese, and butter, and cream; a rather heavier burden than one would choose for a hot day certainly, but the pleasure of the giver made it light.

"What a pity!" thought Katie, as she left the slip-panel of Sunny Hollow behind her, and struck off across an opposite paddock for Mrs. Maitland's house, "what a pity we cannot have this pleasant weather all the year! Now, in a little time all this grass will be burnt up, there will not be a flower remaining, and the sun will come scorching down upon our heads, there will be no enduring it. I don't like winter, for we have nothing then but rain, rain, rain; and I don't like summer, for we are burnt up then." An involuntary sigh rose to her lips, for at that very moment a little memory rose up of something she had once read. It was about a shepherd on Salisbury Plain, who, when asked what kind of weather he liked best, answered, "Such weather as pleases God pleases me." She could not say that, for she knew she thought differently. She could not help wishing that the fruits would ripen with less sun, that the corn would grow with less rain, and so with her vain wishes she was cherishing a spirit of discontent, and forgetting the present lovely weather and her pleasant walk.

It was not in Katie's nature, however, to brood over imaginary or distant sorrows. Her light, buoyant spirit too readily seized on the present enjoyment, and, butterfly-like, revelled in the flowers of to-day, forgetful of what to-morrow might bring forth, forgetful that flowers must fade. It is a little, light-hearted creature our readers have to follow in her rambles, who would have been better for a trifle more ballast to steady her curly head, and tranquillize her palpitating little heart. That ballast religion could have given her, but Katie thought religion a

very gloomy thing, and tried to put thoughts of it away as much as ever she could. This was not always possible, as some of our fair young readers know from their own experience. Well would it be if the soft whisper within were heeded; well would it be if no deaf ear were turned to its murmuring.

Katie resolutely turned her thoughts away from what to her was very unpleasant, but thought proved too strong an antagonist—it would come. Her very mission, the very basket on her arm, sided against her, she was going to see those who she knew possessed the talisman of happiness that she had not. She knew it, and almost revered them for it, though sometimes she thought she should love Annie Maitland better if she were a little more like herself: yet that was an impossibility, and strangely mingled with that thought came a sighing wish that she herself could more resemble Annie.

“That I never shall—never, never!” thought Katie, as she crept under the fence in the close neighbourhood of the school-house. “So I must even be contented to be Katie after all—random, wild little Katie, as they call me.” She need not have desired to be other than herself; it was but the calm, the beautiful influence of the grace of God she needed, and what a lovely change would that have made!

As Katie crept under the fence in sight of the school-house the door opened widely, and one after another, in wild delight at freedom, rushed forth the happy children, some one way, some another. School was out, and there was no longer any necessity to restrain the laugh and shout, no longer need to keep

quiet the restless feet that would sometimes rebel against all law and rule, impatient for a run. Books, and slates, and maps, farewell to you till Monday. Respite now for the pale, weary teacher. Respite now for the almost as weary little ones. Hurrah for the holiday for both ! Precious boon this Saturday and Sunday to the teacher and the taught !

Katie passed quickly through the crowd of children, with a nod and a smile for each, unknown as they were to her ; and on their part, though they were impatient enough for a good play, they were yet all eyes for Katie's pretty face, and fair ringlets, and more especially for the white feathers that drooped over both.

" May I come in ? " she softly asked, putting her pretty head in at the open door.

Annie Maitland was standing in the centre of her cleared school-room, with her back towards the door, in an attitude of deep thought. The neat dress exquisitely fitted her slender figure, and, simple as it was in material, was faultless in proportion. The little linen collar looked delicately white, and the hair fell in dark, soft masses over her white throat, not in curls, but drooping bands, which swept away from brow and cheek, and was gathered in some graceful fashion of her own. She did not hear Katie's voice, so deep was her reverie, and Katie waited two or three moments before she again spoke, taking a good view meanwhile of her fair friend, and wondering after all what made her so exceeding fair ; wondering, too, the subject of those intense thoughts, so intense that she could not even hear.

" Hear she shall, though," thought Katie, springing

forward on tip-toe, and then suddenly placing both hands on her shoulders, at the same time exclaiming, "Will you never come back from dream-land, and salute a fellow-mortal?"

Annie turned suddenly round, the crimson blood brightly deluging cheek and brow. She was so thoroughly taken by surprise, that her hands were given in welcome without words.

"You gave me permission, you know, Miss Maitland, to come and see you," said Katie, laughing at the confusion she had caused.

"Indeed I did," said Annie warmly, "and I am very glad to see you, Miss Linwood."

"Are you? Well, then, give me another permission. If we are to be friends, let us have done with formalities; call me Katie, and I will call you Annie."

"Willingly; I am no friend to formalities either."

"And I am the most informal little personage in the world."

"Come in, and let me introduce you to mamma, then," said Annie, smiling; "there need be no formality there, mamma half knows you already."

"And I know her—far more than know her, though we have never spoken," said Katie. "But stay, my dear Annie, do you think your mamma will accept a little of my dairy produce? I hope she will like it, for I have come all through the heat because I thought she would."

"Like it, indeed she will; she is so fond of cheese, and it is so long since we have tasted any. How kind you are!"

"Nonsense, Annie! but I am glad the cheese will

be a novelty, it will be all the sweeter," and Katie followed her friend into an adjacent room.

It was impossible not to like Mrs. Maitland. Her kind, quiet, lady-like manners, her winning smile, attracted Katie at first; but, prepared as she had been to love Annie's mother, she loved her much more than she could have believed. There was much to reverence too, and yet Katie was surprised to find how soon she felt at home even in her presence. The little room was very pleasant that afternoon, so perfectly neat and spotless. The chimney, not of quite so large dimensions as many of its neighbours, was filled with fresh flowers and waving grasses, for the little kettle was boiling in a tiny shed outside that usually did service as a kitchen. The door and window stood wide open, giving a full view of everything green and lovely without, while the perfume of the garden flowers wandered in with every breeze. A few of the best of them were nestled together in a vase upon the table, and presently, to keep them company, Annie placed there a little, old-fashioned, oval tray, and upon this some of that quaint, rich, old china, that does one's heart good to see; rich and deep in colour, but not ancient in make, though not, perhaps, of the orthodox bush dimensions, or calculated to satisfy all colonial thirst. These, and the silver tea-pot and cream-jug and spoons, were relics of past days of affluence, some of the few things saved out of a vast sacrifice of household treasures. No wonder they were valued, and as Katie was a welcome guest, Annie did all she could to show that she was welcome.

"How quiet and happy you always seem, dear

Mrs. Maitland !” said Katie, as, seated between mother and daughter at the table, she drank tea from those delicate cups, and admired their delicacy. “You never seem to repine,” she continued, “and yet things must seem so different to you here to those you were accustomed to at home.”

“Do you remember what St. Paul says of himself, my dear girl, ‘I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content’ ?” replied Mrs. Maitland, with a smile. “Now, I fear I have scarcely attained to that happy condition, though I desire it.”

“Does St. Paul say that ?” asked Katie in surprise. “I did not remember. Well, then, my dear Mrs. Maitland, that seems to me just like you ; but I cannot think how St. Paul and you learnt it.”

“It is a very difficult lesson, my dear, but a very happy one to know, as Paul did, both how to abound and to suffer need, and yet with all to be contented is very blessed.”

“Yes ; but to me it seems impossible,” said Katie, “and I can’t think it in the least wrong to lament past luxuries or happiness. I don’t see how any one can help doing it, Mrs. Maitland.”

“Is it wise to do so ? The regret will not replace them, will it ?” asked Mrs. Maitland, with a smile. “Is it not, think you, acting a more sensible part to try to be contented with the present lot, instead of sighing after the past ? It is, as I said, a difficult truth, but less difficult to those who know that ‘all things work together for good’ to them, for their Father has promised it.”

Katie ate her bread and butter in silence.

“Those who know this,” continued Mrs. Maitland,

"have little need to trouble themselves about past, present, or future. What matter a few rude storms, what matter a few untoward accidents? the treasure in the heavens cannot fade away, the mansions above are indisputable. Has Miss Linwood any title to those mansions, to this refuge?"

The voice was kind and earnest that asked the question. Katie rose from the table, and, pushing aside her chair, tied her hat-strings tightly under her chin to hide the tears that started unbidden to her eyes, while in a constrained voice she answered,—

"No, Mrs. Maitland, you must not look for Christianity in me. I am a poor, wild little thing, without a serious thought; but don't forsake me on that account."

There was something so like tears in the choked voice that said this, that it brought answering tears to the widow's eyes. "Forsake you? No, my poor child!" she said, as she warmly shook the little trembling hand, and then kissed the flushed cheek. She stood for a moment or two watching the little retreating figure as it passed the garden gate, then sinking again in to her chair, she looked up into Annie's face with a smile through her tears, and gently said, "Nil desperandum."

CHAPTER XIV.

THOUGHTS DISSIPATED AND RE-COLLECTED.

THE tears came fast and unrestrained for a few moments after Katie left the little garden gate. She would not for anything have met with any one just then, and even when those tears were driven back, there was a pain in her heart at the answer she had been forced to give to Mrs. Maitland's question that would not be put down so readily.

"I cannot help it," at length she said desperately, "I cannot help it that I am not a Christian ; there seems so much to do to become one, and it is not in my nature either."

Poor Katie ! she never spoke a truer word when she said Christianity was not in her nature. We wonder in whose nature, indeed, it is ? By nature all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ; by nature the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Katie, however, was not thinking of the scriptural view of her nature. Oh, no ! she was but remembering that all her inclinations and tastes tended to the opposite side of Christianity, that in it to her there was nothing' alluring, however in another she might admire it. Yet she could not

help being troubled at the knowledge that she was not a Christian ; that she really had no title to the eternal mansions, no refuge for her soul.

Are there any among my readers to whom this view of the subject has never hitherto occurred ? Oh, think of it now, my dear young friend, now seek a refuge for your trembling soul ; now seek a title to the mansions above ; oh, now, now, now flee to Jesus and be secure.

- Katie began, however, to take comfort in her nature, to take refuge from her trouble in her inability to become a Christian. Why should she trouble herself about it ? She was not, and never could be, like Annie Maitland, and she should not try. By the time she reached Dr. Moore's house every trace of tears was gone, and not a vestige even of the pain in her heart remained. It was rather a gay little knock she gave at the door. The door flew open as soon as she knocked, for Fanny Moore had seen her from the window, and, seizing her in her arms, almost carried her into the parlour.

"You dear little thing !" she exclaimed, with the usual amount of kisses girls bestow on one another. "You dear little Katie ; here have I been half dying with ennui, and almost inclined to run up to Sunny Hollow again to see you, if it had not been for very shame at coming so soon again. And here you are yourself, to dissipate the 'blues' in person, and everything else besides of an unpleasant nature."

"No ; I can't take off my things," laughed Katie ; "I can only stay a very little while."

Fanny laid violent hands on the hat-strings. "A little while, indeed ; don't tell me ! Now, Katie, you

must stop ; I've any number of things to talk about, I want you to stay tea so much."

"I've 'stayed tea' elsewhere, Miss Fanny, and can't positively take a second. I have been to see Annie Maitland."

"You naughty girl, you ought to have come to me first. No, you shan't have your hat ! Can't you sit your 'little while' without it ?" and Fanny held it out of her reach.

"Well, if I must sit down, I suppose I must," and Katie, nothing loth, threw off her scarf, and took possession of the doctor's comfortable easy chair, crossing her little feet on a footstool, and looking very much at her ease.

"How hot you are, dear ! what have you been doing with yourself ?" and Fanny brought a Chinese fan from the mantel-piece, and stationed herself before her friend, waving it rapidly up and down. "Papa would say you were at fever heat, and wanted some of his advice ; but he don't know everything. By-the-bye, Katie," she added slyly, "did you meet any one on the road as you came ?"

"Why ?" asked Katie.

"Oh, I thought perhaps you had. I saw some one ride past your way a short time ago."

"Who ?" again asked Katie.

"Now, are you not anxious to know, Katie ? Confess that. Why, who but the Rev. Graham Howard, our worthy pastor. I verily believe he was going to your house."

"He will find me out, then, that's all," said Katie, colouring slightly. "I'm glad of it."

"For shame, Katie, what can make you say that ?

Why, we are all so glad to have a visit from him. Don't you think he is nice-looking? Has he not splendid eyes? And that name of his, Graham, is so uncommon."

"Does he know how much you admire him?" said Katie, with a saucy smile, colouring even more, and tearing to shreds a spray she held in her hand, an old trick of hers.

"Not he! At least I suppose not; I have never told him. Oh, no! he would never think of me; I am not good enough for him. I expect he will choose a very different girl from either you or me when he wants a wife; but I think him very nice, after all."

Katie looked up at her graceful attendant, admiring the face and figure before her, and wondering why Fred did not fall in love instanter with the pretty girl. Very pretty she looked indeed, waving to and fro the elegant fan. The pale, rose-coloured dress she wore suited well her complexion and hair, which was worn half in bandeaux, half in heavy curls. After what Fred had said, she supposed that Fanny Moore would never be sister of hers; and yet she did not know, he would not be likely to confess to her.

"Fanny!" she exclaimed presently, "here is something you left at our house the other evening. Fred had it in his possession all the time. It was too bad of him!"

Fanny's face was crimson with eloquent blood. Katie looked at her with a covert smile, as she quietly took the handkerchief.

"Thank you, Katie," she said; "it is too bad

that you should have had to bring it. He ought to have brought it himself." She would gladly have recalled the words the next moment, but could not.

"He ought to have done so," laughed Katie. "Never mind, Fanny, you can repay him another time."

An hour of laughing chit-chat, and Katie, regaining possession of her hat, started for home. Fanny accompanied her a few steps; but she was expecting her papa's return to tea, and knew he would not be pleased to have Mary the servant-girl's presidency at the table instead of her own! so, with some reluctance, she quitted her friend, and ran back to the house.

Amid Fanny's laughter and nonsense, Katie had banished all her serious thoughts. Fanny had been giving extra lively details of an evening party she had recently enjoyed about ten miles from home; and Katie, whose passion was dancing, entered so fully into all, that not even the wish that she was a Christian remained. She almost danced along in her homeward path, as polkas and waltzes passed in succession through her pretty, but giddy little head.

It was such a lovely evening too; the sky was one glowing carmine, and here and there small flaky clouds just caught the radiance, and blushed back again. The sun—almost sinking—poured forth his rich flood of glory upon the tree-tops; they looked beautiful in that glory. What a perfect chorus of birds! the magpie with its rich notes of ecstatic gladness, the laughing jackass with its perfectly joyous bursts of merriment, the robin with its crimson waistcoat and sweet notes of melody. And yet Katie

did not notice all these ; the eye of her mind was busily engaged with other scenes. Instead of the glory of evening she was thinking of wax-lights, and music, and the whirling dance. Strange, wondrous strange as it was, at that moment she was preferring the works of man to the handiwork of the Creator.

She did not even stay to gather one of her favourite flowers, fond as she was of them. They were some of the natural objects that she greatly preferred to artificial ones ; but straight home she went, for she remembered that her brothers would be nearly home from their work at the other side of the section, and quite ready for supper too.

She was scarcely prepared, though, as she approached the slip-panel, to see Fred standing there. He was evidently not alone, for a fine horse stood there impatiently pawing the ground with his feet, whose bridle was held by some one whom she could not see, for, unfortunately, the huge trunk of a gum came in the way. Whether it was something in the appearance of the horse, or whether the indescribable monitor within betrayed, or whether what Fanny had said about a certain horseman having passed in that direction made her suspicious, we do not know, but certainly she was not very much surprised when, on rounding the tree, she found that it was the minister of Vermont who was standing with her brother.

Graham Howard was just turning to spring into his saddle, when his eye caught her little figure crossing the road. He stopped short, and stood waiting for her ; while Fred, having taken his farewell, was already half across the paddock on his way to the house, not having seen his sister at all.

"Miss Linwood," said Graham kindly, "I have been so unfortunate to-day as to pay my visit in your absence; but I hope I shall have the pleasure of soon seeing you again."

"I hope my brother has not failed in politeness, and has done himself the pleasure of asking you to remain to tea with us, Mr. Howard," Katie replied, with a frank smile.

"He urged me to do so," replied Graham; "but I begged him this time to excuse me, as I have to preach at a distant station to-night; and for that reason, my dear Miss Linwood, I must be so rude as to hasten away now."

Katie shook hands, and they parted. But with only the sight of the minister her painful thoughts came back again, and the wish that she more resembled these children of God was very deep down in her heart indeed. Yet how closely was covered up from view this pearl of a wish amidst a vast heap of dross!

CHAPTER XV.

THORNBUSH AND ITS NEW INMATE.

“ Who can foresee the beauty of the flower,
Enfolded in the tiny bud ?—who trace
The glory of its future ? ”

DAYS and weeks pass rapidly away when they are well employed. This was the case with most of those spent at Sunny Hollow. There were not many idle hands or idle moments there ; yet, amidst all, Katie, by good management, found many a little interval for a gallop on her pretty pony ; for more than one quiet visit to Annie Maitland and her mother ; for many a laugh with Fanny Moore and the facetious doctor. In spite, also, of Mrs. Bateman's malicious doubts and suspicions, she was never less than once a week at the store, with her basket of tempting butter enclosed in cloths of snowy purity ; and from even that grim personage she would sometimes almost extract a smile, though one of very frosty character. Two or three times she had cantered her pony along the road leading from the township, for an hour's chat with quiet, home-loving Mrs. Ranger, or for a moment's romp with her children, whose name might have been legion, so numerous they clustered round the old roof-tree. Lollies from the store, or ginger

nuts from her own well-stocked shelves, generally accompanied her on these visits ; for her part, she never came quite empty away. Mrs. Ranger was not one to let an opportunity slip of doing good. A word, even though *but* a word, was never forgotten ; nor was she discouraged at the apparently little effect her words seemed to meet with. She remembered the command and its attendant promise, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days."

Katie liked Mrs. Ranger very much ; her kind, motherly manner won upon her warm little heart. She was often surprised to find herself so quietly listening to words and advice little akin to her general feelings. But for this she would apologize to herself that Mrs. Ranger was so different to many ; she had so peculiarly winning a way of saying these things ; she spoke always as though she firmly believed all she said, and all she *did* so constantly proclaimed the Christian ; it was rather pleasant than otherwise to hear her talk. Truly, if ever Katie was sobered down into anything like serious thought, it was the result of a visit to Mrs. Maitland's, or to Thornbush, for so the Rangers' place was named. Katie often laughed to herself at the discovery she had made of *roses* amidst the thorns—*one* rose, at least, whose fragrance shed beauty on all around.

One lovely afternoon towards the latter end of November, Hebe, Katie's pet pony, stood before the door, ready equipped with saddle and bridle, and impatiently pawing the ground with her slender feet, giving little, short neighs meanwhile, by way of testifying her dislike at the delay and the restraining

rein. She was out of the sun, too, just in the shadow of the verandah, as cool and pleasant a spot as her mistress could have devised ; but, like her mistress, Hebe was inclined to be wilful, and the pretty graceful head and neck again and again bowed to the very earth with impatience.

“Hebe ! Hebe ! what ails you, pet ?” exclaimed the little mistress herself, appearing in the doorway with her habit gathered in one hand, and a small basket in the other.

Hebe responded to the well-known voice by a little glad note of her own.

“That beast knows you like a Christian, miss ; I never see the like,” said Dolly, advancing to take the basket, while Katie sprang to her seat.

“Like a Christian, Dolly ? Ah ! and I’m sadly afraid a great deal better than most Christians know me. I have not sought the acquaintance of many who deserve that name.” And Katie slackened the rein, and permitted Hebe to bound forward. “At any rate,” she thought to herself, “even here I am not quite destitute. I have gained, I think, the love of some who truly deserve that name.” And her thoughts particularly recurred to Mrs. Maitland, to Annie, and, lastly, to the object of her present visit—dear, kind, homely Mrs. Ranger.

“It must be beautiful to be a Christian,” sighed Katie, as she quickly cantered along the road past her brother’s wheat, now high, and not far from “white unto harvest.” She looked round her, as she uttered these words, at the bending corn, at the grass skirting the roadside, purple in places with the heath blossom, in others scarlet with the native pea-flower ; at the

green trees, yet in the beauty of early summer ; at the creek, which ran in one spot across the road ; and, as she did so, the thought arose : He who made them all, so good, so great, would that He also was her Father, her Friend ! would that she also knew something of the beauty of holiness, the beauty of being a Christian !

“ But ah ! ” she thought presently, “ what folly in *me* to think of such a thing ! A Christian ! It is indeed something more than name, or I do not understand the Bible. Do I love God above everything ? that is one command. Am I prepared to do this ? No, no ! my heart tells me that. I love the world ; I love its pleasures. I am not prepared to do this ; to part with a single one. Not much of the Christian spirit there,” she sighed, bending slightly forward and caressing Hebe’s arching neck. “ Then, too,” she continued mentally, “ have I not read somewhere in the Bible some such words as these : ‘ If ye love Me, keep My commandments.’ Commandments ! not commandment. More than *one*. What are they ? ” Katie was at fault here. She could not remember any but the one whose foundation was love, love to God, love to neighbour. She had not made the Bible her companion. She had read it sometimes, to be sure ; but she had not thought over it, prayed over it. It was to her a sealed book ; a casket of jewels, indeed ; but the key was not in her possession. “ Ah ! ” she sighed again, “ it is beautiful to be a Christian ; but oh ! how difficult ! it is useless for me to try.”

Yes, Katie, worse than useless in your own strength ; for indeed you have neither strength, nor

power, nor ability to become a follower of Christ of your own. That evil heart within has no goodness to yield. Christ is indeed able, willing, mighty to save to the uttermost all that come to Him. But then they must come empty, to be filled ; as having nothing, to Him who possesseth all things ; weak, to be made strong ; poor, to be made rich. Not the righteous, sinners Jesus came to save.

But Katie knew nothing of this ; and when a desire after the life of a Christian came over her, and sometimes, we know, as now it did, the recollection of her own love of the world and its enjoyments—of her entire inability to fulfil the requirements of the gospel, effectually closed her mouth, and checked the wish.

“No use,” she muttered in a half careless tone, and with a slightly bitter laugh ; and she urged her pony forward, for Hebe was almost forgotten during her serious thoughts, and seizing the advantage she had come almost to a stand under a shady tree, where a particularly inviting patch of green herbage had attracted her appetite.

“So, so ! So, so ! talk of an angel, &c.,” exclaimed a well-known voice in her close vicinity. Kate looked up hurriedly ; a bright flush rising to her very temples, as though the doctor could read the thoughts that had occupied the last few moments.

“You, Doctor ! how you frighten me !” she exclaimed, with a smile.

“Nervous, eh ? Bad thing ; wants attention ; a stimulant, I should say. That’s what I tell Fanny. The boys and girls of Vermont all want stimulating.”

"Why, sir?"

"Why? Oh! the place is in a state of stagnation, highly dangerous. Half our youth are becoming little better than mopes. Bad sign; bad sign, depend on it. Must be relieved. Mental plethora, requires bleeding."

"I hope you won't bleed me, doctor," laughed Katie; "I'm sure I don't require it. My blood is not stagnant; it dances lightly enough in my veins."

"Eh! and up into your cheeks, too, my fair lady; but I should like to see a little more in your toes. What do you say to a dance, eh?"

"A dance, Doctor!" Katie's eyes were dancing now. Where were the thoughts of the last few moments? where, indeed? The first anticipation of worldly pleasure had banished them.

"I have seen your brother," the doctor continued, "and shall expect both him, yourself, and Master Stephen next Thursday; Fanny and I between us are thinking of getting up a little dancing party. We shall invite a few friends outside Vermont to meet those in it. I'll give you stimulants, you young folks, for I'm sure you need them. You are five pounds better now than when I met you. So good-bye, and remember Thursday."

Where now was the beauty of holiness? Whither had passed those earnest yet fleeting desires after that purity without which "no man can see the Lord"? Oh! the world! the world! what charms it has for the gay and young! How fair are the chaplets she weaves!—fair, though fading! But who among the fair and gay, while gathering her flowers, will stop to consider how soon they will wither! No; there is

intoxication in their perfume, and those who gather imbibe the fatal breath.

Scarcely possible it seemed that the Katie of the present moment could be the Katie of a few previous moments; scarcely possible, the change seemed so great. No longer with her head bowed down to her saddle; no longer bending over the neck of her pet pony. Ah, no! Once more Katie Linwood was the Katie of old; the wilful, coquettish, laughing Katie. Hebe seemed to participate in the change, for, with ears erect, and nostrils slightly distended, on she went, scarcely touching the ground with her dainty feet. Pretty creature! unknowingly she kept pace with the feelings of her mistress.

A dance! there was exhilaration in the thought. At present it had been very quiet in Vermont; no music, no fun. Katie's heart beat merrily with her new anticipation, and as Hebe sped along with fairy steps and swift, the mistress was busy in the mazes of the dance; busy in the arrangements of the evening, anticipating who would be there and who would not, and as busy as thought could be in the mysteries of muslin and lace, and all the et ceteras of an evening costume. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity."

Katie's gay, bright thoughts made her forgetful of everything else; her pony stopped at the slip-panel of the Rangers' paddock so suddenly, as nearly to throw her out of the saddle. A fine little girl of eight years old ran eagerly forward to let down the panels.

"Well, Lucy," exclaimed Katie merrily, "have you come to meet me? Here, hold this little basket while I fasten Hebe. How is mother?"

"Oh, better, Miss Linwood, much better; she's up to-day, and we've got the prettiest, dearest, and littlest baby you have ever seen, Miss Linwood," said the little girl, colouring with pleasure.

"You have!—a baby?"

"Yes, Miss Linwood; it came on Sunday night, and mother's up now, sitting in the bed-room, and I've nursed the baby ever so many times!"

"You are a clever little girl, indeed—will you show me the baby?" said Katie, smiling to herself at the unexpected surprise.

"Oh, yes, dear little thing; mother will be so glad to see you;" and she led the way with rapid footsteps to the house.

"Tell mother I am here," said Katie, in a low voice, but that was unnecessary, for a quiet "Come in, Miss Linwood," from the adjacent chamber saluted her ears, and at the same time the curtain hanging before the door was quietly pushed aside, and Betsy, the eldest daughter, stood blushing and smiling a welcome in the entry.

"Only a curtained door! how miserable!" was Katie's first thought. Her second, as she entered, was one of surprise at the neatness and order that bush bed-room exhibited. The floor was earthen—only earthen, but it was at least level; and it was now covered in every part by sugar bags neatly sewn together, and well washed and bleached, till they formed a very neat and respectable matting. A large box at the window, which was curtained with snowy calico, did duty as a toilet table, covered with a very white cloth, on which were arranged the small looking-glass, pincushion, and brush and comb; above this

was the little window, with its white curtain half drawn aside, admitting a glimpse of a rose that grew without, and now playfully kissed the bright panes. At the other end of the room was the simple bush-bedstead, the stalwart legs of which were firmly rooted in the ground, but the rudeness of its manufacture was concealed beneath the neat pink and white patchwork quilt, the white sheets and pillow-cases. A little square table stood near the bed, on which a small tray had been placed, covered with a towel, and upon it a basin of savoury broth, with its accompaniments of toast sippets, and blue salt-cellar, stood awaiting the attention of the invalid, who was seated by its side in a rude home-made rocking-chair, comfortably cushioned with patchwork pillows, her feet resting upon a little round log set up endways, which did duty as a footstool. Pale she looked, and rather weary, but very happy and contented, for at her bosom she held the tiny stranger whose advent little Lucy had announced; and although this was her ninth child, it was welcomed as warmly as the rest had been; because both parents took it as a precious boon from their heavenly Father, a treasure entrusted to their care, the last was no less loved than the first had been.

Katie, as she took the hand of the happy mother in hers, and gently pressed it, could not help looking with wondering admiration upon the mild tranquil face beneath the neatly-bordered cap. Everything was so clean, so sweet, and even fragrant in that little bush-room, for there was a mug of wallflowers mingling their blood-red with some pale roses, close beside the tray, and near these, with a single rosebud

between the leaves, was the "Book of books," the treasured, much-loved, much-read Bible, and Katie's gay spirit was softened and quieted by what she saw within.

"You must not let me disturb you, my dear Mrs. Ranger," she said quietly. "Let me have the little stranger, I shall love to nurse it; and let me see you take your lunch as though I were not here." And Katie drew a chair near the window, and gently took the tiny one, in its simple white gown, pure and sweet as driven snow, into her arms.

"God has been very good to me," said Mrs. Ranger thankfully, "better far than I have deserved; He has spared my life, and given me another." And she looked fondly at the helpless little babe as she placed it in Katie's arms, and then, turning towards the table, bowed her head for a moment as she asked a blessing on the simple meal.

Tears almost started into Katie's eyes as she noticed this; she bent low over the infant in order to conceal her emotion as she remembered the table at home, loaded with the bounties of God's bestowing, but no blessing entreated upon it.

"Dear little thing!" she exclaimed, as Mrs. Ranger drew the tray near her, and began her pleasant luncheon. "I am sure, Mrs. Ranger, you have reason to be proud of this tiny baby, it is really the prettiest baby I have ever seen, with the exception of my cousin's children, and they are lovely too."

The pleased mother looked fondly at the little velvet-looking morsel nestling in Katie's arms. "I have sometimes thought, too, that it is pretty; though you know," she added, smiling, "most mothers think

that of their babies ; and yet," she added, as she trifled with her teaspoon, "I confess my baby has reminded me of the infant Moses, who was so fair that his mother, out of the deep love she felt for him, hid him away from the tyrant."

"You must not call it Moses, my dear Mrs. Ranger ! don't ! it is not a pretty name," said Katie deprecatingly.

"No, we shall name him, not Moses but Samuel," replied Mrs. Ranger, "for, like Hannah, I have given him to the Lord."

"A gift that will not be despised, my dear friend," said a deep-toned but quiet voice in the entry. Katie started, and looked up, the quick blush rising to her temples as she did so, for at the doorway, with the parted curtain in his hand, stood the minister of Vermont Chapel, Graham Howard.

Katie's first impulse was to restore "little Samuel" to his mother's arms, and to take a hasty flight. A better sense of decorum prevented so childish a proceeding. She kept her seat with the baby in her lap, and contented herself with extending her hand, which the intruder advanced to take.

"You have undertaken a new, but a very becoming office, Miss Linwood," said Mr. Howard, with a slight smile.

"I am admiring Mrs. Ranger's little one," replied Katie laughing, and colouring more than she desired, as she tossed her fair ringlets from her brow, and looked an instant at the speaker. "But I am afraid," she added, as baby began to exhibit symptoms of restlessness, "I make a poor nurse. Oh, baby, baby, don't cry ; I must give you back to your mother, I see."

"I am afraid I am the innocent cause of disturbing your nursing," returned Graham Howard, with the same quiet smile, as Katie yielded up the tiny morsel to the arms it knew best ; "I was anxious to see my good friend, and this is the only opportunity I am likely to have for some little time ; so I thought I had better come now," he continued, turning kindly to the invalid ; "I am rejoiced to see you so well."

"Thank you, sir ; I have ever found God faithful."

"And now you have dedicated the little life He has given to Him ! This is right, my dear sister. May your little Samuel grow up before the Lord as did the Samuel of old. Your trust is an important one. Hannah did not undertake the office of bringing up her child for the Lord ; she deputed that task to Eli. You, my friend, have the priest's task assigned to you."

"Yes ; I have thought of that," replied the mother quietly. "I feel, too, that we are little for the task ; but God can give strength and wisdom even for this duty."

"He can and will," said Mr. Howard, who had taken up the Bible, and was slowly turning over the leaves. "He who sent His Son in the likeness of a simple babe upon the earth, loves little children. I do not know that I can choose any more suitable portion to read you than that which this rosebud indicates. I see it is of the birth of Jesus, and His manger bed. Your little one lies more softly than did his Saviour."

"He does indeed, sir ; yes, I like that subject. I was reading it when Miss Linwood came in."

“You will not object to hear it again, will you ?

“Oh, no, sir—oh, no !”

And Graham Howard read in his calm, impressive way, commenting sweetly as he went on. Katie sat with her chair turned towards the window, her elbow resting on the chair-back, and her brow on her hand. He glanced towards her once or twice during the course of the reading, but he could not see her face ; the curls shadowed that, as well as the little hand upon which her brow rested. He did not see the tremulous motion of the lips, the downcast eye, or the little tear that wandered from the fringed lid ; and yet there was something in the bowed expression of the head, the drooping of the little figure, that made him believe she was not unimpressed.

They knelt together. Katie listened to the hallowed words of prayer, ‘as they ascended from that little room to heaven—listened and felt strangely solemnized ; listened and trembled. What a contrast, again, was here to some of her previous thoughts—those that had passed through her mind before quitting Dr. Moore. The dance ! the song ! the merry jest, was then their theme ; now, she was kneeling before God, listening to the holy language of prayer. She heard Graham Howard pray as a child to a fond parent—pray for the children of that Father. And she ? She was not one of the number—she could have no interest in that prayer ; she alone was left out !

Left out ! what a thought ! “One shall be taken and the other left.” It rang in her ears while Graham was praying. She did not weep, but her heart felt still and cold : and as they rose from their knees, she

tied her hat, and gathered together her habit, and took a kind but hurried leave of Mrs. Ranger, promising soon to come again.

Graham Howard stood in the middle of the room, watching her as she parted with Mrs. Ranger, and stooped to kiss the baby in her lap. He held out his hand as she approached him, and slightly detained her as he said,—

“The gift of the heart in youth is precious, Miss Linwood—

“ ‘The flower, when offer’d in the bud,
Is no mean sacrifice.’ ”

Katie’s colour rose as he spoke. “You mistake me, sir,” she answered somewhat haughtily; “I have no interest in these things.”

“Why not?” he quietly asked.

“I am not a Christian.”

Katie could not trust herself to say more. Her voice was husky as she uttered even this, and, turning away, she hurried from the room.

With a sigh, Graham Howard followed to assist her on her pony; but this she did not intend. He had not walked many steps before she had leaped into her saddle, and the next moment she was flying down the road, waving an adieu to the group of children, among whom she had hastily turned out her basket of sweets.

CHAPTER XVI.

WEEDS.

"ILL weeds grow apace." Ay! weeds of all kinds—weeds of the garden, the field, but most certainly of the heart. Thus soliloquized Graham Howard, as, a morning or two after his call at Mrs. Ranger's, he strolled out into his garden, with a view of gaining a little relief from mental labour by a trifle of physical. He stood with something between dismay and despondency, looking at the condition of some of his flower-beds. Flowers were there in abundance—beautiful and profuse; but the weeds were almost as numerous, and their influence was certainly not the best amid the flowers. Long, twining tendrils insinuating themselves among bulbs and delicate annuals, choking the roots of rose-trees, and preventing entirely the growth of some few fragile flowerets, and doing all the mischief, in fact, that they could. They had sprung so quickly into being; it seemed but the other day that those beds had been perfectly free. Graham Howard thought every vestige had been completely eradicated, and now he discovered he was indeed mistaken. He stood, as we have said, leaning on his hoe, looking down at the flower-beds, but his thoughts were presently far from them.

They had wandered with his weeds to another

garden—the garden of the world ; the garden of his own little pastoral charge ; the garden of the human heart—and a gloom gradually settled on his clear brow as the thought of weeds there, weeds in abundance, weeds far more difficult to uproot, occurred to him.

Over the whole world how was the influence of these weeds spread ! over all human nature ; over all most bright and fair ; sin, unbelief, iniquity of all kinds, those deadly weeds first owing their origin to that fair garden of Eden where all was so beautiful, so pure, all so rich in innocence and loveliness, so fresh from the hands of the Creator ! How had these weeds, first sown by the Serpent in those sweet garden shades, since swept their noxious leaves and berries over the surface of the whole earth ! Graham Howard was inclined to exclaim with the prophet :—“ The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.”

“ Verily, the harvest is great, and the labourers are few,” he thought to himself, as he slowly began his weeding operations. “ Yet that is but a reason for more strenuous exertion on the part of the few.” And then he remembered how the tares and the wheat were to grow together till harvest, and that then the separation was to take place. Yes ; he remembered that, after all, man could only judge by the exterior ; that God alone knows the heart. He felt, in a measure, cheered by the reflection—more hopeful than he had been when he first surveyed the state of his parterre. And, as his hoe turned out weed after weed, leaving the fair flowers room to unfold their foliage and exhibit their loveliness, hope grew yet more clear and bright, and even radiant.

But, trouble as he might, and grieve over the weeds of the world at large, those nearer home distressed him far more. It was but a little church over which he laboured. It was but a small body of Christians at most who met with him round the sacred board, upon which the symbols of a Saviour's dying love were spread ; and yet, among even this little number, how visible sometimes were the weeds choking up the sweet blossoms of peace, and joy, and righteousness, hiding almost from view their beauty. Oh! this was something indeed for the minister to grieve over ; something to cause the hanging down of head and hands. Hard it was to see, Sabbath after Sabbath, the weeds still flourishing in his congregation—weeds uneradicated, notwithstanding his labours constantly among them ; but even this was as nothing to the wounds he sometimes received in the houses of his friends.

Graham Howard was not alone in his trials. Alas! many faithful ministers of the Gospel have the same occasion to mourn ; again and again to bemoan the growth of ill weeds, when they looked only for the blossoms of peace. Bitter indeed must be the disappointment of those whose whole life proclaims, "We seek not yours, but you," when looking and expecting to find Christian graces predominating, only to discover the harsh influence of the world and its maxims.

Yet perhaps Graham Howard was beneath a cloud that morning. He was looking at the dark side of the little Vermont church. There were some bright spots in its history, and those spots at least were ameliorating. Fresh from England, favoured, Chris-

tian England, and from the centre of a warm circle of friends, he had entered Vermont Vale with a hope of better things. But how desolate did he find its scattered population! No Sabbath chime—no prayer bell to whisper of commemorating holy day; no prayer house set aside for the worshipping of the Lord of all. No; he found the people of Vermont in much the same condition as he would have anticipated the heathen of a far-off land. "God was not in all their thoughts." No wonder, therefore, they had erected no temple to His name.

"Ah! those were desolate days!" Graham took off his hat, and wiped his heated brow as he thought of them. Desolate days, and drear days of little hope—little expectation. The whole surface of the ground he gazed on seemed covered with weeds. And now, was there no change for the better? no different aspect? nothing to disperse the cloud on his brow, the despair from his heart? There was—there was! God had been faithful to His promise. He had heard and answered prayer. He had proved gracious. The dew from on high had descended in copious draughts. Graham remembered, and was still!

Then came refreshing memory of flowers among the weeds. How well now he remembered his sweet overpowering feelings when the first Christian response met his ear! How, like an anxious, eager antiquarian, he sought amidst those hills for the precious jewels, encased in the hard clay; for the bright gold in the rough quartz—sought, and was not disappointed in his search.

The shadow was clearing from his brow. Were

the weeds gone? No ; but they were concealed beneath sweet blossoms. There was the fragrancy of the bud, the future promise of the flower : and faith and hope were again in the ascendancy. Faith again resuming her sway, the spirit within was stirred.

And how thought followed thought, fresh, and vivid, and beautiful ; how promise crowded on promise, till he felt it would indeed be impious to doubt ! God Himself had declared that His word should not return unto Him void ; that it should accomplish that whereunto it was sent. He had nothing left but to work on and to trust.

God had blessed him hitherto in his labours. He had made known to him the right gems beneath the unpromising soil. He had shown him veins of silver and gold in the shadow of the hills, and had planted His seal on the ministration of His servant in such a way that Graham, remembering, felt ashamed and grieved at his despondency in the face of so much goodness.

What had he been expecting ? Perfection in the creature ? His own heart warranted no such expectation. The Word of God gave him no reason to look for it. Even among the beloved apostles of the Lord the imperfection of human nature was too visible. Peter, the warm-hearted, impetuous Peter, how grievous was his fall ! he, who so short a time before had exclaimed, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." And what exclaims the high, the noble, the exalted Apostle Paul ? "When I would do good, evil is present with me." And at another time he exclaims from the depths of a burdened heart, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me

from the body of this death?" Even the beloved Apostle John, that loving, affectionate follower of our Lord, he who was so highly favoured as to enjoy particular communion with Jesus, who lay upon His breast, and is called emphatically "the disciple whom Jesus loved"—he exclaims, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Graham Howard's weeding proceeded rapidly with the new current of his thoughts, but at last they came too fast for work. Work of another kind lay imperatively upon him. It seemed to him now as though he had been but half-hearted in his work; as if more zealous efforts still were needed. It was not sufficient to work in the Lord's vineyard, but to work earnestly, to wrestle mightily for souls; and not only for souls to be brought from darkness into light, but that those who already bore the Christian name might more fully exemplify the life of a Christian. He threw down his hoe, and with hands crossed behind his back and bowed head, slowly turned towards the house, the words of his Saviour re-echoing in his ears, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

We will leave our young minister on his way to his chamber, to pour out his whole soul before his heavenly Father, on his own behalf, on behalf of the people of his charge, and of all those whose sins were separating between them and God. Him we will leave, to ask the question of ourselves, and of you, dear reader, whether our many or our one talent is in full activity, or whether these talents, bestowed by

a beneficent God, are idly lying by unused, unthought of? Look to the weeds, dear reader; are they choking up your garden? Ask for guidance and direction, that you may be taught to distinguish between flowers and weeds; and that the latter, as soon as discovered, may be rooted up. And then go forward into the garden of your family, the garden of your friends, the garden of the world, and wherever you detect the noxious tendrils, pray, entreat, labour till they be destroyed. "Work while it is called to-day; the night cometh wherein no man can work."

But perchance some of you may say, What can we do? What is our province in the garden of the Lord? True, we are members of a church, but there seems no sphere of labour for us. Stop a bit, friends, make not so sure of that; as members of a church you have much to do. Look well to it, that you use your talents aright. Are there no young to instruct? Or, if all other places are engrossed, is there no seeking soul to encourage, no fainting one to revive, no wanderer to restore? Think you this *all* devolves upon the minister? Nay, thrice nay, dear readers. No sphere for your labour? Have you not your prayers to give in public or in private on that minister's behalf? Ought you not to support his hands, to sustain and encourage him in his work? If no blessing descends on you through his ministry, may it not frequently be traced to delinquency in your closet? Do you not, from time to time, go up to the house of God to hear what man shall say, and not the Lord, and still do you expect a blessing? No, friends, God does not act thus with His people.

His promise is to them who ask ; to them who seek ; to those who knock. And to all these the promise is sure. Ask yourself, dear reader, whether you are one of these characters ; and if not, seek to be so. Ask ; for God has said, " Prove Me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTRASTS.

“ I dream’d of bliss in pleasure’s bowers,
While pillowing roses stay’d my head ;
But serpents lurk’d among the flowers,
I woke, and thorns were all my bed.”

SUCH an evening ! an evening without clouds, and with as pure a moonlight as ever beamed athwart our Australian sky. Who would covet other illumination than that fair light whose mellow beams fell softly and dreamlike over the old gum-trees, throwing fantastic shadows to the grass beneath, gently casting its magic spell over quaint barns and rude fences, and scarcely less rude habitations, beautifying all with its pure radiance. How softly, too, the breeze rose and fell, whispering lovingly among the trees, rustling the long, dry grass, stealing the incense of the garden flowers, folded as their sweet heads were in their night sleep. The day had been cloudless too, the sky of one unvaried and intense azure, and through that azure the sun had poured forth an uninterrupted succession of lurid beams. The heat of the day rendered still more delicious the soft balmy coolness of the evening air.

Up among the hills, in the bosom of some thick blackwood, a morepork uttered its cuckoo-like note,

softly and plaintively it came down to the valley, softened, perhaps, by distance; sometimes a stave of richer melody succeeded the echoed joyousness from some other little night-bird's throat. The owl was silent; the moon was too brilliant for him to venture out; he left that to the lighter-hearted of his feathered companions, to the sprightly opossums, that revelled in the moonbeams, or to those of human kind who found its illumination more to their taste than he.

It was Thursday evening—the Thursday that was to quicken the blood of Vermont's youth, to dispel the moping into which it appears there was some danger of their falling. In other words, to drive, as far as possible, all thoughts of a serious nature from their minds. Thus, according to Dr. Moore, and certainly a more auspicious and inviting evening could not have ushered in so worthy an object. There were lights in all the rooms, back and front, of the Doctor's house; he never did things by halves. The parlour windows were all open to admit the sweet balmy air, and only the muslin drapery floated between the illumination without and within. How surpassingly more lovely the former! And yet it was a pretty sight that came through the flashing muslin. Fair, fresh, young faces and young figures passing and repassing; delicate muslins, some pure white, or pale lilac, or rose-colour; round white arms; lace shadowed; curls and bandeaux, some dark as night, some fair as the first amber-tint of morning; and yet there were not, perhaps, more than some half-dozen young girls in the room besides the fair young hostess. Katie Linwood had not yet arrived.

Other figures, less fair, were mingled with the soft gossamer robes of the ladies. Stalwart figures, some little calculated to adorn a ball-room, but admirable at the handle of a plough; these in different costumes, according to the fancy of the wearer, and by no means studiously adhering to drawing-room etiquette. One particularly fair, curly-haired young man appeared habited in a snow-white linen suit, just relieved at the neck by a pale blue silk handkerchief. That he was a Linwood was easily perceived; in fact, Stephen had taken the start of Fred and Katie, choosing to make his *début* alone. One or two had adopted another style of dress—dark blue holiday-looking guernseys, faced with silk, in the centre of which elegant embroidered shirts and elaborate fancy neckties peeped forth. These were the Hortons, Stephen's particular friends, young men who prided themselves exceedingly upon the grace with which they could trip on "the light fantastic toe," or their skill in horsemanship, or in the number of glasses of wine that they could presume on without **being** betrayed into anything like bad breeding. The elder of the two really was, or pretended to be, deeply smitten with Fanny Moore; but the fair Fanny herself paid but little attention to her admirer.

There was plenty of light within—wax-lights burning from the pretty crystal candlesticks on the mantel-piece, and in stands of alabaster wreathed with roses on the chiffonier. Flowers of every hue and form were used in every available position allowing such decoration. The room to the right, where the principal part of the company were

assembled, extended the whole depth of the house. At the back there were French windows of stained glass, opening upon a broad verandah; for though there was no verandah at the front, the back of the house was not so unprotected. This verandah was an admirable promenade for those who liked the cool evening air. A broad even path, neatly cut out of the grass, led from the door down to the margin of the creek, which here diverging from the high road, swept at some distance from behind the house, yet not so far that the musical murmur of the bull-frog, and shrill treble of his companions, could not be heard distinctly. Near these open windows the elaborately-appointed tea and coffee trays, with their delicate cakey accompaniments, stood waiting the arrival and pleasure of the guests.

On the part of some of these that arrival was rather tardy. For some reasons best known to himself, Fred was in no hurry to prepare for his evening visit. He found innumerable little things to do, and was unusually particular about some matters; at least so thought Katie, who, ready dressed for the occasion, walked up and down in a pretty fever of impatience.

"Fred! Fred! will you never leave those horses?" she exclaimed in despair from the door, as she watched him most leisurely dealing out a quantum of hay from the barn, stopping now and then to give a pat or caress to one and another eager head.

"All right, sis!" was the response; but it did not seem all right to her, that, though turning from the horses, he should follow it up by a visit to the

pigsty; the pigsty, of all other places, the least desirable to frequent before an evening party.

"I hope you have plenty of eau-de-cologne, Fred," she exclaimed in a vexed tone, "your boots will be quite offensive."

"So I think; and therefore, sister, I intend to change them; they are scarcely the thing to dance in," and Fred glanced laughingly at the thick soles, and coolly walked to his bed-room.

It was to be a moonlight walk from Sunny Hollow to the Doctor's. To ride Hebe would have caused the utter destruction of crinoline and barège; that was not to be thought of, so Katie retained her walking-boots, consigning her dancing-slippers to Fred's pockets for safe keeping.

"What was Fred doing? what could make him so long dressing? surely he intended to captivate Fanny to-night, at least," thought Katie, standing at the moon-lit door, and pettishly tapping the step with her foot. Could she have seen him at that moment, standing only half-dressed at the little window of his room, which commanded a distant view of the lucerne field; could she have seen how his eyes were fixed, not upon that, but upon a little light beyond, steadfastly gleaming from some other window, Fanny Moore's name would never have been mentioned again in connexion with her brother's.

Katie had thrice most beseechingly called "Fred!" before that gentleman thought proper to appear; but when he did come, she was quite as much astonished at his sudden haste as she had been at his former slowness; not but what she was better pleased for him to walk her out of breath than that he should

do twenty things rather than the one she wished, though even that could not be borne beyond a certain stage of endurance.

Across the farm-yard, and by the slip-panel into the road, for Katie had no wish to tear her dress creeping through the fences. Here the moon poured a very full flood of light; their own shadows were plainly visible, for it was behind them. Katie laughed at her *petite* figure beside the tall, fine shadow her brother cast. She was in the mood to laugh at anything, ready for any amount of fun, and Fred's unusually quiet manner afforded infinite scope for her amusement.

Whatever were Fred's thoughts, he did not choose to communicate them. He parried Katie's raillery as best he might, and by no means unsuccessfully; had she not been too much attracted by the scene that came through the Doctor's window, and by the sound of a pretty lively polka, excellently played upon the flutina by some skilful hand, she could not have failed to observe that her brother's gaze had wandered still farther down the road, to a little steadfast light from an unpretending little window. Certainly the lucerne was in that direction; perhaps he was thinking of that—perhaps not!

Katie Linwood, with her profusion of soft, fair ringlets, her sweet, laughing blue eyes and saucily curling lips, her pale blue barège, with a single white rose for adornment, was decidedly the belle of the evening. Who would have dreamt that one serious thought ever entered that little head? Who would have guessed that even while whirling in the giddy dance, flushed with excitement, and apparently

at the very height of enjoyment, lurking beneath all these was a heart-pang, a sorrow, a fear, and that words were re-echoing again and again in her memory, words of fearful import, words she knew not how she had learnt, or where she had heard them, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Dance and song—dance and song. The Doctor was in the midst of a merry group, not to restrain, but to promote the merriment. He was doing his utmost to drive all serious thoughts from the youth of Vermont, and he showed not a little skill in the human heart by the measures he adopted. He was, in fact, working for Satan, and against the kingdom of God. No doubt he did not look thus seriously upon the work he was about, but that it really was.

Yet all the youth of Vermont had not been seduced by the music and the dance. There were "seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal;" there were a few names in Sardis whose garments were undefiled ; and so in Vermont there were some upon whom the Doctor's questionable benevolence had produced no effect.

Later in the evening, a party of the young folks were standing or walking about in the verandah, partly to enjoy the cool fresh breeze, for they were heated with dancing ; partly for the sake of exchanging one illumination for another. Amongst the number were Fred and Katie Linwood—not together though ; Fred was standing a little in

advance of all the rest, alone, while Katie was the centre of a merry, laughing group nearer the door.

Suddenly, a full clear volume of music rose and fell with the evening breeze ; its rich harmony arrested even the merriment at the door. Fred moved a few steps farther from the house, and stood in an attitude of deep attention.

"What is that ?" asked Katie, in amazement.

"Do not you know there is a meeting at the chapel—this is service night?" replied a young lady at her elbow, with a laugh. "Come a little this way ; here. Now, look through the trees ; don't you see the light?"

"Yes," replied Katie, turning away rather gravely ; she did not see that there was anything to laugh at, for at the moment she almost wished she was there too. She stood thoughtfully looking out into the moonlight, and towards the little chapel, the words again returning, "For all these things God will bring thee to judgment," and envied Annie Maitland's place at the harmonium, wished almost she could slip away from the gay party, even to the quiet of her own home. "Happy Annie," she thought, as again she heard the music and chorus of voices softened into melody by the distance. "Happy Annie, those words have no terror to her. She loves God, she delights in His ways, and is not tempted by the things that tempt me !" But she was not permitted time for further reflection. One of the young Hortons, who had scarcely left her side all the evening, came up at that moment to remind her that she was engaged as his partner for the forthcoming

polka, and a moment more thought was buried beneath a frivolous flirtation.

Within those chapel walls there was a pleasant little company assembled, not greatly lessened in number by the party at the Doctor's. True, two or three who were wont at times to creep in on week nights had preferred the dance to the sermon. Katie had never yet been on a week-night to chapel, and had thought little about it. The meeting was not well attended certainly, but how seldom, in this southern land of ours, are week-night services appreciated; yet are there some who can exclaim with David, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

Annie Maitland and her mother were rarely absent from the weekly meeting; they were certainly not that night. Katie's ears had not deceived her; it was from Annie's fingers the concord of sweet sounds arose; it was Annie's voice that rose full and clear above the rest of the singers; hers was not alone the worship of the lips, there was heart-worship in every tone of her flexible voice as it yielded itself to the sweet words of sacred song penned by the Christian poet Montgomery:—

"When on Sinai's top I see
God descend in majesty,
To proclaim His holy law,
All my spirits sink in awe.

"When, in ecstasy sublime,
Tabor's glorious steep I climb,
At the too transporting light,
Darkness rushes o'er my sight.

“ When on Calvary I rest,
God, in flesh made manifest,
Shines in my Redeemer’s face,
Full of beauty, truth, and grace.

“ Here I would for ever stay,
Weep and gaze my soul away ;
Thou art heaven on earth to me,
Lovely, mournful Calvary.”

Yes, Calvary was the theme—the theme of the song, the prayer, of the sacred page, and of the few and simple yet eloquently simple words of Graham Howard that evening ; a theme, as he told his people, though worthy of an angel’s song, yet best told, best expressed, deepest felt by those whose hopes were centred in the hallowed spot, whose life was derived from the transactions there, whose first spiritual breath was drawn upon its sacred heights. Sweet Calvary ! the resting-place of all our hopes, the birth-place of our faith. Jesus ! precious Jesus ! by Thy death we live ; from those bleeding wounds of Thine issues our life-blood ; in Thy final groan our anchor has firm foundation.

“ Finish’d all the types and shadows
Of the ceremonial law,
Finish’d all that God hath promised,
Death and hell no more shall awe.
It is finish’d,
Saints, from thence your comfort draw.”

Graham Howard was at home in his subject : it was dear to him. From Calvary’s mount he could expatiate with holy joy on that marvellous love—that love past understanding, issuing from the depths of a

bleeding Saviour's heart, Christ's love for the vile, the weak, the helpless—all this was faithfully depicted, held forth as encouragement to the seeker, as comfort for the sorrowing. But for those who disdained the lovely heights of Calvary, who chose the flower-woven valley at its base, who clung to the paths of sin, and saw nothing winning in the sacred cross—for these there were no joy, no hope, no happiness. Condemnation and woe, and final misery, were at the termination of the valley ; they who chose its path chose the paths of death !

Tears stole into Annie's eyes as the picture of the height and the valley beneath was placed before her in the forcible language of the enthusiastic young preacher, particularly as after the happy service the little band of worshippers lingered in groups in the chapel-yard, the minister moving about among them, giving here a word of exhortation, there one of consolation or encouragement, as he knew the character and circumstances of the case required. Annie's tears were for those who had not been among them, for those who she knew were treading the mazes of the valley, who loved the paths of sin, and knew nothing of the choice of Moses, who preferred to "suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." As she passed the Doctor's house on her way home, with her mother leaning heavily on her arm, the sight of the scene within, disclosed by the floating muslin drapery, by no means tended to check her tears. She caught a glance of Katie Linwood in her fair beauty, the centre of a merry group ; but Fred, where was he ?

“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come.”

Those were the words that rushed to Annie's mind, as, with a shuddering sigh, she turned her back on the gay, frivolous scene, and again lifted her thoughts to Calvary.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STEADFAST LIGHT.

“One little steadfast light shot through the gloom,
And wooed her to holier thoughts.”

FRED was not there. No; the pleasures of the evening had suddenly become distasteful to him. He loathed the very sound of the gaiety within, and determined to stay no longer.

“If my sister asks for me, tell her I have the headache, and am going straight home. Stephen will take care of her,” he presently said to the servant girl, who came out into the verandah as the troop of merry dancers went in. He did not wait for either response or remonstrance, but turned immediately into the road towards the back of the little chapel, and disappeared amidst the shadow of the trees.

What had produced such unaccountable depression? What had so suddenly caused the wild throbbing of his temples? What had occasioned the intense distaste he suddenly experienced for the gaiety of the evening? Was he ill? No; or if so, it was a species of mental illness—that illness which is, perhaps, the most terrible to endure. Wine was not the cause of all this; it sparkled in abundance on the sideboard at the Doctor’s, but he had barely

touched it with his lips. Neither had anything occurred to offend him, for he had been one of the most honoured guests. The promising young farmer, with his well-cultivated lands, was not despicable in the Doctor's eyes; nor were his fine figure, handsome face, and laughing eyes calculated to create dislike in those of the fair Fanny. No, there had been no offence; for Fred Linwood, go where he might, was always a favourite, always courted, always admired.

He was going home, but certainly not straight; he could scarcely have chosen a more circuitous route. The road at the back of the chapel was the very last a person in haste would have chosen; but once away from the Doctor's house, and it became evident that haste was not the desired object with Fred. Indeed, as he approached the simple little edifice, his steps became slower and slower, till at last he came to a dead stand just under the window, near the pulpit. Only for a moment though, yet in that moment he heard far more than he had calculated on hearing. The preacher was in the heat of his discourse, fired with zeal, and filled with holy anxiety for the souls around him. He was speaking of the world, of its attractions, its pleasures, its amusements; of how little all these accorded with the sweet mournfulness of Calvary; and after enumerating all that world's seductions, with a sudden change of voice, that sent a chill through Fred's athletic frame, he exclaimed,—

“What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

He had heard enough; he lingered no longer. As if to clash with his previous thoughts of distaste

for the trifling of the evening, came those words—deep, solemn, impressive. They found an echo in his inmost soul, “What shall it profit a man?” Ah! what indeed, if for such pleasures, such trifles, yea, for the gain of the whole wealth of worlds, the soul was to be bartered! He walked no longer listlessly, every step told.

At the rate he walked home was soon reached, circuitous as was the route: creeks were no obstacle, fallen trees no impediment, fences were almost invisible barriers in his eyes. Indeed, if any choice he had, he made the roughest way his choice, as though the derangement of his thoughts and ideas best tallied with the rugged and rude; as though the very obstacles he encountered not a trifle subdued the unrest within.

And Sunny Hollow looked so calm, so quiet, in its moonlight aspect as he approached it. The ripening wheat, as he passed through the midst of it, rustled but slightly with the sweet breath of night; the very passage of the waters of the creek across his path was tranquil; their low, low murmur was only of peace, but peace was far from Fred Linwood.

And yet he could not have deciphered his own feelings; why he was so disturbed was almost a mystery to himself. He had heard much of religion; there had been times when he had thought much about it. He was not an entire stranger to his Bible; but words he had lightly read therein and lightly received seemed to come back to memory with additional power that night. He paced backwards and forwards in the shadow of the barns; backwards and forwards with slow and measured footsteps. The

current of his thoughts impeded his movements, and this time he could not shake them off so readily, he scarcely tried to do so.

“What shall it profit a man?” Eh! what, indeed, this gaining of the world when the salvation of the soul is at stake? Fred was no miser, but he dearly loved gain, the gain of the world. He looked upon his well-filled barns, he turned to his promising fields almost white unto harvest, he remembered his growing bank account in Adelaide, and felt that in this gain a great portion of his happiness had been placed, that this gain had been the main point of his existence, while the life eternal had but little if any attention. Yet, to lose his soul! was he willing for that? No, that indeed was a fearful alternative, he shuddered at the thought.

But whence had originated this restlessness? From whence came these streams of thought? They were not natural to him, the merry-hearted, free, careless Fred; what had he to do with care, or sadness or remorse? What had there been in his life to cause all this uneasiness? Almost might he have exclaimed with the Pharisee of old, “I am not as other men,” for he had little zest for the follies of other young men, the attractions of the wine cup were little to him. No one could cast a shadow over his moral character, his principles were just and good, and he was generally beloved. Still there was something wanting, and of that something he was just conscious. Yet what was it that rendered this consciousness more vivid?

There is such a thing as preaching in the life without the utterance of the lip. It is this that so

frequently renders the child of God obnoxious to the worldly man. It is this that renders him an object of dislike and almost dread. Those quiet deeds, those unobtrusive actions, are as stings to the conscience of the lover of pleasure. They speak more loudly of another world, and of allegiance owned there. They whisper more surely of "a fleeing from a wrath to come," of a hope founded on more certain treasures than those of earth. The worldling cares not to be reminded of these things, hence is the very presence of the just distasteful to him.

It is a trite but a true old proverb, that actions speak louder than words. Fred was just one of those matter-of-fact characters who believe fully in this. Action had ever been his forte; if others gave forth the idea, he was generally the first to bring the idea into bearing. Was a thing to be done, he was one of the first to do it. He spoke but few words on the occasion, but was prompt to act. There was therefore nothing he approved of more highly than promptitude of action in others. There was nothing he observed more. But those quiet habits of observation had at last led to disquiet in his own soul. Words had little touched him, though they had not been wanting; or if they had touched him, it was but a momentary uneasiness they caused, passing quickly away, a fleeting expression of feelings soon gone.

There were, however, examples of active life that had passed under his notice. There was his cousin and her husband, so calm, so noble, so decided in their Christian walk; no hesitation, no doubt, no inactivity in the path they trod. And his mother! How constantly her clear brow bore the mark of a

follower of the Lamb upon it ; these were witnesses for the cross of Christ ; witnesses as to the truth of religion ; witnesses for Heaven ! And he felt it ; felt it in his inmost soul, that they were essentially different from him. Their paths, their lives, their joys, were separate from his. They were right ; and he, he was widely wrong.

But there were other quiet witnesses to this hidden life in Vermont that yet more impressed him. One was, the unwearied, untiring, zealous Graham Howard ; who studied no fatigue, who sought no rest while labouring in his Master's cause. Another was the unpretending Mrs. Ranger, who, amidst her own home circle, so evidently evinced the power of the Gospel ; whose lip and life so eminently corresponded ; whose attachment to her Saviour, whose love for souls, was so real, so apparent, in every action.

"By their works ye shall know them." These were words of sacred writ that suited all Fred's ideas. Wherever these works were visible, he acknowledged the difference. But, perhaps, among all his models of Christianity, his thoughts wandered most frequently to the cottage near the lucerne patch ; to the inmates of the school-house. For if ever religion wore a lovely aspect, certainly he felt it was within those unpretending walls. There, Christianity was no mere Sabbath dress, to be assumed at the end of every seven days, and cast aside at its close. No ! oh no ! It beautified the actions of every-day life ; it cheered and consoled amidst painful trials ; it was a beacon-light at all times visible, and yet as unostentatious as that same steadfast little light Fred had watched so long that evening.

And wherefore had he watched it? Oh! much to him seemed staked in the flickering of that little light. Was his faith in Annie to be shaken? Was *she* going to prove that the pleasures of the world were still her pleasures? Was she now going practically to deny her Lord, by uniting with the world from which she had hitherto professed to stand aloof? No. Fred could not believe that of Annie Maitland. If so, his faith in the very essence of Christianity must be shaken. And yet, if not, why that light? It proceeded neither from the parlour nor schoolroom, but came from behind the drawn curtains of the bedroom. The draperied frame of the looking-glass was shadowed on those curtains; and more than once, on the removal of the light to another part of the room, another shadow flitted across the window. Fred knew even the shadow of that hat and figure!

She was going out, then! But could it be to make one of the Doctor's party? That he could scarcely credit. To make sure on that score he had hurried the completion of his toilette, and walked his sister out of breath. But when they reached the Doctor's, the little light was still burning brightly; the shadow still came and went before the window, and Annie Maitland had evidently not left her home yet.

Little could the gay party within, who welcomed Fred and his sister with such acclamations of joy, decipher the quick, earnest glances the former cast at the door as one or two later guests arrived; or the look of intense relief that passed over his face as he saw them enter. Still less could they imagine the amount of comfort he was experiencing as the evening passed on, and *one* came not.

"I knew it!" was the inward record of his heart; "I knew it." And as at last he heard her voice mingling with others floating through the open windows of the little chapel, and recognized her touch upon the keys of the harmonium, he exclaimed to himself with a deep-drawn breath, "As ever! Annie Maitland is true to her principles! There is truth in Christianity after all! Oh! that I had it!"

Alas! poor Fred! He was falling into a very general failing of mankind. It might, had he been less happily situated, have led him far wrong. He was looking for that in the creature for which he should have turned to the Creator. He was expecting that from poor fallen human nature which in poor human nature might most miserably have failed; and he was ready to stake his faith, his hope, and all expectation of future joy, upon the steadfastness of that most unsteadfast of all things, a human heart! permitting that to be the arbitrator of his belief, rather than the Word of God that never can fail.

Christians! is not this a word to you? "Ye are a light in the world." Take care that the light burn clearly. See that ye have oil in your lamps; and mislead not those who would seek your guidance. There are many eyes upon you: the eyes of your fellow-travellers; they watch as those who "watch for your souls," lovingly, tremblingly. The eyes of the world are upon you: they will readily detect your failing footsteps; they will contemptuously point out your slightest dereliction from the right path. The eyes of devils are upon you: they seek occasion for your halting; they pour their poisonous seductions into your ears. Oh! seek strength from on

high, that no weapon, be it flower-girdled or not, may prosper against you, but that you may still steadfastly, decidedly, and with all meekness and lowliness of heart, follow after your Lord.

In no mood for encountering either brother or sister, Fred went off to bed some two or three hours before they returned home. Not immediately, however, did sleep visit his eyes. His thoughts were of too tormenting a character to invoke the presence of "Nature's sweet restorer." Dawn was purpling the east when the revellers returned from their orgies. By that time he had fallen into so deep a slumber that he was utterly oblivious to every sight and sound of whatever nature or character.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESULT OF THE REVEL.

“Still where rosy pleasure leads,
See a kindred grief pursue.”

“MISS KATIE! Miss Katie! don't go on so; there's a dear; it will hurt you—indeed and it will.”

Another passionate burst of tears was the answer; tears partaking of two natures—shame and indignation; it was almost difficult to tell which feeling predominated.

Katie, half-lay, half-crouched upon the outside of her little white bed, her face buried in the pillows, her fair ringlets in wild disorder, her pretty blue barège all crushed beneath her. The flowers from her hair and bosom covered the foot of the bed, withered and dying like her own pleasure.

The dawn, which was gradually diffusing itself over the whole face of Nature, came but dimly through the closed curtains of the chamber. There was still but a dreamy, half-developed light within. On the dressing-table a little night-lamp yet emitted a few expiring rays, but, entreat earnestly as she might, Dolly could not get her young mistress to go to bed. She persisted in lying where she had first thrown

herself on entering the room, and uttered only ejaculations of anger or choking sobs.

Dolly was beside herself; she was a thorough warm-hearted girl, and could not endure to see all this in quiet. She from time to time renewed her efforts, alternately expostulating and coaxing.

"Miss Katie, don't take on so; why, there's no great harm done after all! Sure, and young Horton, for ail his mighty fine speeches, was pretty nigh as bad himself as Master Stephen."

"There is harm done, Dolly, there is harm done!" cried Katie indignantly, half rising from her pillow. "I tell you I won't own a brother who has so disgraced himself and us! I could not have believed it of Stephen," she continued, melting into tears again, and resuming her place on her pillow.

"I thought you knew, miss, that your brother did sometimes take a little too much," said Dolly, in a tone of surprise.

"Not I, indeed!" said Katie, "not I! I have never seen anything like last evening's doings; Stephen would soon have heard of it if I had. I tell you, Dolly, it's a bitter disgrace to have a brother behave himself like he has done; I can never see the Doctor or Fanny again!"

"Oh! as to the Doctor, he is not much better himself; I am sure you need not mind him, and your brother is not the only one, Miss Katie, who gets drunk now and again in Vermont. Did he behave so very bad?"

"Bad!" replied Katie, this time sitting up and dashing her dishevelled curls right and left from her flushed cheeks; "he disgraced himself and us, I tell

you ; he made himself the laughing-stock of the room —insulted Fanny Moore, smashed half a dozen glasses, fought with one of the Hortons, and wound up by falling into the wretched state of insensibility in which he was brought home ; I wish I had been anywhere else rather than at that dance,” and Katie threw herself down again with a fresh burst of tears.

That dance—that dance ; yes, that had done the mischief, and Dolly was right. If such things had occurred in the Doctor’s house, they were of his own seeking. He had, indeed, stirred up the blood of Vermont youth, and wild blood it had proved, terminating in destruction to his property and insult to his daughter. From the Doctor’s own sideboard the poison had been liberally diffused ; from the Doctor’s own example Vermont youth had been inspired. He at least, as Dolly said, had nothing to complain of.

Katie wept at last more quietly, and with her face so hidden in the pillow that at last Dolly thought she had really fallen to sleep, and, creeping slowly from the room, went out into the kitchen to put fresh wood on the smouldering ashes, and prepare for an early breakfast. Poor girl ! the revel had brought no good to her, as her heavy eyes and weary yawn testified. She had not been to bed, and there was a long day’s work before her that must be done. She had no prospect of rest till another night brought again the hour for sleep. That she would not have cared for, but she did care for Katie’s evident distress ; she did mind Stephen’s disgrace ; and she felt sure that something was wrong with Mr. Fred ; and this she cared for most of all. Dolly had been long in the family—too long not to feel a degree above common interest

in its members. She began to think that Sunny Hollow would enjoy sunshine no longer.

And through all the noise and bustle of that return Fred had slept, never once arousing from his heavy slumber, though the by-no-means quiet entrance of the Hortons with their senseless burden was made into his very chamber. The golden sunbeams streaming in through a lifted corner of the window-blind at length dispelled his sleep. He woke with a sudden start, and with a consciousness of having lain too long pressing upon him. As he awoke, the whole pain of the past evening returned.

"What shall it profit a man?" Yes! that was the burden of the song echoing again in his ears. Was he still to go on as ever? Were the world's pursuits still to be his? Was he willing, for such pleasures, to barter his soul? No; he was resolved not to do that. He would seek after another state of things from this time forth. And he sprang from his bed with the energy of the thought.

Poor human nature! How pertinaciously it clings to its own strength; how elevating the thought of doing something to merit—whereas, the lesson taught us by the lowly Jesus is, that empty we must come to be filled; naked, to be clothed; sick, to the Physician.

Fred sprang from his bed full of the determination, but he came to a dead stand by the side of his brother's bed, and an indignant flush crossed his face, for there lay Stephen in all the disorder of an inebriate, still sleeping soundly, heavily, his white summer dress stained and soiled both with wine and blood; for, in the disgraceful part he had played, he had not come off scathless, as a gash across the fore-

head testified; a gash but imperfectly bound with a crimson silk handkerchief, which had added to the ghastly paleness of his countenance.

Fred stood almost motionless, his colour coming and going with the powerful character of his feelings. At one moment he reached out his hand, as though to strike his brother from his senseless slumber, but other, better thoughts came. He remembered that at least he was his brother, and the upraised hand fell again to his side. He turned away from the bed, and went and leaned against the window, shrouding his face with his hands as though he would shut out from his sight even the fair face of Nature itself—calm, serene Nature, whose very quiet and calm seemed to reprove by its powerful contrast.

“No thanks to the Doctor for this,” muttered Fred, turning another look on the haggard countenance of his young brother. “It may give him a patient; that’s all the good his dance will do. Hang the drink! No drop shall ever pass my lips from this day forth!” And he clenched his hands determinately. He laid his hand on the Bible, which had been left open on the table beneath the window the night before, and, as though to reprove the positive character of his words, his eyes fell upon the open page, and rested on the sentence—

“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.”

His hand fell from the book, and, for a moment, his head dropped in his hands, and then came forth the agonizing petition, “O God, help me to do right!”

Dear reader, does not God always come to the aid of those who in earnest seek His aid? He does, He

will ; though sometimes, to show us our own utter weakness, He delays His coming.

“ Engraved as in eternal brass,
The mighty promise stands ;
Nor can the powers of darkness rase
Those everlasting lines.”

Fred gave one more look at his prostrate brother—a look now savouring more of pity than of anger or contempt. He was still in the heavy, stupid sleep of inebriety, the most degrading condition to which man can reduce himself, even lower than the very beasts of the field ; his fair curls all crushed and entangled, and matted with blood from the wound upon his brow. Fred turned from the room with a deep sigh, and sallied forth into the broad kitchen, already neatly arranged for breakfast. What a pleasant picture it presented, even that rude bush kitchen, with its steaming kettle and bright fire, and cleanly-swept floor ! The breakfast service had been placed as far as possible from the fire, and near the open window, through which a gentle but very pleasant morning breeze was sending the perfume of the cornfields over the bright cups and saucers, and spoons, lifting, or rather softly swaying to and fro, the snowy corners of the breakfast-cloth. Over home-made bread, and golden butter, and white-shelled eggs, the sweet breath passed, making all more pure and sweet. A glass of flowers from somewhere stood near the tray, and green watercresses presented their cool tempting leaves near a finely-cured ham. There was a strong contrast in the fresh coolness of the kitchen to the close, hot air of the chamber he had just quitted. Fred felt it so, and stood at the door a moment

refreshing his eyes with the sight. Then, catching sight of the flowers, he drew nearer the table, and concentrated his thoughts on them.

Just such roses he had seen somewhere before, with their waxen petals and soft leaves, half-opened, too, and dew still resting upon them. He ought to know that fuchsia: it drooped its bell-like blossoms in only two of Vermont's gardens. The passion-flower, with its curling tendrils, was there also; and one tiny little blue flower, peculiar only to one spot. Fred needed not to ask whence they came; but he did ask, nevertheless, as Dolly entered the room.

"They were a gift from Miss Maitland to Miss Katie," Dolly said. "She had just run over with a little cream for the breakfast of the little school-mistress and her mother, and just to beg a few of the watercresses that grew in the creek at the bottom of the garden, and Miss Maitland would gather a nose-gay as well.

"You are fond of running down there, Dolly," said Fred, with a carelessly-assumed manner.

"It is so pleasant to hear Miss Annie talk," said Dolly apologetically. "I always get good when I go there."

Fred thought he should like to increase the number of his visits, that he might "get good," but he did not say so. He only asked—

"What good have you got this morning?"

"I don't know," said Dolly colouring, and dusting the coffee-pot most industriously with the corner of her apron. "I don't know as I've got much, only it's pleasant to hear——"

"What were you talking about?"

"The flowers, and sure Miss Annie knows a power about them. Those roses, now," said Dolly, gathering courage; "you don't know what she had to say about them."

"I should like to know," said Fred, with a touch of his old spirit of fun.

"That yellow rose, a rare sort, as she told me," continued Dolly, "is called the Rose of Sharon. She had a deal to tell me about that; how it made barren places far off beautiful; and smells so sweetly, too, in its native air; and how that Jesus calls Himself the Rose of Sharon; and that to those who love Him He is sweet as a rose, and altogether lovely. There are no thorns in Sharon's rose, she told me; and there is nothing like a thorn in Jesus—nothing sharp, nothing cruel. Then, this blood-red damask rose—that, she said, always reminded her of Calvary, and the blood that was shed there to wash away the sins of His people; and those snowy-white rosebuds, she told me, made her think of the saints, 'washed white in the blood of the Lamb.' Oh! I could have listened to her for ever."

Fred thought he could have done so too, but he made no remark; only walked from the table into the verandah, and stood there a few moments with bowed head and folded arms, perfectly oblivious to Dolly's glance. He spoke again presently, only to ask what time Katie and Stephen reached home.

Dolly simply named the hour.

"And who brought my sister home? for I suppose, from Stephen's beastly condition, he did not," said Fred, his deep disgust reviving.

Dolly did not know the young man's name; he

only brought Miss Katie to the door. The Hortons carried Stephen in their gig.

"Quite drunk, was he?"

"Yes, quite," said Dolly, in a low tone; but I fancy he is hurt as well. He seems pretty bad, any way."

"Serve him right, too, a fool!" said Fred hastily, turning from the house, and walking with rapid footsteps towards the barns. He cooled down a little before reaching the stock-yard, and returned to tell Dolly to see if Katie were awake.

"I shall be ready for breakfast in twenty minutes, tell her," was his parting injunction, as he once more went off to the house.

The breakfast-room was not unoccupied when he returned. Katie was there awaiting his arrival. She had removed every evidence of the last night's revel, and was simply attired in a cool morning dress. Her curls, even, were pushed away from the forehead behind her ears. When Fred entered, she was leaning forward, with her face upon the table, between her outspread arms. He came forward, and laid his hands upon her shoulders, exclaiming—

"Katie!"

She started, and gave a little irrepressible shudder, but did not look up.

"Are you so tired?" inquired Fred, "or is it another cause that depresses you? You must not take on so."

She looked up then—looked up with her flushed and tear-swollen face; then again lay down her head, as she reproachfully exclaimed—

"Oh, Fred! why did you leave us? All this might have been prevented."

"I don't think it, Katie—I don't think it. Stephen is too headstrong to be advised; I have tried that often enough." And Fred moodily took his seat at the table.

"But he has never been like this before," said Katie.

"You have never seen him, Katie; I have, and in spite of all my efforts to prevent it," Fred replied. "It's those Hortons have ruined him. He is perfectly infatuated with their society."

"Fred, he has disgraced himself; he has disgraced us. Things can't go on so," exclaimed Katie passionately. "I won't stay here to be pointed at as the sister of a drunkard!"

"At any rate," said Fred gravely, after a slight pause, "I don't think there will be any chance for some time of Stephen's drinking again. He has fairly done himself up this time. I looked at him just now, and see plainly enough there's more the matter with him than drink. I sent for the Doctor as I came in to breakfast."

"Not much wonder if he is ill," said Katie bitterly, as she played with the spoon in her untasted cup of coffee.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," repeated Fred, in a low tone, as though the words were half spoken to himself. His sister looked up in surprise, but made no other answer, and Fred went on silently with his breakfast.

And there stood those flowers between them, breathing a double fragrance now. He was thinking of them—thinking of the sweet meanings Aunie Maitland had attached to each, wishing that he could

feel the same. Oh, how sickly did the pleasures of the past night appear when placed in comparison with the pure joys of heaven—with that love he was beginning to crave after. Ah! he thought those sweet buds bore Annie's own image, so pure, so stainless; the very emblem of the white-winged cherubs. But was it possible that he could ever hope to approach to such a condition?

"Do you wish for another dance to-night, Katie?" he presently asked, as he rose from the table, with a bitter smile on his lips.

"Another!" re-echoed Katie indignantly. "No, indeed; I wish I had never gone to this. I am sick of dancing."

"And I," returned Fred, moving moodily towards the door. "That is why I left last night. I was thoroughly tired, and sick, and disgusted with the proceeding, and I wouldn't have stayed longer for five pounds; I couldn't, and that's an end of it." He leant a moment against the door-post in silence. "There's something wanting, depend upon it, Katie," he continued; "and, after all I've seen and heard, I'm inclined to think it's God's blessing we lack. Mother and Amy would tell us so, and maybe they are right."

CHAPTER XX.

KATIE'S TROUBLES.

“Strange that they fill not, with their tranquil love,
The spirit, walking in their midst alone.”

OH! how calmly and sweetly the soft moonlight looked down upon everything that evening! How it threw shadows to the ground of quaint old trees, with gnarled trunks and outstretching branches, and leaves like lace-work! How it glistened on the waters of the little creek, which ran so soberly along with very gentle murmuring, having no fear of the moon's quiet gaze! Yes! calm moonlight, quiet moonlight looks down upon many a scene of *unquiet*; upon many an aching head, or, still worse, aching heart; upon many a scene of trouble, or cruelty, or despair! And so calmly it looks! Whatever of earth's doings ever ruffled thy fair, pure face, O sweet moon?

Katie stood in the moonlight, looking up at the heavens with cold, tearless eyes, and lips heavily compressed. She had come out into the air, for it was hot, stifling in-doors, or, at any rate, it seemed so to her; and, with her head resting against the post of the verandah, she had already stood there many minutes. Her thoughts were not, however, of the calm, sweet evening. No; the beauty of all around her entered not into her soul. Her spirit

“walked in the midst” alone, and disquiet was its walk. Yesterday evening, that unhappy yesterday, returned again and again to the memory in all its most painful details. Katie had just left her brother’s sick-room, and was keenly alive to a recollection of the scenes of the past night that had led to that sick-bed ; keenly alive to the degradation of having a drunkard for a brother ! Yes ; Katie had no milder term to give him. She had wept over the disgrace, till it seemed to her she had no more tears to weep.

And had that sick-room no softening influences ? Could Katie indeed look coldly, angrily upon that swollen face, pale and almost livid as it was—upon those helpless limbs, and feel no pity ? Pity ! Yes ; for he was her brother. But those pale, livid lips, those feeble, trembling hands, all had a voice for Katie—a voice that at times almost froze her pity up—and that voice was *Drink !* Yes, drink had done all ! That was at the root of the mischief ; and, like Fred, disgusted at its abuse in their own brother’s case, she stood there in the moonlight, and, raising her hands impetuously to heaven, forswore its use for ever !

Poor Stephen ! Poor Stephen, say you ? Even so ; for was he not the slave of his own passion, the slave of what to him was liquid poison, and had almost maddened him ? Was it not like a very tyrant burning in his veins, and scorching his very temples with fire ? Katie had been his constant attendant all that day, and oh how lovingly would she have attended him had any other cause for sickness laid him low ! How gently and lovingly would the fingers have lingered among the dishevelled curls as

she bathed his heated brow! But now it needed again and again that sentence, "He is my brother!" to remind her of her duty. Oh! it was hard to bear, to hear those fevered lips calling again and again for the wine-cup, the very "hair of the dog," that had so cruelly bitten him.

Yet he was her brother; and that thought had kept her all day in the sick-room bathing the unconscious head, holding cooling drink to the parched lips, and had restrained the bitter words that again and again were ready to break out upon the senseless invalid.

Doctor Moore had made an early visit, but Katie was not by to see him; she would not come when he asked for her, and he was obliged, therefore, to leave his directions with Dolly. Somehow or other, she viewed the Doctor as the root of all the evil. That invitation, that unlucky invitation! how angry she felt that she had accepted it! She remembered the time, too, when the invitation was given, remembered what different thoughts the Doctor's light words had dissipated, and bowed her head with shame at the recollection of how easily she had yielded to the first temptation.

But she! oh, she could never be a Christian! she exclaimed to herself petulantly, as she stood alone in the shadow of the verandah, cooling her heated brow with the gentle night breezes. No; it was useless for her to seek to do right, she had not the steadfastness; and the tears gathered into the sweet eyes that were raised still to the pure moon.

Katie's idea of the Christian life was widely different from those of the present fashionable

religious world. It is not now considered necessary to take up the cross of Christ, or to lay aside the pleasures of earth. By some sophistical course of reasoning, these two extremes are made most comfortably to meet ; and those who would place their veto against the song and dance are proclaimed fanatical enthusiasts, but little removed from those pilgrims of old—not those of modern date, who perform their pilgrimage luxuriously on the cushioned seats of the railway car, but those veritable martyrs of an unworthy cause, who walked the whole distance with peas in their shoes ! Well, be it so ; we are content with the name, and would gladly adhere more closely than we do to the dear old-fashioned doctrines of the Bible, which say, “ Is any merry, let him sing psalms ;” and “ Singing unto yourselves hymns and spiritual songs, making melody in your hearts to the Lord.” These are the kind of songs we would sing. Alas ! there is too great conformity to the world in this present day ; the distinction is a very faint one. We are all apt to forget that, “ denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works ” (Titus ii. 12—14).

Katie’s view of religion was, after all, a Bible view, for the religion of the Bible is pure and holy ; and so she mourned her own lack of steadfastness, her clinging to earthly pleasures. Did the thought never occur to her that, like herself, Stephen might lack

the steadfast quality? Did it never occur to her that manifold temptations lay around his path, and that he might not possess strength of purpose, as he certainly had not grace, to resist them? Did it not occur to her that henceforward it would be her duty to aid him with her strength, with her example, to try to draw him, with gentle love and persuasion, away from the tempter? No, this did not yet occur to her.

Stephen was very ill, that was certain. The Doctor had spoken of care, and the most perfect quiet; he had even hinted at danger, but they did not tell Katie that. She knew little of sickness; the office as nurse was new to her, and, weary both in body and mind, she knew that there was yet a long dreary night of watching before her. Dolly, indeed, had offered to sit up; but then she had her work to do in the day, and how could she do it after another night of watching? Besides, a little inward monitor proclaimed it her duty. She wondered whether she must sit up alone. Would Fred go to bed? and she turned sick at the thought of the solitary watching.

She could see Fred from where she stood. What was he doing, pacing up and down, past the barns—up and down, without any definite purpose? Was he troubled? and about what? Was Stephen so bad? or was he thinking of that sentence he had uttered that morning after breakfast, "It is God's blessing we want"?

"God's blessing! and had they not that?" Katie trembled at the thought. "God's blessing!" They never asked for it, and she remembered a certain text

in her seldom-read Bible, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Not asking, could they expect to have? Had God's blessing been petitioned for, would her brother be lying a prey to his own inebriety as he then was? Would they not all be happier for that blessing? Tears again came unbidden, but she drove them back. "What right, indeed, had she to talk of asking for God's blessing? How could she expect to receive answers to her asking, when she was so far from God, so clearly a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God?"

Fred presently came slowly towards the house, and stood in the verandah by her side.

"A lovely night, isn't it?" he remarked, in a low tone.

Katie made a slight movement of impatience, and then replied, "Yes, to those who have light hearts."

"Lovely to any one, I should think," said Fred drily. "If it is dark within, I should think the light without would be all the more welcome, eh? I can't for the life of me wish for a cold, dark, stormy night, because I feel dull and gloomy in myself; and I can't think you do."

"Wish for gloomy weather! No, indeed," said Katie. "What I mean is, I cannot glory in the beauty of the night while there is gloom, and sorrow, and sickness around me."

"And sin," said Fred gravely.

"Yes," said Katie, after a lengthened pause, "I think sin might well be put first, for there is plenty of it here. That is the very cause of Stephen's illness."

"I listen little enough to Mr. Howard's sermons, Katie," Fred presently resumed, "yet I do remember one thing he quoted the other Sunday: 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Now, this is not speaking of individual cases, it refers to all. 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' So Graham Howard says, and I suppose it is so. However, in that case, Katie, there are other sinners at Sunny Hollow besides Stephen."

Katie made no reply; she only bent her head a little lower, and tapped her foot fretfully on the ground. Human nature rebels at being declared utterly guilty. What had she done to render her so sinful? What sins had she committed? At least nothing flagrant. How many there were far worse than herself; yet she could not deny the accusing conscience within, that declared her "a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God."

"You must not sit up to-night, Katie!" at length Fred abruptly exclaimed, as he noticed the drooping of the little figure against the post of the verandah. "You were up late enough last night. I was in bed hours before you came home; indeed, I much doubt whether you went to bed at all."

"I lay down outside the bed," replied Katie. "But, Fred, it will not be right to leave Stephen."

"Neither am I thinking of doing so. I shall sit up myself; and as there might be some little matters that a man could not very well attend to, I went round an hour ago, and got old Mother Hall to come for the night. She's a good-natured old thing, and a good nurse; and, moreover, has taken quite a liking

to Stephen. So you see, my girl, you won't be wanted, and you had better be off as soon as possible. That's my verdict!" and he laid his hands affectionately on his sister's shoulder as he spoke.

She turned, and threw her arms round him with sudden emotion. "Oh! thank you, thank you, dear Fred! I am so glad old Mrs. Hall is coming. I know so little about sickness, and sometimes I get so frightened; and in the night, too, I don't know what I should do."

"I think you might as well add, 'and I am so tired.' Why, child, I can see you are pale by this moonlight."

"Perhaps the moonlight helps to make me look pale," said Katie, almost gaily, for the relief she felt when she heard that an older and a wiser head, in sick-room experience at least, was to take the watching post that night, was greater, maybe, than she would have chosen to acknowledge.

"You must call me if I am wanted, Fred," she exclaimed, as she took his good-night kiss, and ran off with a lighter step into the house than she had walked out of it; but the sight of her brother's bed-room door, through which the dim light was visible, and the sound of moans and mutterings that met her ear, soon subdued her spirits again. She stole softly in.

"How does he seem now, Dolly?" she said in a voice almost below her breath. She scarcely ventured a look at the restless head on the pillow.

"No different, Miss Katie, that I see," replied Dolly. "He just moans on same as ever. Now and then he calls out, and talks to himself; but he's out of

his head all the time. You are not a-going to sit up to-night, though. It won't hurt me."

"No, Dolly. Fred says neither of us need to-night. He knows you have enough to do in the day, and I am a poor little thing in a sick-room; and so he has asked Mrs. Hall to come."

"That's good! She knows as much as three of us. Well, miss, I won't say but what I'm glad; for I'm always afraid of going to sleep, I am, if I sit up o' nights; and that wouldn't be much good neither."

Katie went and stood at her brother's bedside with folded hands. Was that Stephen, the handsome, merry Stephen; her playmate and companion in many an olden frolic? Oh! how altered, even in that short time; even though he lay quite tranquil for a short interval.

"If he were to die! Oh! if he were to die!" she thought in terror, and he, her brother, to die in a state of senselessness; to die oblivious to all good! Where would his soul go? Would he be lost for ever?" She turned away in horror at the thought; and in agony of earnestness exclaimed to Dolly—

"Oh, Dolly! never marry a man who drinks! Never get a drunkard for a husband! Of all lives, what a wretched life a drunkard's wife must lead!"

"No fear, miss. I'll take good care when I do marry. But don't think so hardly of your brother, Miss Katie. This, you see, is not all drink; the Doctor says so. The heat has a good deal to do with it."

"I wish it had all to do with it," sighed Katie. "Well, Dolly," she presently added, "I am very tired,

and shall go to bed ; so you had better, too, when Mrs. Hall comes. We may have to sit up another night." And Katie passed on to her little bed-room and closed the door, but did not immediately retire to bed.

She put her little lamp down on the dressing-table, and drew the curtains over the open window, and then took a chair ; and, sitting down at the table, slowly brushed out her hair. There was a Bible lying near her, her mother's gift: for that it had been treasured ; for itself, for its own virtue, little regarded. It placed itself in view now. Katie paused midway in her brushing, and took it in her hand.

"What a little I know of this book !" she said to herself ; "and Christians love it : one more proof how far I am off Christianity. How hard it is to be a Christian ! The more I wish and try, the farther I seem off it."

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it," she read, as she carelessly turned the leaves of her Bible.

"That's it ! that's it ! That's why I can't find it. I don't seek 'aright, I expect : don't try enough," she said, the tears coming into her eyes. "Oh ! I needn't ever expect to find it, or to be among those 'few ;'" and she went on turning the leaves.

Again words met her view :—

"I am the way, the truth, and the life."

She shook her head, and pushed aside the book ; and yet with a deep inward wish that she knew what that meant. A few minutes more, and the lamp was out ; and only the quiet moonlight looked in upon the weary sleeper.

Foolish, foolish Katie ! She felt her malady, but neglected the physician ; she was conscious of her ignorance, but passed by the fountain of all knowledge. No prayer went up from that little room that night.

CHAPTER XXI.

FRIENDS IN NEED.

“Couldst thou but catch one glimpse of Him,
Thy brother dear, thy faithful friend,
Whose watchful eye no sleep may dim,
Who loving, loves thee to the end.”

“TROUBLE at Sunny Hollow,—not much sunshine there now, I warrant me. That comes of giving places such names, as if all the sunshine was there, indeed!”

These words came from an old friend of our readers, and from behind a motley array of goods she was slowly packing for another friend of ours, to whom we have twice before introduced them, and who, from some cause or other, had made an earlier visit to the store than wonted.

Mrs. Bateman wore her usual sarcastic smile, and was that morning in the worst possible humour. Not even the gentle face of Mrs. Ranger, or the large ready-money order she had brought, could restore her to good humour. She was glad even to vent her malice on Sunny Hollow and its trouble.

“Trouble at Sunny Hollow?” echoed Mrs. Ranger, though in a very different tone, looking up suddenly from her basket, in which she was carefully depositing

a portion of her stores ; " I passed by as I came along, and saw no signs of anything the matter, not at any rate with Fred Linwood ; I saw him in the stock-yard, though not near enough to speak. What is the matter, Mrs. Bateman ? "

" Ah, nothing but what happens to other folks sometimes," said Mrs. Bateman, with a curl of her lip ; " I'm not surprised, but I should think it would pull Miss Linwood's pride down a bit."

" What is it ? Something wrong with Miss Linwood ? No, surely, has her brother failed ? or what ? "

" You're not good at guessing this morning, Mrs. Ranger ; it's none of these. The fact is, Stephen's ill, very ill. The Doctor says it's brain fever."

" Poor fellow ! and I not to know it ! " said Mrs. Ranger's really grieved voice. " When was he taken ill, Mrs. Bateman ? "

" Yesterday morning, I suppose. The fact is, his illness is all of his own seeking. The Doctor gave a dance, or ball, or what not, and all three of the Linwoods went, of course ; I wouldn't have let my girls have gone if they had been asked. Well, Stephen Linwood chose to drink a good deal, and drank too much, and got noisy and quarrelsome ; so what with the heat and the drink, and a blow he got on his head in fighting, he's downright ill. Brain fever he's got, the Doctor says ; don't he, Jemimy ? "

" Yes, mother ; and not much wonder," replied the dutiful daughter of her worthy mamma, with a slight toss of her head, as she shut the drawer of ribbons with a bang.

" Poor fellow ! poor fellow ! Ah ! this is bad news,

Mrs. Bateman," said her customer earnestly ; "and I to pass the house ! Well, I shan't go by again without calling. Poor Miss Linwood, too ; little gay thing as she is ; how will she get on with her troubles ?"

"Law ! Mrs. Ranger, as other folks do, I suppose ! What help did I have, I wonder, when Jemimy was took ill of fever ? Oh, it will do her good, a little trouble, depend on't."

Mrs. Ranger was a wise woman ; she did not say all she could have said at that moment ; she saw very plainly that Mrs. Bateman was in no humour to think well of any one. She might have said, had she thought proper, "He who would have a friend must show himself friendly ;" she might have repeated those words of our Saviour, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy ;" or have administered the warning, "Judge not, that ye be not judged ;" but she said none of these things, for in the present mood of the lady in question, she was sure that by admonishing she should but add fuel to the fire already burning.

So her only answer was a slight accession of colour, and a little uneasy trembling about the mouth, while her stores were thrust into her basket, and tied up in her blue checked handkerchief, a little more rapidly and with less precision. But whether Mrs. Bateman interpreted this silent language rightly is best known to herself ; perhaps she did not even understand it to be language, for to some people only words are intelligible. Those thousands of expressive though silent signs conveyed by eye, and lip, and action are incomprehensible to them.

Something very like a tear glistened in Mrs. Ranger's meek grey eyes as she hurriedly tied her handkerchief bundle to the horn of her saddle, and she almost turned her head away as, after climbing up to her seat, Jemima handed her heavy basket to her.

She stood for a moment in thought, then suddenly turned her horse's head a little out of his usual course, to his evident discomfiture, and took the road that led past the Doctor's. It was not, however, to the Doctor's house she was going, such a thought never entered her mind, though she was very anxious to hear more certain news before she went to the Linwoods. Dobbin was not to be urged, or even coaxed to go any but his own pace on a road he disliked, for no other reason than that it was not homeward, but at last he came to a stop, in answer to a sharp pull at the bridle, before the open door of the little school-house.

Open doors and windows were imperative on such a day. The sun sent down its fervid beams, and both Mrs. Ranger and her old horse were in a state of heat and perspiration. It was inviting to look into the shade of that cool school-room, the very pail of water under the porch, with its tin pannikin appended, ready for thirsty scholars, was refreshing, and Mrs. Ranger, as she jumped down from the saddle and walked to the door, did not fail to take a draught of the pure fluid.

"Miss Maitland! Miss Maitland!" exclaimed two or three voices, as young eyes caught sight of the figure in the doorway, where Mrs. Ranger had been quietly standing for the last five minutes, regarding the busy pleasant scene within, and listening with a

mother's pride to the ready answers one of her little ones was giving in his multiplication table.

It was a pleasant scene, for the sweet face of Annie beautified it, and the little folks around were interesting.

The one chair in the school-room—and be it known that only a wooden one—was occupied by the little governess herself, and upon the one foot-stool, converted, by-the-bye, out of the root of a tree, were perched her dainty little feet, that just peeped out, black and shining, from beneath the cool green gingham dress. What soft glossy bands of hair fell on either side the gentle face, forming a pretty contrast to the slightly-flushed cheeks; and how softly and brightly the violet eyes fell upon one and another of the group that were gathered round her! There were perfect order and neatness from the jetty hair and gossamer collar, fastened by a simple, sparkling crystal brooch, to the small neatly-fitting boots, and the little black apron.

Yes, it was a pleasant sight to look upon, but more pleasant still to listen to the winning tones of the young governess as she encouraged one and another of her little troop to "speak up," and Mrs. Ranger's admiration was fairly divided between Annie and her own youngest boy, who had just achieved the wonderful feat of proclaiming that "six times six are thirty-six," and but for other eyes, Mrs. Ranger might have lingered longer still, for Annie was so absorbed with her class, that she did not even hear the first "Miss Maitland!" that sought to attract her notice; but the delighted exclamation of "Mother!" that burst from little Joseph, and his

rush from his place in the class, at once aroused her. She sprang up and came eagerly forward to the door, and seized the hand extended to her.

"Mrs. Ranger! have you been waiting long? I was so busy, you see," she exclaimed merrily. "Did you hear Joey?" she added *sotto voce*.

"Yes, that I did, Miss Maitland, and I was surprised. You certainly do get the children on. There's Lucy is as fond of her book as can be. No," she continued, "I have not been long, just time to hear Joey."

"How hot you look! do come in, mamma will be so glad to see you; it is so long since you have called."

"Yes, I will go in; I won't hinder you, Miss Maitland, but I'll take another drink first, for I am very dry to-day, riding along in the heat and dust," and Mrs. Ranger stooped down to make good her word.

"Oh no, Mrs. Ranger, not this; you shall have some of mamma's lemon syrup, or a cup of tea if you like it better," said Annie, gaily seizing the pannikin and leading the way out of the school-room.

"I have but a few moments to spare," said Mrs. Ranger, "have you heard of the illness at Sunny Hollow?"

"Only a little while ago," said Annie, colouring brightly. "Stephen Linwood, the children tell me, —but is he very ill?"

"Very bad," replied Mrs. Ranger, "so I heard at the store; brain fever, they say; I'm afraid poor Miss Katie is in sad trouble."

"Yes, indeed!" said Annie, tears starting into

her eyes, "I had no idea it was so bad as that. I wonder I have not heard of it before ; I will speak to mamma, and run up after school this afternoon ; I can let the children out half an hour earlier."

"Yes, do," said Mrs. Ranger; "I'm sure she'd like you to come, and I am going to call on my way home. To-night I couldn't stay, so it's no use of me to offer ; but if you could, it would be a real good thing, and then I might come to-morrow ; we know what sickness is, Miss Maitland, and I don't much think that poor little thing does."

"And, I am afraid, has not the same hope as we have," said Annie, the bright drops trembling on the downcast eyelashes. "Oh, Mrs. Ranger, what should we do without our anchor Hope?"

"Ah! that's what I always say," replied Mrs. Ranger meekly; "that hope will do to die by; we can leave all in our Father's hands when this hope is ours. But oh! to have no hope—no faith—no trust in God, must be terrible!"

"Oh, terrible indeed!"

"And yet I sometimes have hope for Miss Linwood ; I scarcely know why. Well, I'm just going in to see your mother ;" and Mrs. Ranger passed through the little door, closing it after her to shut out the noise, while Annie turned with glistening eyes to rearrange her disorderly class, and set her scholars once more about their interrupted duties.

Half an hour after, Mrs. Ranger's old Dobbin was tied against Fred Linwood's stockyard, while she wended her way to the house.

It had so happened that she had never visited Sunny Hollow since Katie's arrival there, though

Katie had more than once been to Thornbush. She was therefore scarcely prepared for its improved appearance, visible even at that distance. The deep verandah, up the posts of which two or three tendrils of Cape ivy were essaying to climb, threw into shadow, but did not conceal, very bright windows, neatly curtained with muslin drapery. There was a sunny aspect about the whole house, with the exception of one window, and the closely-drawn curtains of that proclaimed sickness within. Mrs. Ranger lingered a moment or two before she entered the open door, as she was rather fond of doing, and looked about her ; along the cleanly-swept verandah to the dairy, the door of which was also open, and looked exceedingly inviting with its clean shelves and bright pans of milk, and dishes of butter fresh from the churn. Having regaled her eyes so far, she advanced to the doorstep of the house and looked in. All quiet and still there ; freshly swept, and clean, and bright looking ; the large table stretching its length across one end of the kitchen, and chairs and benches all neatly back against the wall. Rather too much fire on that clean hearth though ; but it was too hot to venture fire out of doors ; and the huge pot swinging from the crane told of pigs in the sty, upon whose appetites the heat would have no effect. Several other minor utensils swinging from the same crane told also of the necessity there was for feeding the genus *homo*, heat or no heat. There was a large mat of different-coloured pieces of cloth, ingeniously knitted together, lying outstretched at a little distance from the hearth. It was astonishing what a comfortable aspect it gave the large room. The

table, too, was neatly covered with a pretty-patterned oilcloth ; and, certainly, the glass of flowers in the centre gave an air of refinement to the bush-house in spite of the rafters above, and their well-arranged store of hams and bacon. Perhaps Mrs. Ranger, in her pleased contemplation, might have forgotten that there was anything but sunshine at Sunny Hollow, spite of Mrs Bateman's assertion, had not a little tray containing an empty physic phial, a spoon, the peel of an orange, a half-eaten quarter of the same, and a glass partly full of lemon syrup, betrayed it : these all spoke of a sick-room ; besides, through a partly opened door came the sound of hushed talking, and now and then a moan, or a few incoherent words. Grieved and sad, Mrs. Ranger stood silently by the side of the table, waiting for some one to come out. She had found the shadow resting upon Sunny Hollow now.

The door opened a little wider, and a well-known voice met her ear.

" Oh, you must not be frightened ! He'll do well enough ; he has youth on his side, and a good constitution. Keep the vinegar cloth constantly to his head, and send over for the medicine. He'll be better after that."

The door was pushed widely open, and out came the Doctor, followed by Katie.

" Mrs. Ranger ! Who would have thought of seeing you ? " and he came forward in his heartiest manner to shake hands.

" Oh, Mrs. Ranger ! I am so glad to see you," was Katie's earnest, tearful exclamation with voice and hand.

"Well, I need not ask how you are, I see," said the Doctor ; "and the young hopeful, I suppose it's well, or you wouldn't be here?"

"Yes, sir, quite well," replied Mrs. Ranger quietly. "He sleeps all the morning, so I am not afraid of leaving him for an hour or so."

"You don't dose him, I hope?"

"Sir?"

"Dose him ; give him laudanum, or Godfrey's cordial, or any of those messes, to make him sleep, eh?"

"Oh no, sir! It's nature in him."

"And a very good nature, too. Well, good morning, Miss Linwood ; keep up your spirits. All's right. I'll look in to-night."

Mrs. Ranger followed him to the door, and out into the verandah.

"Is there any danger, sir?" she whispered softly.

"Humph ! Always danger in these cases. The heat is against him, but his youth is in his favour, as I told his sister. He may get better."

"And this all arose from drink!" said Mrs. Ranger, in a grieved voice.

"Well, well ! partly, no doubt. These young fellows don't know what moderation is, you know, like you and I do," said the Doctor funnily.

"Ah, sir ! moderation in drinking poison?"

"Come to that, all food is poison if taken in excess. Did you ever know that before?" said the Doctor, laughing. "No, no, my good friend ; no fault in wine any more than in the bread we eat. God has given us the vine ; He Himself drank of the fruit of

the grape ; and our Bibles tell us that ‘wine cheereth the heart of God and man.’ I can quote Scripture, you see, Mrs. Ranger.”

“That is nothing new,” thought Mrs. Ranger. “Satan did that to our Saviour ;” but she quietly answered, “Doctor, I have been a total abstainer for years, and I have found nothing in my Bible yet to encourage me to break my pledge, and see everything there to cry down the sin of drunkenness, and show forth its evil.”

“Oh, well ! if I only had the time, I could prove quite clearly to you that wine is a good thing—in moderation, of course—but I haven’t ; I’ve to see a patient ten miles off, and it’s late already. So good day. That boy wants good nursing,” he cried out, as he mounted his horse, and rode away.

Mrs. Ranger shook her head, and then turned to go in. Katie was standing by the table, both arms extended on it, and her face hidden in her hands ; her whole frame was trembling, and quivering with sobs.

“Come, come, Miss Linwood, don’t distress yourself ; your brother will be better soon, I daresay,” said the kind woman, gently laying her hand on Katie’s shoulder. “Are you all alone, dear ?”

“Yes, all alone. Dolly is feeding the calves ; she is obliged to be about a great deal ; and Fred has gone to the post with a letter, to fetch mother.”

“Ah ! I’m glad of that ; that’s right. Do you think your mother will come ?”

“I think so ; I’m sure she will ; but she cannot possibly be here before the day after to-morrow, and Stephen is so ill. And oh ! Mrs. Ranger, I know

nothing about illness, absolutely nothing, and am no better than a baby;" and Katie's face was again bowed down to the table.

"I daresay you will get on a good deal better than you think, Miss Linwood," said Mrs. Ranger kindly; "but it is lonesome for you, and you must not be left alone. I would have stayed myself to-night, could I have known before."

"Oh! Mrs. Ranger, I could not expect you with your large family, and dear little baby too."

"Oh, baby's very quiet; he don't give much trouble," said Mrs. Ranger, smiling; "but I was going to say, as I cannot come till to-morrow night, Miss Maitland will come. I have arranged to send Susy up to keep Mrs. Maitland company."

"Annie Maitland coming to-night! Ah! how kind!" exclaimed Katie, brightening up.

"Miss Maitland knows a good deal about sickness. She is a good nurse; and beautiful company, too. I always feel better for a little talk with her."

"And can she really come?"

"Oh yes; her mamma wished her to do so. She told me she would send school out half an hour earlier, and come away immediately after."

"And I have been so unhappy, thinking I had no friends," said Katie, the tears welling up again.

"You should not have thought that till you had tried them," returned Mrs. Ranger gently. "Yet, at best, my dear Miss Linwood, earthly friends can do us but little real good, if we have not a Friend that loveth at all times. Jesus is the best friend. Oh! let Him be yours."

Katie had nothing to say to this, with the exception of a little quiet sob. Presently she turned beseechingly to Mrs. Ranger, and exclaimed—

“You will come in and look at Stephen?”

“Certainly, my dear child ; that was one reason why I came ;” and she followed her into the sick room.

CHAPTER XXII.

SICK-ROOM EXPERIENCE.

“Dost Thou my profit seek,
And chasten as a friend?
O God, I'll kiss the smarting rod,
There's honey at the end.”

THERE are seasons in the life of every one when even the most frivolous must feel subdued and impressed. At the bed of the afflicted; at the couch of the dying, when every pulsation of the clock seems to tell the fleeting moments of existence—such times as these are not for the merry laugh and jest: no gay song, no dance here. What a discord would they make in those night watchings!

In midnight hours of sad and anxious watching, when the whole past life stands before the eyes, a dismal spectacle indeed, if that life has hitherto been spent without God. To the Christian, it is of little consequence whether the broad eye of heaven looks into the chamber, or the stars of night. The knowledge that he is under the shadow of the Almighty wing is a peaceful, happy one. He need not fear even the review of his past life, for those sinful deeds of past days are all cancelled; blood has procured them pardon, has blotted them out for ever.

“Thou givest songs in the night,” one Bible

Christian exclaims ; and how many since those words were written have added their seal to the testimony. No ; there is nothing for the child of God to dread. His Father is near to him in the night as in the day ; those eyes never slumber, never sleep !

Midnight ! the great clock in the adjoining room had just proclaimed the hour. It fell with almost a chill upon Katie's unaccustomed ears : she lifted her head from her book, and looked around her with a half shudder, turning with a glance of relief to the little figure opposite to her ; for Annie Maitland had fulfilled her kind promise, and was sharing the watch.

All had been so quiet for the last half-hour in that little chamber. The patient was in a heavy slumber, and the silence was only broken by his thickened breathing, and the monotonous tick of the clock in the other room.

It was sultry yet within doors ; without, a most refreshing breeze was playing with the leaves of passion-flower and Cape ivy, and a little of its freshness came in at the widely-open window, gently swaying to and fro the white curtains, and wandering over the heated brow of the invalid ; in its way thither, toying with Katie's sunny ringlets, and softly kissing Annie's placid brow. They had placed a small round table between them, nearly underneath the window, and had seated themselves on opposite sides, within sight of the sleeper. A small lamp stood between them, with a deep green shade over it, that threw the rest of the room into shadow, while the light fell pleasantly on the open books that each had chosen to while away the hours, and upon their own

little figures, and downcast, drooping heads. A little vase of monthly roses breathed their faint perfume on the two weary watchers. That vase was the most cheerful thing in the room ; for it spoke of life—fresh, young, blooming life—in the midst of so much that reminded of death, that bore its impress.

Katie's eyes were divided between those roses and her sweet companion, Annie. Perhaps they rested more frequently upon the latter. It was a pretty picture of rest she formed. Katie saw that, and felt the contrast in herself. The smooth hair, with unruffled bands, so gracefully sweeping from the cheek's fair oval, a soft, faint rose-hue resting on either cheek. What a sweet expression the little mouth had taken, and the brow was as calm as a summer morn. There was nothing but quiet and rest everywhere that Katie could see. The delicate muslin dress, so fair with its tiny spots of pink on a snowy ground, the gossamer collar again—Annie's collars were always of lace-like texture—all this was faultless, and yet she had not been idle that evening. She had frequently shaken the pillows, the nicely-arranged bed was her work ; she had administered the draught each time ; the cup of panado was made by her little hand, and a hundred little kindred offices had fallen to her share, and yet she was unruffled as a rose-leaf on the bosom of a quiet lake. So Katie thought—thought, admired and wondered.

There was another watcher in the other room. Katie begged him to take her bed, and sleep that night ; but Fred would not hear of it, even though Annie Maitland added her gentler entreaties to his sister's. Yet, though he would not go to bed, he

promised her he would lie down on the sofa in the kitchen, and try to sleep, if they would promise to wake him should he be wanted, or Stephen worse ; and they thought he had done so once, when they stole softly in, Katie to show where materials might be found, and Annie to mix the panado, and boil it to its right consistency. They little knew, as he lay there full length upon the sofa, his arms thrown back and crossed over his brow, that, beneath the shadow of those arms, there were earnest blue eyes intently watching every movement.

And what did he think as he saw that little, calm, unruffled figure so quietly moving about his house? Ah ! she seemed an angel to him—an angel of goodness and mercy—an angel who added fresh brightness to the rough house of Sunny Hollow. He considered whether it would be possible to transplant that sweet flower from its lowly station beside his lucerne, and permanently to fix it in his home ! Was it possible that he should ever have the happiness of bestowing his name upon her? Would she turn away if he asked her to share Sunny Hollow with him? How he wished he knew !

And there she was so quietly standing at the table, unconscious of the eyes that were resting on her, so utterly unconscious of the thoughts that were passing within the sleeper's (?) breast, that once she fixed her own with a sweet half-sorrowful gaze upon him. The unwonted tears rose to Fred's eyes as he met that gaze. "What ! is she thinking of me?" he inwardly exclaimed. "That I am deep, deep down in sin, too sinful for her ! Ah, so I am ; but she does not know how earnestly I am seeking another

state of things—how I long to be a Christian, intend to be one ere long.”

It was well that Annie turned and went back into the room just then, with her nicely-prepared cup, for Fred's thoughts were becoming too disturbed for quiet. He lay in forced stillness a moment or two, and then sprung softly up, and went and paced up and down the verandah.

It was the first time thoughts of Annie Maitland as his wife had placed themselves in such tangible shape before his mind. He had, it is true, been aware of a certain growth in his warmth of feeling towards her ; he had made the discovery that, as the stars grow pale in the light of the sun, so all other girls, in his estimation, had become insignificant in the presence of Annie Maitland. But it was reserved for that evening, when he saw her so quietly moving about his house, as though she were indeed a portion of it, for the pent-up feelings of his heart to pour forth—not audibly, but mentally—he knew now, almost angelized though she was in his estimation, that he could not calmly look upon her as the bride of another. No ; she must be his, or he should never again be happy. But would she ?

Not if she thought of him as that sorrowful glance she gave him declared she did still ; not if she deemed him still wandering away from the fold of Christ, still a seeker after false gods, still a votary of pleasure, and what had he proved himself yet to be ? And, after all, should he be able to fulfil the gospel requirements ? Was he able to perform all the promises he had made to his own heart ? Was he capable of becoming a Christian ?

Ah! Fred was fast treading the way to Mr. Legality's manse; by and by the thunder and lightning of Sinai will alarm him if he continue this watching. Strange is it that so many take that terrible road, when the way to Mount Calvary is so easy, so plain. Jesus only! Jesus only!

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To free my soul from one dark spot,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Yes; that is the secret, "Waiting not"—"Just as I am." That is how Jesus would have us come to Him. He "will cleanse each spot;" we may vainly try to do so. He will accept us just as we are, and take us to His loving bosom.

Young friends, are there any among you who, like Fred, are seeking to become Christians in your own strength—seeking to make yourselves pure and holy? Oh, come at once to Christ, and the work is done!

Fred was still walking up and down when Katie came out into the verandah.

"Is Stephen sleeping yet?" he asked.

"Yes; he took a few spoonfuls of panado, and is asleep again. He was quite sensible for a moment or two, and asked for a drink; but he relapsed again almost directly. Won't you come in and look at him?"

Fred followed his sister into the room, and stood by the side of Annie at his brother's pillow.

"What do you think of him, Miss Maitland?" he asked, as though he thought her opinion of greater value than his own eyesight.

"I think that the Doctor will say he is out of danger, Mr. Linwood," said Annie, raising her dark blue eyes to his face with a flush of pleasure. "I have been watching him attentively since he took the last draught, and I feel sure there is improvement."

"Doctor Moore promised to be here by daybreak," said Fred gently; "we shall certainly know then. I confess I have had my fears to-day of his recovery," he presently added, in a low voice, as Katie left the room to prepare some coffee.

"I feared much too," replied Annie; "but I knew that God is all-powerful, and that He is a hearer and an answerer of prayer. In this case I believe He has already answered."

"You have prayed for him?" asked Fred, in surprised and earnest tones.

"Oh yes, Mr. Linwood; have not you?"

"Do you think God would hear prayer of mine, Miss Maitland? Would it not be presumption in me to try?"

Annie gave a quick, penetrating glance into his face, and then suffering her lashes to drop over her soft eyes, she replied, "Presumption! oh no. Jesus has invited us to come, to bring all our burdens to Him; rather would it be presumption to try to bear our burdens ourselves. Have you tried to do that, Mr. Linwood?"

"Too much, I am afraid," returned Fred sorrowfully.

"Because," said Annie fervently, "it is so much easier to take our troubles to Jesus, and this particularly, for Jesus can heal where man's skill avails nothing. He can alone make remedies available."

"Does it not need strong faith to credit this?"

"I do not think so; it seems so simple to me. God's words ought surely to be enough for us."

"I am ashamed to say what a stranger I am to the Bible, to the words of Jesus. What are those words, Miss Maitland?" asked Fred, leaning back against the wall with folded arms, and looking earnestly down at the fair face by his side.

"Words of rest and comfort, Mr. Linwood," returned Annie, looking up with tear-gemmed eyes. "'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee.' 'Look unto Me, and be ye saved.' 'In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me.' 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Me.' 'Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.' These, and many other as precious promises, are for the Christian; but," she continued, with downcast eyes and low sad tones, "Jesus also said, 'Ye have not, because ye ask not;' 'Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life.'"

"You think," said Fred, in slow, hesitating tones, after a pause of some length, "you think that I am among the latter class—those who will not come, will not ask, Miss Maitland? I trust you are mistaken."

Annie turned quickly round, a joyous flush illumining her face as she turned it to his.

"Oh, how gladly would I be mistaken!" she exclaimed in earnest, eager tones. "You are, then, seeking Christ? You are a Christian!"

"I dare not call myself by that name yet, Miss

Annie, but that I desire to become one, to be worthy to enjoy that name, I can truly say; and that I intend, with all my heart and soul, to try is also true. Will you not pray for me?"

"Indeed I will!" said Annie, with tearful face. She did not tell him how frequently before he had been remembered in her prayers, and he did not say all he could have said just then; how the steadfast little light of her Christian walk had lured him into the narrow path, lured him into the desire to search for himself, and see whether or no these things were true.

"Remember, Mr. Linwood," said Annie gently, as she turned away at Katie's call to enjoy a cup of coffee, "remember, Jesus can perform all things. He not only leads sinners to Himself, but guides them all the way. 'If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Me.' 'I will guide thee with Mine eye, and afterwards receive thee into glory.'"

CHAPTER XXIII.

PEARLS WORTH DIVING FOR.

“ My pardon I claim,
For a sinner I am,
A sinner believing in Jesus’ name.”

A FEW hours later, and the Sabbath morning sun stole quietly into the kitchen at Sunny Hollow, throwing long golden bars across the floor as it entered the open doorway, and illumining the very quiet scene with its radiant beauty. The window-blinds of green venetian were drawn down to exclude the too lurid entrée of those sunbeams; they cast a grateful shade over everything in the room. All was in the same perfect order; the floor was swept to the last degree of nicety, and the hearth had not even a stray cinder on its snowy expanse. From the chairs set carefully back in their places, to the vase of fresh flowers on the table, everything was just as everything should be and ought to be, where there are no children to displace, and disarrange, and litter with their unwearying little feet and fingers. These little ones will make themselves felt as well as seen and heard. They leave the impress of their presence everywhere, be it by the scattered toys upon the carpet or the greasy finger-marks upon your dress. After all, the world would be a stiff-set, prim sort of

place, were it not for these little meddlesome, mischievous cherubs.

But there were no children at Sunny Hollow, though the little figure on the sofa was almost as *petite* as a child. Perfectly quiet it lay, the little hands resting on one another, and the soft cheek resting on both. Katie, worn out with the fatigue of the previous evening, had consented to yield up her watch to a neighbour, who had come in for an hour or two till Mrs. Ranger should relieve guard. She would not, however, in spite of all Dolly's coaxing, go farther than the sitting-room; but, when there, she had scarcely thrown herself on the sofa five minutes when all other senses were drowned in sleep.

What would become of our weary frames were it not for this sweet restorer? How wonderfully and beautifully adapted to the human frame is every provision God has made for it! Where would be our mental power without the wholesome refreshment of sleep? How little we think of this when we sink wearily on our pillows, and luxuriate in our soft beds, toying with sleep!

Katie's sleep was made up of more than one ingredient; grief had a large share in it, and she closed her eyelids to shut out the sense of shame that still continued to haunt her, which, indeed, since the Doctor had proclaimed the danger in some degree over, had returned with double force. How little had she thought, in her light-heartedness, that there really was truth in those odious reports that from time to time had found their way to her father's house! How she had longed to prove to Amy and her husband

that they were but reports after all ; that her brother Steve, whom she dearly loved, was as free from the vice of intoxication as she wished him to be. "Alas! now, what could she say to Amy?" And her head sunk wearily down on the soft pillow with the question. She fell asleep like a child, with the tears yet upon her lashes.

Annie Maitland had left Sunny Hollow soon after breakfast, promising to come again in the afternoon, to see how Stephen was getting on. She had heard the Doctor's report, who had been very early, as he had promised, and confirmed her own opinion that there was certainly a change for the better in the patient, but that the most perfect quiet was yet necessary to prevent a relapse. Stephen was still but partially conscious, but he was quiet, and that was much. It was certainly far less painful to attend upon him. Annie left with greater satisfaction when she had seen the patient under the care of old Mrs. Hall once more, and received Katie's promise to lie down and take some sleep.

The house after that was quiet in the extreme. Even Dolly had found some place to stand herself out of sight and hearing. The sunbeam stole in quietly enough, and so also did a modest little zephyr : it played but few pranks at its entrance ; gently, very gently swaying to and fro the corner of the table-cover ; softly, very softly, rustling the window-blinds ; and finally, lightly, very lightly, uplifting some of the fair ringlets that swept the brow of the sleeper.

By and by a quiet step crossed the room ; a chair was noiselessly placed against the table ; a large book laid open upon that, and Fred seated himself down to

study his Bible. That was a sight that doubtless the angels delighted to look upon; for Fred was no common reader. He had come to that old volume, that long unused volume, as the thirsty traveller to an unexpected fountain. It was to drink of the living water he desired; to lave in the pure streams of salvation, and be cleansed, that he eagerly sought. He knew what that book contained: healing for the sick, cleansing for the leper, comfort for the troubled, rest for the weary; he knew this, though not practically as yet, for he had not made it his study hitherto; he had only heard of its precious contents from others, like one who has been told of the skill of a physician, but has not tested the efficacy of the medicine himself. So Fred had yet to prove in his own case that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is all-sufficient, all-consoling, all-divine.

It was a new thing at Sunny Hollow for the Bible to form a part of even the Sabbath reading. Hitherto the newspaper, with all its detail of politics and crimes, this world's pleasure, and amusements, and fashions, the whole Babel of the world in all its everyday phases, had always been reserved to while away the tedium of the Sabbath afternoon. To go to chapel twice on Sunday, or even once, had been considered quite enough; and, as Fred's own conscience admitted, he had not gone there either to listen to the preacher or to the word of God. But now, he was going to that sacred word, because he felt among those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Jesus Himself pronounced these blessed; and the promise to them was, he knew, "they shall be filled." He was determined to search, that the fulfilment of that promise

might be seen in him. As he turned softly over the great pages, his eye fell upon the 13th chapter of Matthew, the 45th, 46th, and 47th verses; and, as he slowly read them over again and again, he thought that he was like the man seeking for hidden treasure. But was he willing to give up all for the sake of the Gospel of Christ? He, too, was deeply anxious to find the pearl of great price; but to possess it, would he resign the world? Yes, he desired so; he thought most certainly he would; he wanted that pearl of great price; he wanted that treasure in his possession. Just then he felt with the poet:—

“For Thee I could the world resign,
And sail to heaven with Thee and thine.”

He bowed down his head upon his hands, and inwardly prayed that he might always feel thus.

He presently went on with his reading, but the remainder seemed almost fearful to think of—the end of the world; its tribunal; the good and the bad! If judged by his deeds, where should he be placed? Would the “furnace of fire,” the “weeping and wailing,” have anything to do with him?

“When Thou, the righteous Judge, shall come,
To call Thy ransom’d people home,
Shall I among them stand?
Shall such a worthless wretch as I,
Who sometimes am afraid to die,
Be found at Thy right hand?”

This was the substance of what passed through Fred’s mind, as he fixedly gazed on the words that troubled him so greatly. What had he to recommend him to the mercy of God? Why should he be saved

and others lost? And he hurriedly turned over leaf after leaf of his Bible, while his troubled thoughts ran heavily along. He was beginning to think that the road was indeed narrow that led to life eternal, and that he ought not to be expected to enter, when his eye again fell upon healing words—words just suited to his state of mind: “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Ah! this was what he wanted. He had no money; nothing to recommend him in the sight of a holy God. He needed, then, a free salvation. And what could be more full? “Without money and without price.” Was he, then, to do nothing? And he hurriedly sought again through many pages to find an answer to his question. He found something, at last, that seemed the very thing for him. The very same question is asked by the jailer of Paul and Silas—“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Fred bent eagerly over the words as he read the reply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Yes, it was only faith was needed; faith in Jesus, faith in His love, His ability, His willingness to save. The spirit, if not the words of the answer, made by the ruler who sought healing for his child, came to Fred’s lips—“Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.”

In the midst of his earnest pursuit after the waters of life, so purely gushing for his refreshment from the sacred word, a shadow crossed the sunshine at the door, and clouded the golden bar that by this time had found its way to the opposite wall. He looked from the large Bible before him to meet the kind

sympathizing face of Mrs. Ranger, whose passage through the door had been suddenly arrested by the pleasing and unwonted sight, the young master of Sunny Hollow studying the Word of God !

Fred rose instantly ; pointing with one hand to his still sleeping sister, with the other, giving a warm grasp of welcome to the hand extended to him.

"She is wearied out, poor thing; and no wonder, with mind and body too on the stretch," said Mrs. Ranger, in under-tones. "I have heard the good news, that your brother is better, Mr. Fred. Miss Maitland told me; and I am heartily thankful for it. I know God is a hearer of prayer." Miss Maitland had not told her of Fred's confession to herself, or that he intended and desired to become a Christian, *that* she had treasured in her own heart ; and therefore Mrs. Ranger's surprise and pleasure were unfeigned when she saw the open Bible upon the table, and the eager, searching look of the face that bent over it.

"You looked just now as if you knew something of the goodly pearls to be found in here," she presently said, laying her hand on the pages of the book.

"What makes you think so, Mrs. Ranger?"

"You seemed reading in earnest, as though you were seeking for something."

"I was, Mrs. Ranger."

"And have you not found it?"

"Yes, indeed; I have found more than I ever expected to find in here for me. Mrs. Ranger, I believe I now understand what makes you call the Bible a precious book."

"Bless God for that ! Bless God for that!" said

Mrs. Ranger, the tears of joy running into her eyes. "If you are beginning to understand why I think it precious, you are feeling it precious to yourself. Ah! how I have prayed for this! prayed as though you were my own son."

"You have prayed for me?" said Fred, tears involuntarily coming into his own eyes. "I did not deserve that, Mrs. Ranger; and I fear I am now very far from what you think me."

"No, no; I hope not. I think not. You are a sinner as I am, and you feel it; feel you have disobeyed the commands of God, walked in your own ways, and that of the world; that hitherto God has been forgotten by you, and that you are undeserving of His mercy."

"Yes, yes; all this, and more too."

"I thought so," replied Mrs. Ranger, still clasping his hand. "And you need a Saviour; you feel that you do?"

"I do indeed!"

"Jesus Christ says, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;' 'The whole need not a physician, but the sick.' Is not that invitation enough for the sinner who feels the burden of his sin?"

"Yes, Mrs. Ranger. Yes; I see that it is beautiful and plain. And see here, this is what I have been reading;" and he turned first to the words in Isaiah, and then to the Acts of the Apostles. "See!" he exclaimed, "I was asking the same question as this man asked, and how beautifully this answer came in, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!'"

"And you believe?" asked Mrs. Ranger, her meek eyes glowing with intensity of feeling, as she asked the momentous question.

"I do most fervently, most reverently," replied Fred, in low decided tones.

"Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord, my dear Mr. Linwood. Salvation follows! If you believe with your heart you will confess with your tongue. You will seek to follow Him; to do His will; not because you fear, but because you love Him who first loved you, who has given Himself for you."

Gentle reader, has this confession ever been made by you? Have you also believed in Jesus to the salvation of your soul? If not, pray, pray, pray that the heart of unbelief may be removed, and that you may sit at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in your right mind.

Little knew those earnest, low-voiced speakers that their half-hushed tones were being eagerly taken in by a pair of ears not far distant; that eyes blue as violets, half hidden by the clustering ringlets and little hands, were stealthily glancing from one to another; and that, finally, when Fred proclaimed his belief in Christ, tears crept silently through the fingers that concealed her face. "Fred a Christian!" she mentally exclaimed; "and what, oh, what am I? Yes, he will be a pillar of strength; he will not swerve from his opinions, if he has indeed become a Christian; he will be a true, unflinching one, I know that;" and she watched her brother as he followed Mrs. Ranger into the sick-chamber with mingled feelings of admiration and wonder, half-tinctured with fear: fear that he would not be the same to her; fear that he

would not love her as ever ; fear that another cloud was coming over Sunny Hollow.

She noiselessly crept off the sofa when she saw there was no danger of being seen, and snatching her garden-hat from its peg, slipped out of the house beyond the barns, and a long way up the creek, a portion of which wandered through Fred's own land. To one point, not that point where the watercress grew—that only favoured Annie Maitland's garden—but to a clear, bright little open bit of water, that ran playfully, brawling over stones at the bottom, Katie wandered. Just at that point, where the interposition of some large rocks formed a miniature cascade, it was so overshadowed by trees and bushes, and high embankments, and huge boulders, that it formed an excellent hiding-place, and Katie knew it.

She threw herself down on the rocky bank, resting her arms and head upon a moss-grown boulder that grew out of the embankment at her side, feeling very desolate and miserable, and as if she were quite alone in the world. She dearly loved Fred, very dearly ; and she admired as well as loved him. And now, what was this barrier that was springing up between them ? He was a Christian, a child of God. And she ? Ah ! what was she ? Not that ; not that.

She had been there more than an hour watching the stream as it musically tinkled over the stones ; watching the deep smooth surface of a deeper spot, or the feathery spray of the torrent of two feet high ; and thinking of herself and of her brother, and of the change there would be in his affection now, when she heard that brother calling her loudly, first in one direction, and then in another.

She lay quite still listening to his voice, till it approached nearer and nearer, and the words, "Katie darling, where are you?" seemed nothing wanting in affection, or to be even more tender and sympathizing in their tones. She stood up then, and catching sight of her, Fred sprung down the creek, and was at her side in a moment.

"Why, you little puss, where have you been hiding? I have sought high and low for you. You are wanted at home, I can tell you," said Fred, laughing at her amazement, and lifting her in his arms to the top of the bank.

"Wanted!" asked Katie curiously. "Not to Stephen; I see he's no worse."

"No, little Katie; I am thankful to say not. But you are wanted for all that. Don't you want to see mother?"

"Is mother come?" Katie eagerly asked.

"Come and see for yourself," laughed Fred, doing his best to hasten her to the house; but her feet needed no wings now.

Mother's presence! Ah! what a weight that word took off Katie's mind! She rushed into the house, and a moment after was weeping out all her trouble, and grief, and anxiety on that best resting-place this world can afford, a mother's bosom!

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOTHER.

“As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”

MOTHER! most musical word of uttered language: the first soft lisplings of the infant tongue. Mother, a name so sweet, that it should always be coupled with expressions of endearment. Dearest mother! while I breathe, shall I ever forget thee? Will thy gentle teachings ever be obliterated? That sweet and lovely face, the soft and flexile voice, those fond, endearing carresses, ever cease to be remembered? Ah! never, never!

Katie's mother was but little like her daughter, for though *petite* in stature, she was very stout—not like Mrs. Bateman, but soft and downy, and loving-looking, with deep dimples near her mouth, and soft eyes that smiled upon you, and soft silver hair smoothly put away beneath a very neat little cap of lace, as gossamer as Annie Maitland's collars, it did not give one particle of stiffness to the sweet face, though no cap could have done that. When Katie entered she was seated in the large easy-chair, near the door, fanning herself with her handkerchief; for she was very warm after her ride through the sun,

though the cool muslin in which she had arrayed herself looked very pleasant, and a nice little breeze was beginning to rise and toy with her lace cap-strings, and the soft folds of her dress.

Katie was not more glad to see her mother than her mother was to see her ; she fondled and petted her darling child, smoothing again and again the soft hair from the clear brow, and kissing it warmly, and wiping away the tears with her impromptu fan. "She had been sadly missed at home," she told her ; "and but for her brothers' sake, would have been sent for home long before."

"And does father miss me?" smiled Katie, as though she knew what the answer would be.

"Indeed he does, dear ; I have had much to do to keep him from fetching you home. He says that the boys ought not to have all the sunshine up at Sunny Hollow ; but you seem happy enough here, darling, when Stephen's well, and that is sufficient."

Happy ! Well, so she was, now that her mother was with her, and that she had that dear bosom to lay on, and pour all her sorrows into ; but had her mother seen her a few minutes ago, she would not have thought so. She little knew the under-current that was silently making its way beneath the smooth water of Sunny Hollow ; glad enough would she have been to hear that there was already a "troubling of the waters."

"You have come to stay, dear mother?" asked Katie eagerly.

"Yes, dear, till Stephen is well enough to move, and then I will take him back with me for a time. Poor fellow, poor fellow ! Oh, how it grieves me to

hear the cause of all this!" and the handkerchief was pressed to the eyes that were now streaming with tears. "Ah!" she continued presently, in a broken voice, "if my children were only decided for the Lord—if they had only given their hearts to Him, what a deal of sorrow I should be spared!"

Katie seized the bonnet and shawl that had been left on the table, and hurried out of the room to put them away, and hide her tears. Fred stood for a moment perfectly still, his head leaning against the door-post.

"There is one thing I believe, mother," he presently said, in a grave voice, "that God will yet answer your prayers in our behalf."

"I trust and hope He may, indeed, my son, even though it should not be till I am gone. I shall rejoice even then with the angels in heaven."

"I hope you may yet have to do it on earth, mother," he quietly replied; and he passed out into the verandah, and began walking towards the stable.

His mother looked anxiously after him. "What did he mean by these quiet words—so unlike Fred; she had never heard him speak thus before; could it indeed be that he was already seeking the Saviour?" The mother's heart beat with joyous expectation, as only a mother's heart can beat, though there was little outward semblance, excepting a slight accession of colour on her cheek.

Yes, she had strong hopes of Fred. But Stephen, her poor misguided Stephen! and her true mother's heart clung to the erring one. What had she of him? True, God was sparing his life; and while there is life there is hope:—

“ While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”

But ah ! if there was only to be a repetition of former follies with the spared life, that, indeed, would be hard to endure, even in thought.

She got up from her comfortable chair, no longer comfortable with that thought as an accompaniment, and went into the sick-chamber. How nice, and orderly, and fresh even that looked ! The white curtains were looped far back, so that the patient might have the benefit of all the air that came in at the little window. The sweet, fresh smell of a few flowers took off a little of the heavy atmosphere. The little table drawn near the bed, with the glass of cooling drink upon it ; the medicine for the next dose, and an orange cut into quarters, one quarter of which had already disappeared—all these spoke most loudly of a sister’s careful attention. Katie was learning from her trouble one part of woman’s mission—that most certainly best learnt in the school of experience—painful as the lessons may be. Her mother felt this as she looked around on the evidence of her daughter’s ministration ; and from her warm heart there arose a silent prayer, that among all gentle and loveable things written on that fair young brow, the seal of God might appear ; making all lovely, lovelier still ; all sweet, more perfect in sweetness ; that the beautiful ornament of a meek and quiet spirit might be the adornment of her beloved child. She coveted these far more than jewels or costly array, and she was right ; for, after all, exquisite as are the pearls of earth, what are they to that pearl of great price ? What is the wealth of Golconda’s mine to the trea-

asures in the heavens, where neither moth can corrupt, nor thieves break in and steal? Far better to be the lowliest of the low in time, and an heir of God for eternity. Far better be despised in this world, and reign with Jesus in heaven! Better far tread a path of trial and sorrow below, and receive the crown and the palm-branch in glory!

Would that we could dwell more on this "glory that shall be revealed," and that the puny cares, and sorrows, and annoyances of every-day life affected us less! Strange that our hearts are so earth-worn, so attracted by the pebbles and dust of a fading mortality, that the crown above our head is often disregarded, while we diligently, ah, most diligently, most earnestly, rake together the straws and dust beneath our feet.

"Pleased with these earthly toys!"

And yet our life is but as a moment!

Mrs. Ranger still kindly offered to remain with her quiet little baby, for this time she had brought it with her; and as Mrs. Linwood was fatigued with her hurried journey, her offer was most gratefully accepted; and, indeed, Mrs. Linwood was glad of her company through the night, although Stephen was still much better. The Doctor came in the evening, and pronounced the fever much abated; and it was evident that, though Stephen lay very quiet, consciousness had returned; for once, when his mother laid her hand softly upon his brow, he opened his eyes, and turned them on her, saying, in a faint voice—

"You here, mother?"

But she quickly hushed him, and he felt little inclination to say more, soon dozing again.

"You think he is better, Doctor?" asked his mother, as she watched him counting the pulse.

"Sure of it, madam, sure of it! Strange alteration in his pulse! The lad will be well in a few days! You must mind, though, he don't get spreeing it again too soon."

"If it lies in his mother's power to prevent it, he never shall again," replied Mrs. Linwood, with deep feeling.

"You see, Mrs. Linwood," said the Doctor, folding his arms and looking straight before him, "these young men never can have enough of a thing; they don't seem to know when it is time to leave off, that's the worst of it. You'll have to look after your son a bit."

Look after him, eh! if a mother's vigilance could keep him from evil, would it not be done? But Mrs. Linwood felt with deep anguish how short a distance her power extended; felt that a Higher Power was needed to restrain her erring son from sin. But she rejoiced that to go to that Higher Power was her prerogative, and that she was encouraged to believe from former instances of answers to prayer. She did not give up in despair even now.

"You needn't fight so shy of me, Miss Katie," said the Doctor laughingly, as he went out of the door, and caught Katie in the very act of beating a retreat. "Come, now, this is not fair, I want to talk with you. What are you running away for?"

Katie stood perfectly still now, and the Doctor

looked down into the fair little face with unmistakable admiration.

"What have you against me?" he presently asked, in softened tones, taking both her hands in his.

But Katie made no answer to that, otherwise than by bending down her head till the soft ringlets almost hid the angry flush that sprang to her cheek, and vainly striving to free her hands.

"What have I done to make you angry?" the Doctor again asked, in slightly amazed tones. "Cured your brother, eh?"

"For that I thank you," said Katie, almost haughtily; "but for the cause of his illness, I have a right to be angry as a sister."

"With me? Come, come, Miss Katie, this won't do. I be hanged if you won't drive all the politeness I have about me to the winds! How did I cause his illness?"

"By putting temptation in his way, Doctor! You know," said Katie, with pretty indignation, "you must have seen, too, that he was taking more than he ought, and you did not restrain him."

"He was my guest!" said the Doctor, somewhat abashed, letting fall the little hands he held.

Katie retreated to the wall.

"Your guest, Doctor! Yes, he was; but did you not know his failing? Surely, you could not have been blind to it, though I, his sister, was."

"Well, Miss Katie, I'm sorry you won't be friends—very sorry. If there's any complaint though, by-the-bye, I think I ought to complain, since it was Fanny who suffered somewhat."

"I am very sorry for it, Doctor ; it has bitterly grieved me—bitterly," said Katie, the hot colour flushing to her face, and the tears coming into her eyes. "I'd rather anything, anything than that my brother should have insulted her. But you know, Doctor, a madman is not accountable for his actions. Fanny ought to know that too."

"Well, well, she does, to be sure, and I don't believe she thinks a word about the whole affair. She's fretting for you, that's all, and, little puss as she is, declares she won't preside at another party if there is anything stronger than tea or coffee going forward. What say you to such mutiny? I shall have to look out for another housekeeper," he added, with a peculiar and meaning smile.

"Keep the one you have as long as you can, Doctor," replied Katie, with a slightly increasing colour. "I am glad to hear this of Fanny. Give my love to her after that," and she retreated into the house, leaving Doctor Moore to find his own way to the stables, where his horse had been making the most of its time the last twenty minutes.

"I am surprised we have not had one visitor," said Fred, as a little later he stood with his sister in the porch, watching the little stars as they came out one after another. There was no moon that night.

"What visitor?" asked Katie, with anticipating glance.

"Mr. Howard, our minister," answered Fred. "He is usually so prompt in his attentions in cases of illness, and I am sure this is no common case. Are you not surprised he has not been?"

"No," answered Katie quietly ; "because he

knows nothing about it. Mrs. Ranger says that he went away early on Friday morning to one of his distant stations, and that a stranger preached to-day at our chapel. There are some anniversary services at S——; something of the sort. I believe it was given out last Sunday."

"Ah! yes, I had forgotten. Well, then, that doubt in my mind is set at rest;" and Fred very comfortably lighted his pipe, and threw himself along the seat in the verandah to enjoy a luxurious smoke.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PEEP INTO THE MINISTER'S STUDY.

“He watch’d and wept, he pray’d and felt for all;
And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reprov’d each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

A VERY gentle breeze stole in at an open window, about a room whose atmosphere was quiet and calm, and serene as the evening sky. It was a playful little breeze, one would almost have doubted its right of entrance there, though evidently it did not. It knew too well that, tiny as it was, it brought balm, and refreshment, and sweet fragrance with it, amply compensating for the slight derangement it effected in sundry papers during its stealthy wanderings.

We have entered the room before, and introduced with us our fair readers, so that there is no new introduction to make. The room is the same, muslin drapery, books, and all, only upon the little table stands an open desk, several books and a mass of manuscripts and blank paper, some of which the truant breeze had very disrespectfully scattered, still keeping up a playful rustle amongst them.

The owner of the desk and papers is seated at the table, with head bent down over a large folio Bible;

he is not reading, but dreaming. Graham Howard often fell into reveries in the midst of his studies, and at the present moment he had quite wandered from the subject on which he had then been writing brief notes, and something of the same old trouble that had crossed his brow and darkened his spirit, when last we met him at home, was lingering there yet.

So little fruit, so little fruit to pay him for all his untiring labour, for the miles he weekly traversed in pursuit of souls ; for Graham Howard rode far in his efforts to do good. Vermont was not his only preaching station ; there were other little out-of-the-way hamlets that gladly received him, and profited by his coming amongst them, and over these he grieved not, rather indeed rejoiced. It was for Vermont that he grieved in spirit, the youth of Vermont over whom he desponded. In truth, his present painful reveries had all taken their colouring from the report of Stephen Linwood's illness and its cause, which had arrived at table with his cup of coffee that morning, and deprived him of all remaining appetite.

Yes, the revel and its results ; this occupied the thoughts of Graham Howard so entirely that sweet evening, that its sweetness was unnoticed. Wearied out with his long services and journey of the previous day, he had been obliged to rest the greater portion of this, and to leave his visit to the Linwoods till the evening ; and since his early cup of tea he had been trying to arrange a few thoughts, to collect a few scattered ideas previously to his intended walk, though almost vainly, for sorrow held too predomi-

nant sway for quiet study. Dr. Moore, though a professed friend of the minister's, and one of his most active and energetic cash supporters, was in reality an enemy, for the whole tenor of his life lay in an opposite direction, and, most unhappily, he was not contented to journey alone in his downward path, but strove to attract others after him, too frequently, alas ! succeeding. Graham Howard remembered some young faces in his congregation of whom he had been very hopeful lately ; he had noticed marks of earnest, increasing attention, of eager listening, in more than one fair countenance ! Were all these hopeful signs to be dissipated by worldly influences ? Perhaps "he who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," had noticed them too, and aided the Doctor in his ill-timed revel ; and so the lambs of the fold were to be put to flight, these hopeful ones transformed ! Were, indeed, the dance and the song to put aside the little good that Graham Howard had so long hoped and earnestly prayed for ?

He had been told a little before the evening party that the Doctor had said, "the young people of Vermont were getting the blues, and that, while he could help it, they should not suffer from the want of a little life. He, for his part, would not let them go without a dance, and he knew of two or three more, not far from Vermont, quite ready and willing to back him, and so a succession of revels might be expected." What was to be done ? Graham Howard knew enough of the Doctor to feel convinced that his was no idle threat, and was he willing tamely to submit to see the utter extinction of the little good

that he hoped was already done? Was he to see all his efforts nullified, and Satan's kingdom augmented without an effort? No; that was not like our young minister. He had resolved upon steady resistance, but he had not quite determined on his course of action, and at last his thoughts resolved themselves, as they often did, into the form of prayer. Strength, assistance, and guidance he well knew were his Heavenly Father's to bestow, and those words of the dear Saviour not inaptly occurred to his memory, "Ye have not, because ye ask not."

Ah, sweet relief! ah, kind provision for the burdened spirit! Prayer, that beautiful behest! how dull the Christian's path would be without thy solace! "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Ah! how may every Christian pilgrim take these loving words of rebuke to his own breast! We ask not, and yet wonder we do not receive; or else we ask, believing all the time that our request will not be granted. This is not the prayer of faith; this is not honouring the Lord; this is not taking our God at His word. Oh, that there was more faith among us, dear readers! you who know what prayer is; would that we could indeed believe more, then would our receipts be greater.

Graham Howard rose at length, and, gathering up his truant papers, turned the key of his desk upon them; then, taking his hat, he passed through the window, carefully closing it behind him, and so out into the garden, and through a little side gate, leaving the house on his right. Still deeper in thought, his hands clasped behind him as he walked along, he was reviewing a number of plans to rouse up the

youth of Vermont, though in a far different way to that the Doctor had chosen. Something, he felt, must be done to interest and attract the young people, that at least they might be brought under the sound of the gospel—might be retained among the hearers; and who could then tell what God might do; how many of these youthful hearers He might call into his church? Graham Howard was not a man to sit with folded hands and await a blessing. No; he knew that the promise is to him “who soweth beside all waters,” and he was determined not to withhold his hand while sinners were to be won from their giddy pursuit of the phantom happiness, or souls to be rescued from falling into the pit.

It was a pleasant walk on a lovely summer's evening. The road was the same Fred Linwood had taken the evening he left the Doctor's—that memorable evening when the words of the young minister struck home so forcibly to his heart, although merely an outside listener. Little knew Graham how recently that same way had been traversed by one of his hearers to whom his words had indeed proved a “savour of life unto life.” How strengthened would he have been in his faith, in his resolves, how animated in his course of usefulness, had he known it! But stones do not speak, rocks will not testify, and even the babbling little brook, though it might have told a tale, at any rate was unintelligible to his ears.

What could be done? What was doing in his church already? There was the Sabbath-school; it certainly wanted stirring up. There were plenty of children in Vermont, and not half of them came for Sabbath instruction. Perhaps they needed more in-

ducement. At present no regular system of rewards had been established; that must be attended to—anything to entice the lambs into the fold. Then there had been no Sabbath-school *fête*. And how was this? Graham Howard knew very well how it was. He had been almost single-handed in his work; not *one* congenial spirit had he to go forward with him. The school had no superintendent. Where could he look for one? His thoughts turned yearningly towards the very spot whither his feet were journeying; and Fred Linwood, with all his fine qualities, his commanding yet winning aspect, his methodical, straightforward, energetic ways, stood forward as the very model of the man he wanted, but for one thing. Yes; but for that!—and Graham Howard would not have asked a better coadjutor. But without that, how could he, with all his capabilities, be suited for such a position? The superintendent of a Sabbath-school must at least be a servant of God; and, though he owned that it would not do to think of him, he looked vainly round the field of his labours to find one that would. Teachers, though, were wanted. They must be canvassed for; and his thoughts would stray again to Sunny Hollow—a little figure in a blue riding-dress would flit across his memory, as though to suggest one.

“Oh! if Miss Linwood were only a Christian,” he sighed, “what an influence she might have over her brothers! I must, at any rate, ask her to become a teacher when her brother recovers, though she is not serious. Who can tell if it may not result in good to herself!—that, instructing others, she may not herself be taught?”

Yes, they needed stirring up; but not only in the Sabbath-school. The public prayer-meeting required deeper fervour, more constant attendance. And what of the secret prayer?—had it not declined? Was all right in the “dwellings of Jacob”? There was another subject for his Sabbath sermons.

But how could he gather the young people of Vermont together, so as to throw interest into these meetings? Ah! he would try what, as yet, he had never tried before, to form a Bible-class; render that as interesting as his plentiful resources, his well-stored mind, and his ample library would allow—one that would just meet the requirements of Vermont’s youth, and would embrace all who chose to come. This he determined to put into action immediately. He had faith in its operation, and only wondered it had not occurred before.

He hastened his footsteps now, for he was getting in sight of the house—just passing the potato patch, and passing through the rustling corn, already turning yellow in the November sunbeams. He had only crossed half the paddock when he caught sight of the young master himself advancing to meet him. A moment after they met, with a hearty shake of the hand.

“I should have been here before this, Mr. Linwood,” said Graham Howard, “but you are doubtless aware I have been away from Vermont. I did not return till very early this morning—to breakfast, in fact; and I was too tired to do anything but rest, as there was nothing very urgent in your brother’s case, and I hope he still continues to amend.”

“I am glad to be able to answer, Yes,” replied Fred. “My brother has been very seriously ill; but

since yesterday a decided improvement is visible, and it continues."

"Was he conscious of his danger?"

"No, he was not. Indeed, while he was in danger he was quite unconscious of anything—not even recognizing those around him."

"God has indeed been merciful in sparing his life. Had he been removed in that state of unconsciousness, where would his soul be now? And who can say that he may not yet prove 'a brand plucked from the burning'? Is he conscious now?"

"Yes; but he says little, and sleeps much," replied Fred. "I am afraid he is scarcely yet in a fit state to attend to anything you may say; but my mother is here, and she will be very glad to see you."

The two young men walked side by side up towards the house for some moments in silence. At last Graham Howard spoke again.

"This illness of your brother's has a painful origin, I am grieved to hear, Mr. Linwood."

"One that I am ashamed of, sir; one that has troubled me much," replied Fred, the burning colour rising to his brow. "Yes," he continued, "we are ashamed to have it said that a brother of ours is a drunkard."

"That is a harsh term. Not an habitual one, I hope?"

"It is growing upon him, and is a great deal too frequent in its occurrence to my taste," replied Fred, rather bitterly. "I have warned him before of this, but he is doing all that he can to make a sot of himself. At present he has not the power, even if he had the will."

"I trust the 'will' will never be in the ascendancy again," said Graham Howard, with a sigh, as he entered the house, and, the next moment, the sick-chamber.

The sight of that pale, sleeping face was enough to disarm all bitterness. So Fred thought, as he followed him in, and then stood at a little distance, leaning against the wall, listening to the conversation that ensued between his mother and the young minister; for Katie, like himself, though present, took but little part in it.

She sat, too, with half-averted face again, when, presently, they read from the Sacred Word; but she listened to the impressive tones that carried so much power with them with a sorrowful earnestness; and, as she knelt again with the rest, while he poured forth, in earnest language, a heart-melting prayer, including each member of the household in its petition, tears came so fast that, at the close, she quietly slipped from the room, and took refuge in her own chamber.

"I am sorry, Mr. Linwood," said Graham Howard, as Fred accompanied him across the section on his leaving—"I am sorry that these parties at the Doctor's have any attraction for you. I have been hoping other things of you."

"I think I have given you little reason to do so," replied Fred, lashing the toe of his boot with a riding-whip he had taken from the table. "But the parties in question have less attraction than you think, perhaps."

"I hope so," said the young minister, with a quick glance into his companion's face. "Yet

I think you were among the number the other night."

"I was ; more out of compliance than taste. I trust I shall never go again for any reason."

Graham Howard turned quickly round and faced the young man as he said this, seizing his unresisting hand.

"Can it be that you have learned to feel that these also are vanity ?" he eagerly asked.

"I have," was the laconic reply ; and the hands were warmly clasped and shaken. Graham Howard with difficulty found words to inquire,—

"Since when have you felt thus ?"

And then he heard how, on that same evening, words he had spoken had reached a heart he had little dreamt of reaching ; how the outside listener had carried away the blessing ; how the very revel he had so much dreaded had been overruled for good. The two young men paced backwards and forwards in the path through the wheat, in glad, earnest converse, till the stars peeped out at them from the dull blue sky, and the "morepork" uttered its cuckoo note, soft and sweet, and the agile opossum whizzed across their path with its peculiar "whir, whir." And then they separated, with a promise soon to meet again ; Fred returning to the house, and Graham Howard wending his way back to his quiet home, with his heart singing sweet melody, and his lips uttering earnest thanksgiving for this more than answer to his prayer.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW LIFE'S FIRST EFFORT.

“Language is slow. The mastery of words
Doth teach it to the infant drop by drop,
As brooklets gather.”

SUNNY HOLLOW was sunny once more; for the evidence of sickness was removed, and Stephen, under his mother's escort, had left Vermont, and gone to complete his restoration at home. Things were progressing much in their usual course among the inmates: there was the same amount of butter turned out from the churn, or nearly so; for, to be sure, the season was rapidly advancing, and butter now stood at a higher figure than it had done when so many pounds were produced. There was a long row of very nice-looking cheeses upon the shelves that extended round the dairy, which told of activity enough; while the well-cured hams, in their neat canvas bags, and huge sides of bacon, betrayed that industry was one of the household virtues of Sunny Hollow.

There had also been plenty of activity without doors. The hay harvest had passed, as the high, well-formed hay-ricks testified; and it had been so abundant that Fred had had to employ half-a-dozen men to assist in getting it in and stacking it. This increased the amount of labour within doors, of

course ; there were additional mouths to devour the good things. Dolly and Katie vied with each other in working for the table ; but they did not mind that in the least. They thought that the labourer was worthy of his hire, and of all the attention they could bestow.

But the hay had been carefully stacked, and there was now a short interval of rest before the still more important wheat harvest began—a period well known to every resident of a farmhouse, as entailing a vast amount of labour upon all, both within and without too—a period when most certainly the Scripture declaration is fulfilled that “man shall eat his bread by the sweat of his brow.”

How different were now the feelings with which Fred traversed his paddock of waving corn!—how differently he looked upon the plentiful heaps of hay he had gathered! “They are all the gifts of Thy hand, O my Father,” he could now exclaim ; and while he gave to God the glory, his heart thrilled within him that he should be thought worthy of claiming relationship with One so great—worthy with the worthiness that Christ had put upon him.

Many times since that memorable evening Fred had enjoyed the privilege of conversation with the young pastor of Vermont—conversations that had encouraged him much in his new life, in his efforts heavenward, Godward. With faith that could at first scarcely move its wing, he had commenced his pilgrimage ; but, since then, that faith had gathered strength, and he had found that there was One to help him upwards in his journey—One to whom he

could at all times flee; that, weak in himself as he felt to be, he might lay hold of the strength of One mightier than he. Graham Howard, in all his communions with him, encouraged this sort of reliance, constantly pointed to Christ as the all-sufficient Saviour, ready to save, willing to save, able to save to the uttermost, and not only from death and hell, but from sin and its power.

True to his character, and to his strong belief in that description of the Christian, "By their fruits ye shall know them," he had made no secret of his faith. Those words of our Saviour, "If ye confess Me before men, My heavenly Father will confess you," were constantly ringing in his memory. There was no ostentation about him, or Pharisaical prominence given to his religion; no saying by his actions or words, "Stand by, I am holier than thou:" but there was a quiet boldness in the declaration of his belief in Christ—his desire to walk in His ways; there was a sacred courage in his openly laying aside things that before he was known to love, that greatly rejoiced Graham Howard. Here was the "pillar of strength" he had so much needed—here the companion in his work he so much desired. And, after all, how was this lost sheep brought home to the fold? In such a way that he was compelled to exclaim, "Not by might, nor by power," but by the Spirit of God alone.

Half with wonder, half with dismay, Katie beheld the change in her brother. Was he less kind than usual? No; he was more so. His manners were more gentle and affectionate; he studied her comfort more than ever. Yet there had arisen a barrier between them; there was one point on which

they still differed. Katie knew her brother was a Christian, but she also knew that she was not.

Did she desire to be one? Was she willing to follow Jesus, and renounce all for him? No; she was yet unwilling; she knew that. The amusements of the world were yet delightful to her. She had no inclination to bear the cross of Christ. She could not give up the few pleasures that were still in her power; and, strange to say, she was sorry that Fred, in this respect, was no longer a companion for her.

But now Fred Linwood had learned to love the Saviour, was he not anxious for his sister? He was indeed. How could he avoid it? We who feel within the impress of God's forgiving love, who believe that our names are indeed written on high, how is it possible that we can calmly look around us at our dying fellow-travellers who are passing away, without a pardon, without a wish for one? Many and earnest were the prayers Fred put up for his only sister. But at present he had said but little to her. "Let me show first that in reality I am a follower of Christ," he exclaimed to himself, "then I shall be more at liberty to talk of these things, and she, perhaps, may more readily receive them."

One evening Fred had sauntered across the paddock to the minister's house, and found him at home, and sufficiently at leisure for an hour's pleasant conversation. The matters just then nearest Graham's heart were introduced—the proposed revivals in the church and school. Fred engaged to ask his sister to become a teacher in the Sabbath-school, and a member also of the Bible-class, and he promised his own presence in both, and entered very warmly into

all Graham Howard's plans for future benefit to the youth of Vermont ; and, finally, he was just taking his leave at the garden gate, when the minister, laying his hand on his shoulder, quietly said,—

“I suppose, Mr. Linwood, you have already erected an altar to the Lord in your house?”

Fred coloured, and hesitated a moment, and presently said, “If you mean by that that you suppose I have commenced family prayer, and reading, in our little family, I have not yet, Mr. Howard. I was not sure that I ought to do so.”

“You are the master of Sunny Hollow. The house is yours. It is your duty, my dear friend, to acknowledge God in your family.”

“I have thought so little about it, and do not know how I should succeed. Indeed, I am not sure that my sister would consent.”

“Have you reason to believe that she will refuse?”

“No, certainly ; I have no right to think that, for I have never asked her.”

“Make the attempt to-night, then,” said Graham Howard, with a quiet smile, as he warmly shook the hand he held, and turned back to the house.

Fred took the homeward path with slow and uncertain steps, his head bent down, his arms folded behind his back. It was not his usual attitude, for he generally walked erect, with a step firm and unbending. But to-night he had something to think of that bowed head and heart together. Not that he felt sorry that he had had his duty so plainly set before him, not that he disliked the idea of thus commencing the outward worship of his God in his little

household; it was the commencement was the trial, the uncertainty whether his sister would like it—would remain present; the knowledge that he himself had so recently learned to pray, even in private, and the fear that he should scarcely be able to utter a word with his sister, the young man who had recently taken Stephen's place on the farm, and Dolly for listeners. Yet it must be done; it must be done! And why should he not expect God's help in this, as in other matters? And now, the chapter he had read to himself that morning returned to his memory (the eighth chapter of the Romans, and the twenty-sixth verse especially); it was just to the point, and came almost like an answer to him:—

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.”

That was sufficient. With such an assurance as that he had no right to fear, nor would he! No! he had God's Word for his assistance, the Spirit's influence to rely on, and in God's name he would go forward.

With heart and eyes uplifted to his Father in heaven, Fred pursued the rest of his way; a thanksgiving on his tongue for that Word he had so long despised and rejected, but which now he found so precious, so exceedingly precious to him.

The supper was on the table when he reached home, the lamp burning brightly, and the little household gathered, waiting only for his own arrival. Katie, seated in her favourite easy chair, was taking it very much at her ease; her feet outstretched upon

a small foot-stool, her elbows deep in the cushions, and her head bent over a small volume she held in her hand, a volume of American poetry. Not far from her, and a little nearer the table, sat Dolly, busy darning stockings, a bundle of which articles lay in her lap. She was a comely-looking young woman; and so the new man seemed to think, for half lying along the sofa, with an air of perfect ease and freedom that no "new chum" could assume, he divided his attentions equally between her and a short black pipe he was smoking, that indispensable appendage to the bushman of Australia, with its little chain and brass cap, to shut in all truant sparks. Near the door sat the boy of the establishment, a gawky, half-grown youth, hovering between the boy and the man, and uncertain which character to assume. He was carving something very carefully from a small block of wood, that was beginning to look already most suspiciously like a pipe. Australian youths are as fond of imbibing the pernicious weed as their seniors.

Fred passed through the room to his own seat at the table and took his place.

"Have I kept you long, Katie?" he asked apologetically.

"Oh no!" replied Katie, looking up with a smile from her book. "We have been very pleasantly employed; at least I have."

"You will not mind being detained a few moments later," he resumed, quietly producing a Bible from his pocket, and drawing the lamp towards him.

Katie subsided into her chair without a word, mechanically closing her book, and receding as far into the cushions as she possibly could. She turned

her face quite away from her brother, so that scarcely a glimpse of it could be seen. "And it had come to that at last," she thought. "Well, she had expected it ; it was nothing strange." Was she angry ? No ; that was scarcely the feeling, and yet there was a strange, icy chill at her heart, a feeling as though the tears must come. They came no farther than her eyes though, and she sat perfectly still while her brother read.

He opened the Bible at the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, and read slowly and feelingly that beautiful and touching prayer our Saviour offered up for His people a little before His crucifixion. His faith grew stronger as he read. Did Jesus pray thus that His chosen ones might safely be kept from the evil influences of the world ? Did He pray, indeed, that they might be sanctified, made holy, kept pure ? What had he to fear, then ? The same Jesus was interceding for His people now, pleading for their sanctity now. One with Christ ! Loved of Him ! Cared for by Him ! what could harm him ? what influence could hurt him ? Oh ! thus it is ever. The nearer we keep to Christ, the less power have worldly influences over us ; the more we hold communion with Christ, the less shall sin assert its dominion. Jesus, and Jesus only, can put the tempter to shame, and we through His name.

With that prayer echoing in his ears, Fred rose from his chair and fell upon his knees, trembling at once with excitement and uncomprehended feelings, but no longer at a loss for language. Katie slid from her seat also, and knelt, her face buried in the cushions ; while the wondering, more than half-glad

Dolly followed her example. The young man upon the sofa half rose, then resumed his position. It was something so new to him, he scarcely comprehended the thing ; and the boy at the door for a moment stood hesitating, scarcely knowing what to do, but finally followed his master's example, and knelt also. There was a pause of two or three moments, a silence almost felt, and then Fred began in low, deep, fervent tones his first public prayer. Simple and earnest was his language, but it went straight to the heart. Once or twice he hesitated slightly, but it was but for a moment. He had but recently learned to pray, it is true ; but the Spirit of God was his teacher, and it was his own needs and the needs of his household for which he pleaded ; and faith and confidence in the Hearer and Answerer of prayer gave wings to his speech. God honours those who honour Him ; and Fred's first attempt at establishing His worship in his house was eminently successful. It met with no opposition.

There was one thing that slightly troubled Fred. On his rising from his knees he found that his sister had disappeared. She was visible no more that night. But could he have seen her, her face crushed into the pillow in perfect abandonment of tears, he would have sought his pillow with far greater, happier, more hopeful feelings. Still he was thankful that this decisive step had been made ; that he had established an altar in his family. God helping him, it should be a permanent one.

Little knew the inhabitants of Vermont that Sunny Hollow was now more than ever deserving of the name : for over that household had the "Sun

of Righteousness arisen, with healing in His wings.”
Ah ! when that Sun illumines not with its beams,
the loveliest, brightest spot on earth is but a dark
blot on the creation !

“ The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss,
While Jesus tells me He is mine,
And whispers, I am His.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

REST.

“Jesus, all our consolations
Flow from Thee, the sovereign good ;
Love, and faith, and hope, and patience,
All are purchased by Thy blood.”

FRED LINWOOD had made one bold step in the right direction. He was thankful that he had been enabled to do so. There was now no difficulty in assembling his little household to evening and morning prayer. No one objected. No one, indeed, had a right to do so but Katie ; and she said nothing at all, made not the slightest remark, but quietly kept her seat while her brother read, or knelt when he prayed, expressing neither pleasure nor displeasure at the movement. Even this tacit consent was better than Fred had expected. He knew he was now in the path of duty. The rest he left in the Lord's hands.

According to Mr. Howard's wish, Fred had sounded his sister about the Sabbath-school ; but, as he anticipated, with little effect. She would hear nothing about it from him, and laughed merrily when he mentioned the subject, and bewildered him by her amusing antics.

“I must leave Mr. Howard to do his own work,” he thought after one such fruitless attempt. “I don't

think he will succeed, though I must own he has a better chance than I have. Katie will at least put on a little more gravity with him than with me."

On one point Katie was reassured. She had discovered that Fred's altered opinions, his becoming a Christian, had made no alteration in his love to her. She was still his petted little sister, though he did not consent to join in her song-singing or dancing as of yore; and though he did sometimes talk gravely to her, and with his arm around her waist would ask her if she remembered that to all these things there must be an end. This fretted her sometimes. She grew impatient too if she could not have his company whenever she desired it. Sometimes he coaxed her out to the week-night service, but she always complained that he gave too much time to Mr. Howard, and too little to her.

Time, and Stephen's restoration to health, had softened Katie's anger against the Doctor; and she was again on visiting terms at his house, again in close intimacy with his daughter Fanny. Fanny Moore, indeed, had made the first advances, but they found ready acceptance. Katie felt, as she said, lonely, for setting affection on one side, there was, in reality, a wide gulf between herself and her brother. There were many subjects now in which they had nothing in common, and vexed and irritated that it should be so, she was too glad to fall in with more congenial society, to join in more congenial amusements, though all the time in her inmost heart she acknowledged that her brother was right, and she and her companions were all wrong.

But after this reconciliation with the Moores, if

any one had to complain of being left much alone, it certainly was Fred. Katie was away very often in the evening now, or Fanny was at Sunny Hollow with her, and that was much the same. To escape from the troublesome thoughts that beset her, to turn away from the view of her sins, not to the Saviour but to the world and its vanities, was now her eager endeavour. Very hard work she found it, to run away from conviction, very fruitless work too; but she did her best to accomplish it, did her best to drive away all troublesome thoughts of another world, and judgment to come, and sins unforgiven, and to give herself entirely to all worldly objects, all earthly delights.

Do any of my young readers know what this is, this fighting for the world, fighting against Christ? Oh! it is a battle difficult to wage, and not worth the waging! But, oh! take heed that by these fearful strivings against conviction, that ye grieve not the Spirit, so that He never return to you, so that you are indeed left to an impenitent heart. Rather ask that these convictions may be deepened; that the spark of desire may be kindled to a living flame, and say—

“Hast Thou imparted to my soul
A living spark of holy fire?
Oh! kindle now the sacred flame,
Make me to burn with pure desire.”

Or, with the Psalmist—

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

Fanny Moore was only too glad to have Katie Linwood again for a companion; there was not another girl in Vermont for whose companionship

she cared. Annie Maitland she highly esteemed and respected ; but, as to fraternizing with her, that was another thing altogether. Annie was so "decidedly pious!" she would have as soon detailed all her flirtations and nonsense to the minister of Vermont himself as to her. She was a sweet little creature, that could not be denied, and a great deal too pretty to make such a recluse of herself, or a Methodist, which was much the same, Fanny thought. And, alas for example! after Katie's return to the Vermont's little world, she too began to think Annie a dull companion. Her presence seemed a constant rebuke to her. Her visits became less and less frequent. Annie grieved, but did not upbraid her ; and Annie's mother grieved for both.

There was one who grieved still more at this apparent estrangement of his sister from Annie. It touched him most painfully, and yet he did not complain. Annie Maitland came no more to Sunny Hollow. She was never invited, and her own delicacy of feeling forbade her giving her company unsought. Fred now only met her at chapel, and here she was never alone. If her mother was not with her, one of her elder pupils was—Betsy Ranger as often as not. There were no more pleasant conversations, no more sweet words of comfort for him from her lips. He did not even know whether she rejoiced at the change he had experienced—whether she still continued, as she promised she would, to pray for him.

One evening, after an intensely warm day, the soft tinkle of the prayer-bell met his ear just as he and his men left work. Harvest had already commenced, and the home-party was increased in number, by twenty

at least, for a time. Tired enough Fred was, for he had worked side by side with his men, sharing in both rest and toil ; and certainly he was now almost too much fatigued to wash and equip himself, and walk to chapel. But if he was tired in body, and needed rest, he needed quite as much repose for his mind, and that he must have. He had heard quite enough of levity, and foolish talking and jesting, through the day, to say nothing of worse things still ; and so, giving orders for his horse to be brought round, he went immediately to his bed-room, hurriedly performed his ablutions, put on a clean linen suit, and passed out again before the last musical chime had swept round the hill.

It was rest, at any rate, to be alone, away from the sound of uncongenial voices. Rest, to be able to think in quietude, to feel how near the Comforter was—how near to bless, to soothe, to tranquillize. But Fred did not linger while he thought. He only rejoiced with a glad sort of rejoicing, as he passed swiftly along the road, that he had a place of rest whereunto to resort in times of mental fatigue, of which the world knew nothing. His horse soon took him to the little Vermont chapel, and, leaving it with two or three others beneath the trees, he turned to the chapel-door.

The service had commenced ; indeed, the hymn was over, the chapter read, and Graham Howard was in prayer. How the sound of his voice recalled the time, not so many weeks ago, when he stood an outside listener there. And such a different listener ! not, indeed, thinking of entrance, not dreaming of having any part in that little assembly ; and now ;

oh, what now? Grace, grace had done all; had turned his footsteps from paths of sin to those that lead above; had changed the current of his life, and taught him how empty a thing is the human heart without Christ. Without Christ! Ah! Fred had learnt how terrible that situation is; and with a deep sense of his need of the Saviour's presence during every moment of his life, could exclaim,—

“I need Thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

“I fear no foe; with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

“Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee,
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!”

Fred stood in the porch, leaning against the wall, with head and heart bowed together; bowed, not with sorrow, but adoration; with thanksgiving, that he should have been counted meet to share the blessing, and to walk in the way of salvation. And when, at the conclusion of the prayer, he turned into the chapel, and walked rather wearily down to his own seat, rather wearily, also, leaning back against the “one rail” that was alone allowed for weary backs, his countenance betrayed that, though bodily fatigued, his mind had found rest, for he had leaned on the bosom of Jesus.

Have you ever tried this resting-place, dear reader?

Have you taken your sorrows, your trials, your burdens, and laid your aching heart upon Jesus? If you have not, try it now; oh, try it now! It is the safest, sweetest resting-place you have ever had, and nowhere else can you find rest for your soul. The silken cushion cannot rest the burdened spirit, but Jesus' love can. Yes, dear readers, we know by experience that it can. Will you not, then, bring your burdens to this sweet resting-place, and try for yourselves? Oh, hear the words of this loving Jesus, addressed to you, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

There was rest, too, in the hymn that followed the prayer; rest even in the sweet tune that flowed from the keys of the harmonium, and swelled through the voices of the people—the few worshippers assembled.

"Still with Thee, O my God!

I would desire to be;

By day, by night, at home, abroad,

I would be still with Thee."

Yes, they were seeking the presence of Jesus, and He was already there to meet them with His promised blessing. All ready there to utter His "Peace, be still," to the surging billows of worldly cares; to whisper a little of what heaven would be into the souls of His waiting ones.

And the subject Graham Howard had chosen so beautifully corresponded with Fred's feelings: "If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence." It was just what he needed, the presence of his Saviour through all the devious turnings of life, in all circumstances, painful or pleasant; to have Jesus near was all he desired, nor would he take one step alone.

“Lead Thou the way. I do not ask to see
The distant scene,—one step’s enough for me,”

was the inward exclamation of his soul. And there was rest in all this, for was it not leaning on the bosom of Jesus? Far happier should we be if we did this more frequently, “Casting all our care upon Him, knowing that He careth for us.”

Fred’s mind was still glowing with these feelings when Graham Howard closed his Bible and ceased speaking. But then, instead of giving out another hymn, as he usually did, or engaging in the concluding prayer, he looked towards Fred, and very quietly, though with some degree of firmness in his voice, asked him to close in prayer.

For a moment Fred was in doubt whether he was really addressed; for a moment he hesitated whether, in this new and untried duty, he really might venture. It was but for a moment; with the sense of God’s presence so thoroughly in his soul, with that feeling of perfect rest he was experiencing, it was not possible for more than momentary hesitation. He rose, and, with closed eyes and clasped hands, poured out all his soul before his heavenly Father, in joyous thanksgiving for the unspeakable gift bestowed even upon him; for the perfect rest purchased by the Saviour’s blood; for that balm for every wound distilled from Calvary’s cross.

There were few dry eyes present; his own were filled with glad tears, and there were other closed eyes behind the curtains of the harmonium that were weeping as joyously—weeping with surprise; but oh, how gladly weeping!

With a fervent, earnest, though unsteady voice,

Graham Howard pronounced the benediction. His inner soul was stirred to its depths. His feelings were indeed too deep for expression. A fervent clasp of the hand was all that passed between the young men, but the clasp was understood, and thus they parted. Fred, with heart and soul warm with holy fire, turned from the little chapel, and, remounting his horse, slowly rode homewards. Something of earth, however, stole in to disturb him, even at that moment, and, suddenly turning his horse's head, he rode slowly past the chapel again, and, presently dismounting, walked as slowly by his horse's side in an opposite direction to Sunny Hollow.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TEACHER AND THE TAUGHT.

“Faith, like a simple, unsuspecting child,
Serenely resting on its mother’s arm,
Reposing every care upon her God,
Sleeps on His bosom, and expects no harm.

“Receives with joy the promises He makes,
Nor questions of His purpose or His power.
She does not, trembling, ask, ‘Can this be so?’
The Lord has said it, and there needs no more.”

WE are creatures of earth, even while we are denizens of heaven. We have the soil of our earthly pilgrimage upon our outward garments, even while our souls are enwrapt in the spotless robe of a Saviour’s righteousness. Earthly joys, social joys, earthly loves and friendships visit the Christian’s heart, even while his wings are plumed for higher flight. Our blessed Saviour exclaims Himself, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” Yes, from the evil—from the evil may we be kept! And while we fix not our whole affections upon our earthly possessions of love, or friendship, or social good, far be it from us to despise or think lightly of these precious gifts of a loving Father’s hand. Lightly, indeed, may we hold these gifts, for He who gave may recall

the gift in His own inscrutable wisdom, and ever ready may we be to exclaim,—

“Good when He gives, supremely good,
Nor less when He denies ;
E’en crosses in His sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.”

Yet, while our heavenly Father bestows upon us earthly good, in humble thankfulness may His gifts be acknowledged and enjoyed !

It was the unwonted sight of a little, well-known figure, walking home alone, that turned Fred’s thoughts and horse’s head in a contrary direction to Sunny Hollow. He scarcely knew what he should say when he came up to the lonely pedestrian, or why he had turned back—scarcely knew what to think of his own temerity ; but something urged him forward, something within his heart that would not allow him to linger. It was not till nearly at Annie Maitland’s side, and after he had shaken hands with her, that he slowly led his horse along the pathway she was traversing.

And after the first mutual inquiries after the health of those at home, after the progress of the school had been entered upon and the beauty of the weather exhausted, Fred was puzzled how to proceed. Vexed as he felt at his own silence, wondering as he did what she would think of it, he could not help it, not another word would come.

With woman’s happy tact, Annie broke the silence, which was becoming oppressive to both, and with a kind smile exclaimed,—

“I was so glad of what happened this evening,

Mr. Linwood. I have been so rejoiced to hear that your resolve to try after Christianity has been successful—that now, indeed, you have proclaimed yourself on the Saviour's side."

"You have heard all this, Miss Maitland, and you believed it true?" said Fred, with an eager, scrutinizing glance.

"Yes, I believed it. People do not say the things they have said of you for nothing, but this evening has confirmed all I have heard. I have rejoiced with the angels, Mr. Linwood, and now," added she frankly, extending her hand, while tears stood in her eyes, "now I rejoice with you."

"I was afraid I had not even your prayers and sympathy," said Fred, in a low voice, taking the little hand, though respectfully releasing it the next moment.

"Why so?" asked Annie, in slightly-surprised tones.

"It has been so long since you have been to see us—so long since I have seen you."

Annie walked on in silence; to that she had nothing to say.

"I wish my sister was different," he continued, a moment after, in troubled tones; "I am afraid that she must be very uncongenial society to you, Miss Maitland."

"Katie allows me to see but very little of her," replied Annie gravely; "but it is not my fault, Mr. Linwood. I wish, indeed, she saw things differently; but we need not stop short at wishing, we have something better than that to do."

"Yes, I know; we can pray. I do unceasingly.

But you will not quite forsake her, Miss Maitland. Your example might do so much, while Fanny Moore's is decidedly hurtful to her."

"Katie has an example nearer home now," replied Annie softly. "Surely her brother's influence is great."

"Yes; I believe Katie does not so easily pursue her worldly course. I believe she has many a pang at heart even now; but she used to value your company very much, Miss Annie, and I had learnt to do the same before you left us."

Annie looked suddenly up into the speaker's face, and then as suddenly down, a bright colour stealing into her soft cheeks, even to her brow; but she quietly answered,—

"To be of use in my Saviour's vineyard, indeed, is my desire. I wish I could speak more for Him; but I am a poor, weak creature, prone to look to earth and earthly objects, and to tremble before the least trial. And shall I tell you, Mr. Linwood," she added, again looking up with a bright smile into his face, "shall I tell you how your prayer to-night has done me good? I came away from home in a weary, desponding mood. Two or three things had troubled me. Unkindness from the parents of one of my pupils, unjust complaints of non-improvement, though the child was sent but half the time, and the hard and unkind manner in which the complaint was made, from one who professed to belong to the same heavenly Father, who profess to obey the injunction, 'love as brethren,' in the first place grieved me, for it was cruel, and the mischief they have tried to do me worse still. Yet, perhaps, it was silly in me to take

notice of it ; but then, Mr. Linwood, it is hard, very hard, after labouring with all your power among your pupils, doing all you can for their advancement, having to contend with all their carelessness and inattention, or obstinacy, to meet with so little sympathy, so little help or appreciation from the parents ; though parents I need not say, for this is but a solitary case, and therefore ought not to have troubled me."

"No, Miss Annie, it ought not," replied Fred indignantly ; "there are enough left to appreciate your services. The unkindness of one who has evidently forgotten that a part of 'pure' religion, and undefiled before God, is this—to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction ; who has evidently forgotten the law of love that should exist between Christians, is little worthy of heed or trouble ; but I would not be in the position of that person, be he man or woman, for much !"

"Perhaps for the moment I might have dreaded their influence against me, but I do not now. Your prayer made me ashamed of myself ; it taught me to remember Paul's exclamation, 'If God be for us, who can be against us ?' But this was not all my trouble. My dear mother's health is so delicate, I fear so to lose her ; and it is so long since we have heard from my brother—that troubles us both very much, for we do not know where he is. Yet you have made me ashamed of myself ; so short a time have you known the Saviour, and yet seem so full of faith, of trust !"

"I have not your trials, Miss Annie ; perhaps, when trial comes, I may not prove so strong. And

yet," he added earnestly, stroking his horse's mane as he spoke, "yet it seems almost impossible to doubt such promises as these : 'My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches of mercy in Christ Jesus ;' 'No weapon formed against thee shall prosper.' There is a sure promise for you to rest upon, Miss Annie. The evil tongues that may desire to hurt are powerless with that promise at hand !"

"Yes, yes," said Annie, with overflowing eyes, "I see it all, and am cured of my unbelief to-night. Oh, that I should ever distrust my heavenly Father, who has always been so true to His promise ! Thank you, thank you, Mr. Linwood ; you are the teacher now, and I the learner."

And shaking his hand warmly in token of adieu, for they had reached the house, with eyes still full of tears, she opened the little gate and ran in, leaving him nothing more to do than to mount his horse, and turn its head once more towards Sunny Hollow.

Had he said all he intended to say ? No, he had not ; but he blessed God that anything he had said had been overruled for the comfort and consolation of her whom, best of earthly things, he felt he loved. Strange, indeed, it seemed that it should be so—strange that he should be able to say anything for the Saviour, whom so lately he had begun to love and try to serve—and to her especially, to whom he had so long looked up as a standard of Christian uprightness and perfection ! After all, what had he said ? Nothing but the utterance of his own faith in the word of the Lord, his own belief in the verity of the promises ; and his prayer was simply the breathing forth of his own wants, his own thanks—

giving. Fred Linwood again and again repeated this to himself, for such is the human heart that he found himself in danger of being lifted up, even with the thought of being made useful to her. The prayer that night that was most frequently upon his lips was for the blessedness of the "poor in spirit."

"Did not our hearts burn within us, while we talked with Him by the way?" Would Christians, when they meet, talk more of Jesus, they, too, would experience more of these heart-burnings, for Jesus Himself would be with them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SILENT RIDE.

"Say, dost thou well to murmur when thy sky is overcast ?

Rather bend in meek submission till the darkening cloud be past."

HARVEST-TIME, with its golden gatherings, passed away. The heavy-laden waggons, with their waving store ; the monotonous rumble of the reaping-machine, as it relentlessly cut down the precious grain ; and, finally, the murmur of the winnowing-machine—all ceased, and with that last busy recognition of harvest passed away also most of the men, who, during their sojourn, had made Sunny Hollow little better than a Babel.

The summer was gradually sinking into the autumn, leaving yellow tints on the fruit-trees, and scattering leaves to the ground. The chrysanthemums were now the gayest denizens of the garden, and these, with the variety and brilliancy of their hue, strove to make up for the absence of other and fairer flowers. The peach still showed its crimson cheek, though even that was passing away ; and though rich clusters of grapes still loaded the vines, the glory of their purple and green was over, and the leaves that sheltered looked sere and autumn-tinged.

The hot winds were already among the things of

the past, and the cool breeze that sprung up every evening now, with daylight's departure, made a fire on the hearth a pleasant thing to look at, a pleasant thing to feel. Still there were some few lingering warm days, some occasional warm evenings too, that rendered open doors and windows inviting still.

Around Sunny Hollow things were quietly progressing. Well-stocked barns, well-built hay-stacks, well-foddered cattle, and perfect order throughout all the farm arrangements, gave a very enviable reputation to the young master; while the butter and cheese from the dairy, the neatness of the household affairs, made Katie's name no less a household word; nor did Dolly lack her full meed of praise. More than one stalwart, well-to-do young farmer began to think it pleasant to be in the neighbourhood of Sunny Hollow—more pleasant still to obtain a seat at the table there. One gentlemanly young fellow, a sheep farmer, with plenty of "rhino," as he himself expressed it, had discovered latterly that a lounge beside the kitchen hearth at Sunny Hollow was so infinitely preferable to the loneliness of his own Murray mansion, that he endeavoured to make very frequent business (?) visits to Vermont Vale, dreaming maybe, meanwhile, of a future, when, perhaps, he might transplant from thence a wee little wife to grace and cheer his own home. But he little knew Katie, or how little his rhino affected her heart, or surely he would never so coolly, so comfortably, so securely have wooed her.

Fanny Moore was still an occasional visitor at Sunny Hollow; but she also had been wooed, and, unlike Katie, won. Whether her affections had any-

thing to do with the matter is doubtful ; it is certain that gold had, and that she was delightedly looking forward to an Australian mansion, horses in abundance to ride, an elegant dog-cart, and a buggy to drive when and where she chose, and a visit to dear, delightful Adelaide by way of bridal tour ! As the owner of all these delectabilities was very attentive in his visits to his *fiancée*, Fanny Moore was less come-at-able than of yore ; and Katie, beginning to find the Doctor not quite such pleasant company, because, foolishly, he tried to make himself more pleasant, seldom made her appearance within the range of his surgery, so that altogether she was left a great deal to the loneliness of her own home. Twice Annie Maitland had called upon her, and once she had returned the visit ; but somewhat of the coolness still remained, and to Fred's sorrow he could do nothing to prevent it.

Katie's pony carried her pretty frequently to Thornbush, where she managed to dispel some of her gathering gloom in a game of romps with the children. Little Samuel, however, the last born, was her favourite, and the "flower of the flock" he most certainly was in every sense of the term ; his large, spiritual, blue eyes, his light, curly hair, unusually abundant for such an infant, and sweet, cherub mouth, told that. He was but six months old, scarcely that, but he was a lovely child, and many a pretty present found its way from Katie's hands into Mrs. Ranger's, for her "wee pet-blossom." Pretty little dresses she made for him to wear, and snowy pinafores and sleeve-ties, and little, coloured shoes—nothing was too good for her pet. The little creature knew her voice, and

would stretch out his arms to her, and cling round her neck with all his baby might when she took him. He was so pure and delicate—a very “lily bell”—and, sooth to say, this very delicate transparency of skin, Katie so much admired, caused the mother’s heart to tremble, and the father to shake his head in sorrow, for their last little one was the darling of the whole household.

Katie only laughed at their fears, and prophesied great things for the pet of Thornbush—this “little rose without a thorn.”

On one of these intervening warm afternoons, when sitting out of doors was more pleasant than within, Katie took possession of a seat in the verandah, with her brother by her side, a plate of rich purple and green grapes between them, to which they were both doing ample justice; habited in one of the coolest of cool muslins, with her soft, light ringlets floating away from her face with every passing breeze that playfully stole under the eaves of the verandah, Katie was looking her loveliest, Fred thought, and sighed as he thought it, that one so fair should have only “hope for this present life.” Yet was there not reason to believe that beneath all that seeming levity and thoughtlessness there might be an under-current of deep feeling? Fred thought there was, for the cloud that sometimes crossed the sunshine on her brow, the tear that trembled occasionally in her eye, that quivering motion of the lip, told of desires unsatisfied, hopes unrealized, and might yet lead to the hope that “maketh not ashamed!” He had just arisen at last, after having had an ample feast of grapes, and was standing looking out in the direction

in which his afternoon's work lay, when his footsteps were arrested by a soft voice behind him, and, turning suddenly, he found himself face to face with Annie Maitland.

"I am come to ask a favour of you this afternoon, Mr. Linwood," she said, with slight hesitation; "I am come to borrow a horse."

Fred's smile of pleasure was very bright as he replied that one should immediately be at her service.

"The one I have been accustomed to use has fallen lame," said Annie, "and I know you have more than one horse that can take a lady."

"Have my Hebe, Annie; I am sure you are welcome to her," said Katie kindly.

"Thank you, Katie dear; but if you will, I want you to ride Hebe yourself, and accompany me."

"You do not require an escort?" asked Fred, with a half-wistful smile.

"No, thank you," said Annie gravely, "it is only to Mrs. Ranger's we are going; you have not heard, perhaps, that her baby is seriously ill?"

"Little Sammy—my little pet? Ah, Annie, I am so sorry!" exclaimed Katie, starting from her seat, tears springing to her eyes; "when was he taken ill? I saw him so lately."

"Only a day or two ago, of dysentery, of which so many babies die; I fear for him, and yet do hope, for his mother's sake, that his life may be spared, for her heart seems so wrapt up in him."

"Well it may be!" said Katie warmly. "Poor little Sammy is the 'flower of her flock' most truly. But it is always so—the best go first;" and she gave an angry shrug to her shoulders as she spoke.

"Shall I order Hebe as well as Lily?" Fred asked of his sister—a pained expression crossing his brow as he heard his sister's uncomfortable speech.

"If you please, Fred! Yes, Lily—you will like Lily; she is a capital lady's horse; such a gentle creature, Annie—too gentle for such a harum-scarum as me; Hebe suits me better."

"Why should I go? what good can I do? what words of comfort can I give, if dear baby is dying?" thought Katie bitterly, though with tears in her eyes, as with trembling fingers she hurried on her habit, her thoughts hindering not in the least her rapid movements. She was ready and waiting before Fred appeared with the horses.

"You will at least say for me that, if I can be of any use, Mrs. Ranger need only send for me," said Fred, as he assisted the young ladies to their saddles. "Mrs. Ranger is an old friend of mine, and if I be no use to her in her trial, tell her I thank God I can yet pray for her!"

"I will," said Annie, looking up through her tears; "she will need our prayers—that is all you can do, and it is much!"

Beyond an occasional word between the two fair riders, the ride to Thornbush was a very silent one. Lily moved gracefully forward, suiting her paces to the mood of her mistress *pro tem.*, and Katie did all she could to restrain the vagaries of her wilful little Hebe, so that for the greater part of the way they rode side by side—the thoughts of each fixed, not on the road they were traversing, fair, even road as it was, but on the distant homestead, the scene of sorrow they feared awaited them; and oh, how different were

the thoughts that occupied them even on this subject!

Katie was in no submissive, humble state of mind. The only baby she had ever loved was about to be taken from her; the little, fair creature who had learnt to love her, to seek her caresses, to lay his little, curly head on her bosom, was soon to welcome her no more with his sunny smile; she was sure of it; she knew he would die, and why should she be submissive? Did it not seem cruel and unkind of God to take this little one from its mother's arms? Could there be mercy in such an action? She could not understand it; she would not believe it; and so she rode along full of proud, rebellious thoughts—thoughts derogatory to Him who is all mercy, and goodness, and love.

Annie's thoughts were widely different from these. She thought, it is true, of the anguish of the parting—for farewells on earth are ever sad—but she remembered also that there was a fairer shrine for the little spirit than it wore below; she thought of the crown and the palm-branch, and the winged messengers to carry it home, and knew that if God took it from its mother's arms it would but be to make it happy for ever. Then, too, she knew that by-and-by there would be glad reunions, the babe and its mother would meet again, and the sorrowing one would find her little lamb safe and happy in that fold where there is but one Shepherd—He who gathereth the lambs in His arms! Then, remembering that if, indeed, it had arrived to this, that mother and child must part on earth—that these parting hours contain much that is very bitter—that the spirit needs sus-

taining at these times with more than human help,—that nature is apt to fail and droop, and to cry out under the heaviness of the trial, “All Thy waves and Thy billows have gone over me,”—knowing it is hard, even for the child of God, to say, at times when sorrow presses heavily, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good”—she prayed as she rode along, earnestly, fervently, that sustaining grace might be given, and that the chastened one might feel the stroke a stroke of love, and bow in humble submission and trust.

And so passed on the two friends through all that silent ride, communing with their own hearts: how different those communings, their countenances, alas! too visibly betrayed.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SCENE AT THORNBUSH.

“ The baby wept,
The mother took it from the nurse’s arms,
And soothed its griefs, and still’d its vain alarms :
And baby slept.

“ Again it weeps,
And God doth take it from its mother’s arms—
From present pain and unknown future harms :
And baby sleeps.”

THORNBUSH looked the same to Katie, as they approached it, as it had ever looked to her. Nature never changes its serenity for all the troubled scenes around. Its calm, quiet face is unruffled by human sorrow. So thought Katie, as they passed through the slip-panels, which some hand had left open. One sight and sound she had missed most sorrowfully : there were generally three or four children at that slip-panel to meet her, and, among them, the sweet baby Samuel, whose tiny arms would be outstretched to hers until, lifted to her saddle, she rode with him to the house, covering him with kisses and caresses on the way. That absence told still more painfully upon her spirits ; and when, at a little distance from the house, they left their horses, and then walked towards it, with every step she felt her

courage flag ; and when at length they reached the door, she trembled so excessively she could scarcely stand.

Well might she ; for, as they stood in that doorway, the whole scene of sorrow burst upon them, and their worst fears were verified. Sadly significant was the group collected in that rude bush-room. The very absence of the younger portion of the family told much. Two or three of the elder children stood huddled together in a corner, half awed, half terrified, by this first scene of death. By the fireplace, with his arms resting on the back of a chair, his face leaning in his hands, stood the tall athletic form of the father of the household. It was easy to tell what caused the attitude. Joseph Ranger, who seldom bent beneath any trouble, was bowed down to the dust by the illness of his ninth child. The loving caresses of that little one had stole around the unyielding heart of its usually unbending father, and the strong man was melted even to unwonted tears by its sufferings.

The centre of that sorrowing group, on a low stool near the hearth, sat the patient, suffering Mrs. Ranger ; her meek face looking heavy and worn, and with an unmistakable expression of anguish upon it ; for upon her lap lay her darling little one, the impress of death upon its tiny features, and she knew it was going from her. And yet, through all the anguish, there was yet another expression : the heart of the Christian was seeking to lay itself down on the sympathizing heart of its Saviour, to yield up all to Him.

A mute upraising of the eyes was all the welcome the afflicted mother could give her visitors. They

pressed her hand in silent sympathy, and stood at her side tearfully watching the dying babe.

For it was dying. The pale unmistakable hues of death had gathered on brow and lips ; yet there was no struggle. The violet eyes half-open, and the breath came quiveringly through the slightly-parted lips ; but, so quietly did it lay, it might have been simply sleeping. So Katie thought, till she took the little hand in hers—that little hand that used so caressingly to toy with her ringlets—and felt that indeed the chill of death was there. Death ! What was it ? this strange, mysterious visitant, desolating the household, and snatching away the sweetest and brightest ? Katie turned away with a shivering sigh, the colour fading away from her own face so entirely that, but for the timely interposition of a chair and glass of water, she must have fallen. A passionate burst of tears relieved her.

“The darling is only going home, dear Katie,” said Annie, softly. “Do not weep ; think of the happiness it will soon gain. Sweet little creature, there will soon be no more pain for thee ! He who said, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto Me,’ will soon have thee in His loving arms. You can yield him to those arms, can you not, dear Mrs. Ranger ?”

“Yes, yes ! If it is His will to take my child, I ought to bow ; but nature rebels. I want to lay down my stubborn will. Pray for me, that I may ! Pray for us all !”

“I have, and do, my dear friend,” said Annie, fervently. “But I will pray now, if you wish it.” And Annie knelt down by the side of the dying infant, and in hushed tones earnestly prayed—prayed

for that presence, that promised presence, to be manifested (that already was there)—for the “Peace, be still,” that can quell the raging tumult without or within—for that entire submission to the will of God that leads the bereaved to exclaim, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord ;” and for the painless flight of the little one she also prayed, that Jesus would gently bear it from its mother’s arms. Even in the soft tones that uttered that fervent prayer, there seemed peace.

Katie rose from her knees, still trembling excessively. Never before had she been brought into such close contact with death ; and tears gushed forth again and again as she gazed on the pale lips of the baby, and noticed the peculiar leaden hue that pervaded its fair little face, changed and thin, as even in two or three days’ severe illness it had become.

Annie put her arm round her waist, and drew her head down to her shoulder, as a slight convulsion ran over the quiet little features.

“It is in no pain, dear,” she softly said. “Jesus is taking His little lamb very quietly home.”

“Sin brought death into the world and all our woe,” she presently continued, “but Jesus brought life and immortality. Our little one will soon be an immortal being, a winged angel. He will soon enter on a bright beautiful life. You will at least have this little one to welcome you when you reach home, Mrs. Ranger.”

“Bless my sweet baby! Yes! I ought not to murmur ; but it is hard to part.” And tears gushed from the mother’s eyes, bedewing the little convulsed hands. “Ah, precious one ! thou wilt soon be gone ;

soon have done with pain," she sobbed, as another and another convulsion passed quiveringly over the little form; and then it lay quite quiet, slightly gasping for breath, but very slightly. Katie hid her face in her hands, weeping still more bitterly.

"Let me take the darling from you, dear Mrs. Ranger; you are wearied out," said Annie.

"Thank you. Oh no! I can only give him up to his Saviour. I shall soon lose him. A few moments more, my sweet one, and thou wilt not want thy mother." And through blinding tears she watched her fading treasure.

Dying fast now. Slower and slower the breath came from the parted lips, more quiveringly, more falteringly; the blue eyes gently unclosed in a last loving recognition of its mother, the pale lips moved, and then the spirit winged its flight. Yes; gone! and without a struggle or a sigh—gone in those loving arms that would never loose their hold—enfolded in the bosom of Jesus.

Was he really dead? Katie bent down, though she trembled and wept incessantly, to look closer at her little favourite, when Annie whispered he was gone. "Oh! it could not be! could not be!" and yet those cold lifeless hands, their contact, made her shudder; and the strange, sweet smile that seemed to have taken possession of the little mouth, what did that mean? Was it that the spirit of the little one, glad to escape to its bright home, had left its last glad impress on the senseless clay?

Lovingly the mother kissed her baby; tenderly she closed the violet eyes, softly composed its limbs, murmuring gently meanwhile (though her heart

yearned sadly over the "pet lamb" of the household), "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Katie could bear it no longer—could bear no longer to see either the humble submissive sorrow of the bereaved mother, or the tall stout frame of the father bowing to the very dust with grief. Springing from the chair at Mrs. Ranger's side, she ran from the house—whither she scarcely knew nor cared; only to be alone, away from that scene of death, anywhere. She could not get away from herself. She threw herself down at last, exhausted by her own feelings, upon a heap of loose hay, behind a huge haystack that intervened between the house and the barn, and here gave full vent to her sorrow.

How mixed were the feelings that disturbed her! Grief, fear, and indignation, each in turn usurped her breast. Her little favourite was gone for ever! And tears burst forth again at that thought and the remembrance of what Mrs. Ranger must feel. The first child, too, she had ever lost! Then came rebellious feelings. Why should it be thus? Why had God taken the darling from them? Why had He thus smitten one of His own children? Was this His kindness, His goodness to His children? And through all came echoing that sentence from her neglected Bible, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

Blessed? Yes, surely it must be so! Those whom God loves are blessed. But what of those who have nothing to do with Him? who will not have Him to reign over them? what of those who, with the fool, have said in their hearts, "There is no God?" Ah! Katie well remembered reading Voltaire's terrible

death-scene, and shuddered as she remembered. "Oh!" she thought, "it is only those who love God that can have no reason to fear death. Our little lamb is folded now in the Shepherd's arms."

"Safe in the Heavenly Shepherd's arms,
And gather'd to His faithful breast,
Beyond all dangers and alarms,
The infant spirit is at rest.

"Glad to forsake the feeble clay,
And breathe a pure immortal air,
He wing'd his joyous flight away,
The glory of the bless'd to share."

"But what," she thought, "if I had been thus called away from earth? I, who have no hope that will do for eternity?" Katie's tears burst forth again. She wept long, and with exceeding bitterness. The sun was fast sinking, when at last she arose and returned to the house.

She met Annie at the door, and asked in a low voice if they had not better return.

"Yes, dear," replied Annie, "we can be of no further use to-night. But come in; Betsy has made some tea; you must take a cup before you ride home." And she looked kindly and sadly at the evidence of weeping and distress in the young girl's face.

Katie swallowed a little tea with difficulty, and then Annie softly drew her into the other room.

"You must look once more at our little cherub, dear Katie," she said, tenderly raising a white cloth from the bed as she spoke.

How sweet a picture! Surely it was but a sleep! There he lay in his snowy night-dress, with its deli-

cately crimped frills—the last, the very last gift Katie had made him—the crimping her own fingers had done. Little did she think it would prove a shroud ! Death ! it was not like death, to see the soft hair curling over his little head as in life ; those violet eyes just peeping between the long lashes ; and the lips, with that strangely sweet smile upon them ! She could scarcely believe that this indeed was but the casket—that the jewel was gone for ever.

“He will not return to us, but we shall go to him,” said Annie, softly, stooping to kiss the marble brow, and placing a monthly rose-bud in the cold little fingers.

Katie dared not trust her voice, but sadly shook her head.

“Is it not worth living the life of a Christian to have a Christian’s death, dear Katie ?”

“Worth anything ! Worth anything !” Katie huskily whispered.

Annie silently pressed her hand, and then, letting the veil fall lightly over the little sleeper, left the room.

Katie’s heart was too full then for any words. Her hand was silently given to one and another in farewell ; but when she came to Mrs. Ranger, she threw her arms impulsively round her neck and kissed her.

“God bless you, my dear child, for all your goodness to my little one ! May you indeed have God’s blessing, and then you need not fear to die !” Mrs. Ranger’s heart was full ; so was Katie’s : they parted thus.

“We will be here again the day after to-morrow,

Betsy," said Annie, kindly, as they mounted their horses and rode rapidly away.

Very rapidly; for they had a long ride before them, and the shadows of night were beginning to thicken around them. But a faint crescent of a moon broke through the darkness, and slightly silvered their pathway, throwing, perhaps, into deeper shadow the bush that skirted the road. The road was straight and plain, that was one good thing; but Annie was slightly timid, and hurried forward, keeping as much by Katie's side as possible. They were both as silent as before, occupied each with their own thoughts, till they were broken through by the sound of approaching horses' feet. Annie slightly drew her rein, but Katie kept onward.

"It is only Fred," she exclaimed. "I know the sound of his horse's feet, and of that low whistle, too. I expect he is afraid that something has happened to us." "I wonder," she thought to herself, "for whom his fears are awakened? for Annie, or for me?" And as she thought, she turned and looked at her fair companion. Very sweet she looked in that pale silvery moonlight—a pretty little figure in a very graceful habit—and Katie turned back with the inward exclamation, "If he loves her, no wonder; she is all he could wish for, and will make a sweet mistress for Sunny Hollow, if she will have him, and if Sunny Hollow must have another mistress."

The horses met, and the horseman turned back with the young ladies after a brief salutation. It was Fred Linwood; and Katie's suspicions being aroused, she soon detected a certain *empressement* in his manner to Annie, which made her feel herself a little

Madame de trop. At least so she fancied, though only fancy it might have been. For that reason, when they reached the slip-panel, she took leave of Annie, leaving Fred to escort her home alone.

"You have not heard from your brother yet, Miss Annie?" said Fred, presently, reducing the speed of his horse to a slow walk.

"No, Mr. Linwood," Annie replied, sorrowfully, "I have not." But something peculiar in his manner made her suddenly look up.

"Mamma has not had a letter since I left home, has she? Surely you know something, Mr. Fred?"

"Yes," Fred exclaimed slowly, "I confess I do, though there is no letter. You will find your brother at home, Miss Annie, when you get there."

"My brother at home!" But then there was a burst of joyous tears, and Annie, faint and trembling with the sudden surprise, almost fell from her saddle.

Fred was at her side in a moment, angry with himself at his want of tact.

"I am a stupid bungler at letting out a secret, Miss Annie," he exclaimed; "but it is all right at home; and Mrs. Maitland is well and happy."

"Oh, never mind," said Annie, laughing and wiping her eyes; "I have had so many mixed feelings to-day, and I believe I am not quite well. But you will think me very foolish?"

"I think no such thing, Miss Annie. I am angry with my own haste and bungling. But, somehow or other, there seems so much connected with the return of your brother. He has come back from the diggings successful; and for his own sake and yours, I am glad of that. But I am afraid of one thing, Miss Annie."

"Of what?" asked Annie, timidly.

"I am afraid you are going to leave us; and there is something I should so much like to ask you first. But this is selfish in me; you are tired—exhausted." For he noticed she swayed like a reed on the saddle as he spoke.

They had fortunately just reached the house. He lifted her from the horse to the ground.

"I am tired," she said, faintly. "This day has been very exciting. And the thought of my brother, too—the two conflicting feelings, sorrow and joy—forgive me!"

"I cannot forgive myself," said Fred, sadly. "And yet, before we part, Miss Annie, just one word. May I ask you the question I wish, to-morrow?"

"Yes," was Annie's timid reply, as she gave him her hand. "Thank you, Mr. Linwood, for your care of me." She turned into the school-room; and Fred rode off, not without some hope, leaving Annie to seek the presence of her newly-arrived brother.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

“ Love—human love—thy tone
Is sweet to the bosom lone ;
And a potent spell dwells in thy song,
That to joyous thought gives birth.
Do such deep thrills of bliss belong
To the sad and changeful earth ? ”

LIFE is made up of extremes : birth and death, sorrow and joy, sunshine and cloud, often cross and recross each other in one short day. The heart is torn with conflicting feelings, lifted one moment to the heavens with happiness, the next dashed down to the earth in despair. But how sweetly here comes in the Christian's strong City of Refuge : “ We know that all things shall work together for good to those that love God.” “ Who shall separate from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loveth us.”

Yes, it is well to be thoroughly grounded and rooted in the faith, to be able to exclaim with St. Paul, “ None of these things move me ; ” and whether a full tide of joy or sorrow set in upon our souls, to be enabled meekly to lie at Jesus' feet is happiness indeed.

Annie Maitland's day had been indeed a day of excitement, of mingled sorrow and rejoicing. Little had she anticipated its winding up—her brother's return ; still less that Fred Linwood would really have uttered words whose meaning she could not, if she would, misunderstand. If her many mingled feelings gave pallor to her cheek, it was no wonder ; for the human frame is weak, and the harp-strings delicate, and too much tension of either joy or sorrow is trying to either.

Mrs. Maitland, under experience of the overwhelming happiness that in full tide had seemed to rush at once upon her with her son's return, had only bestowed her good night and blessing upon her children, and retired to bed, leaving the field clear to Annie and her brother James. They sat out the night together, talking till the stars paled in the horizon, and the first faint streaks of dawn appeared.

There was so much to talk about—so much of bold adventure, so much of wild romance, so much of deprivations, and trials, and danger, that Annie's blood nearly curdled in her veins many times, as, half-lying in her brother's arms, she listened to his thrilling recitals ; ten times more thrilling were they because he had been an actor in all the scenes he narrated. He had forded the dangerous creek ; he had leaped the beetling crag ; he had been stripped by bushrangers, and all taken from him. It was not of another he was talking, but of himself. And more than once Annie raised herself upon his shoulder to look into the face, so changed with its quantity of hair and immense moustache, to see if it was indeed her brother, or whether it was not, after all, an imposition.

What marvellous "digging tales" were also related, and how perfectly mystified poor Annie was with them, losing half the charm of the narration in the multiplicity of new words that thronged her ears ; and she confessed herself fairly bewildered as she heard him speak of the merits of different claims and drives, and discuss the cradle and the puddling-machine, with all their ramifications. It was surprising to her how he could laugh over "duffers," and "shisers," and seem to think it glorious fun to sink a shaft, no matter how far down into the entrails of the earth, and find it after all without a speck.

"Never mind, sis," he laughed. "Never mind, I have made a glorious pile. Let that suffice. The old reef turned out at last better than we expected, and so you see me here."

"And here you are going to stay, are you not, dear James? You will not go away again," said Annie, coaxingly passing her fingers through his dark hair.

"Not without you, little witch," he replied, laughing. "I don't intend to leave you and mother behind. I certainly do not intend to have your pretty cheeks become thin and sallow, your blue eyes hollow, and your voice sharp, teaching school for Vermont's small fry, I can assure you."

"Do I look all this?" asked Annie, with a slightly mischievous smile.

"Well, no, little one ; glad to say not, though there is just a modicum of delicacy about that fair cheek of yours which is rather more than I like ; however, we will take care to restore its bloom at the diggings."

"The diggings, James! You will not take us there?"

"What do you know about the diggings?" laughed James. "Have I fairly frightened you by my savage account?"

"But they live in tents there!"

"A veritable canvas town! and boil their tea in their billies! Well, my dear Annie, you will not. You must know that at a well-established diggings, where there is plenty of quartz-crushing going on, there are plenty of houses going up. You would find the diggings you exclaim so determinedly against another sort of place to Vermont Vale; or, for that matter, to any other towns in South Australia. We Victorians laugh at the poor puny doings over here. South Australians are too slow for us. Do you know, little sis, what I once heard a man exclaim, who had been visiting Adelaide, and returned to Victoria? He said, 'he did not like South Australia much, the people there could talk nothing but theology!'"

"If he could have added that their discussion of theology influenced their lives for good," said Annie, gravely, "it would have been an excellent character; but if your Victorians are to bear an opposite one, what kind of people must they be? No, James, I think we are better in South Australia, where country and people are familiar to us. Mamma would never bear removal, or stand a voyage."

"Here! what, in Vermont? Not I, indeed! Too slow altogether, Annie! What on earth should I stay here for? Why should you stay here? why any of us? I see nothing so attractive in Vermont; it is a pretty place enough, but that is all; and I'm no

farmer to take pleasure in fine crops. No, there is nothing attractive that I can discover, unless, indeed," he added, slightly changing his tone, and suddenly facing round upon his sister, "unless, indeed, it possesses attractions I am unaware of. Is it so, my little Annie? Has my little, timid dove indeed found a mate, and is he worthy of her?"

The rich colour that remorselessly flushed Annie's fair cheek and brow answered more expressively than any words could have done. With a half sigh, a half smile, her brother rose and fondly kissed her, and then, pointing to the streaks of dawn already rising, bade her go to bed.

"You must tell me all about it in the morning, Annie," he said laughing. "I will not tease you to-night, for you are weary enough. Little did I think to find my bird wooed away from her nest on my return."

Neither had he, but she did not say so. She only thanked him deeply in her heart for the respite he had given her; for what had she to tell him? What? Nothing in the least tangible at present; nothing she could possibly put into words; nothing of which she should even like to speak. Tell—tell what? She did not even whisper that to herself.

She laid her head upon her pillow, but not to sleep. There she lay, in the little, white bed near her mother's—silently, prayerfully, wakefully; lay and watched the dawn come in, the rose-flakes gather on the bosom of the heavens, the pearl and the gold and the ruby clouds sail forth one by one, and, finally, *en masse* to usher in the god of day; but sleep came not. The future, and what it might be to her, would

trouble her weary brain; and the question that was to be asked, and how it would be asked, and what answer she should return—all this forbade the approach of Somnus.

The song, gushing, free, and joyous, of her own favourite magpie at last rose on the soft morning air. A little breeze caused a late rose playfully to rustle its perfumed petals up and down the window pane. That same playful breeze softly moved among the she-oak leaves that stood beside the house. Even at last the clouds of gold and crimson grew dream-like. And when, in all its splendour, the sun broke forth, scattering its scintillations on every hand, and when one truant beam stole even into the lady's chamber, the fair lady herself was asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DOLLY'S STRATAGEM.

"It is here! it is here! it is lightening again,
With sun-braided smiles; the deep heart of the glen;
It is touching the mountain and tingeing the hill,
And dimpling the face of the low laughing rill."

THE stars had paled, and the morning dawned, on other eyes than those within the little school-house; for, though all besides in Sunny Hollow soundly slept that night, it contained one unquiet spirit that would not be stilled. It was not a sorrowful spirit, nor a gloomy spirit, nor a dark spirit; for, as the glorious poet Milton says,—

"He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day."

And something very like "bright day" occasionally flashed across his face, spite of an occasionally passing cloud.

Fred Linwood's spirit was in truth too deeply stirred within him for sleep to lock his senses. Half startled by the bold step he had taken, more than hopeful by the promise of reply to his question, he could scarcely believe in his own happiness; could scarcely bless his heavenly Father sufficiently for the bountiful bestowments of His hand. But he was still perplexed, he had something still to do, and how with-

out a deal of very painful formality, very uncongenial to his nature, could he possibly gain an opportunity of asking his question? How was he likely to find Annie separated from her brother, a brother only just returned, and who naturally would be anxious to engross his sister's company? at the same time, he would not for worlds delay. James Maitland's movements were uncertain. He had proclaimed the immediate dismissing of the school. That was inevitable, but who can tell when and where he would carry off his mother and sister? He paced the floor of his room across and across. He sat down and thought, he rose up and thought still, but could hit on no plan of easy access to the fair Annie herself. Easy matter enough, for that matter, to speak to either mother or brother, it seemed so to him, but it was to Annie he owed an explanation, and she should have it some way or other. But how?

His Bible lay open at the words that met his case, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall direct thy paths." A clear direction and safe promise. Why should he not obey it? Did he not desire to commit his way into the Lord's hands? And had he not reason to believe, whenever he had done so, his path had been directed? This present dilemma was a path through which he wanted direction. Was it wrong to ask? He was ashamed of himself for the unbelieving question—ashamed that he should for a moment have doubted the loving care of his Father, who had said, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," and who proclaimed, by his servant David, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He shall bring it to pass."

And while on bended knees he lowly pleaded the promise, asking for guidance in this important epoch of his life's history, let the sceptic laugh if he will. For us, we rejoice that our God, though enthroned upon the heavens, stoops down to men of low estate, and like a father pitieth his children, like a mother comforteth them, sticketh closer than a brother, and is a friend that loveth at all times. In these endearing characters we have a licence to approach Him, and ask for all we need ; always bearing in mind His own loving rebuke, "Ye have not, because ye ask not!"

Dawn had triumphantly made its *entrée* while he knelt. Its rosy light even now bathed the room in its beauty ; the birds were up with their glad matin songs ; a chorus of laughing jackasses suddenly and joyously filled the air from an adjacent group of gum-trees ; while the sweet gurgle of the magpie, softened by distance, sounded sweeter still.

Fred threw open the window with the air of one no longer perplexed, and stood a moment to enjoy the beauty of the morning, and the soft, fresh air that blew across his forehead from the Vermont hills. Then, drawing a chair to his little table, he opened his own writing-desk, and sat down with pen and paper to write.

What was it he wrote ? Oh no, gentle readers, we will not be guilty of such rudeness. We leave him with very earnest fingers to plead his own cause, and, as he has chosen this method of action, we wish him all the success he can desire ; but, to read the loving words that were meant for other eyes, we will not.

Two letters ! one folded within the other ! and finished at last, just as the sun made its triumphant *entrée* upon the Vermont world, and sleep fell upon Annie's eyes. But Fred had no inclination for sleep. Daylight had come, and with it the day's work ; and, after a plentiful ablution and brushing, which banished all traces of the night's watching, he carefully placed his sealed letter in his pocket, and sallied forth to his morning's work.

Half an hour later all was astir at Sunny Hollow. The hens were proclaiming a plentiful store of eggs, while chanticleer's shrill clarion re-echoed again and again among the hills ; geese and ducks most noisily proclaimed their existence ; cows with full udders lowed to be milked ; horses, recognizing the men that fed them, uttered pleasant, cheerful welcome. In short, Sunny Hollow would have loudly proclaimed itself every inch a farm, even to a blind man !

"Dolly, do you think you can do me a favour ?" asked Fred, quietly following the girl into the dairy, during his sister's absence, a little later in the morning.

"Yes, sir ; sure I can !" was Dolly's bright reply, and she looked rather curiously into his face as she spoke.

"Well, then, will you try to give this letter to Miss Maitland, as soon as possible this morning, into her own hands ? You understand ?"

"I will, gladly !" Dolly replied, with a smile of quick apprehension. "No other hands nor eyes shall catch a glimpse of it."

"Not even my sister's ?"

"No, sir, not if you say so." And, proud of her secret mission, Dolly instantly put the precious docu-

ment out of sight. "I've a little more to do here first, but I'll manage an errand to the school-house yet."

"I will give you one. Take some cream and fresh butter. Mrs. Maitland will be glad of it now her son's come home ; and a few fresh eggs too, Dolly," he added, turning away just in time to miss the meaning smile that overspread the girl's good-natured face.

"Dolly !" said Katie, coming into the dairy a few moments after, "I have been thinking you might run over to Mrs. Maitland's with some cream, for now her son is returned she will be glad of something nice to give him for breakfast ; and then there is that small ham, put that up too, I know it is a good one."

"It's a beauty, miss ! and Mr. Fred told me to take eggs and butter." She did not say what besides.

"Has he? Oh, oh ! I am forestalled, I see. Well, take all you can, and the best, and run off with you, I'll see to the milk dishes ;" and Katie turned to her employment with a half-sad smile.

"Well, Katie," she said to herself, half disconsolately, "I see your reign at Sunny Hollow is nearly at an end. A short reign, too, you have had of it, but I suppose it is in the nature of things, and no use grumbling against it. I might have expected it."

A morning run over to Mrs. Maitland's, especially with something nice in her basket to tempt the old lady and please the young, was always a pleasant affair to Dolly, but never had it been so pleasant as now, for she was the bearer of a secret that was to be kept even from the bright eyes of her young mistress, and she felt as if in a certain measure Master Fred

had taken her into his confidence, though all he had told her was to deliver the letter in question. So much for a woman's power of putting "two and two" together, and making up a tale.

Dolly had made that tale up long before. Those dark, saucy eyes of hers had not been used for nothing; and she had detected, perhaps long before Fred himself had done so, "which way the land lay."

"I am glad of it—as glad as can be," she said to herself as she went along. "I am sure Miss Annie will make a rare good wife; and if she is not much about a farm, he can afford to keep people to do the work. He don't want a wife for that, I know. If there is anything that would make me leave Miss Katie, it would be to live with Mr. Fred and his young wife. And who knows? Perhaps I may, if Miss Katie gets married, and I don't like her husband!"

And, so saying, she crept under the fence, and advanced towards the house. One person was there already she did not wish to see—young Maitland himself, very busy feeding his horse. She hoped he would continue to do so, and not follow her to the door, and he did not.

Annie herself came, looking revived by her sleep, but rather pale too. She welcomed Dolly with a very bright smile.

"A few little things she had brought from Mr. Fred and Miss Katie," said Dolly, "if Mrs. Maitland would accept them."

Annie did, on her mother's behalf, with many thanks, as she emptied the basket.

"Our kind neighbours have sent us a plentiful supply from their dairy for your benefit, James," she exclaimed, as her brother that instant entered the room.

"Very kind, indeed!" said James, with a half-quizzical look at his sister's blushing face. "I am sure I am greatly obliged to these kind friends."

Poor Dolly was in perplexity. Her precious letter—how should she get it into the proper hands unseen? What could she do? Her woman's wit befriended her.

"May I trouble you to spare a little parsley from your border, Miss Annie?" she presently asked, as the empty basket was returned to her.

"Oh, yes!" as much as you like, Dolly," replied Annie. She would have added, "Gather what you like for yourself," had not something in the expression of the girl's face assured her she had something to say without witnesses.

She followed immediately into the garden, and her suspicions were confirmed the moment they knelt together at the parsley-bed, for among its most thick and curly leaves Dolly laid her letter.

With a start of surprise Annie took it in her hand, and read her own name upon it. "Were you told to bring me this, Dolly?" she asked, the beautiful colour deluging her cheeks. She looked like a guilty child detected in a wrong action.

"Yes, miss; and I thought I had better give it you out here," said Dolly, with a sly, sideways glance at the fair, blushing girl beside her; "and thank you, miss, that will be quite enough parsley. You are robbing yourself," she added, for, in her

confusion, Annie began to tear up parsley, roots and all, in abundance.

“You can plant the roots,” she replied laughing, and blushing anew at finding how she was betraying what she sought to hide. “Good-bye, Dolly.” And she ran off as fast as she could ; while Dolly, with a quiet smile at the success of her stratagem, returned home to whisper the accomplishment of her errand to Fred.

“What an old, old story it is, this love ! Yet how, again and again, it renews its youth, from sire to son, from mother to daughter ! And, after all, how much of God’s love and mercy are enfolded in each one of our affections ! Did all view them in their proper light, we should see them as part of a beautiful whole. Our happiest moments are all the gift of God !

“All my springs are in Thee !” says the sweet songster of Israel ; and to us his songs are very sweet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LITTLE GRAVE.

“God took thee in His mercy,
A lamb untask’d, untried;
He fought the fight for thee,
He won the victory,
And thou art sanctified.”

OUR readers have not forgotten, in the interest we trust they have taken in our fair Annie’s future, the sad scene we lately introduced them to at Thornbush. Katie had not, neither had Annie, for to them had been assigned the task of bearing the little one to his last earthly resting-place. It was but the clay that remained, it is true, but even that seemed dear; and Katie’s eyes were many, many times weeping bitterly as the day drew on.

“I shall stay, and take care of mother,” said James Maitland, as they rose from the dinner-table. “I am no hand at attending babies’ funerals; I’m a stranger besides. I hope, however, my dear Annie, you will be taken care of. I have had no answer to my question yet, you know. I scarcely like letting you go alone.”

“You may safely; and, for the question, ask mamma when I am gone,” said Annie, colouring and laughing. “I give you leave to do that.”

“Oh, well, if mother knows all about it, I’ll soon hear news. But mind, if I don’t approve, I shall run off with you to those ‘odious diggings’ still.”

A little time after Annie set off with two of her pupils, attired in white (for they were also to be bearers), to walk to Sunny Hollow. Fred Linwood’s large waggon was to go from there; but, according to Annie’s written intimation, she had taken her riding-habit, very carefully rolled up in a parcel, for a homeward ride. There was one thing, therefore, evident; had the letter met an unfavourable answer that parcel would have been left at home.

The waggon was already outside the slip-panel, and a bevy of young people near it of either sex, their merriment but half kept down by the remembrance of the cause of the gathering. Amongst them Annie recognized Fred. He came instantly to her side to shake hands, and assist her to one of the best seats. She scarcely spoke; but the one timid glance up into his face, as he handed her that parcel, was all he needed. His thanks and pleasure were in his looks.

It was a fine afternoon, not hot and sultry, like the afternoon of Katie’s ride, but soft and genial, with neither too much sunshine, or dust, or wind, to be pleasant. The ride was a pleasant one, too, and with so many young people congregated together could not be very gloomy; for when youth, and health, and buoyant spirits exist, they must betray their existence.

The proposition to sing a hymn met with universal favour. Young people are fond of hearing their own voices, and very pleasant it was to hear those sweet

young voices thrilling out, "There is a land of pure delight," and its triumphant refrain—

"We're marching through Immanuel's ground,
And soon shall hear the trumpet sound;
We hope to meet at Jesus' feet,
And never, never part again."

The horses rattled along bravely with that chorus of voices behind them, and perhaps none but Fred's experienced hand could have restrained them, fresh as they were from food and rest; and yet they seemed to like the singing, and so the sweet singers sang again, this time the "Better land," and the words and music so world-wide known and loved, arose, and fell softly with the breeze.

They were singing the concluding verses when a horseman joined them, and the pastor of Vermont made himself known to his young flock.

"I thought you passed some time since, Mr. Howard," said Fred; "some one told me so. It was you, Katie, was it not?"

"Yes, I saw Mr. Howard pass," replied Katie, slightly colouring.

"I did pass, Miss Linwood, you were quite right, but I had a sick member to call upon on the way. We heard you pass while I was in the cottage. The singing sounded very sweet indeed."

"A good way to employ the time, sir," said one of the young men demurely, putting slyly into his pocket what appeared most unmistakably like a bow of ribbon from the dress of his companion, whose entreating gestures almost betrayed him.

"Yes," said Graham Howard, "yes, if the heart

is employed with the voice. Without that there is no 'making melody to the Lord.' Perhaps," he added, "we had better hurry forward, Mr. Linwood; my watch warns me that we are rather late."

And on galloped the horses in sober silence now, for the minister was by, and could see, if he could not hear, all that was said. Besides, a little sense of outward decorum, and the near approach to the scene of death, quieted the most reckless and giddy among them.

As they drew near Thornbush, a little boy, with hat-band round his cap, threw down the panels, and the horses passed through, and on up to the house. They stopped there, and all quietly dismounted, for this was surely no place for unseemly mirth.

It was a sad gathering, strange and sad. The mother and father, and elder children, in their habiliments of woe, and each little one with some slight mourning for their little brother, were already there; and now the young men and maidens came flocking in, in all the beauty of youth and health, forming a strange contrast as they grouped around in their holiday garb; all but the four young bearers, and the snowy whiteness of their dresses was still more strange in that scene.

They had placed the little, white coffin upon a low bench in the midst; it was not closed, and all could yet see the last of little Samuel. Rose-buds were lying in profusion round the little ice-cold baby; but oh, how changed he had become! Katie's breath came thick and fast, as she saw and recognized the waxen hue of death that now rested on the sunken eyelids and fallen cheeks. The smile was there, still

sweet, most wondrously sweet ; but, passing strange, like no earthly smile. Her own heart seemed growing cold and still, as she looked at the faded blossom before her, and felt that death must come upon them all ; that the bright eyes round her must grow dim, the red lips wither, the full, round cheeks fall, and that that same waxen hue would stamp itself too soon on every feature in the room.

And then came the vain, vain wish, the wish that hundreds have echoed, that death in infancy had been her lot ! Yet why that wish ? Why, when there is a loving, a willing Saviour to go to now ? Why, when there is life yet to yield to Him ? Why, when there are talents to devote to His service, wish that life had passed away in infancy ? All who will may come. Jesus has said it ; He who has said, "Ask, and receive, that your joy may be full." Surely, if the wish to be safe for eternity were sincere, that wish would be uppermost, and would work out into realization.

Graham Howard presently stood by the side of the little coffin, with his Bible in his hand, and there was an instant hush through the room. He read a few verses from the story of Lazarus, commenting very sweetly upon those words of the Saviour, "I am the resurrection and the life," "Thy brother shall rise again." And while he spoke of the little one's happy, glorified state, and sought to comfort the parents with the assurance of their child's eternal happiness, faithfully and firmly he spoke to the youth around him, bidding them remember that, perhaps, the hour might be near at hand, when they, too, would be carried to their "long home," when their

eyes would close in death, their pulses cease to beat ; and what terrible moments would those be, if "without Christ and without hope" then !

There were not many dry eyes present, when all rose from their knees, after his solemn concluding prayer. Katie's tears still continued to flow unceasingly, as they prepared to sally forth with their light burden to the grave, for little Samuel was not to be laid far from his old home, and the loved ones there. There was no regular graveyard at Vermont, no enclosed place for the dead ; and so the father had prepared the little grave for his child at the bottom of the long, straggling garden, among a cluster of red-and-white moss-rose bushes, and almost beneath a slender willow, that sent down its delicate branches to the ground. To this lovely spot the little procession slowly walked. Graham Howard led the way, and immediately after him came the little coffin with its snowy pall, and its four youthful bearers, each in white. Then followed the mourning parents, tearless now, but sorrowing still ; and after them their eight remaining children, two and two, the youngest carried by his sister. The remainder of the procession consisted of the Vermont youth, who had come with Fred Linwood ; and other near neighbours, amongst whom were three or four German countenances, made up the group.

As the little coffin rested at the side of the tiny grave, Graham Howard again spoke : spoke of the unseen world, its bliss, its glory ; of the convoy of angels ; of immortal flowers and living fountains ; of the "Lamb in the midst of the throne ;" and then rising into almost joyous tones as he proceeded, he

exclaimed, "What, my friends, what must it be to be there? This little babe has done for ever with sorrow; it is now beholding face to face 'the glories of the Lamb before his Father's throne.' Can we wish it back? Ah, no, fond mother! loving father! you do not—you cannot. But let us who are left behind press forward to the same bright home, where sorrow, and sighing, and death cannot enter!"

He paused a moment, and in the deep silence that followed, the rustling of the leaves of the hymn-book he held in his hand was distinctly audible. Then with deep feeling he read the following sweet verses, which were presently as sweetly sung by the whole of the little group around the grave:—

"What must it be to dwell above,
At God's right hand, where Jesus reigns,
Since the sweet earnest of His love
O'erwhelms us on these dreary plains?
No heart can think, no tongue explain,
What bliss it is with Christ to reign.

"When sin no more obstructs our sight,
When sorrow pains our heart no more,
Then shall we view the Prince of Light,
And all His works of grace explore!
What heights, what depths of love divine
Will then through endless ages shine!

"Well, He has fix'd the happy day,
When the last tear shall fill our eyes,
And God shall wipe that tear away,
And fill us with divine surprise,
To hear His voice, and see His face,
And feel His infinite embrace.

"This is the heaven I long to know,
For this with patience I would wait,
Till wean'd from earth and all below
I mount to my celestial seat,
And wave my palm, and wear my crown,
And with the elders cast them down."

As they ceased singing, a motion from Mr. Howard, and softly, tenderly the little coffin was lowered to its last resting-place ; as tenderly and slowly the earth was thrown in ; and, as the little grave was filled, the pastor turned, and took the parents' hands in his.

"Your child is not dead, my friends," he exclaimed ; "that little baby simply sleeps, till it shall be again united, a glorified body to a glorified spirit. A little while, and we shall rejoice. Come, young friends, once more, as we walk back to the house, let us have your favourite—

" ' We sing of the realms of the bless'd.' "

And soon the full chorus was swelling through the air, not one voice silent but Katie's, and she was still weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE HOMEWARD RIDE.

“Sweeter far,
By those we love, in that all soft’ning hour,
To watch with mutual eyes each coming star,
And the faint moon-rays streaming through our bower
Of foliage, wreath’d and trembling, as the car
Of night rolls duskier onwards.”

THE moon was shining brightly, not much more than a crescent as it was, when the party left Thornbush, on their way back to Vermont and their several homes. Fred had secured his companion and her horse, but he was afraid not their solitary ride; for Mr. Howard was an equestrian too, and how could they evade him? How was it likely that he should discover that there were moments when even his valued society was not coveted?

Katie settled that point herself, though scarcely for the benefit of her brother. Her feelings were too deeply excited by the scene of the afternoon to endure the babble of nonsense the waggon contained; so, quietly borrowing a horse and side-saddle of a neighbour of the Rangers', and Betsy Ranger's skirt, she signified her intention of proceeding home in that manner, to Fred's very great joy and relief. She was scarcely, however, prepared for the convoy who

immediately took her in charge ; for it must be confessed that of all others she had least expected the minister of Vermont at her side—least desired it. There was no help for it, though ; for no sooner had he ascertained that his sister was in safe hands, than Fred and his “fair companion” disappeared ; for, anxious to avoid interruption, he took a circuitous bend, away from the high road, where the opossums and night-birds, curlews and moreporks, could alone have to contend with their voices.

Very lovely it looked, too, in its deep solitude ; the path scarcely admitted two abreast ; did not sometimes. Now and then the gnarled branches of the huge gum-trees stretched quite across them, intertwining above their heads. In one or two places Fred had to dismount and lead forward his companion’s horse, and at last their course appeared completely arrested, the overthrow of a huge gum in the midst of a forest of young wattles, full in the path, proving an enormous barrier.

There was nothing, then, for both to do, but to dismount and view the land, and then they found that one of two courses only remained open to them, to turn back into the high road again and regain their companions, or for Fred to force a passage through the young wattles round the tree. The latter course, though more difficult, yet involving a continuance of their quiet ride, appeared most agreeable, and that was chosen by Fred at once.

Fastening the horses to the limb of the fallen tree, preparatory to commencing his wattle breakage, he came back to where Annie had quietly seated herself to wait, and stood at her side looking down at her.

"Am I to understand, dear Annie, that by thus kindly granting me this ride, as I asked, you have not turned away from my other request? We have had no word yet together; but it is so, is it not?"

She looked up a moment, and placed her trembling little hand in his. He wanted no more. She was his, he knew. Her promise was given with sealed lips, but it was a true one. And now, what would he not do to prove his love and care for her!

Half an hour passed away unheeded before either deemed many moments had elapsed, and then, with Annie's gentle reminder, Fred set to work, soon making a clear pathway for the horses. They were presently once more mounted, and riding slowly through a rather clearer pathway side by side homewards.

"I had very hard thoughts of your brother, dear Annie," said Fred, as they rode along. "When I heard, the afternoon he came, that he was going to spirit you and your mother away from Vermont very shortly, I was half inclined to put in my veto immediately. The time for an effort was so short, and yet it was 'nothing venture, nothing have.' Did I not right to venture?"

"It seems so," said Annie, smiling and blushing in the moonlight.

"But how I should speak to you—that puzzled me most. You would be off before I could get a chance. I did not sleep last night, Annie."

"Nor did I."

"Was it my words that kept you awake? Well, I dare say you wondered what I had to ask you. And yet, not so; for you surely must have known what I thought of you. Now, did you not, dearest?"

"It is too bad to ask me, Mr. Linwood."

"Not Mr. Linwood now, dear Annie; that is cold."

"I am not used to call you Fred yet," said Annie laughing. "But cannot we get out upon the high road again before the waggon comes up?"

"Yes, dear, if you prefer it; or we can go straight home without meeting any one at all."

"We had better not do that; Katie would think it unkind, and Mr. Howard rude."

So they turned presently off into another track, and, after a little intricate meandering, the highroad, looking white in the moonlight, appeared. They stood together, waiting and listening for the approach of the waggon.

"You like Vermont, don't you, Annie?" Fred presently asked.

"Better than any other place in the colony," replied Annie warmly.

"Then the thought of leaving it, even in the company of your brother, was not pleasing to you. I am glad of that."

"Why?"

"Because I wish your future home to be the dearest spot on earth to you, darling; because I want you to have no wish ungratified that I can grant you."

Annie was silent for a few moments. When she spoke again her voice slightly trembled. "You would not wish me to become an idolater," she gently answered; "I still want to be able to say,—

"'The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.'

I would not that the fairest, dearest earthly treasure should make me forget my heavenly."

"Nor I, dear Annie; but we shall seek that together—together. we shall be able to talk of its beauties. Our hearts are one in this, as in all else, dear one—do not forget that. Our home will be brighter for that thought. We may enjoy our Father's bounty, dear Annie, without idolatry; and rejoice in His gifts without requiring the apostle's injunction, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols.'"

The waggon wheels approaching nearer and nearer, with the prancing of the horses on the hard road as an accompaniment, were now distinctly audible. They slowly urged their horses forward, and were presently joined by the whole group. Mr. Howard and Katie rode forward with them the remainder of the way, till the waggon stopped at Sunny Hollow.

A pressing invitation to stay and take supper was made to all, but, on account of the lateness of the hour, refused. In a little time Mr. Howard was on his way home, accompanied by those whose path led the same way. Fred, of necessity, could not intrust his charge to other keeping. The waggon, denuded of its horses and trappings, was left in the yard; and Katie hurried indoors, complaining of fatigue to the kind and anxious Dolly, whose attentions she could have done without just then, and whom she soon got rid of by retiring to her room for the night.

Not to go to bed—tired as she was she could not do that; but, throwing herself into the large chair which she had wheeled into her room that morning, she covered her face with her hands and sighed deeply.

"What will he think of me? what will he think?" she exclaimed to herself, in grieved tones. "I have been absolutely rude to him; have answered so differently to what I feel. Ah! why am I so foolish? why do I throw happiness from me like this? What is it within me so antagonistic to all that is good? And yet I would do good; I would be good. I know my sin, and would come to the Saviour if I only knew how; and he would have told me, would have helped me, and I would not have his help—would not listen to him. He would have led me to his Saviour; would have given me his advice, and I would not take it; would not humble my proud, proud heart. And when he so kindly asked me the cause of my tears, pretended it was because I grieved so for dear little Samuel, when all the time the grief was for myself, for he, I know, is happy: for my own sin—for fear of this death that I know must come to me yet!"

Yes, Katie was right; her heart was proud, and needed humbling—needed leading to the foot of the cross. But a great deal of her pride was external; inwardly, her spirit would cower even to the very dust; and often, as now, when she had rejected the kindly-offered guidance of another, bitterly she repented in private, bitterly bemoaned the folly that kept her away, perhaps from her best friends.

Graham Howard's opportunity with Katie had been a golden one, and he was not the man to lose it. Her sorrow gave him a pretext for speech; and as they rode some distance in the rear of the waggon, a little beyond the noise of its wheels and tongues, he had his own way.

Not all his own way though, for he found Katie

as wilful as her own little pony ; repudiating any serious thoughts, and, as she said afterwards to herself, laying the full charge of her griefs and tears upon the buried little one. It would not do; Graham Howard read her better than that. He knew she was struggling with conviction—that he soon discovered—struggling against life and light. The calm, quiet, yet serious question he addressed to her was sufficient to betray his thoughts, when suddenly, after she had made a vain attempt to laugh away her tears, he turned to her, exclaiming—

“Miss Linwood, do you not desire to have Christ for your friend?”

“Why do you ask me such a question?” said Katie, rather haughtily.

“Because,” he replied sadly, “I fear you are seeking to shut Him out of your heart; you are seeking to give the heart to the world that He desires for His own.”

“If I am,” said Katie slowly, “surely I am permitted to do as I like. No one has a right to interfere.”

“Only the right of friendship,” replied Graham. “It is not in the nature of one to see a friend run into danger and not start to the rescue.”

“What danger am I in?”

“In danger of forsaking the fountain of living waters, and ‘hewing unto yourself cisterns that hold no water;’ in danger of leaving on one side the bread of life, and satisfying yourself with husks; in danger of proving yourself a hearer of the gospel, but not a doer of it, Miss Linwood: is not this danger enough?”

Katie’s eyes were full of tears, and her bosom

heaving with sobs, but she contrived to reply, "Is that all the danger?"

"Is it not enough?" he replied in a deeply-grieved manner; "but no, there is greater danger still; for our Saviour Himself said, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'" He paused for a few moments, as though after that terrible sentence he could say no more; but she did not speak, and he presently went on—

"Believe me, Miss Linwood, I have hoped such different things of you. I have looked forward to the time when you should, with your brother, be aiding me forward in the gospel work. I have built highly on what seems to be a baseless foundation. Is it to be so?"

"There is no help for it, Mr. Howard."

"Why no help? You are not happy; I am sure you are not; and if you would only take your sorrow to Jesus, all would be well. Why will you not permit me to help you forward? Why will you refuse this dear, this loving Saviour?"

"What if I do not see Him as a loving Saviour? What if I can see no kindness in Him; nothing but the harsh Judge, the austere Lawgiver?" said Katie, in low tones.

"Ah! you are not looking to Jesus, Miss Katie; it is not Jesus you are looking at. He is all love, all goodness, all mercy. It is the high and mighty God who is the Judge; but when we flee to Jesus, and hide ourselves there, the Judge no longer looks upon us, but upon 'our Shield,' and for His sake we are accepted."

A little glad thrill ran through Katie's frame as

she saw the beauty of what he said. Her soul clung to the "Shield," but not for worlds would she have betrayed herself. At this juncture she caught sight of her brother in the distance, and quickened her horse's pace ; her companion did the same, and they were no longer alone. He shook hands with her when they parted at Sunny Hollow, warmly and inquiringly, but no other opportunity occurred for renewing the conversation.

And now she sat in the large chair, reviewing the past, not only the past events of the evening, but of her bygone life, and for the first time in that life, at last she prayed : prayed that she might find Jesus a shield indeed ; that beneath His shadow she might find repose ; and as at last she crept away to bed, cold, and shivering with emotion, the last of her waking thoughts was expressed in Toplady's inimitable lines—

" Rock of Ages, shelter me ;
Let me hide my soul in Thee."

CHAPTER XXXV.

SAD NEWS FROM HOME.

“Is this, dear Lord, the thorny road
Which leads us to the mount of God?
Are these the toils Thy people know,
While in the wilderness below?”

“’Tis even so—Thy faithful love
Doth all thy children’s graces prove;
’Tis thus—our pride and self must fall,
That Jesus may be all in all.”

DAYS passed away, almost unnoticed by some of our young friends, for happiness leaves little room for remarking the flight of time, without it be that it runs all too quickly. Certainly “the course of true love,” in the case of Fred and his sweet friend Annie, ran very smoothly with nothing to interrupt it. The watchful eye of the fond mother could detect nothing that she would not desire in her daughter’s intended, and James Maitland fraternized at once with the young farmer, entered into all his plans, listened to his advice, and half promised to take it. As to Katie, she had guessed the whole matter before her brother revealed it to her, and was not therefore in the least surprised; she could not help two or three tears escaping when he whispered the news to her, though in her warmest tones she answered him—

"I knew it, dear Fred, and am glad of it ; she will make you a dear little wife." And when she next saw Annie, which was very soon, kissing her warmly, she exclaimed—

"My dear Annie, my own sweet little sister, you have made Fred very happy, I thank you heartily for it."

But, in her inmost soul, Katie felt very, very sad and lonely. It seemed, indeed, to her, as if she was being left alone, as if the happiness of those around her could have nothing in common with her desolate heart, as if their bright, joyous countenances were only a mockery of her grief ; and they, in the mutual love that makes people selfish, forgot how lonely she must be, and suffered her to disappear from among them for long intervals without discovering she had left them. Certainly they often wished her to accompany them in their walks and rides, but she was fertile in inventing excuses, and they, engrossed in their own society, were, perhaps, too easily induced to accept them. Be it how it may, Katie was almost always solitary now.

"I can't think what ails Miss Katie ; she is not like the same," said Dolly to Mrs. Ranger, one day ; "her colour is all going, and her appetite too ; she feeds like a bird. Then she don't care for a single thing she used to ; she takes no care for the cows, or the dairy, or the butter, or any of it at all ; it's well we're not so busy as we were a time ago. It cuts me to the heart to see her stealing so silently in and out, away for the most part among the rocks, out of sight ; she's never been the same since your baby died."

"Wait a bit, Dolly," said Mrs. Ranger quietly, "it will all be for the best; the world is showing its dark side to her now; perhaps by-and-by, through the clouds, she may see Jesus."

"I wish to my heart she may; she needs something to comfort her; I only wish our minister could say the word!"

Mrs. Ranger was right; the dark side of the world was turned towards Katie, and what was worse, the dark side of her own heart, and very dark it seemed, so dark that she despaired of it ever becoming clear and pure. For though sometimes she gathered a grain of comfort from her remembrance of Graham Howard's parting words, about taking shelter in Jesus, and the Judge looking there, not upon the sinner, but the shield, though she very often repeated to herself with clasping hands—

"Rock of Ages, shelter me,
Let me hide myself in Thee!"

yet still the next moment the law with its thunders would alarm her, and the terrific sentence, "Do this and live," make her shiver to her very soul, for she was learning that terrible lesson that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" she was gradually learning, that "Not the righteous, but sinners Jesus came to save." And what, ah, what could she do?

But Katie, like many another sinking, trembling sinner, shut up all her troubles in the depths of her own heart, and obstinately shrunk from revealing a particle of her sorrow. She rather shunned Graham Howard than not, gliding quickly out of chapel when

he approached, or disappearing out of the back door when he entered the front ; and yet that very action was always repented of with bitter tears, while she grieved alone unutterably that the pride of her heart kept her distant from all sources of comfort ; that the very stronghold of strength she so longed to apply to for advice, was the one of all others she constantly shunned. Even when her brother kindly questioned her as to her change of manner and troubled brow, she would assume a manner which was but very foreign to her feelings, and but half convinced him. The little Bible that made the constant companion of her daily walks, was carefully and adroitly substituted for a volume of poetry, if any one approached her. Poor Katie, she was shutting herself up from consolation, and she knew it.

One afternoon, Fred and Annie had taken a ride to a distant village, and she was left alone with only Dolly for companion. Rather late in the afternoon she laid aside the work she had been affecting to do, and tying on her hat and throwing on a shawl, for the days were beginning to be rather chilly now and then, she set out for a walk, her two books for companions, as usual.

How fair it looked, for the green old gums were not less green, though the fruit trees in the gardens were stripping of their leaves, though the latest chrysanthemums were in blossom, and though vine-leaves were all yellow and sere. The grass, too, was recovering a little of its freshness, for there had been already some heavy showers that had laid the dust, and given a touch of green to the ground, and brought a few wild flowers to light. A few heavy

showers that had widened the creek and sent its waters tumbling noisily and boisterously along their way. The afternoon sun was so pleasant too, and threw such exquisite light upon all, while a delicate haze mellowed the distant hills and softened the rocky declivities. Katie chose a way in which she thought she should be least likely to be disturbed, a well-beaten pathway across the creek, deeply fringed with trees on either hand; trees whose branches sometimes met above her, and hid the blue of heaven from her gaze. It suited well with her desolate mood, and there were many such walks round Sunny Hollow.

Fairly secure in her retreat, she took out her little Bible and read as she walked; she opened first on that beautiful psalm of David's, the forty-second, commencing—

“As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”

“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?”

“Yes,” she thought, “I surely know something of this thirst; I am wanting God, waiting for God, thirsting in vain for His presence.” She read again, and the tears welled out as she read—

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.”

“I shall yet praise Him? Shall I?” thought Katie; “shall I ever praise God for the help of His countenance? Will He indeed hear me?” The tears were almost blinding her now, but she still read on.

Then turning back a leaf, her eye caught something else.

“I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

“He brought me up also out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

“And He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”

She stood still for a moment, and looked fixedly at the words. “‘Patient waiting,’” she murmured, “followed by ‘deliverance.’ Yes, that is clear enough. Oh! if by patient waiting I could attain what I want; if only the Lord would hear me!”

“And whenever has He turned away the earnest seeker?” inquired a quiet voice nearly at her side.

Katie started violently, the colour receding from her cheek, and as suddenly returning, for, seated on a fallen tree, himself with Bible in hand, and two or three fly-sheets upon which he was taking notes, was Graham Howard.

Flight or concealment was equally impossible this time; Katie sought neither, but stood her ground as best she might.

Not long, for he did not choose that she should stand; he quietly led her to his own seat on the fallen tree, and took up his place at her side.

“I came here for solitude, Miss Katie,” he said, with a slight smile; “it appears you have done the same, and so, without dreaming of it, we have interrupted each other. As it is so, permit me to ask that question again I asked just now: Whenever did

the Lord turn back one who patiently waited for Him?"

"You know more of these things than I do, Mr. Howard," said Katie, gravely, too fairly caught in the toils to be able or willing to retreat. "Perhaps," she continued in a low voice, "it is those who are impatient that receive no blessing."

"That patient waiting, Miss Katie, does not imply apathy," replied Graham, taking up his little Bible; "the very psalm you have been reading is contrary to that: 'As the hart panteth for the waterbrook.' Does not that imply vehement desire, ardent longing after God? Then farther on, in the 130th Psalm, David says again,—

"'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope.

"'My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning.' No apathetic watching that, as I am sure you will admit, if you remember watching all night by the sick."

Katie did remember it; did remember how earnestly, when watching at Stephen's bedside, she had longed for the first dawning streak of daylight, and in her own heart compared it with the longing now after God and salvation. The comparison seemed strong.

"In another place David says, 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage; wait, I say, on the Lord.' We are to ask, you know, if we want to receive; we are to seek if we wish to find;" and Graham Howard looked eagerly down at the bowed head before him, tears almost rising to his eyes, as he saw how utterly bowed it was.

"Will you not give me the happiness of knowing that you are amongst the seekers?" he presently asked in softened tones, after a lengthened silence, which neither had cared to break.

"I am nothing good, Mr. Howard," said Katie, in a low broken voice.

"I do not ask you that," he replied, a flush of pleasure illumining his fine countenance; "I do not ask you what you think of yourself, I only ask you if you are seeking Jesus."

But she did not answer that, and he stood patiently waiting by her side, watching her bowed head, bowed down in her hands as though it would never rise again, and sighed deeply.

"You will not give me that consolation?" There was deep pathos in his tones, as he spoke.

She sprang up then, and tossed back the hair from her heated brow.

"Why should you trouble about me? What should induce you to ask these questions? How can it concern you?" she asked with sudden petulance, but she ended in tears.

"More, perhaps, than you deem," replied Graham, in deep, earnest sounds. But he more quietly added, as if stifling some inward feeling that sought for outward expression, "Has your minister no interest in these things? Has he prayed and watched for souls, and may he not rejoice over those he hopes are saved?"

"You have nothing yet to rejoice in me," said Katie, sadly. "I am not saved, and fear I never shall be. It is hard, hard work to be a Christian!"

"But easy to trust all to Christ!" He took her

hand a moment in both his, for she was in haste to go ; "I trust you are coming, Miss Katie, though you will not admit it, and that one day yet you will be spared to tell me what a dear Saviour you have found."

And so they parted, each turning homewards. Poor Katie ! she was yet to find the road to the kingdom a thorny one, through afflictions she was yet to learn the sweetness of Jesus' love.

When she reached home she found her brother returned ; he was waiting at the door for her when she came up : the expression of his face alarmed her.

"Is all well?" she asked, in startled tones.

"Not quite, at home," he replied, as steadily as he could ; "we must both start for home immediately !"

"What is the matter?" faltered Katie, the colour receding from her cheeks, for the second time that evening. "Not mother?"

"No, not mother," replied Fred, "but poor Stephen again ; he has fallen from his horse and broken both his legs !"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TRYING HOURS.

“ Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer :
Trials bring us to His feet ;
Lay us low, and keep us there ! ”

AN hour later and two horses stood ready caparisoned at the door, waiting for Fred and his sister. The news they had received came by letter, and consequently there had already been some delay. There was no telegraphing in those days of colonial progress, and perhaps the more direct method of sending a message was not practicable. Be that as it may, the brother and sister suffered nothing further to hinder their progress. With a few parting directions to Dolly, from Katie, they mounted their horses, and were soon turning their backs on Sunny Hollow, prepared for a rapid night-ride homeward.

“ You must try and keep up, Katie darling, for mother’s sake,” said Fred, as he noticed his sister’s bowed head and almost drooping figure.

“ Perhaps it may not be so bad as we hear—it may be worse ; but oh, Katie, our heavenly Father does all things well, and even this may be seen to work together for good.”

Katie could not trust her voice to reply : she was

thinking how that could be ; how her brother's terrible death could in any way lead to good ; how this dreadful trial could be in any way sanctified. Then came Bible words to her by way of answer : "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in Me ye shall have peace."

So in the midst of great trial and trouble it was possible to have this peace ; "The peace that passeth all understanding." Katie prayed earnestly for it as they rode rapidly and silently along. She was beginning already to find one use of trials. They were teaching her to pray ; they were opening her lips, and putting prayer in her mouth ; prayer for herself, and oh ! what earnest prayer for Stephen ! If he was going to die, how was his soul fitted for death ? Would that God would hear her agonizing cries for him ! Would that, even in the last hour, He would show Himself all-powerful to change, to turn the soul in love to Him !

The brother and sister were united in their aspirations, though neither knew the other was praying. Fred prayed most earnestly for both sister and brother ; prayed that the heavy trial might at least bring his sister out of her gloomy state of mind into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." But it was a bitter, a painful trial, that night's ride, full of the torture of suspense as it was. Never in after life was it forgotten by either. Every little incident was painfully impressed on the memory of each ; never had ride seemed so long, so dreary, though a beautiful night it was, for the moon was at its full, gloriously clear ; and the dark blue of heaven was unsullied by a cloud, and studded here and there with

twinkling stars, looking pale in the brilliant moonlight.

The moon went down, and the morning star alone glimmered in the horizon, where dawn was sending forth its first faint streaks.

“There is a soft and fragrant hour,
Sweet, fresh, reviving in its power ;
’Tis when a ray
Steals from the veil of parting night,
And by its mild preclusive light,
Foretells the day.”

And even for those sorrowing hearts the approach of day was sweet. The bright dawn will bring hope with it, while hope can have existence ; while night makes all our gloomy forebodings gloomier still. One gleam of sunshine will often revive the drooping spirit, and replume it for action.

But the sunlight had not yet climbed the hill-top when Fred and his sister came in sight of the old homestead, embosomed in hills and trees. At any other time, and in any other circumstances, the sight of the dear old home would have sent a thrill of pleasure through Katie’s heart—now it only gave her a thrill of pain. And yet it looked calm and peaceful in the early dawn, almost buried as it was in the thick canopies of jasmine and passion-flower, and Rosa Banksia intermingled. The blinds were all down, too—that looked peaceful, though a thin column of smoke was slowly rising from the kitchen-chimney, which to its very top was ivy-wreathed, betraying there were wakers already in the household.

Peaceful did we say the old homestead looked ?

Scarcely that to Katie. The sere and yellow leaves of the fruit-trees in the large old garden, the few pale flowers that decked the faded beds, the very quiet that reigned around, to her were significant of grief. Tears came to her eyes, and sobs she strove to quiet shook the slight figure as they slowly rode up by the side of the house, and dismounted.

The sound of the horses' feet, quietly as they rode in, had been heard in the kitchen. Their father came to the open door to meet them, and answered their mute questions by a shake of the head, and a sorrowful—

“Not much hope! Keep up, Katie, my girl, for your poor mother's sake.”

“Is he conscious?” asked Fred, below his breath.

“Yes, yes, quite so; he wants Katie; he is asking for her all the time. Come in, breakfast is ready; you must not see him till you have rested.”

“Rested! when should she be that?” thought Katie with overflowing eyes. If bodily, certainly not mentally, for in what a state of mental unrest she was! Stephen wanted her! her of all others! Why did he want her? What could she do for him?

She went into her little room—her little room still, religiously reserved for her in all her absence. It was the same into which we introduced our readers when we indulged them with their first peep at Katie. Joyous was she then, bright and joyous as a bird, welcoming her birthday with a gladness she would never have done could she have foreseen the future. Oh! wisely hid from us is our future; wisely concealed the trials and sorrows that are coming. These frail bodies would never endure the weight of expected trouble; our spirit would crush as a moth before the

mere anticipation, and therefore the loving-kindness of a Father has not revealed them. Would we seek to rend aside the veil that shrouds our future? No, dear readers; no, thrice no! We would not. Rather would we leave body, soul, and spirit under the guardian care of our Father in heaven, who "knoweth our frame, who remembereth that we are dust!"

Throwing off her hat and habit, indulging in a plentiful ablution, and then arranging herself in a morning wrapper, Katie's next step was to fling herself upon her little bed, and assuming her usual attitude, her face buried deep in her pillows, to hide her tears and sobs there. So few months had rolled away, and yet what changes they had brought—changes she had little dreamt of. Fred, how changed had he become, and what a different aspect things at Sunny Hollow were already beginning to assume; and was she herself unchanged? No, indeed, if any were changed, it was herself. But was the change for the better or the worse? She could hardly answer that; the joyousness was gone, the thoughtlessness, light-heartedness had flown; but though she was under the heavy cloud of a sense of God's displeasure—though as yet she had not entered into the shelter of the "Rock of Ages"—though the storm still beat around her, and she still exclaimed,

"Cover my defenceless head,
With the shadow of Thy wing,"—

yet still, was it not better to be thus, than apathetic? Was it not better to be for a time under the cloud, hereafter to emerge into the broad sunlight of God's love, than to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"?

to follow the multitude down the pleasant broad road to destruction? Surely, surely it was!

Are any of our dear young readers like Katie—feeling after Christ in the darkness, seeking Him through the night, and dreading never to find Him? Take courage, dear ones, “those that seek shall find;” that precious promise will never grow old, will never fail. The clouds shall by and by part, and the pure sunlight be revealed. You seek Jesus, and assuredly by and by you shall find Him! And ah! then for you awaits a glorious future, when you “shall see Him as He is,” with no veil between, when faith shall be exchanged for sight, and the clouds be rolled away for ever!

In the midst of her trouble, one thing surprised Katie—prayer no longer seemed difficult; her whole thoughts turned to prayer; her very breath was tinctured with it; and in the midst of her tears, in the midst of her grief, with prayer yet upon her lips, the wearied body had the ascendancy. She fell into a deep sleep.

“Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High: therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SISTER'S MISSION.

“Peace—through the blood of the cross.”

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

DARKENED windows and shrouding curtains softened the rays of the sun that fell from the eastern sky, and would have penetrated the chamber but for them, and broken the slumber of the sufferer within. Rest and sleep were too precious to be lightly broken—there was balm in both, and the tender care of loving friends took all precautions that neither light nor noise should disturb the fitful slumber.

If, indeed, all slumber it was, and that was scarcely possible to tell, for the face was almost concealed among the pillows which were purposely drawn round, as closely as practicable, the broken limbs permitting no other position than a prostrate one upon the back.

The room was well furnished and replete with every convenience—softly carpeted and draped with curtains. The hangings of the bed were white, and almost all draped around it now, to provoke the slumber that it had been found so difficult to win.

Beside the invalid, there was but one other occupant of the room; a little figure in a morning wrapper, with light flowing ringlets, all pushed back from a fair clear brow, and cheek without its bloom—pale with anxiety, fatigue, and grief. Crouched behind the curtain sat Katie, jealously watching her prostrate brother through a loophole she had purposely left, watching every breath, every movement, however slight, with an aching, beating heart, and tears that came no farther than her sweet blue eyes, but pained her as they came.

Have you, gentle reader, ever sat thus beside the sick, watching, fearfully watching, for the last breath to be drawn? If you have, you will be able to sympathize with our poor little Katie, as she crouched, yea, literally crouched, beside her dying brother. Dying! Yes, she knew now he was; she knew again the leaden hue, the dark circles round mouth and eyes; that strange, strange indescribable expression she had but so lately witnessed in the dying baby. It was here too, she read it on her brother's face, though they did say they thought him better.

Oh! was he dying? Dying without hope? Was his intemperance indeed going to place him in a drunkard's grave? And was there no hope beyond for him? She had not ventured, had not dared to ask; but she heard, nevertheless, that no response had passed his lips to any questions put to him of a serious kind. The minister of W—— had been with him, talking and praying; his mother had unceasingly tried to win him to Christ, to extract his feelings from him; but vainly, for whenever they tried to direct him to Jesus, he constantly replied,—

“Where is Katie? tell her I want her!”

And Katie came at last.

But why did he want her? And what would she do? There was one thing, and that, in her agony lest her brother should be lost for ever, she could and did do—she prayed, agonized in prayer, like Jacob wrestling with the angel; it seemed to her she could take no denial. Her brother must be saved. “Thou hast promised, Lord,” she cried, “that all shall be granted to those who believe; I believe that Thou canst save my brother: not his life—no; if it is Thy will take that—but spare, oh, spare his soul—show that he is Thine—that Thou hast bought him with a price! Hear, Lord! for Thine own honour, hear!”

And the perspiration stood out upon her forehead in great drops, and her hands clenched together till the nails were almost embedded in the soft flesh, so great was the agony and anguish of the petitioner, so deep the trial of her faith.

And yet there was no sound went up in that silent chamber.

“Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace,” came floating melodiously to her memory. It was as if the sweet voice of Jesus Himself had spoken it, almost as if her outward ears drank in the music—that it was but one of those exceedingly precious communings the Holy Spirit is pleased at times to grant to the suppliant. Jesus still thus talks to His children, still comforts and strengthens them thus—still thus reveals to them the love of His heart. Oh, holy and blessed Comforter, Thou promised good! Wouldst Thou but more frequently dwell in our poor hearts, how well with us would it be!

Well?—eh! and Katie felt that it was well with her too, and would be well with her dying brother. No longer crouched to the earth in agony, she sat with almost a smile upon her lips, a little streak of colour coming back to her pale cheeks, and her brow smooth and calm as the surface of a lake. What had wrought the change? Her brother, apparently, was in a deep slumber. No words had passed between them—no, indeed, but Jesus' words had entered her soul, and that was enough, was more than enough!

Fellow-Christian—traveller Zionward—you are no stranger to these communings of Jesus, and is it not indeed sweet when He talks thus with you by the way? Do not your hearts burn within; and does not fear, and weakness, and unbelief, all vanish before His presence, like mist before the rising sun?

“The opening heavens above me shine
With beams of sacred bliss;
While Jesus tells me He is mine,
And whispers I am His.”

“Katie!” The voice was weak and tremulous that called her; she gently put aside the curtains that parted them, and kissed the pale brow, softly exclaiming,—

“Dear Stepby, I am come!”

“Yes, at last—I wanted you; I am glad you are come; I am going to die this time, Katie, I know.”

She held back her tears forcibly, and as forcibly steadied her voice as she answered,—

“Are you afraid to die, dear Stephen?” An expression of deep agony passed over his face; he waited a moment, and she softly repeated her question,—

“Dear Stepby, are you fearful of death?”

"Death is fearful," he answered ; " and what have I to remove its sting ?"

"What all may have, Stephy. The blood of Jesus Christ, which taketh away that which causes the sting. You know the sting of death is sin."

"Yes, and I have been a great sinner ; I have sinned against light and knowledge !"

"But not sinned beyond the mercy of Jesus ! You can't do that, Stephen, for His blood cleanseth from all sin !"

"You used not to think so, Katie ; you used not to talk so. They all talk on and on about Christ to me, but I did not believe they could understand my case ; I do not believe they have ever despised Christ like I have ; despised His people, despised His word, like I have. But you, Katie, I used to think in these things you were something like myself ; I used to think that you cared as little for religion as I did. That's why I wanted you ; I wanted to see how you would feel in trouble, for I knew you would be troubled for me ; I wanted to ask you if you really believed there was any truth in these things that they tell me of—any truth in the Bible, any truth in an hereafter ?"

"Dear Stephy, it is all true ! all true ! I have found that out myself !" Katie's eyes were streaming tears, but she kept her ground.

"You believe ?"

"Yes, yes, I do, I do !"

"It is true, then, that is certain, if you believe !" and he sank back on his pillow with a groan of anguish.

"Quite true, dear Stephy, quite true ; but that is a cause for joy, not anguish ! If Jesus has pardoned

me, He will pardon you ; I know He will. I, too, sinned against light and knowledge ; I, too, laughed at and ridiculed His word ; I, too, trampled on His precepts, and heeded not His promises, and despised His counsels ; I, too, till but lately, put aside convictions, put aside prayer, and went on in my own mad career !”

“And now ?” asked Stephen, in low, husky tones, eagerly looking for an answer.

“Now ?” said Katie, “now,

“ ‘I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God.’

All of them, each of them ; He is teaching me to bring them all to Him, instead of trying to remove them myself ; He is showing me how His precious blood can cleanse ‘each spot’ without one of my poor efforts. Yes, dear Stephy, I am learning how to come with ‘nothing in my hand’ to Jesus. That’s how He likes a sinner to come ; and He is taking me to be His, and He will take you, if you will but bring all to Him.”

“I have nothing to bring,” said Stephen, bitterly.

“Nothing but sin ! Yes, dear Stephy, I know ; but bring that, take your sin to Him.”

“My sin, Katie, that is the sting I fear in death
Ah, Katie !”

“Well, take it to Him ; the burden is too great for you, the sting is too sharp ; take it to Him—He will hide it behind His back, and forgive and receive you for ever. Will you not, dear Stephen ?”

“Will I not ? eh, gladly will I, if I can,” said Stephen, a ray of light stealing into his dark soul.
“Yes, I have plenty of sin, I don’t want that ; take

it, Jesus ! take it, and hide it with Thy precious blood !”

He closed his eyes, and such a deathly hue stole over his face, that, fearfully alarmed, Katie called aloud for help. There was plenty of help at hand. Stephen had only fainted, but for a few moments they thought him dying. A restorative revived him sufficiently to enable him to look round for Katie ; he motioned her to remain, and she sank down quietly in her old place, only looping back the curtain that he might see her, and holding his thin hand in hers. He pressed it once or twice, and looked upwards, but did not speak ; but she saw that many times his lips were moving as though in prayer ; and once he softly whispered,—

“Thank you, Katie, I am glad that Jesus will take my sin ; I have nothing else to give Him.”

She gently repeated by way of answer,—

“Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling ;
Naked, come to Thee for dress ;
Empty, look to Thee for grace ;
Black, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”

He smiled, and pressed her hand again, and after that he sank into a quiet sleep.

“The sting of death is sin ; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory !”

“He hath blotted out the handwriting of ordinances against us, nailing them to His cross !”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SETTING SUN.

“ So fades a summer cloud away,
So sinks the gale when storms are o’er ;
So gently shuts the eye of day ;
So dies a wave along the shore.”

THERE was a change in the invalid from the earliest dawn of that day ; a change the anxious parents saw, and yet dreaded to see or interpret.

From the time of the accident there had been little intermission of severe pain, gradually amounting to agony ; but with the first peep of dawn there had been a gradual cessation of suffering—he ceased his complaints, and slumber began to succeed.

Was the change good or bad ? They anxiously waited the arrival of the two doctors, who had been in constant consultation since the accident occurred. How the friends of the sick cling to the medical man, hoping even against hope ; how anxiously are his visits anticipated, how eagerly his countenance examined, and what a weighty charge hangs over the doctor’s head ! Surely, of all other men, he should be a Christian ; of all others he needs the wisdom from on high ! But how many are there in this southern land of ours, among our staff of medical men, who care to name the name of Christ ?

Fred and Katie shared together the watch that day; for, exhausted by previous watching and anxiety, their father and mother were obliged to yield to their entreaties, and take a little rest in an adjacent chamber. Katie still retained her position close by her brother's pillow, her face many times concealed in it; for she was still earnestly praying—praying that there might yet be greater manifestation that Jesus was received and loved—greater manifestation that hope was rightly founded, that the soul was winging its way to a happier world; for after the doctor had seen him, she knew there was no longer reason to hope for life, that was fast ebbing away—fast, fast. Katie knew that by the grave shake of the head; knew that but for a little time her brother would be with them. Oh, how earnestly it made her pray through her bitter tears!

And Fred, too, he was more troubled still; for he had had no word with his brother—his continued sleep prevented it—and he knew nothing even to lead him to think hopefully of him. But he prayed unceasingly, and awaited for an awakening with an eagerness he could not express.

And hour after hour wore away, and, with scarcely any intervals, Stephen strangely slept on, the shadow of death increasingly lingering about his eyes and mouth, the cold dew resting on his forehead. Fred sat with his elbows leaning upon the bottom of the bed, his face in his hands, watching every breath that passed the pale lips with painful intensity. Was he going to pass from them like this? Was there to be no sign—no word? He could bear the silence no longer, but came softly round and stood by his sister's side.

"Katie, is he going to die like this? Don't you think he will awake again?"

"I don't know," she sadly whispered; "yet I think he will, before—before——" and her voice faltered; she could not speak the word.

"Oh that he would! It is dreadful to die and give no sign of other but worldly feeling; I would give everything to know that he trusted Christ!"

"I believe he does," said Katie, in firm low tones.

"You do?" was Fred's whispered exclamation, a joyous light coming into his eyes. "My dear Katie, what makes you think so?"

"His own words!" was Katie's reply, low and fervent.

"He has spoken to you, then?"

"Yes;" but Katie held up her finger then to silence him, and leaned eagerly forward to the dying one.

His eyes were open now, but their brightness was gone. All was evidently dim to his vision. He stretched forward his hand, murmuring,—

"Katie."

"Here, dear Stephy, I have not left you a moment;" and Katie clasped the hand she held, and kissed the clammy brow. "What can I do for you, dear Steve?"

"Pray, Katie, pray; I am going fast; pray that Jesus may be with me!"

"I do, dear Stephy, I do all the time; and He will, I'm sure He will. He always comes to those who want Him; He always is near those who ask for Him; He is by you now, dear brother; His rod and staff will comfort you."

"I have taken my sin to Him."

"And is He not hiding it, Stephy? is not His blood sufficient to blot it all out?"

"Yes, yes, quite, though I have forgotten Him all my life long. He says, 'Come,' and I will go to Him. Oh, Katie, I have been a great sinner!"

"Yes, but He is a great Saviour, and saves to the uttermost."

There was a moment's quiet; Stephen lay perfectly still, with eyes upraised to heaven, and scarcely able to believe his ears, Fred stood with clasped hands in unutterable wonder. "Were these, indeed, his brother and sister? Oh, unspeakable mercy! who teacheth like Him?" thought he in silent thanksgiving, as he hurried to the door, and quietly but quickly summoned his parents. He knew that his brother's moments were growing few upon earth, and longed that they also should hear the happy tidings. Returning with them, he bent over his dying brother.

"Do you not know me, dear Steve?" he eagerly asked.

But the dying eyes gave no sign of recognition as token that they knew the companion of their boyhood; and, deeply distressed, Fred spoke again.

"You know Jesus, do you not, Steve?"

"I have just learnt to know Him," was the feeble reply.

"And to love Him?"

"Yes, yes! He has blotted out my sins!"

"You will love Him more in heaven, dear Stephen; you will praise Him loud enough there, will you not?" said Katie.

"Louder than any of them, Katie, for I shall have

more cause!" he answered, his dying eyes lighting up for a moment in triumph. He lay still for a few moments, the silence only broken by his slightly hurried breathing; and the sobs would burst forth, not untinged with joy and thanksgiving as they were.

"Crying, Katie!" he presently faltered. "Not for me!—don't; you should rejoice; Would you have me live, like I was before, in my sin; or die, and live with Christ, which is far better?"

"I would rather see you die, dear Stephy, and go to Jesus. It is selfish in me to weep, but I love you so, dear Stephen!"

"Yes, I know that; but Jesus loves me more. Oh, that I had found Him, and served Him in life! Will He accept me now?" he feebly whispered, as a cloud momentarily crossed the sunshine of his mind.

"Yes! do not doubt Him; do not doubt Him, my dear Stephen! What did He say to the dying thief? 'This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise!' He says that to you, dear Stephen. You will soon see Jesus, and cast down your crown before Him."

He raised his hands and eyes, in reply, towards heaven, but the shadows were deepening round his mouth and eyes, the dew of death stood out upon his forehead. Stephen was fast leaving them.

"Let me once more see the light of earth," he whispered, huskily. "It's growing dark—so dark." And they put back the curtains from the window, and let the full light of evening into the room. The hills were glowing in the roseate hues of the setting sun; the crimson glow bedewed the whole heavens. But the aspect of the chamber was eastern, and therefore no sunbeam stole within. Still, the room was

anything but dark. It was the darkness of death that was sealing the mortal vision. How soon were those eyes to reopen on a fairer, brighter scene—upon celestial fields and living sunshine—upon a sun that would no more go down!

With his dying head resting upon his mother's shoulder, and his hands clasped in his sister's loving, trembling embrace, Stephen lay placidly breathing out his life. His father stood with his silver-haired head bowed, and his arms folded, at the foot of the bed, utterly bowed in spirit as in body, unable to utter a word. Fred at last arose, and then the voice of prayer, fervent, loving prayer for the safe conduct of his dear brother through the Jordan to the celestial city, echoed softly through the room. For the comfort of the rod and the staff, for the presence of Jesus to the last moment of life, and that by and by there might be with all a happy reunion before the throne of the Lamb; for this how earnestly, how entreatingly he prayed! And while he prayed, the sun went down, and the shadows of evening began to fall thick around; and while he prayed, there were a few whispered words from the dying one. They listened attentively, and caught the faint, dying accents, —

“Lord, I come! just as I am!”

And then there was a brief, brief struggle, and the sun of Stephen's life had set for ever on earth.

Set for ever on earth, to rise in brighter beauty in heaven. Jesus had received him—His loving arms had enfolded him. He was safe now, for in all his sin he had come to Jesus; and, just as he was, Jesus had taken him; just as he was, Jesus had

blessed him ; just as he was, Jesus had justified him ; and now, just as he was, He had taken him home to glory—"Made meet by the precious blood that blotteth out all sin."

Those weeping friends knew this ; they had no doubt of the efficacy of that blood ; they doubted not that the beloved one was safe in the arms of a loving Saviour. And, though nature will feel these separations, still they "sorrowed not as those without hope."

The excitement over, and suspense at rest, and Katie's power was gone. She saw them close the eyes that had to the last turned towards her, and then all consciousness forsook her—she fell senseless to the floor ! Tenderly her brother carried her to her mother's room ; tenderly they watched over her ; but though, after a time, consciousness returned, she lay quiet and nerveless, and almost pulseless, all night, notwithstanding the stimulants constantly administered. The tension on mind and body had been terribly severe. No wonder that the slender frame felt some of the shock ; no wonder that it succumbed to the oppressed brain.

And yet, through the long illness that followed this tension of mind, there was the "peace that passeth all understanding" to comfort and sustain her ; the knowledge that her brother was safe, to uphold her. No longer fear of wild and dreadful wandering into sin. God had, indeed, most wonderfully put a stop to his wild career, and brought him to Himself. In those days Katie's faith was established, the sorrow and heaviness removed from her spirit. Like a little child, she sat down at the feet of Jesus, taught to see and feel the reason for all that had

passed, and to acknowledge, with James, that "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."

She had also learnt, amidst her trials, to sing—

" Father, I know that all my life
Is portion'd out for me;
And the changes that will surely come,
I do not fear to see:
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

" I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know:
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

" There are briers besetting every path
Which call for patient care;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer
But a lowly heart that leans on Thee
Is happy anywhere."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WINTER AT VERMONT VALE.

“The rocks are from their old foundation rent,
The winds redouble, and the rains augment;
The waves in heaps are dash'd against the shore,
And now the woods, and now the billows roar.”

VERMONT VALE was in its winter season; and winter at Vermont Vale was very much like winter anywhere else in our southern land—replete with rude storms and heavy rains; replete with murmuring creeks and falling branches. Perhaps the artillery of heaven re-echoed and reverberated more loudly here than in the plains, for there were hills enough to throw back the sound. Perhaps, too, Boreas held rather more unbounded sway along the valley, roaring, like a chained spirit, in and out the hills that shut him in. Perhaps, too, the rain fell a little more heavily, for hills are said to attract the limpid fluid, and a valley is a tempting reservoir. Be that as it may, the winter that followed the events of the last chapter proved a very wet one.

Shortly after his brother's death, Fred returned alone to Sunny Hollow. His sister was ill, and unable to accompany him. She needed her mother's tender care and nursing, and all that winter she remained at home, even after she was convalescent—

sheltered, like any fragile flower, with loving attention. The roads, too, were completely saturated with the winter rains, so as to be in many places impassable. She was beginning already mentally to bid adieu to Sunny Hollow as her queendom, for it would be hers but a little while longer. She had merely consented to return and prepare the house for the reception of its new mistress, whenever things were in the state of forwardness to make that desirable. Meanwhile, Dolly most willingly did all the washing, cooking, and dairy-work required in the precincts of Sunny Hollow, much to her own and her young master's satisfaction.

Saturated roads and swelling creeks did not prevent Fred from paying daily visits to his wee little lady-love. It was known now all over Vermont that they were engaged. All that could be said upon the subject was exhausted almost at the first onset. Mrs. Bateman's indignant feelings rose, and bubbled up, and ran over most furiously when first she heard the intelligence.

"That Fred Linwood should have made such a fool of himself as to take that little schoolmistress for a wife, who knew as much about butter as a cow itself! Well, some people didn't know how to choose, and if they neglected good chances, why, it was their own fault."

And the mother glanced over at her beloved Jemima, by that glance signifying the "good chance" Fred had been so utterly unconscious of, and had so strangely passed by.

The young lady herself proclaimed, with a toss of her head, that "for her part she would not have had

that Fred Linwood if he had gone down on his bended knees to ask her." But, as he never did do so, the truth of her assertion could not be satisfactorily credited or proved.

Be that as it may, on one of the few really fine moonlight nights that Vermont's tempestuous winter afforded, Jemima Bateman absconded from home. Whether in pique at the loss of the owner of Sunny Hollow, or whether really out of love to the wild harum-scarum young fellow who accompanied her flight, is not certain ; but certain it is, the morning sun, wintry and watery as it was, shone into her little room, revealing an unruffled bed, but very disordered chest of drawers, rifled evidently of their choicest articles. To complete the romance of the thing (for Jemima, spite of the rotundity of face and figure, piqued herself on being romantic), she had placed upon the looking-glass a little silver-edged note addressed to her august mamma, which, in spite of bad writing, worse spelling, and very questionable grammar, that lady contrived to read, amidst indignant bursts of tears : finding thereby that her beloved Jemima, before twelve o'clock that day, would be twenty miles from home, and would have yielded up, by that time, her maiden name for ever—Jemima Bateman being exchanged for the scarcely less euphonious one of Jemima Cassey.

"Mrs. Mark Cassey!" repeated over and over again the sister in pinafore. "Oh, mamma, never mind ; the name sounds well enough, I'm sure."

"What's the name to do with it, child?" cried mamma, amidst her sobs. "The man's an idle good-for-nothing, whose whole soul is taken up with horse-

racing, and who has not a penny of his own to begin life on. I'll have nothing to do with them, not I. If Jemima makes a hard bed, she must lie upon it; she'll get nothing out of me, I can tell her."

And when the next day's post brought in a letter from the repentant Mrs. Mark Cassey, asking for forgiveness, and purposing to return with her husband, and still assist her mother in the shop, as hitherto, the angry mother tore the offending scrawl into twenty pieces, delivered them over to the flames, and ordered Selina to write instantler, sternly forbidding her sister the house.

Which she did, but added a postscript of her own—

"Never mind, Jemima; ma's 'up' now, and in an awful passion at your marrying Mark; but I'll see what I can do. I'll work her round. She won't be able to do long without you, or Mark either. Only keep quiet a bit."

And Selina's policy was correct, child as she was. Spite of her short frocks and pinafores, she most decidedly knew a thing or two; for Mark Cassey, notwithstanding his idle propensities, notwithstanding his love for horseflesh and racing, had proved a very efficient aid to Mrs. Bateman hitherto in the butchering line, and her daughter's services were not easily dispensed with in the shop; and so it happened that, before many weeks had expired, before the last penny had quitted the purse of the improvident young couple, Mark and his fair bride were recalled home, re-established in shop and slaughter-yard, a slab hut, meanwhile, going rapidly up in the close vicinity, intended to form the nucleus of the future home of

the "happy pair"—for such newly-married couples are usually denominated ; whether they are really so or not is a matter that concerns them alone—and in the case in question, spite of Mark's recklessness and waywardness, as his lady inherited a great amount of her mamma's amiability, it is rather dubious which had the best of the bargain. Selina gained something by the event, at any rate—the loss of the much-hated pinafores ; and, to crown all, her next dresses were permitted to be made several inches longer.

The elopement at the store was the one great event of the Vermont world that winter. All elsewhere went on very tranquilly and serenely, nothing of greater moment occurring than the washing away of somebody's pigs by a flood in miniature, or the bogging of some dray upon the excellent macadamized roads (?) so distinguished in our young colony.

The floods of rain that descended on Vermont's pastures somewhat thinned the attendance at the little chapel, but Graham Howard laboured early and late among his flock, rode miles in the drenching wet, toiled day after day that he might win souls to Christ, and often with a throbbing brow and sorrowful heart. His home, too, somehow or other, had lost its pleasant aspect ; not that it was less carefully tended, not that his old housekeeper was one whit less attentive or studious of his comfort ; but if the truth must be told, he was wearying for a younger face to answer back his smile at the breakfast-table, for brighter eyes to give back a welcome to him when, weary and sad, he returned from his journeys ; and without that other face that rose in vision frequently before him, his home seemed very desolate.

Perhaps not the less did he experience his own desolation of feeling in view of his friend Linwood's approaching happiness. It met him at all points. Fred and Annie came together to chapel ; he encountered them in his rides, when weather at all permitted ; he saw them in Annie's own home, and they always looked happy, trustful and happy. He could not avoid longing for similar happiness, and wondering whether he should ever know it ; and after such encounters no wonder his bachelor home seemed lonely and desolate.

And meanwhile the winter stole away rapidly. The streams became few and far between. The sun peeped forth more frequently from a mild blue sky, daily waxing warmer and warmer, and invigorating the chilled, saturated earth. Tiny flowers ventured to show their pink and blue heads. The magpie uttered her sweetest notes, and the swelling buds in the garden, and green mantle in the valley, whispered that winter's reign was nearly over,

“ The sadness of the winter
Which gloom'd our hearts is gone,
A thousand signs betoken
That Spring-time comes anon.

“ 'Tis Spring-time in our bosoms,
All strife aside we cast ;
The storms were for the winter days,
But they are gone and past.”

So sings sweet Mary Howitt, and so sing we, gentle readers ; and so doubtless sung others within the neighbourhood of Vermont Vale. Fred looked forward to that early spring with very pleasurable feelings. Annie had promised to become his wife

then ; and, therefore, to make his home a pleasant one to receive his young bride, occupied all his spare moments. Dolly was a hearty and delighted assistant in all his plans for improvements, but for the last delicate touches, the last arrangements, he looked forward to Katie's taste and skill, and with the first appearance of spring she was coming once more to Sunny Hollow.

CHAPTER XL.

SUNNY HOLLOW PREPARATIONS.

“There’s music in each wind that blows
Within our native valley breathing;
There’s beauty in each flower that grows
Around our native woodland wreathing.”

THE spring, with its budding beauty, its pure freshness, and enamelling of flowers, came at last, and with it came Katie. Not the Katie of old, not the joyous, madcap Katie of twelve months since. Those months had wrought a wondrous change in the little sprite to whom we first introduced our readers. They had toned down the colour in her cheek, though she was not less lovely for that; nor was the ready smile less sweet, though the light in the sweet blue eyes was softened. Time had altered her most assuredly, but circumstances more; the love of God yet more, and that had only beautified while it subdued—refined and purified while it restrained. Katie of the present spring was happier far than the Katie of the past, for her happiness had a deeper foundation.

It was one of spring’s loveliest early days when Katie once more left home on her return to Sunny Hollow. Her father was driving her this time in the gig, for he did not consider her sufficiently strong for so long a journey on horseback. Besides, she had

sundry and divers packages of mysterious shape and size, most suspicious-looking band-boxes, under her convoy, which would have been sadly out of place on the dray, among the new furniture, which, encased in hay-bands and wrappers innumerable, had toiled up from Adelaide, and stood under the close cover of the gig-house, awaiting the time when Sunny Hollow should be in a fit state of preparation to receive them.

For though Fred admitted that his home, with its present arrangements, was excellent for a bachelor, yet in view of the pretty little bride that was to grace that home, he began to think that he must get some pretty things to correspond ; and so with the dawn of spring he had started for Adelaide, and under the guidance of a married lady friend, made sundry important purchases, committed them to the tender mercies of the bullock-dray, and the still scarcely dried roads, and reached Sunny Hollow once more to complete the work already commenced there, and receive his sister Katie.

“We shall have you all to ourselves soon, Katie,” said her kind old father, glancing lovingly down at the little fairy thing by his side, as they trotted merrily along in the gig at early dawn, after many kisses and “good-byes” to dear mother, as she lay warmly tucked up in bed. “Once get this marriage through, and Fred and his wife comfortably settled, and then, my little girl, you must come and comfort your poor father and mother.”

All which Katie declared she intended to do, and if there was a little secret wish lying at the bottom of her heart for a home of her own, and some one nearer

her own age to love and cherish her, you, my fair readers, will not blame her.

Katie, as she rode alongside with her father, could not help remembering the time she first started for Sunny Hollow; her bright light-heartedness; her bullock-dray ride; her anticipations of gladness at becoming the young mistress of her brother's farm. And what a short reign she had had! and yet how much had been compressed into that twelve months! She could scarcely believe at times that twelve months were barely passed. And now, there was one missing from Sunny Hollow! She glanced down at her sable dress, and the tears came fast. Was it well that one was missing? Yes, it was well.

For who could tell what sin and sorrow had been spared to him? Who could fully count the mercy that had stopped him in his wild career? Who could sufficiently estimate the blessing of the full and free pardon he had received? of the welcome even he had been accorded to those pure and spotless realms wherein shall enter "nothing that defileth?" Oh! matchless grace! Oh! wonderful love! "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

And so, with full assurance of faith, she could look up to those blue heavens, and believe her brother Stephen there with Jesus, as much as she believed the martyr Stephen had entered among the white-robed throng; for, after all, it was only the "blood upon the lintel" of either that had given them a right to the heavenly city.

With a swift horse and a "good whip," for such old Mr. Linwood was still accounted, Sunny Hollow was made before the evening shadows had quite concealed

it from view. Fred, in the fulness of his joy, took his little sister in his arms, and carried her bodily in to their old haunts, though they were certainly as "an old friend with a new face," for what with plastered walls and ceiled roofs she scarcely recognized the scene of her former reign. However, she liked it none the less that the rafters were now invisible, and laughingly exclaimed—

"We will have more improvements yet, dear Fred, to welcome home your sweet little bride. I have twenty ideas in my head, and as many contrivances."

"As many as you like, Katie," said her brother as laughingly.

But if the house did not look homely, the bright fire did ; it sparkled forth a warm welcome. The cups and saucers and huge teapot welcomed her too, in their way, and a very pleasant way it was, after a long ride of many hours. Nor was her old chair slow in offering her its welcome. Yet, nevertheless, Katie felt that her reign in Sunny Hollow was over for ever. She was queen no longer ; the rightful sovereign was yet to come.

In her own little room Katie went to sleep that night ; her room still, spite of the ceiling and plaster that had so strangely altered it. She went to sleep ; not, indeed, now, without committing herself to other guardianship than human. The prayer-bell sounded not in vain now. Katie had learned the worth of prayer.

Her dreams were confused and mingled that night. With return to Vermont Vale, many thoughts returned, and faces arose to memory ; forgive her—but I

know you will, fair readers—if one face through all her dreams reigned supreme ; mingled itself in every scene ; but whether for joy or sorrow Katie herself could scarcely tell.

By early morning, just as the sun peeped forth, Katie was up, and out. A hearty welcome from her brother saluted her as she stepped out into the old kitchen, and forthwith, with something of the Katie of old in look and step, she followed him about, looking at all his improvements, and suggesting more, admiring and wondering at the rapid growth of the Cape-ivy and passion-flower she had planted, and which now beautifully wreathed the formerly bare verandah poles, and hung in graceful festoons across. The front, too, of the house had been neatly railed round, and dug up, and planted with flowers ; not many blooming, to be sure, at present, but plenty bearing ample promise. It was astonishing how the new relations in which Fred stood were drawing forth a latent love for the beautiful, so Katie said ; at which he only laughed, and kissed her.

“And now, Mr. Fred,” said she, “I am going to have a morning run over to my sister that is to be. I shall be too busy after breakfast. No ! I want her all to myself ; so, please, keep back. I shall not get a chance for a word, or a look, if you go too ; and you know, sir, I am somewhat of a jealous disposition, and like to receive attention.” And with a saucy shake of her head, off she ran.

“Don’t go through the grass, it’s wet with dew, Katie,” laughed Fred ; “there’s a dry path for you, if you will please to look.”

“Well, I declare ! Worn by your feet, Mr. Fred.

That betrays how many times a day you have visited little Annie this winter." But the path was very pleasant, after all, and its termination none the less so ; for, though the two girls met with kisses and encircling arms, as girls are always wont, though tears were very plentiful too, and came in copious showers of sorrow and sympathy, yet there was so much really joyous awaiting them, so much of the sunshine of Sunny Hollow surrounding them, so many things appertaining to the coming event, that was already sending its long shadows before, to consult about, and discuss, that the tears were soon dried, and the sunshine had its full sway.

After that the preparations at Sunny Hollow went on very rapidly indeed. Annie's bridal was to come with the first roses, and they were budding already.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE DAY AT LAST.

“Nay! shrink not from that word, ‘Farewell!’
As if ’twere friendship’s final knell;
Such fears may prove but vain.
So changeful is life’s fleeting day,
Whene’er we sever—Hope may say,
We part, to meet again!”

THE roses had bloomed, and brought with them the important day! Vermont Vale was on the tiptoe of expectation; Vermont youth wild with excitement; who would, and who would not, be at the wedding, was the theme of discussion throughout many a homestead.

After all, the wedding-party was very small, and entirely a family affair. It was the safest way, both Fred and Annie agreed, to prevent jealous or slighted feelings; and entirely on the “no card” system, so extensively adopted at the present stage of South Australian life—a system, by the by, with which we cordially agree.

The wedding-party arrived the night before: father and mother, and George and Amy, with their sweet little girl, who in conjunction with Aunt Katie was to act as bridesmaid. A very cheerful party they were indeed; for was it not a joyful occasion? Of

course Fred had to undergo the usual amount of roasting from his father and cousin, but he bore it all very well ; and laughed as merrily as any of them, as well he might, for he was to be the winner.

But the morning dawned at last in all its loveliness ; the roses opened in the bright spring sun, which kissed away all the glittering pearl-drops that bedewed their fair faces ; the lilacs shot forth, and offered their delicate aroma to the senses ; the wattle put on its golden mantle, and shook its glittering robes in the fresh morning breeze till the air was rich with the perfume ; over hill and dale the grass was studded with golden blossoms, glowing joyously in the sunbeams ; and Katie's glorious scarlet creeper festooned every bank and hill-side.

The spring, and its flowers, and warmth, and sunshine, appeared to have burst at once upon them ; and a glorious spring it was, beautiful enough to gladden the heart of any fair young bride.

And so it did Annie's, as she peeped out of her chamber-window and beheld its beauty. There was not a cloud resting upon her future to disturb her happy, tranquil spirit. That future seemed to her as bright as the sunshine, that dispelled her slumbers and bade her be stirring. Her mother was still to be with her—that had been decided upon from the first ; and her brother had arranged to take a farm but a few sections away from Sunny Hollow, and had laughingly declared that he should have to look out for a housekeeper as well as his neighbours. Katie, too, would often come and see them. Certainly the future had a rose-hue upon it ; *that* drove back the glittering drops that would most strangely steal out

in the very excess of her happiness ; and Annie's full heart uttered many a prayer for future guidance, many a thanksgiving for present happiness.

We will not dwell upon the wedding ceremony, fair readers ; weddings are such every-day occurrences among us : the bride is always "fair," and the bridegroom always "happy." And though in this case it was really so, our gentle readers must be contented with the assurance that Annie Maitland did not look less fair in her snowy robes and bridal veil, though we decline describing either veil or robes. The little group, assembled in the tiny Vermont chapel, looked just as it should. Altogether, it was a neat, quiet little affair, just as they wished it to be ; and a very few moments sufficed to rob our friend Annie for ever of her maiden name, conferring on her the title of a matron !

The most discomposed of the little circle that surrounded him was Graham Howard himself ; and most certainly discomposed he was, though he strove hard to conceal it. The paleness of his cheek bore testimony to the fact, had it not been for two or three most unclerical mistakes that he committed during the service. What ailed him ? Was he marrying to another one he would have chosen for his own bride ? No, assuredly not ; he had never dreamt of Annie Maitland in such a light. But to say that no other had been dreamt of by day and by night would as certainly be false.

However, the thoughts of the Vermont visitors were too much centred upon the bridal party to notice the agitation of their pastor who officiated ; and the bridal party, we suppose, were too much

enwrapped in their own thoughts to observe anything else ; and so Graham Howard had time to regain his tranquillity, and congratulate the happy pair at the conclusion as a friend should ; and he was tolerably restored by the time they had gained the outside of the chapel, and the vehicles that awaited to drive them back to Sunny Hollow, where the wedding-breakfast was to be taken. He handed Katie to the gig, and took the seat beside her, with a beating heart to be sure ; but his words sounded as calmly as ever to his companion. She envied him his calmness.

The arrangements that had been made by the party were a little peculiar, and out of the common order ; but the law of necessity had interfered with the customary course. George and his wife were compelled to return home immediately, and old Mr. Linwood had business of importance at home ; so that, after all, the newly-married pair were to be left to the quiet possession of Sunny Hollow, while the rest of the party took their departure, Mrs. Maitland and her son accompanying them.

The wedding breakfast, tastefully arranged in the long room, no longer a kitchen but a sitting-room, pleasantly furnished, and even carpeted, was merrily despatched. The huge bridal cake, one of Goldsack's best, was cut, and tied with its snowy ribbons for the Vermontites, who would not be contented without such a testimony of regard ; and then the parting moments arrived.

Katie had yielded up her place in her father's gig to Mrs. Maitland, and had taken possession of her riding-habit and Hebe. There was yet a short

interval remaining; so, gathering the folds of the former around her, and leaving the latter by the side of its companion (James Maitland's horse), she stole off to visit for the last time her favourite old haunts; to pat, as it seemed, for the last time, her favourite cows. She had kept in her tears all day, but they would not be restrained longer, and they burst forth with full power as she stood on the top of one elevated point, and caught sight of the little Vermont chapel amidst its trees, the only peep of Vermont Vale Sunny Hollow permitted.

Why should she weep at leaving Vermont? Was not her own home pleasant? and were there not her kind and loving parents there? Yes, truly it was so; and yet that dear old home seemed dull, for young faces were absent, and youth ever clings to youth. There seemed, too, now so much to make her love Vermont, but she dared not whisper even to herself all that rendered it dear.

Dashing her tears away as she remembered that time was fleeting onwards, and would not stay for them, she hurried again from place to place, making her silent adieus, till at length once again she stood waiting under the verandah.

"Lovely Vermont! sweet Sunny Hollow!" she exclaimed to herself, "I am leaving you in all your fresh young beauty." And so it was, for the grass was green and velvety, the golden wattles in their full beauty, and the young springing wheat of glorious promise. She could have wept again, but she drove back her tears, and re-entered the house, where the bustle of leave-taking was actively going on.

"Well, Katie, have you said 'good-bye' to your cows?" asked her cousin George, rather mischievously. "You look thoroughly dismal upon it."

"Good-bye!" exclaimed Fred, warmly; "not she. What has she to say 'good-bye' for? No, no, Katie, we shall see you very often here, if you will only come."

"I shall want you," said Annie, blushing.

"Oh! to be sure; I forgot that!" said George. "Certainly, Mrs. Linwood wants your instruction. Come, you need not think your work over, you have plenty more yet to do."

"You little thought, dear George, how well our little Katie would perform her mission," insinuated Amy, softly, laying her little fair hand upon her husband's shoulder.

"Admitted, little wife; I did not. But we must make the most of her now we have her, for, depend upon it, these weddings are infectious, and we shall have her running away from us soon, and becoming Mrs.—what is it to be, Katie?"

There was a movement in the room, and Katie took advantage of it, quietly slipping out to her pony.

"You will not half so much miss Vermont as you will be missed, Miss Linwood," said a gentle voice at her side; and she knew that Graham Howard had followed her out.

"I shall miss it more than I can tell."

"You will be missed still more; Vermont will be dull without you, Katie."

Did it seem strange that he should call her Katie? Scarcely that; but something in the tone

and manner struck her. She raised her eyes in timid surprise to his, and the eloquent blood crimsoned her cheek, and went throbbing to her heart. And wherefore, gentle reader? What did she read in his face to cause the emotion so suddenly raised? Ah! it matters not, for not a word was spoken more; and presently her father and mother, and Mrs. Maitland, took their places in the gig, and her cousins took possession of their dog-cart. James Maitland, too, was in readiness to mount, awaiting only her pleasure; while her brother, with his fair blushing little bride, stood expecting her farewell kiss. Those few passing moments were passed in such an exciting whirl, she could never after clearly remember what she did or said; the pressure of *one* hand, the fervent "God bless and keep you, Katie," of one voice, were indeed never forgotten; but all else was a void.

The last view of Sunny Hollow also retained a place in her memory. She did recollect turning, as they passed through the slip-panel, and catching sight of it in the full glow of its spring noon-tide beauty; she did remember seeing her brother, with his arm encircling his fair little wife, standing, with waving hat, beneath the golden wattles that skirted the little garden; but she remembered far more one other figure, standing at a little distance on the road to his own solitary home, watching, with folded arms, their departure. She remembered far more the snowy handkerchief uplifted in the air when he saw her, lost from view by a sudden turn in the road. She drew her thick veil closely over her face then, and not for worlds, dear readers, would we uplift it.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE PASTOR PERPLEXED.

“ Thus trusting in Thy love, I tread
The narrow path of duty on,
What though some cherish’d joys are fled ?
What though some scattering dreams are gone,
Yet purer, brighter joys remain,
Why should my spirit then complain ? ”

A WEEK had passed over the Vermont world, and lulled to rest the subject of the wedding at Sunny Hollow, that had formed almost the only topic of conversation for many a previous day. Fred Linwood was fairly now a married man, and had appeared in that character at chapel on Sunday, with his pretty little bride on his arm, blushinglly receiving the congratulations, polite or uncouth, yet all well meant, that Vermont had to bestow. Yes, he was married, and had therefore lost considerably in the eyes of some of Vermont’s maidens ; while others of the opposite sex began to wonder why they had thought Annie Maitland so pretty, or why, as Mrs. Fred Linwood, she should be less so ; though, we suppose, it was all on the principle of the old song—

“ If she be not fair to me,
What care I how fair she be ? ”

As to the young folks themselves, they were very happy, and every day Fred congratulated himself on having named his farm Sunny Hollow, for it certainly seemed to have plenty of sunshine on it just now, and to deserve its name more than ever—at least so it seemed to him ; and so, by her sweet face, was it to his wee little wife, who moved here and there in her new home like a gentle presiding spirit, making that home for her husband very bright indeed with her fair presence.

We have no sympathy with those who tell us that in this world there is no happiness! Gentle reader, believe it not ; it is untrue again and again. What ! has our heavenly Father bestowed upon us so much that is lovely, so much that is beautiful, and are these gifts of His hand to remain unenjoyed, to form no source of pleasure ? Has He painted the delicate tints of the rose, and bathed it in rich perfume, and shall we experience no joyous thrill at its beauty ? Has the rosy tint of the morning, and the golden glory of the closing eve, no charm to enhance our happiness below ? Are not many of our heart songs aroused by the splendour of the starry heavens above our heads. Ay, and by the richness of the verdure beneath our feet ? Gentle reader, they are ; we know it—they are !

And thus, too, with those other of God's bountiful gifts to man, our dear ones, are not they rich portions of our earthly bliss ? Are they not all the dearer, also, that God has given them to us, that He has bestowed the happiness ? Yes, it is indeed so ; that thought crowns all !

Yes, that crowns all ; God's love in the heart

beautifies all. Where the grace of God is, all else seems lovely, all else fair !

Vermont Vale, we have said, was fast subsiding into its customary quietude ; things were wearing their usual appearance even around Sunny Hollow. But there was one hearth-stone more desolate and solitary than ever ; not that it was so in reality, but only in seeming ; for no brighter feminine smile than that of the old housekeeper had ever lighted up the little room.

And yet there was a shadow upon the brow of the minister of Vermont, a void at his heart he could not overcome.

It was rather more than a week after the wedding that he returned home rather late in the afternoon from a distant station, and stopped by the way at the store for letters.

“Has the post brought any news for me, Mrs. Cassey ?” he smilingly asked that lady, for it was the bride of the store that was in attendance.

“Plenty, Mr. Howard ; the English mail’s in, and you have quite a heap this time,” and she began turning out letter after letter, and paper after paper, for his inspection, till he found it necessary to get his valise from his saddle, and dispose of them in that.

“The English mail is particularly favourable to me this month !” he exclaimed, turning rather pale as he recognized one or two deeply-edged black envelopes amongst the rest, ominously foreboding death in some of the dear home quarters. He dared not look too closely then, to see which of those it was likely to be, for the raised eyes of Mrs. Cassey were upon him ; so hurriedly taking up his valise of

letters, and rather unceremoniously his leave at the same time, his horse and himself were soon within the precincts of home.

Yielding up the former to the care of a man who was at work in the garden he hurried indoors, startling Mrs. Norton very greatly by his sudden and unannounced entrance.

"Why, I never heard you come in, sir?" she exclaimed. "Have you but just come?"

"Only this moment, and I am very tired, and shall be very glad of a cup of tea, my kind Mrs. Norton; I have English letters to read, and can enjoy them best while I take my tea."

This scarcely comported with the old lady's ideas of either comfort or propriety, but she was used to it, for seldom did the young minister engage in a meal without either a book or paper as a companion. She loved him for all that, and respected him too, and hurried off now as fast as she could to get him as good a cup of tea as the little silver teapot would make; and in a very few moments Graham Howard was seated in his easy chair by a little table covered with a very tempting array of viands, presided over by the lady in question, with his letters by his side, ready to read at his leisure, his slippered feet crossed on a footstool, and a cup of tea in his hand, which he thoughtfully sipped, glancing now and then at the heap of news at his side which he desired yet dreaded to open.

"This is weakness," he at length exclaimed to himself, "the news must come out, and I may as well know at once all that I have to suffer;" and he singled out from the heap the black-edged letters,

and glancing at the handwriting, hurriedly tore open one of them.

The old lady opposite, though apparently very busy with her teapot, was in reality covertly watching her young minister. The black edge to the letter had not escaped her eye. What did it mean? Some one was dead—some one dear to him. Yes, she was sure of that now; for—for a moment he hurriedly read, then dropped the letter, and covered his eyes with his hands, and then her own tears almost blinded her, for she saw on her dear minister's cheeks the glistening drops begin to shine; she could bear it no longer.

"Mr. Howard, there's trouble I'm afraid in that letter? Oh, I hope not, sir!" she said, in a voice of deep sympathy.

"Yes, Mrs. Norton; I have lost a dear, an honoured father. This letter is from my only sister," replied Graham sadly. "Little did I think I had seen the last of the dear old man when I quitted England; I always hoped to see him once more; but God's will be done."

"And your mother, sir?"

"I lost my mother before I left England," said Graham, taking up his letter again, and presently becoming so absorbed in its contents that it was well that he had taken some tea before he commenced the perusal, or little enough would have stood a chance with him now. He rose after a little while, and collecting his letters, left Mrs. Norton bemoaning the little tea he had taken, and shut himself up in his favourite room, in which a small but bright fire, comporting with the coolness of the evening, was

already diffusing a cheerful glow. Then throwing himself into the large chair that stood by the table, in comfortable distance from the fire, and kindling his lamp with a small wax taper, he again became deeply absorbed in his letters, reading on and on to the last one. Then pushing the whole from him, and wheeling his chair round to the fire, he remained long with his elbows resting on the arms of the chair and his face in his hand, gazing at the glowing embers as though all the dear faces he had ever seen, or known, or loved were there.

“‘The lot is cast into the lap,’” said he at last to himself in low, sad tones. “‘Man proposeth, but God disposeth!’ That is most true. Oh, how different were the plans I had proposed to myself this day! What happiness I had dreamt of, and now—now, all is over, the dream has passed.”

But was there no possibility of avoiding this voyage to England? Was it inevitable? He turned abruptly to his letters again, but they gave him no loophole of escape. His return to England was imperative, and must be immediate. There could be no settlement of property without, and that settlement involved others beside himself. Yes, even if it sacrificed all his happiness, the sacrifice must be made. That was clear; there was no gainsaying it, and he was silent.

He presently got up and walked about the room in his old attitude of despondency; up and down, up and down. He was thinking of his people and how they would fare, left like sheep without a shepherd. Should he ever be permitted to return to them, would it not be to find them scattered? His heart

bled to think of it, but the words of Jesus came refreshingly to his memory, "Of those Thou hast given me, I have lost none," and he was ashamed that even for a moment he had forgotten to commit them into the heavenly Shepherd's care. Kneeling then, he brought them all before his Master—his church, his congregation, himself, and last one dearer still, whom he had scarcely yet dared to mention even in his prayers ; and while he thus committed all to the guidance of his heavenly Father, his faith was perceptibly strengthened, his way seemed less dark, his perplexity ceased. He resolved, and waited for daylight to carry his resolves into action.

Not even at the family prayer that night did he betray his emotion; he chose to let his worthy house-keeper have a night of undisturbed rest; for well he knew that were he to tell her how shortly Vermont was to lose its minister, her pillow would be sleepless. He kept his intelligence till the morning for her. Not much sleep visited his own eyes that night.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SPREADING OF THE NEWS, AND ITS RESULT.

“I dare not choose my lot—
I would not, if I might;
But choose Thou for me, O my God,
So shall I walk aright.”

WE have presented you, gentle readers, with our favourite Vermont Vale in many aspects. We have given it to you in its springtide beauty, when the very hills seemed to rejoice in their mantle of blossom, and bird songs echoed from tree to tree; we have shown it in its glowing, flashing summer-tide, when blushing fruits and golden grain enriched and beautified; we have ushered it into your presence amidst storms and rain, amidst swollen creeks and lightning flashes. We have brought you into its neighbourhood in the midst of festivity, we have exhibited it at a season of death, we have even permitted the bridal veil to adorn its graceful valley, and now we have another aspect to present to our fair readers—Vermont Vale mourning the anticipated loss of their pastor.

At the breakfast-table next morning, according to one of his resolves, Graham Howard gently broke the intelligence to the astonished and greatly distressed

Mrs. Norton, that Vermont Vale would possess him but two or three days longer, that his presence was immediately necessary in England, and that he must positively go. How that news flew is not known, but like wildfire it spread through the place from one to another, till before sundown it had even communicated itself to the distant stations, and there was one general distress throughout the whole.

Then came calls innumerable; expostulations as wearying as unavailing. Graham Howard saw his duty plainly before him; and though cut to the heart, and deeply wounded on more accounts than one, he had committed his way unto the Lord, and knew it must all be right.

Amongst some of the first callers came Fred Linwood; for he viewed the loss of his minister not only as a public, but a private calamity.

"Why cannot they settle these affairs in England, without compelling you to voyage 16,000 miles away from your flock? It's a great shame, and a great trial; I don't see how we shall get on without you."

"I would not go for worlds, you may believe, Mr. Linwood, if I had my own choosing. I have more at stake than you imagine by this voyage; but it is not mine to choose, nor would I choose if permitted; I would rather be guided by my Father all my way."

"Yes; and if you go, I suppose it will all be right," said Fred sadly. "The clouds seem hovering over Vermont enough now, but we must hope that you will soon return among us."

"If I live, and may choose, believe me I will; and now, my dear Mr. Linwood, I may as well say all I want; I have a word or two for your ear alone;" and

leading Fred on one side, the two entered upon a low-toned, earnest conversation, which ended in Fred's suddenly seizing his young pastor's hand and wringing it with all his might.

"From my heart I wish you all the success I believe you will have," he exclaimed warmly.

"Ah! I see we shall have you among us again; at least, I hope so," he added, thoughtfully turning away.

"You have heard the news, of course, Mrs. Ranger," said Mrs. Bateman, as she weighed out a quantity of goods once more for her excellent customer.

"I am sorry to say I have, Mrs. Bateman, if you mean about our dear pastor's intended voyage?"

"Yes, I do mean that; it's the only news we have just now worth anything. Well, I must say I am surprised; I thought things would have turned out very different.

"How so?"

"Why, at first I had set down Annie Maitland for him. I'm sure it would have been a better match than the one she has now; but since she and Fred Linwood made it up, I made sure that as Katie Linwood had become so terribly good and pious, that our young minister would fall in love with her; and so I did think he had, and should think so still, only it's odd to me that he's going off to England in the midst."

Mrs. Ranger smiled. She too had indulged in her own thoughts, and, sooth to say, they led to somewhat similar results to those of her companion. She kept them to herself, however, contenting herself with the smile; but she presently said—

"We shall miss our minister very much, Mrs. Bateman."

"Yes, I suppose we shall for a bit; but I expect we shall get another from somewhere. Of course we can't do without one, and we may be all the better for a change."

Mrs. Ranger looked grieved and shocked. "I thought you liked Mr. Howard?" she exclaimed.

"Oh yes, he is well enough; but I think he has been rather dull lately, and he does preach long sermons, to be sure."

"If you think that, no wonder you will not miss him. Thank God, all have not hearts alike!" said Mrs. Ranger, rapidly putting up her goods together, and preparing to hurry away.

"No, all hearts are not alike indeed in Vermont; we should indeed be a cold set if it was so," said the warm-souled woman to herself, as she urged her old "Dobbin" forward. "But, alas! there are too many lovers of change amongst even us; too much indifference to what is taught; too much overlooking the good done, the time spent, the weary, weary feeling of the hard-worked minister." And our worthy Mrs. Ranger was right; for among the crying sins of our Southern Australia is the treatment of her ministers. Exceptions there may be—many we hope there are—but how many are there labouring by day incessantly among a flock who cause them bitter tears by night; who slight their minister; find fault with his teaching, or, if they cannot do that, with his manner, or the length of his sermons; who grieve him by their non-attendance; who cavil in the church-meeting; who grudge the unworthy pittance they bestow upon

him, though it be lower than they would award to the lowest of their day labourers. What wonder, indeed, that the labourers be few ; what wonder that the Lord of the harvest recall His servants home, when, though the meed of praise has been wanting on earth, shall be heard the welcome, “ Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Well, it is blessed to labour in the service of Christ ; it is happiness to win souls to Christ ; it is happiness to seek for the pure gold amidst the dross. Still, noble servants of the cross, though that cross bear heavily upon you—though the spitting, and the mocking, ay, and even the cruel scourging shall attend you—there was One who bore it all before you, and now He wears the crown, and by-and-by so shall you. Yet “ woe unto those by whom the offences come !”

There were, as Mrs. Ranger said, many in Vermont who loved their pastor dearly, who appreciated his labour of love amongst them, and grieved deeply at his removing from them—grieved at the necessity they saw was laid upon him, for they knew his heart was in his work, that he was ready to live and die for them ; and he knew and rejoiced in these seals to his ministry, and encouraged them on with kind and cheering words to keep together the little congregation as much as it lay in their power, “ not forsaking the assembling of themselves together,” but “ rejoicing in hope,” “ waiting for the appearing of the Lord.” He gave his advice to those assembled at the week-night meeting, and there were few dry eyes present. They went away weeping, “ sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more,”

for so it seemed to them. England was so far distant, was it probable that he would come back among them? What had they done to entice him back? Nay, what could they do now, in the short space of time that remained before he should embark, to show their love and respect to him? But a day or two remained before he quitted Vermont. They flew to Fred Linwood in their perplexity, and he decided at once; a farewell tea and presentation to their minister was imperative.

The utmost powers of the housekeepers of Vermont were taxed, in the rapid preparation of cakes and condiments innumerable, for these, in any variety, are the essentials of a South Australian tea-meeting. The good old substantial bread and butter and plum-cake at some of the tea-meetings in the home land would not suit South Australian palates. Delicate custards cream-laden, jam-tarts of endless variety, cakes of all kinds, from pound and sponge to the tortuous fancy biscuits; wafered slices of bread and butter, between which the thinned slices of ham were visible, and these garnished with parsley. Such are some of the belongings of our southern tea-meetings.

With James Maitland's assistance—for he had returned to Vermont—a large marquee was erected at Sunny Hollow, and arrangements on an extensive scale made for the meeting. The young lads and lasses twined, into words of "Farewell," the yellow and white blossoms gathered in profusion by the busy fingers of the children under Mrs. Linwood's supervision. Annie's own graceful fingers wrought in roses and leaves the feeling inscription—

“God bring thee back in safety!”

As there were few dry eyes, there were certainly few idle hands. To give a warm farewell to their pastor was now all they strove after; and if an assemblage of all that was good in the edible line was a token of it, certainly it was done. The gardens round Vermont must have been sadly shorn of their flowers, for they were brought in profusion to Sunny Hollow to breathe out their fragrant farewell to the Vermont pastor. But he valued more than all the gathered multitude that, on so short a notice, had collected together to bid him adieu, to pray for his safe guidance over the mighty ocean, and show at once their love and respect to his memory. Far more he valued these than the heavy purse that, as a last testimonial of their love and gratitude, they laid before him for his acceptance. After all, it was the hearty shakes of the hand, the fervent “God bless you, and keep you, and bring you back to us,” that dwelt longest on his memory, and sank deepest into his heart.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DRAWING TOWARDS CONCLUSION.

“ Were it not sweeter still
To give imagination holier scope,
And deem that thus the future may fulfil
A loftier hope ? ”

“ ANY letters, Katie ? ”

“ Yes, mother, some for us all, I believe. I have quite a budget, at any rate. Two or three from England, among them one from Vermont for myself—from Annie by the writing. At any rate, I have an afternoon’s reading before me ; and so have you, dear mother.”

So said Katie, as she came with a quick, elastic step into the room where her mother was sitting with that favourite fancy-work of old ladies—a stocking—in her hand. Katie had just returned from a walk to the post, and the fresh spring breeze had given her cheek a little deeper colour than usual. Her mother, at any rate, thought she looked very lovely, as she threw off her hat, and unprisoned her soft, light ringlets, which fell in pretty confusion over her shoulders.

“ Give me my spectacles as well as my letters, dear, and let us commence at once.”

“Yes, mother, but I can afford to read my letters leisurely ; I will take off my things first.”

Then singling out her own portion, she supplied her mother with the remainder and the necessary spectacles, and ran off, singing, to her own room.

She tossed her letters down on the bed, and her hat and cap after them ; then, turning, threw open the window to its widest extent. There was a lovely prospect from without, bounded as it was, of a bowery garden. Two or three orange-trees that grew near the window breathed out their delicious perfume on the soft breeze, and the roses that climbed to the top of the sash peeped in and shook their incense in her face, vying with a slender jasmine to win her favour by their beauty. A few sweet notes from the “shepherd’s companion” now and then came floating through the air from a group of cherry-trees not far distant, and the soft murmuring hum of insect life without came soothingly within, and made Katie dreamy. It was a pleasant place this home of hers, and it was strange, gentle readers, that a wish should ever cross her mind to change it—now was it not ?

But such creatures of contradiction are we, we never know when we are happiest, never think that our path is so smooth, that nothing is wanting to make it smoother ; and so Katie, in her pleasant home, had begun to think and dream of one more pleasant in the future. Perhaps occurred to her memory these lines of Josiah Conder’s :—

“ Oh, when shall Israel’s mystic guide,
The pillar’d cloud, our steps decide ;
Then, resting, spread its guardian shade,
To bless the home that love hath made ?

Daily my love shall thence arise,
Our hearts' united sacrifice ;
And home indeed a home will be,
Thus consecrate and shared with Thee."

Poor Katie ! how unconsciously she stood looking out into the pleasant garden, listening to birds' song, and drinking in the incense of the flowers, dreaming so pleasantly, meanwhile, of the last day at Vermont, and little dreaming what was transpiring there—little dreaming what her neglected letters would unfold. She had forgotten them.

She thought of them at last, and turned hurriedly to the place where she had thrown them, selecting the one from Vermont for a first perusal.

"Ah ! from Annie, my new little sister. What has she to say ? Not wearying for me, surely, yet ?" she exclaimed, with a smile, as she tore open the tiny envelope. "Such a short note ! Well, she is growing idle, surely."

But, short as it was, she almost stopped breathing as she read it, while the colour her mother so much admired gradually faded from her face.

"SUNNY HOLLOW.

"DEAREST KATIE,—Fred has made me hurry off to write you a wee note, just to ask you if you can possibly come back to Vermont to-morrow ? I am grieved to tell you that Mr. Howard, our minister, has had letters from England announcing his father's death, and recalling him home immediately. We are, therefore, about giving him a hurriedly-got-up farewell tea-meeting the day after to-morrow, Thursday

the 24th. Do come, if you can. In great haste, with love from Fred and self, your affectionate sister,

“ANNIE.”

“The day after to-morrow!” Katie looked at the date, and then at the words “too late” outside the envelope. The letter had been delayed, and the previous afternoon the farewell meeting had taken place at Vermont. She sat down on a chair near the window, trembling and faint.

So this was the end of her pleasant dreams! this was the end of her happiness! Yes, she acknowledged it all to herself now—acknowledged what you, our most sage reader, have long since found out, that Graham Howard’s love had become essential to her happiness; and he was going to leave her for ever! Poor Katie! crushed, heart-broken, covered with shame as she felt at this discovery of the state of her own heart, and of what she deemed the state of his—free, unscathed—sat cowering down by the side of the bed, the fatal letter crumpled in her hand, and her face hiding itself from view in her old despondent attitude, forgetting in her sorrow that one place yet remained to which the Christian may always bring his grief.

She was accusing herself of presumption in aspiring to such a post as a minister’s wife. Oh, she was not worthy of it! How could she ever have dreamt he would choose her? And yet, what had she done? Surely there was no harm in her having given her love to him in secret? She had done it. A secret it could remain. And that he did not, could not, return that love did not prove him unworthy. No! he was worthy of her love, and it was not strange that she

should love him. But, since it was so, she was glad he was going away, that by no possibility he should ever find out that she thought of him otherwise than as a friend—a dear and esteemed pastor. And, after the chilling effects of grief were past, she felt glad, too, that the post had been delayed—that she had not been present at the “farewell meeting,” for that she felt would have been beyond endurance. Better indeed that they should never meet again.

She raised her head after a little while, and went and stood again at the window, allowing the soft, cool air to play upon her fevered brow. The sun was rapidly sinking into the west, making the heavens glorious with gold and purple; the shadows from the trees fell broad and long, and many of them were only tipped with the rosy radiance in their topmost branches; the “shepherd’s companion” had departed with his sweet, glad melody, and had given place to the long, melancholy wailing cry of the curlews, which suited better with Katie’s feelings now.

And yet her thoughts were far away, still with the pastor of Vermont Vale—wondering whether his grief for his father’s loss had overwhelmed him in this “farewell meeting,” and how he had borne himself through this leave-taking with a people whom she knew he loved, and many of whom she knew dearly loved him. And then came thoughts of his distant voyage to far-off England—the land of her birth, indeed, but beyond the reach of her memory. Would he ever come back? And what was it taking him away? What so urgent as to induce him to desert them all? What, oh! what would become of Vermont Vale without him?

And then came refreshing words of promise to her aid—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" and tears came with that, for she knew she had been forgetting her Lord and His power; knew that she had been leaning upon human power; knew that she had been reclining upon a reed which had only broken and cruelly pierced her through. Was not that word of promise enough? He who cannot lie had promised "never to forsake," and did she not believe?

Yes, she did, and prayed that she might still more believe; be able still more to commit all her way unto His hand; to submit to all He laid in her path, whether of joy or of sorrow; to bow humbly before Him, even though thorns were more plentiful than roses in her life.

"Let me henceforth love only Thee, dear Jesus," she prayed. "Let all earthly love be swallowed up in love to Thee. Henceforth may I devote myself wholly to Thy service, giving up time, and energy, and even life, for Thee."

Thus Katie yielded up her broken heart to the Saviour, and thus He took the gift; for He bids the broken-hearted come to Him, and smiles upon the yielding spirit, even though it be earth-crushed. Oh! what a Saviour have we! How suited to our every need!

The shadows were falling fast in her room, when, at the foot of the stairs, she heard her mother call her. She rose immediately, replying, "Yes, mother, I will be down presently;" and, bathing her face with cool, clear water, and smoothing a little her dishevelled hair, she gathered up her letters, and thrust them into a little drawer, tied a small black silk

apron round her waist, and prepared to join her mother with all the composure she could muster. For worlds she would not have had those kind, penetrating eyes read her secret, and grieve over it.

Her favourite little dog, "Fly," came bounding towards her as she entered the passage. She took it up in her arms, and carried it in with her, covering it with caresses.

"Were you wondering where I had got to, mother dear?" she asked, as she entered the sitting-room, where the tea-table was spread; but the lamp was unkindled, and the fitful light of the fire on the hearth, burnt down to red embers, threw the room all the more into misty shadows. She could see, however, that it was not her mother who rose to meet her. Coming quickly forward, and starting violently, she let little Fly fall from her arms.

"Did you really think I could leave the colony without coming to say farewell?" asked a quiet, well-known voice, one she little expected to hear again. She might, indeed, have thought she was again dreaming, had it not been for the hand that held her own so warmly.

"I did not think—I do not know, Mr. Howard, what I thought," said Katie, breaking down in utter confusion, and very much, indeed, inclined to cry. But she presently mastered her emotion, and asked—

"Does mother know you are here? have you seen her?"

"Yes; I have been here nearly three-quarters of an hour; I wanted to see your mother alone first. You have heard from Mrs. Fred Linwood, have you not, that I am summoned suddenly to England?" he

presently continued, drawing her to a seat, and placing himself beside her, without releasing her hand. "I have lost my dear old father, Katie; he has gone home at last."

"Yes, I heard; I am so sorry," said Katie, almost in a whisper.

"We may sorrow, but not as those without hope, Katie; he was a true servant of Christ, and died in the midst of his work."

There was a moment's pause, in which the silence was only broken by the quickened breathing of Katie. Graham presently went on—"There is property in England to settle that cannot be apportioned without my presence, and I am compelled to go; much as it grieves me, I am compelled. But there is one thing I cannot go without, and that is—a farewell from you, Katie."

Her heart beat quickly, but she pushed aside her feeling, and answered almost coldly, though in low, trembling tones—

"I thought you had no time to remember us."

"I could not forget you if I tried, dear Katie," he answered; "have you not discovered that? But this is not what I want to say. I want to carry with me something more than a farewell, Katie. I want to have a promise I hope one day to return and call upon you to redeem. Will you give me that promise, Katie?"

"A promise?" she faintly asked.

"Yes, dear Katie," he replied, drawing her yet closer to him, "that you will one day be my own little wife, aiding me in my work, making my home a happy one, labouring for Christ with me. Dearest, is it too much to ask?"

CHAPTER XLV.

CONCLUSION.

“If some poor wandering child of Thine
Have spurn'd to-day the voice Divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin,
Let him no more lie down in sin.”

To those of our dear readers who always can tell from the first page of a book what the last will be, we leave our dear little Katie's answer. For our part, our task is rapidly closing; and however imperfectly delineated be the characters of Vermont Vale, however inefficiently told our tale, we leave it in the same merciful hands who so kindly welcomed our “Marian” in times gone by.

Our task is done; we have longed for your souls, dear young friends; we have anxiously sought to induce you to love the Saviour whom we love. Ah! and why are we so anxious? Because this world is a fleeting dream at best—the reality is beyond! Because all here is passing away; because earthly joys are delusive, earthly hopes unstable, and nothing out of Christ worthy our confidence. And ah! if but one of our dear readers—if but one discovers through the medium of these few poor pages the emptiness of the world, and the preciousness of Jesus—if but one is

brought, like Katie, to sit at the Saviour's feet, our desire will indeed be accomplished ; for we feel indeed

“ 'Tis worth a world of shame and loss,
To draw one sinner to the cross.”

Our characters, dear reader, are drawn from daily life ; they are such as most of you meet every day in our southern land. We have sought to place before you “every-day” characters and “every-day” experience, and these combined with the hopes and fears attending a better state of things—a transition from darkness to light. Imperfectly though we may have fulfilled our intention, may God's blessing attend it !

And now, for the enlightenment of those of our dear readers who may not have some of their phrenological organs so largely developed as the class of readers we first address, for those who love to follow a favourite heroine to a comfortable settlement (and we have the vanity to hope our Katie is a favourite with some), we will take another peep at the fair girl still in her quiet home, fulfilling her quiet duties. Graham Howard, though long away in England, engaged in many duties too, had not forgotten his affianced bride in Australia ; and though it was soon discovered that those duties would require a permanent residence in England—though Vermont Vale was not likely again to welcome him as its pastor, yet a return to Australia was already contemplated. He was coming, was even on his way, to take off his little wife to an English home, and even her fond parents have not refused it.

And so, after all, our little Australian Katie was to be transplanted into a less genial soil ! How will

she bear the transplanting? Happily she could say with all her heart—

“Since Thou, my God, art everywhere,
I cannot be where Thou art not.”

And though it is not our purpose to follow her to see how her wifely mission was performed, though we intend not to go with her to her new sphere of action, we can safely trust her in those hands that never fail, to the care of Him who has promised to be with His people “in all places,” to bless them.

Sunny Hollow, happily settled, we can as safely resign; Fred and Annie, both with hearts beating in unison, only added greater sunshine to the place; and by and by, when little prattlers climb those green, velvety slopes, and laugh and shout among the wattles, the sunshine will assume another phase, but not a whit less bright.

And Vermont Vale, we will trust that was not neglected. Those who love holyday will surely not tamely yield up their privileges because their minister has been called away; and not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, “will find that God is indeed near to bless, and that He will still water them abundantly with His Holy Spirit!”

After our fair friend, Fanny Moore, there may be some inquiries. She was not slow in following the example of Annie Maitland, and but a very short time elapsed when another wedding took place with great *éclat* in our pretty vale. Let us hope that our young friend Fanny found in her Murray mansion all the happiness she hoped for. Would that we could

tell our readers that in all her finding she had discovered the "Pearl of great price."

Dr. Moore, a short time after the marriage of his daughter, wooed and won a fair bride for himself; so, after all, the Doctor's house in Vermont still bore the evidence of feminine fingers about it, and the Doctor was a happy man.

Mrs. Bateman, we are sorry to say, did not improve in temper, though she increased in fat. Additionally soured by the match her favourite daughter had made, she was getting quite disagreeable to many of her customers, when happily Selina, having resigned short frocks and pinafores, and being really a passable young lady, attracted the attention of a wealthy sheep-farmer, many years her senior, and with abundance of the "yellow dust," a circumstance which rendered the disparity in years quite pardonable. A short courtship and a hurried marriage followed, and then Mrs. Bateman, yielding up the store to her daughter Mrs. Cassey, went to spend the rest of her days with Selina and her husband in the far bush.

Mrs. Ranger, in her quiet home, continued bringing up her children in the fear of the Lord. Peaceful and trustful as ever, and looking forward to the end of her journey as to approaching happiness, she could say—

“Lo, when my latest breath
Shall rend the veil in twain,
By death, I shall escape from death,
And life eternal gain.

“Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word!
And oft repeat before the throne,
‘For ever with the Lord!’”

Yes, to her the thought of life with Jesus for ever sweetened all her daily toils, made even sickness, and pain, and sorrow but messengers to lead her thoughts above.

And thus may it be with us all. Having Jesus for our Friend on earth, may we find Him near when life and strength shall fail—when the dark curtain of death shall be drawn over our failing eyes, and our fleeting breath is fitfully drawn between our pale lips. Then may those words, “For ever with the Lord,” sweeten our dying moments; may the “rod and the staff” sustain us; may the hand of Jesus uphold us! On His bosom may our last breath be drawn. Then, indeed, all shall be well!

“When my sad heart surveys the pain
Which weary pilgrims here sustain,
As o’er the waste of life they roam,
Oppress’d without, betray’d within,
Victims of violence and sin,
Shall I not cry, ‘Thy kingdom come’?”

“And when I know whose strong control
Can calm and cheer each troubled soul,
And lead these weary wanderers home;
Can lodge them in a Father’s breast,
And soothe this weary world to rest,
Shall I not cry, ‘Thy kingdom come’?”

THE END.

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