



ADAM'S DAUGHTERS

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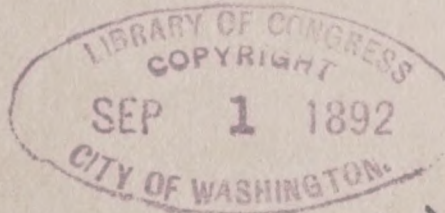
ADAM'S DAUGHTERS.

BY

JULIA MACNAIR WRIGHT.

I wonder if in coming years, oh little realm, mine
eyes
Shall see above thy turf-built roof the waving
harvests rise.

VIRGIL, ECL. I.



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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

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"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

P R E F A C E .

“WHAT shall we do for a living?” is a problem proposed to many women, maids, wives, and widows. The penalty waiting upon a failure in the solution is generally, to put it in its mildest terms, pauperism. Yet this momentous question is often sprung upon women suddenly, when no previous training has capacitated them for the solving thereof.

How three maids and their mother sought to unravel this enigma, how they failed, and how they succeeded, is set forth in this true tale for the help of their sisters.

Most of those who have busied themselves in philanthropic work have been appalled by the way in which women called to self-support crowd into the over-full ranks of the city's workers, abandoning the friends and the healthful environment of rural homes, in the hope that the marts of the city will give them easier work and higher wages. In scarcely one case in a thousand is such expectation realized.

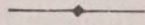
This book has been written with an earnest desire to deter some young women from a step so surrounded with danger and difficulty; to

show the advantages and possibilities of rural life, the dark side of the city, which is often the only side seen by the city's toilers. Not all girls from the country or in the country can have the advantages enjoyed by the heroines of this story; they were perhaps exceptional, but the story is true in all its main points, and that very exceptional side of the experiences commended them to my attention.

Is there hope and help then only for those fortunate enough to secure unusual offices of friendship and almost romantically happy opportunities? Nothing is too difficult for Christian wisdom and Christian charity, for workers whose hands and heads, whose hearts and purses are consecrated to serving God in the person of suffering humanity. But the cities are crowded with women who are the children of the city, who have been born and bred within the brick walls. What of them? They came from no Eden garden-land, and no such land lures their return. Daughters of Lazarus who live and die within a stone's throw of Dives' gate—what, we say, of them? The subject is too large to be united with another theme. Only the side of the country girls, of Adam's daughters, has been treated in this book; the daughters of Lazarus would demand a volume for themselves.

THE AUTHOR.

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ADAM S DAUGHTERS.

CHAPTER I.

BEEES AND HONEYSUCKLES.

“To such sweet signs might time have flowed
In golden currents on
Ere from the garden, man’s first abode,
The glorious guests were gone.”

“POPLAR RISE;” that is what the “Three Milbury Maids” had named their homestead, lying fair to the sun and the southwest breezes in one of the richest farming districts of Pennsylvania.

“It is just the name for the place!” said the “Maids” to Uncle Aaron.

“Maybe,” replied that cautious old farmer, “but in my early days no one ever thought of naming farms; it was full undertaking enough to name the horses and work oxen. Now-a-days all the cows, and even the houses, have to be named, it seems. A’n’t it rather of a foreign notion?”

“Why, uncle!” cried his nieces in chorus, “we must live somewhere, and if one just says

‘Milbury Farm,’ it might be the other farm, you know. What name could be better than Poplar Rise? Does n’t the farm stand on the slope, and are there not six poplars on the roadside before the house? It can be seen for miles and miles.”

“Have it any way you like,” said Uncle Aaron; “the place is yours anyhow. Nobody has a better right to name it.”

“Oh now, Aaron!” said widow Milbury, the mother of the maids.

“Oh, uncle!” cried the maids.

“It is so,” said the farmer, repeating an oft-told tale. “Adam and I were twins and we had all things in common. ‘The early Christians’ the dominie used to call us, and we had this farm together undivided; and when Adam died he said, ‘It is all right, Aaron my brother; you’ll leave all you have to the girls; so I’m content.’ And of course that is the way it will be. I have done the best I could for Adam’s daughters, and the farm will be yours by-and-by.”

“But what will we do with a farm? You wont want us to sell what was great-grandfather Milbury’s. And what can we do with a farm?”

“Ah,” said Uncle Aaron, rubbing his chin, rough with three days’ growth—“ah, what will you do with it? That’s a puzzler!”

Whenever the subject of the ownership of

the farm came up, which it did about once a month, the good farmer recording in it his fealty to his dead brother and loving to turn conversation to it, this was the way in which it always ended: What would they do with the Milbury farm, two hundred acres of the most beautiful and well-cultivated land, with that comfortable farmhouse seated on the rise and the great Pennsylvania barn towering behind it?

This query, put by Rachel Vandyke, Myra, and Theodora Milbury, was regarded as a mild little joke. The days, months, and years flowed so tranquilly at Poplar Rise, with Uncle Aaron administering the farm and widow Milbury the domicile, that it seemed as if life and ease and good cheer must flow on there for ever like the brook.

But there came a day when the question of the future of Van, Myra, and Teddie, as the girls were called, was seriously taken up and discussed. It was on a day in the first week in June, and Aunt Harriet Proctor was at the farm visiting for a few days. She was only aunt by courtesy, for she had been the wife of Grandma Milbury's step-brother. She was the family boast and also their autocrat whenever she chose to assume that function, for Aunt Harriet's husband had served four terms in Congress and Aunt Harriet had written for the papers and

even a book or two, and was at the head of various societies and philanthropic movements and abreast with the leading thoughts of the day.

Aunt Harriet lived in Boston and saw her Pennsylvania friends but seldom. She was making a tour of the family homes now, and mamma Milbury was filled with a praiseworthy anxiety that such a woman as Aunt Harriet should think well of the three "Milbury maids."

Aunt Harriet had been at the house nearly a week, and was now seated on the front porch with mamma Milbury. Mamma Milbury was knitting; Aunt Harriet, with her shapely white hands folded in her lap, regarded the goodly view of "fields which the Lord had blessed;" the fragrance of new-mown hay, blossoming bean-fields, and gardens full of flowers and labiate herbs, came to her as she sat on the porch. The porch was framed on strong white fluted pillars and draped like a bower with honeysuckles and climbing-roses, now in ample bloom.

In an open window above the porch sat Van Milbury darning the family stockings. She had a large basket of stockings beside her, just come from the wash; she had a little basket of darning-cotton, yarn, and needles, and as she finished each pair of stockings she folded them up in the tidiest manner possible and laid them on the wide window-sill, for Van was orderly. Now

any girl darning stockings, especially on a brilliant summer morning, feels self-sacrificing, virtuous, and praiseworthy, and not in a humor to be found fault with.

Van seated thus could not avoid hearing her mother say to Mrs. Proctor, "Well now, Aunt Harriet, what do you think of Adam's daughters?" It was a habit in the Milbury family always to refer the ownership of these three maids rather to the dead father than to the living mother, and it was a habit in which the mother acquiesced; it made the three girls in some sort Adam's monument.

The subject was not a particularly private one, and there was no reason why Van should leave her work or her place before Aunt Harriet replied, but in the tone of one bestowing faint praise, "I think they are very agreeable, bright, healthy, nice-looking girls."

"Why," exclaimed mamma Milbury, "it *sounds*, Aunt Harriet, as if you did not approve of them some way!"

"I approve of them," replied Aunt Harriet; "I think much of them; but I don't approve, niece Milbury, of the way in which they have been brought up."

"Aunt Harriet," cried the good mother, more and more dismayed, "we have done our very best for them, Aaron and I. I am sure no girls

have prettier manners or are more neatly dressed; and they went to school just as long as they wanted to go, and we bought them a piano, though none of them take to music, though Teddie plays her accompaniments very well, and they are all church members. What is wrong about their bringing up?"

"The question which I ask," said Aunt Harriet, "is, what do these girls know that is of really practical value? What can they do? What are they doing? As church members, niece Milbury, what are they doing? When I heard that one and another of them had come out on the Lord's side, uniting with the church of her fathers, I thanked God for the answer to many prayers. I hoped, when I came here, to find these girls' hearts on fire with the fresh and beautiful zeal of early Christian life, their abilities consecrated to active service of the Master. I have lived where I have seen much need of philanthropic religious work; where I have met men and women of a living Christianity, and so perhaps I have become accustomed to looking for the Christ-likeness in those who bear Christ's name, the likeness in this especial particular, that they shall 'go about doing good,' busy, busy about their Father's business from childhood to old age. This, niece Milbury, is not a burden but a joy. And now, as you have opened

this discussion about the girls, let us go back to the first question and take it in its lowest application, What are the girls doing? What do they know how to do?"

"Why, they know as much as other girls know and can do as much as others do," said Mrs. Milbury in a vexed tone. "They are industrious. You do n't see them lounging about idle."

"True, I do not, and for that very reason I think it a pity so much good will and good ability should go to waste. But, my dear niece, let us look at this question of your girls. I have taken it to heart. What do they know that is practical? Here are three girls without a brother. What can they do for a living? Have they any business or trade at their finger-ends or in their heads? No. You would not bring up boys so. Why should we leave girls in a more helpless and defenceless condition than boys, who are by nature better provided for fending for themselves?"

"I do n't know just what you mean. We have not felt *poor* enough to make the girls learn trades, and we have never wanted them to go away from home. Why should we? We are well-to-do. Brother Daniel Milbury talks something like that now and then; but what does Daniel know about girls? He has only six boys in his family."

"I know something about girls," said Aunt Harriet. "I have brought up four, and I never felt easy until each one of them was well able to support herself if necessary. I think girls ought to have a fair chance. Suppose your girls were left poor and orphans, tell me, what could they do?"

"Well—now—" said Mrs. Milbury reluctantly, "I suppose they—could marry."

"But who wants a girl to be driven to marry for a home? Not you. We scorn or condemn marrying for money or a title. Is it any better to put a girl in such a position that she must marry to be supported, where otherwise she would not? These lower motives for marriage are at the root of much domestic discord and much separation and divorce. You did not mean that."

"There are plenty of things my girls can do," said Mrs. Milbury, rousing up. "They help me in the house. It is true, I keep a strong, capable girl, and all the milk goes to the creamery; but the girls make all the preserves and cake and desserts, and keep the parlor and halls in order and their own rooms tidy. They do their own plain-sewing and mending, make over their common dresses, and fix over their second-best hats."

"Yes, yes. They are not lazy; their mother

is too sensible for that. Their rooms are charmingly neat. But what I ask is, What can they do that is practical? What object have they in life? God did not make human souls to live objectless, as cattle. The French say we should do something to show 'the reason of our being.' What are the girls doing for the church or for the world? Let us return to that. They are Christians. Are they teaching in Sunday-school, working in the Missionary Society, helping in the Temperance Union work, or in the Young Women's Christian Association?"

"The girls do n't seem to take to the 'Young Women's Christian Association.' They say they do n't see the least bit of use in it," said Mrs. Milbury; and Van in her window echoed the words in her heart. And how it came back to her in after days! "And the older ladies of the church seem to get on with all the work of the Missionary Society and the Temperance Union. My girls do n't care much to put themselves forward. And as to Sunday-school, it opens at half-past nine, and we are two and a half miles from church. It is hard for farmers to get an early start Sunday mornings. And with Sunday-school and the Temperance and Missionary meetings too, you know how it is, we cannot always get a team. In the busy season we cannot ask for a horse or a man to harness up."

“You are all wrong,” said Aunt Harriet earnestly. “The young people ought to take hold of church work. If our young folks are not in training now for workers, who will do the work when those who are now doing it shall have passed away? It is the duty and should be a chief joy of Christians to do service for their Master. If there was a will to the work you could find a way. Mostly teams are only busy in fine weather; and in fine weather, when a team could not be had, such vigorous girls could walk two miles and a half. Our Sabbath-schools are suffering for teachers, and classes are often put into the hands of frivolous young people who make no pretence to piety and are unprepared to teach. Your girls have been well taught in the Scriptures, they all have Teacher’s Bibles, and I see in your bookcase Scott’s Commentaries, a Concordance, Bible Atlas, and Bible Dictionary. Here are tools for work. They could prepare good lessons. I am sure in the Sunday-school they would be blessing and blessed. Something in Christian work they ought to do. The world is full of need. The fields which Christ saw ‘white to the harvest’ are white still. Where is the Christian common sense in praying the ‘Lord to send forth laborers into his harvest,’ and yet being unwilling to lift a hand to the work? That is too much of the

Pharisee-fashion for children of God. I tell you, niece Milbury, that God is not likely to be fonder of idlers in his family than you are of them in yours. Would you like it if your girls refused to help you because they did not like to rise early, or did not wish to soil their hands, or wanted to amuse themselves? In the church where I live, all, men and women, old and young, are expected to be workers according to their ability."

"I should not be surprised if you are right, Aunt Harriet," said Mrs. Milbury. "The fact is the girls to me have always seemed little girls, and I forget that they are women grown. If you would talk to them about working in the church I feel sure you might do them good. I'd like to see them busy."

"But that matter of church work is only one side of the question. What I want to know further is, what can your girls do that is practical in the way of self-support? Can one of them cut and fit so as to earn a dollar or a dollar and a half a day as a dressmaker? Could they set up an establishment for first-class dress and cloak making? Could one of them maintain herself as a milliner? There is not one of them could teach music or painting, though they have had lessons for a smattering of both."

"But, Aunt Harriet, how you do go on!"

cried Mrs. Milbury. "You speak as if the girls were likely to be driven to want. Why, this place is clear of all incumbrance. Whatever happens there will always be the house and the farm."

"Even houses and farms take wings," said Mrs. Proctor; "and if they do not, what can girls brought up as yours are do with the farm? What do they know about farming?"

"Ay, that's what I ask," said Uncle Aaron, coming up from the hayfield and seating himself on the porch step to fan his burning face with his big chip hat. "I tell you, ladies, when I consider how those three girls might be thrown on the world, and not one of them know how to handle herself, I feel dreadful skittish about it!"

The voice of Hannah, the maid-of-all-work, was heard calling for Mrs. Milbury. Hannah never thought of calling for one of the girls in an emergency. Mrs. Milbury left the porch.

"What should be done with girls to make your mind easy about them?" asked Uncle Aaron of Mrs. Proctor.

"Make them capable, in some way, of self-support."

"But what way?" demanded the anxious farmer.

"It depends upon the girls, just as the way

the boy shall make his living depends upon the boy."

"With a boy it's different," said farmer Aaron. "I'd put a boy to work naturally; but with a parcel of pretty girls it don't seem natural," and he went round the house to wash and brush and to change his coat before dinner.

Of the three girls who were burdening the family mind at that moment, Van was, as we have said, darning stockings, Myra was in the garden picking currants for jelly. Van, from her window, could hear her merry song and see the bobbing about of her green gingham sun-bonnet as she picked. Theodora, familiarly Teddie, was lying under a tree in the orchard reading. Van tossed her head and in the first instance felt greatly exasperated with Aunt Proctor.

Rachel Vandyke Milbury was no beauty, but she had a strong, pleasant, healthful face, quick wit, and much intelligence; her brown hair was always smooth and shining, and her vigorous figure never failed to look well in its neat dress set off by linen collar and cuffs.

"What does Aunt Harriet mean?" Van asked herself indignantly. Nevertheless her good common sense was roused by the frankly put question, "What could you or your sisters do for a living if thrown upon your own resources?"

What could they do? Anything? No. What had they ever tried to do besides helping a little in the house, where their skilful mother and the energetic Hannah made work easy? Under inspiration of remarks made by Uncle Daniel Milbury's enterprising six boys, they had at various times tried rearing lambs, colts, and calves, keeping bees, raising silk-worms, or cultivating small fruits. But their efforts had been spasmodic and short-lived and had invariably been remitted in a few weeks. Such affairs had ended in a laugh, and Uncle Aaron and the hired man had taken the abandoned labors and stock in hand.

"Aunt Harriet is croaking," said Van, folding up the last pair of stockings; "we shall always have the farm, and at the worst there is Uncle James."

Then Van's mind reverted to the suggestion that they might solve the problem of support by marrying. Her native dignity and good sense placed her on Aunt Harriet's side, which was really her mother's also, that need of a home was not a proper reason for marriage. It would be paying too dear for the home; one might perhaps better go out to service and be free to change work and masters.

"I wonder if such dire need of a home will ever come to us?" said Van, looking out over

fields of clover, corn, wheat, barley, over fragrant bean-fields and swelling uplands. "Certainly not."

She heard Myra's song as she picked fruit, and noted Teddie's graceful form lying under the apple-tree. Myra was like Van, "neither foul nor fair," but Teddie was the family beauty. She had taken to herself the curls and dimples and general prettiness which might have lawfully been shared by the plainer Van and Myra.

"She at least," said Van, "will marry, and for love. Any one would be very lucky who would get our Teddie."

For these three were very affectionate sisters, and the elder two cherished and rejoiced in the beauty of Teddie as if it were their own. This brought back Van's mind to the thought of marrying, and she remembered that by some fatality there were no unmarried men of suitable age in the neighborhood. Besides, how often at country gatherings she had heard stout farm wives say that "Adam's daughters were not cut out for farmers' wives; always depended on hired help; never sent contributions of bread, jelly, or butter to the county fair."

"And yet," said Van in her musing, "I know we could work just as well as any of them if need were and we were put to the test. For my part I prefer to stay at home. Mammy and Uncle

Aaron are far dearer and nicer than any man could be."

Now these girls were, Teddie eighteen, Myra twenty, and Van twenty-two; and haunted by the conversation she had heard, Van after dinner took her sisters up stairs and detailed the case to them. Myra spoke out promptly:

"She is quite right. There is nothing we could do. I give it up."

"We could sew," suggested Van.

"Not well enough to earn fifty cents a day," said Teddie.

"We could go to the city and find work," said Van.

"I've heard of hot garrets and starvation prices there," sniffed Myra.

"The fact is," said Teddie, "the whole method with us has been wrong. If we had been boys we would have been independent and safe; as girls we are helpless and in danger. I've thought of it like a nightmare sometimes."

"See here," said Myra, "let us all think about it, and a week from to-day we'll have a meeting in the garret and talk ourselves well over. I think we ought to take ourselves in hand. Something must be done about us."

"You mean we must do something about ourselves," said Teddie; "and that question whether we are doing anything that might be called real

Christian work has come to me sometimes so that it has kept me awake nights! One can't read the Bible without coming upon such texts as 'Why stand ye all the day idle?' 'What owest thou unto thy Lord?' 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' 'Work while it is day,' 'Behold the fields white to the harvest,' 'Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.' Girls, do we live or act in one thing different from what we did before we joined the church? Sometimes I think the Judge will be able to say to us, 'Naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not; a stranger, and ye took me not in.' There really must be some work for us if we look for it."

"Teddie," said Van, "you are a regular little concordance. Is all the Bible in your curly head?"

"I wish there was more of it practically in my life," said Teddie, sighing. "The text on the wall-roll to-day was, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' Did you notice it? I suppose the first thing would be to find out what mind was in Christ, and then to see if such a mind was in ourselves."

"Teddie, you blessed little soul," said Myra, "what a pity you were not a boy, so you could be a minister; you'll have to help Van and me on towards heaven a little."

CHAPTER II.

A GARRET CONCLAVE.

“Weave, brothers! weave! Toil is ours ;
But toil is the lot of man ;
One gathers the fruit, one gathers the flowers,
One soweth the seed again !
There 's not a creature, from England's king
To the peasant that delves the soil,
That knows half the pleasure the seasons bring
If he have not his share of toil.”

THE great garret at Poplar Rise was the senate chamber wherein the “Milbury maids” discussed affairs of State. Extending from one side of the house to the other, and lit by great semi-circular windows east and west, it was cool and well aired in the hottest days. Here Van and her sisters planned grand surprises of Christmas and birthday presents, designed their dress for the mild festivals of the neighborhood, argued over haps and mishaps, behavior and misbehavior; labored over their compositions and considered of their graduating array when they had been schoolgirls. Often mamma Milbury was invited up to sit as judge in equity and hear their various cases. Here were hoarded relics

and treasures of three generations of Milburys, from the flax-wheel and wool-card and loom of great-grandmother Milbury to the drab brocade gown and scoop bonnet wherein mamma Milbury had appeared as Adam's bride. Here were their well-kept childish toys and picture books; but the cradle, trundle-bed, and high chairs had gone to Uncle Daniel's to serve his brigade of boys. The garret had a spicy smell of cedar-wood and camphor-chests and bunches of dried herbs. Here the Milbury maids had played day after day from early childhood, and here they had been wont to flee for refuge from domestic ebullitions such as house-cleaning, pig-killing, preserve-making, and soap-boiling. Grown older, and expected to take active part in the cares of household state, they yet resorted to the garret to hold a conclave in every crisis of their cheerful, well protected, and well provided lives.

Van and Myra were first in the garret at the time appointed for discussing "Ought we to do something?" and "What ought we to do?"

Presently Teddie was heard in the lower hall singing, and so on up both flights of stairs, coming slowly as if burdened, but singing still of one and another person known to fame trying in vain to climb the golden stair. Teddie's voice rang out clear and sweet as a nixie's bell as she carolled

"Don't you hear dem bells a-ringing?"

Presently she appeared at the garret door, flushed and smiling.

"It is well," cried Myra, "that we have not three pairs of stairs, or you would have had time for a litany embracing all the notables of the day. It reminds me of the plantation song, 'Where, oh where is good old 'Lijah,' and so on for all the Bible heroes."

"Our subject is a weighty one," said Teddie, "and I thought we wanted all the light and information we could get, so I looked over our bookshelves and borrowed of Miss Prudy Steele and Uncle Daniel."

Her arms were full of books, and she dropped on a worn-out hassock and laid the heap of volumes between herself and her sisters. Teddie was not only the beauty but the book-lover of the family. She read more than her sisters.

"Let us see," said Van, picking up a book. 'Woman's Sphere and Duties,' by Henry Linsdale, D. D. Pshaw! why will ministers go on preaching special sermons to women and girls, as if they knew anything about them! Now if these remarks were by a woman, she might have evolved them out of her experiences and her feelings, and I would have so far taken them for what they are worth. But what do these men know of women in particular more than may be said

of humans in general?" and giving the book a toss Van flung it far from her. Van was the impulsive Milbury.

"Luckily it belongs to us," said Teddie calmly, "and if the back comes off we are the only losers. Don't treat this one so, Van, for it belongs to Miss Prudy. This is 'Woman, Her Condition and Prospects,' also by a Rev. I think he tries to be quite fair. I see he has four chapters for woman's suffrage and four against."

"Suffrage!" cried Van. "I don't want to discuss suffrage! That is not what is pressing on *me*. It is woman's sufferings in not knowing what she ought to do, or whether she ought to do anything. As for woman's condition, my own is the point of chief interest, and Aunt Harriet thinks I have been brought up a perennial infant or idiot, and am also occupying the position of a genteel licensed pauper."

Teddie laid her second book down and picked up a third.

"'To the law and to the testimony.' Here is a Book whose authority we all accept, and I have been looking up what it says. Here's the woman's chapter, first of all," and sweetly through the garret sounded her clear young voice reading the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs. Her sisters listened content.

"It is beautiful and full of pictures," said

Myra. "You see her spinning and weaving, as our great-grandmother used to do; you see the household clad in purple and scarlet, and the busy maidens, and all the abundance and good order of the home. But don't you see, Teddie, it is n't for us; it does not hit our case. She is a married woman, the head of a family; she not only has a husband, but he is an elder, either of the church or of the magistrates; at all events he is somebody, and helps her to be somebody. What is there for the Milbury maids?"

"There is always something in this Book for every one," said Teddie. "I've been looking our question up. There was Deborah, and I've come across such funny things about Deborah! You know the Bible, the real Scripture, says, 'Deborah judged Israel;' it does n't in the text say one word about Barak helping judge. Well the editors long ago, or whoever got up the chapter headings, were not quite satisfied with the inspired statement, so without any authority they put in in the contents 'Deborah and Barak judge Israel.' Then along comes a man who writes our 'Bible Atlas and Chronology,' and he thinks the Lord was quite wrong in letting Deborah be a judge, or at least in letting it be known that she judged. And so he puts Barak as judge in the list, and leaves out Deborah altogether! And yet no doubt he is one of those who find

fault with Roman-catholics for altering Scripture statement so as to be not what is but what they wish."

"Maybe he did that because Deborah isn't mentioned in the faith chapter in Hebrews, while Barak is," said Myra.

"That doesn't seem to me to the point," said Teddie. "Barak had faith in what Deborah as God's prophetess told him. He believed the message that came through the human voice. Deborah could not help believing. She had the direct word of God. God spoke to her."

"No matter what she was. Suppose she was a judge, no one will ever elect us, and we should not know what to do if they did. And she led an army, but there will be no war for us to lead in, and if there were I'd run away!" cried Myra.

"Here is another place," said Teddie. "Zelophehad, it seems, was like our father, and had only daughters and no sons. Five of them there were, and they wanted to be treated as sons and get land in Canaan, and the Lord said 'the daughters of Zelophehad speak right,' and they had their share of land, were farmers I suppose; that fits us."

"I make sure it states that they all married," cried Myra, "and had some one to farm for them. Every one married in those days."

“Now see here,” cried Teddie triumphantly. “In Nehemiah it says, Shallum, ruler of half of Jerusalem, worked on the city wall, ‘he and his daughters.’ And no doubt Shallum’s daughters did good work, or it would not be set down about them. So if women could build wall, I think it means that they may do whatever they are able to do and find a place to do, whether it is wall or anything else.”

“All right,” said Van, “we’ll take that as proved. Now the question is not of our *right* but of our *can*; what can we do or ought we to do any more than we are doing?”

“Here’s another book,” said Teddie: “‘The Employments of Women.’ It is a cyclopædia of women’s work, and it is by a woman.”

“Blessed creature!” cried Myra, snatching up the book; “if this has n’t our work in it, I give up in despair! Let us see, ‘PROFESSIONAL WOMEN.’ Can we sing, play, read, write, edit, make books, lecture, be doctor, lawyer—”

“Beggar-man, thief?” chimed Teddie. “No, we can’t; we have no genius, and a precious slim education!”

“I’m in earnest,” proclaimed Van. “I want to find something by which we could arrive at self-support. Could we teach?”

“We could n’t get a six months’ certificate,” said Myra solemnly. “Are we strong on the

multiplication table or compound interest or rhetoric? Do we know all the rivers in Asia or all the mountains in Africa? No!"

"‘ARTISTS,’" continued Teddie, reading, "goes with the other professionals. ‘MERCANTILE PURSUITS’ require training, and I’ve heard you get two dollars and a half salary a week, pay three dollars for board, and have fifty cents less than nothing for clothes and washing! ‘MANUFACTURERS.’ Uncle Aaron and mother would n’t let us go learn in a factory. All kinds of ‘SEAMSTRESSES.’ People round here hire very little sewing done, and pay very little for what they hire. ‘BOARDING-HOUSE KEEPERS.’ Could we do that?"

"Might," said Myra, "if we had a house and something to run it on until boarders came in."

"I move we adjourn until to-morrow!" cried Teddie. "There are the Lacy girls driving up to the gate. They’ve come to spend the afternoon. Come on, Myra!"

Teddie and Myra went dashing down stairs. Van picked up the books and laid them in neat order on a shelf. She could not endure confusion, and the Lacy girls were sixteen and seventeen years of age, Teddie’s especial guests, not hers. She folded her arms behind her, and with her shoulders well held back and her head up, paced the long garret from window to window.

Van was honestly seeking a solution of these questions which Aunt Harriet had thrust into her life. She could not avoid remembering how even in her narrow circle of observation many women had suddenly been left destitute, and worse than that, helpless! She paused, looking out of the westward window, as if the declining sun could give her light on her vexed question, or as if in the wide horizon she could see new and safe paths of life broadening out before her and her sisters. Until she heard Aunt Harriet's remarks it had never occurred to her that she should be other than she was, a pleasant girl in a pleasant home, assuming no responsibilities, but just drifting on easily and pleasantly through life. These two books which Teddie had been examining suggested to Van that there was a great army of women daily compelled to answer practically this question of self-support. How hard some of them found it, how hopeless, how much suffering was in it for the unsuccessful. A wailing cry from her working sisters, many of them young girls like herself, seemed to reach her ears. Had she any right to be idle while they toiled? And that other book—that Book of books—which was so enshrined in little Teddie's heart—there had fallen into Van's soul new light from that. Merely because she was young and fortunate and well protected God had not

meant her to be an idler. Had she not hands and feet and tongue, time, health, and had he given her no errands to do in this world? By what right was she merely living to please herself? What was the word about seeking not our own but another's good? Had the church to-day no walls on which she might build as Shallum's daughters built the walls of Jerusalem? Here were large themes, the religious and spiritual work and the daily practical human work. Van felt a new burden. She knit her brows. Who would help her solve these weighty and intricate problems? She looked from the window.

"Ah! there is the man for me!" she cried as she saw a wide soft felt hat flapping up the road above a bright red flannel shirt. "I'll go talk with Uncle Daniel!"

Down the back stairs, through the garden, across the barnyard, where the calves ran after her to be petted, and then she lightly swung herself upon a gate-post and sat comfortably, with her feet resting on the five-barred gate. The tremulous silvery leaves of the poplars cast quivering sun-flecked shadows over her as she waited.

Daniel Milbury was the youngest of the three Milbury brothers. With him lived Grandma Milbury. She had lived with her twin sons,

and had helped Adam's wife in her first cares for Adam's three daughters. But when Sara Ann, Daniel's wife, might have said with Leah, "A troop cometh," and when along with the army of stout boys misfortunes fell upon Daniel, Grandma Milbury went to Daniel's to live. Troubles had pursued Daniel. A tornado overthrew a nearly built big barn. Another tornado rooted out and entirely destroyed a vast field of tobacco just ready for cutting. Daniel invested largely in Jersey and Alderney blooded cows, and they sickened and died; he took to raising hogs, and cholera broke out among them and they had to be ruthlessly killed. So Daniel's wife began to do her work with aid of only one young bound girl, and though Grandma Milbury could not work much, she knew that she could darn stockings and patch small trowsers, and wash faces and put on clean blouses and collars, and pack little dinner baskets and count up the little heads at nightfall, and tell the children the stories and the nursery rhymes, and teach them the hymns, catechism, and Bible texts for which the hard-pressed mother had very little time. Therefore Grandma Milbury packed up her big work-basket, her "piece-bag," her Bible, her black frocks, her spectacles, white caps and aprons, and her soundless shoes, and moved to Daniel's.

“It does n’t make a bit of difference after all, you dear old blessing,” said the Milbury maids, “for we shall see you every day all the same.” And in truth not a day passed but mamma Milbury or some of her daughters went to see grandma. But it was not to send messages to grandma that her namesake Rachel Vandyke was waiting on the barnyard gate for Uncle Daniel. Uncle Daniel stopped at sight of his favorite niece.

“Hold up there, Billy-boy!” he shouted to the near ox, and the oxen, willing to rest, stopped in the shade. Uncle Daniel, his ox-goad in hand, his blue overalls thrust in the tops of his big boots, seated himself on a piece of timber projecting from the great load on the wagon. “Well?” he said.

“I heard Aunt Harriet talking about us girls the other day,” said Van bluntly; “she says we have been brought up all wrong, and could not take care of ourselves if we were left destitute. She says there’s nothing we really know how to do; and she’s right—there is n’t.”

“I’ve studied over it time and again,” said Uncle Daniel. “If you had been boys, one at least would have been made a thorough-going farmer. You favor your father, Van, and if you had been a boy you’d have been a farmer after the pattern of him and Aaron—lucky farmers,

always good crops, selling at the top of the market, and making safe investments. One of you would have had a good trade, as building or milling; and the other one would have had a profession, and the world would have been the better of you. I've often thought of it."

"What's the use of thinking that way? We must be thought of as we are. We are girls, and we want the world to be the better of us as girls. We've talked of it lately. We don't want to go to the city in an emergency, and make under-waists for ten cents, and drilling drawers for five or six cents. We are hearty eaters, and we'd starve at that rate," cried Van.

"I should say so, indeed," said Uncle Daniel in dismay.

"And," continued his niece, "in case of trouble here, we don't want to be a burden on you, nor to go to the poorhouse, so what could we do? You know none of us will ever marry."

Here Uncle Daniel leaned back more heavily on the load of timber and burst into Homeric laughter.

"What are you laughing at?" cried Van testily. "You know we would n't if we could; and if we would, who is there for us to marry?"

"You are not more helpless than most other girls," said Uncle Daniel, "but mighty few girls have learning that is marketable. They never

earn a dollar, and the consequence is they do n't know practically how much a dollar is worth nor what it ought to fetch. Sixty or eighty cents—that's all the worth of girls' dollars."

"What would you have taught us if we had been your girls, Uncle Daniel?" asked Van coaxingly.

"If you'd been my girls no doubt I'd have been as big a fool as other people and spent my time spoiling you," said her uncle grimly.

"Uncle, why can't you talk to me reasonably, as if I were one of your boys?" demanded Van. "My father and Uncle Aaron were twins, and I think I made a narrow escape from being twins too. I always feel as if I were myself and my twin brother. I have what folks call a girl's virtues, and I have some of the manly virtues that belong by nature to my missing twin brother. I strictly mind my own business, when I have any. I never meddle with other people's business. I am not afraid of things and I despise debt. Speak to me as if I were a reasonable and useful person. What can I do?"

Uncle Daniel looked at her meditatively.

"You are the moral image of your father," he cried. "I say, Van, why don't you turn for work where he turned for it—where Adam and Eve turned for it—to the ground? The Lord has cast your lot here in the country and with

farming people. You are not called to run away for work. Learn what you can, all you can, from what is around you. Learn farming. Could you run this farm if Aaron died?"

"No, of course not," said Van with energy.

"Then learn to do it," said Uncle Daniel. "Go on, Boy Blue!" this last exhortation being to the off ox, and the team and Uncle Daniel moved leisurely down the road.

That night, when the sisters had gone to bed, their two rooms having an archway between, Van called out from her room, "Girls, we'll have that matter all to talk over again; we are as far off as ever from any sensible ideas about it."

Presently she rose, and tall and white in her nightdress, went into her sisters' room and sat on the side of their bed and told them what she and Uncle Daniel had said by the barnyard gate.

"But after all nothing will happen, and we'll live here in comfort all our days, as Miss Prudy Steele has done," said Myra.

"And at the worst we could move to the city, and keep boarders, or clerk, or sew," said Van hesitatingly.

"And break our hearts and starve," cried Teddie. "My mind is made up: I shall study two hours every day hard, reviewing all my

studies, until I know enough to get a certificate. Then I shall get a school and try my hand at teaching.”

Great admiration of Teddie from Van and Myra.

“And after all,” said Myra, “we have forgotten Uncle James! He writes to us and says such nice things about us—that is when he writes at all—about twice a year. He would help us out.”

“Uncle Daniel says he would n’t give a row of pins for Uncle James,” said Van suddenly.

“All this is daily bread work,” said Teddie, “and I don’t think God means us to do our thinking all about that and none about work for him. In one of those books I took to the garret it said, ‘Just as parts of our bodies might atrophy for want of use, so the powers of the soul dwindle when not called into honest action for God and for humanity.’”

CHAPTER III.

LIGHTNING FROM A CLEAR SKY.

“Gloom is upon thy silent hearth,
O silent house! once filled with mirth;
Sorrow is in the breezy sound
Of thy tall poplars whispering round.”

THE second garret conclave was adjourned *sine die*. The Milbury maids suddenly became very busy; there was first a picnic and then a trip to Westchester. After that it was decided to enlarge and improve the church, and the Milbury girls were diligent among the collectors for that end. Then the Bible Society had its anniversary with a great meeting in a woodland on Uncle Daniel's farm, and the girls were busy and liberal in preparing the dinner for that. Next came a Fourth of July celebration on a large scale, and the garret was full of merry young people arranging decorations.

The little excitement about being able to do something practical seemed to have passed out of the thoughts of all but Teddie. Teddie said nothing, but she thought the more. She searched out all the long-unused grammars, arithmetics, histories, and geographies, and made herself a den in one corner of the garret and there daily

she gave two hours to hard work. If anything was going on for the day, Teddie only went to her studies somewhat earlier. She began on the easy primary books to refresh her mind with simple formulas and first principles, and then took the more advanced work.

“Whatever are you about, Teddie?” demanded Myra, following her to the garret one day. “I observe that on very busy days you sneak off and leave me to do all the work in our room! What is going on? Are you turning author secretly?”

“Never so bad as that, Myra, and I know you wont mind about the room days when we have to start off somewhere early. I am determined that at least one of us girls shall know enough to teach a district school.”

“Dear me! I’d forgotten all about that necessity for knowing something!” exclaimed Myra; “I must think of it again.”

That evening when they were all sitting on the porch Myra said, “Mother and Uncle Aaron, don’t you want to let me go to Westchester for six months and take a course in bookkeeping? Suppose I should be left destitute some day, what would I do for a living? Uncle Daniel says we girls ought to know some business.”

“Daniel’s mostly about right,” said Uncle Aaron; “but you girls are safe with the farm;

the rent, and the interest of three or four thousand I have in bank, would always keep you."

"There does not seem to be any need for your doing other than you are doing," said mamma Milbury; "I don't want you off in Westchester by yourself, young as you are."

"You were off here married at my age," said Myra.

"Listen to this," said Van, who was reading a magazine. "Here is an article about 'poverty,' and here are some bits from it: 'The qualities which we often dislike and fear in a man—namely, shrewdness, hardness, adroitness, selfishness—are those which often insure success. The qualities which we love in a man—truth, generosity, trustfulness, the desire to help—often send him to the poorhouse.'"

"There's a bad lookout for you, Uncle Aaron; all your money will be gone in a jiffy!" cried Myra.

Van continued reading, "'Lack of self-confidence is often the cause of failure and poverty.' We don't lack self-confidence, girls; we won't be poor from that cause. What next? 'Rum is the greatest cause of poverty; it is the cause of more poverty than all the other causes put together.' There now, that looks better for us; we none of us are intemperate; we may not be paupers after all. 'Poverty often results from

aimlessness.' Ah now we are hit, sure enough! Myra, you and I will be beggars certain; we have no aims; but Teddie has. What further? 'Laziness is a grand cause of poverty; the lazy man is often, and ought to be always, the poor man.' Hope for us once more; we are not lazy, are we, mammy? But now listen, all of you; here is some hard common sense that comes home to us all: 'I believe that much poverty and suffering and distress would be prevented if parents would insist that their children, boys and girls alike, should be taught some useful, honorable means of earning a living, either by a trade or other occupation. The crying need of to-day is healthy, vigorous, strong, active, clear-minded men and women, who are capable of doing something; who can, in other words, exercise alike their brain and muscle and skill in doing some one thing well.' That cuts you and Uncle Aaron, mammy, for you have never had us taught to do any one thing well that would be a means of earning a living I think you'd better let Myra learn book-keeping."

"Of course she can go if she really wants to," said Mrs. Milbury.

"I would really like to try it in September," said Myra.

"And what shall I do?" demanded Van;

"I'm the eldest, and ought to lead the way in the defensive war against poverty."

"There's no need of crying poverty," said Uncle Aaron; "there is not a dollar of mortgage on the farm, and farms cannot burn up nor be lost in financial panics."

"But there is the right and wrong in it," said Van. "I surely think that 'Why stand ye here all the day idle?' was spoken to both men and women, and that it does not mean religious work only, but the Lord dislikes idleness of any kind. And when I look at myself I cannot see that I am much better than an idler and a cumberer of the ground."

"I wish you were a boy and I'd teach you to farm," said Uncle Aaron.

"Uncle Daniel says I can learn to farm as I am; women have been good farmers. And he says rented farms run down."

"La! who ever heard of a woman farming a place like this?" said Mrs. Milbury; and once more the subject was dropped.

"I have calculated," said Myra to her sisters, "that it will cost about two hundred and fifty dollars for me to go to Westchester and stay six months, and take a thorough bookkeeping course. I'll teach you enough, Van, so you can keep the farm books for Uncle Aaron and Uncle Daniel. And in the spring I mean to get a

place as bookkeeper in the village at John Steele's store. He only pays two hundred a year, but it will keep me in practice and be something to do."

"Well, next spring I mean to go to the teachers' examination and get a certificate and try for a school somewhere in the country and see if I can make it go," said Teddie.

"I feel as if we were getting to be very useful and business-like," said Van, "but if you both mean to be away from home all day or all the week, I shall have to stay here and keep the dear mammy's heart up; she would be too lonesome if we all went. I believe after all I'll take Uncle Daniel's counsel and learn farming."

" But, mousie, thou art not alane
In proving foresight may be vain;
The best laid plans of mice and men
Gang aft agley!"

sang Teddie.

"Your voice is too musical to be a crow and croak," said Van.

But musical as Miss Teddie's voice was, it was Teddie who brought to Poplar Rise the notes of doom, and shed desolation abroad under the honeysuckles and roses and through the peaceful home of three generations. Poor Teddie! She had been to the village post-office. The Milburys contented themselves

with going for their mail twice a week. They had few correspondents, and their world was Poplar Rise and the adjacent farm-lands. The news of the outer world, its troubles, crimes, disasters, came often enough in semi-weekly papers. Teddie was usually mail-carrier, and being fond of reading, was wont to indulge in reading the paper on the road home. She leaned comfortably back in the buggy, let the gray mare take her own way with the road and the reins, and was apt to get home late to supper. But that was no matter; the family lingered round the tea-table while Teddie ate her meal and kindly informed them what news was to be found in the two or three periodicals lying on the table, and which any of them might read for themselves. But they liked to hear the news from Teddie first and discuss it a little, before some one discoursed it aloud from the printed columns.

It was a brilliant late August evening that Teddie came back from the postoffice, and could scarcely wait for the farm-boy to take the gray mare, so eager the girl was to run in and detail the news. The day was one of those still warm August days, when a hazy hint of coming autumn hangs dreamily over the landscape, and the breezes are heavy and sweet with the perfume of ripening fruits. After that such days

always filled the Milbury girls with sadness and a pained memory.

“Uncle Aaron!” said Teddy, running into the cool dining-room and tossing her hat and gloves upon the broad old-fashioned lounge, “didn’t you know treasurer Jonas Meyrick very well?”

“Oh yes,” said Uncle Aaron, carving cold corned-beef for Teddie’s plate. “Mr. Meyrick has always thought a great deal of me.”

“Horrible man! Poor wretched, unfortunate man, too,” said Teddie, taking her seat and passing her glass to Myra for milk. “Just think! he has been stealing right and left for three years, and he is over three hundred thousand short in his accounts; and when he found that he was to be arrested he stepped into the next room and shot himself. And he is bankrupt and no one knows what he has done with the money.” Teddie rattled off this information in great haste. Such sensations were not common in that God-fearing, well-to-do, quiet community.

They all looked at Teddie. None of them looked at Uncle Aaron until Teddie turned towards him and screamed.

Uncle Aaron’s face was livid, great beads of cold sweat rolled over his brow, his eyes were fixed and starting, his extended arms clutched

vainly at the air. The family sprang to their feet: mamma Milbury quickly unfastened her brother's collar and the neck of his shirt, Van sprinkled him with ice-water, Myra ran for the ammonia, Teddie dashed to the porch and called to the farm-boy to turn the gray mare about and drive for the doctor with all speed; then, swift as a hound, she ran down the road to call Uncle Daniel.

Uncle Aaron caught his breath and struggled to his feet, still gasping and clutching at empty air. "Adam! Adam!" he screamed in a hoarse voice of agony, "Adam, my brother! I have ruined your girls! Adam, I have robbed your daughters!" And then he swayed heavily backwards, but Van and Myra caught him in their strong young arms.

They looked at each other over his unconscious form as he lay on the lounge. Dimly looming before them they saw some great ruin and trouble, something that was to change all their future. But the worst trouble was to see that fatal purple growing over Uncle Aaron's face, his stalwart figure becoming rigid, to hear that stertorous breathing sounding through all the house like a bell of death. They loved this man. They had been his darlings, and he had been to them for fifteen years a second father. What was this half-divined other trouble, what-

ever it might be, compared to the loss of Uncle Aaron?

Hannah, the experienced servant, and Mrs. Milbury, to whom all the neighborhood sent in cases of sickness, busied themselves doing what little they could for Uncle Aaron, who fast passed into insensibility. The doctor and Uncle Daniel and Uncle Daniel's wife Sara Ann came, and Uncle Aaron was laid on his own bed. They all looked dolefully at each other, shaking their heads. Little hope for Uncle Aaron.

"What brought it on?" asked Uncle Daniel, taking Van aside. Van told him what little she knew—Teddie's hastily told news—Uncle Aaron's remorseful cry.

The fatal paper, the city issue of the previous day, lay neglected under the dining-table. Uncle Daniel, full of fears, took it to the window. The light of the August day was not fading faster than his hopes as he read the news which had destroyed his brother. There it stood: Uncle Aaron was one of Jonas Meyrick's securities, and it was announced that the "four gentlemen, two of them substantial farmers, who had signed Jonas Meyrick's bonds, were able to make good all the deficit." Yes: no doubt they were. It would sweep away all that Aaron Milbury had to pay his share, and the Milbury twins' property had always been undivided, vested

since Adam's death entirely in Aaron, to whom he had left it, believing that in that way he best secured the future of his helpless family.

Adam's daughters had lost their inheritance!

Poor generous, hopeful, trustful, usually most fortunate and successful Uncle Aaron! The flattery and the glib tongue of Jonas Meyrick had succeeded in securing his name on his bonds, and Aaron Milbury was holden for every dollar that he was worth.

Before midnight all the neighborhood had the news, for nearly all the farmers took the semi-weekly paper. Many were the comments. Most wondered that such a level-headed man as Aaron Milbury had been persuaded to an act so rash; but then not a man in the county had expected a gentleman who stood so well as Treasurer Meyrick to default! Everybody now found out that the "carelessness with which the Milbury property had been left all in Aaron's hands was shameful. Why had not Adam's daughters, poor helpless things, been secured from loss?" "It is n't well to trust anybody, not even your twin brother; for in this age of the world, if a man is n't a knave he is no doubt left to be a fool. No one is safe, nothing is safe." "Could not the widow Milbury and the daughters claim their part out of the estate?"

The wise ones shook their heads and con-

cluded that "Adam's family would have no showing. A long lawsuit lost in the end—that would be the amount of it."

It was two days after, and life was ebbing fast from the lately hale farmer, before he recovered sufficiently to speak. He looked about and muttered, "Adam's daughters."

"Here we are, dear Uncle Aaron!" cried the girls, bending their loving faces above him, faces whose joy and health were now shaded by watching and by sorrow. "Dear uncle, don't worry about us."

He turned his heavy eyes towards his brother. "Daniel, you know what I've done? I've robbed Adam's daughters."

"No, no, uncle," said the girls, "you have never robbed us. No!"

"What shall I say to Adam?" he moaned.

"Tell him," sobbed Van, "that you've been the very best man to us that ever was. Tell him we never felt that we had lost our father, our uncle was so kind and good."

"Adam's daughters will be left beggars," he said huskily.

"No, uncle, never that," said Myra, laying her hand on his brow. "We wont beg, uncle. We shall take care of ourselves easily. You know what is in the Bible, uncle, 'I have never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging

bread.' Tell father and our grandfather that we are safe in God's care."

"Daniel, Daniel," said Uncle Aaron, rousing up, "here's where I missed it. I forgot that the Bible is a good book to do your business by. Do n't it say, 'He that hateth suretyship is sure;' 'He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it'? Daniel, I missed it when I did n't run my daily work, as well as my soul, on Bible rules."

"Uncle, never mind the business now; all will come right; try and sleep a little, while we all sit by you," said Myra.

Uncle Aaron closed his eyes, but his hands worked restlessly. Presently he looked up again and exclaimed, "Daniel! stand by the girls. Do n't let 'em want. Take care of Adam's wife. Adam, Adam, you trusted to me, and—I've robbed your daughters!"

"He is gone," said Mr. Lowell, the minister, bending over him. "His last hours have been made wretched by one mistake, but now he is where he can see the good end of the Lord, and know that light shall be brought out of darkness. Now he can understand that God turns even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain."

That night Uncle Daniel and Sara Ann, his wife, sat by the dead body of Aaron their brother.

“Only for that mistake in being over-persuaded, Aaron might have lived twenty years longer,” said Daniel Milbury. “That word he said about taking counsel from the Bible for our daily affairs struck me, Sara Ann. What a power of good business rules are laid down in the Bible! Now Aaron would n’t have gone against Scripture in any of the laws laid down for his behavior; and yet he went dead against what it says, ‘If thou be surety for a friend thou art snared with the words of thy mouth.’”

“Do you suppose that Margaret and her daughters could lay a claim to their share out of the property?” asked Sara Ann.

“I talked with Squire Deems yesterday, while I was waiting for medicine to be put up over at the village, and he knows all how the property stood, and was left by father and by Aaron. He says Margaret and the girls have a clear moral right to half there is, but that he do n’t think they could establish a legal right. Things were left very queerly; I do n’t know the rights of it myself. Adam was terribly afraid of Margaret and the girls falling into the hands of sharpers, but he thought if Aaron had everything they’d be perfectly safe. Just shows, Sara Ann, that no matter how much pains we take, things may all go wrong. I was reading a Psalm just now, ‘Except the Lord build the house they labor in

vain that build it : except the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain.' ”

“ Well, Daniel, Adam's daughters have been confided to the Lord's keeping from their grandfather down.”

“ And he'll keep 'em, Sara Ann, mark my words, he'll keep 'em. Just how, we can't tell. He may think they lack schooling, and he may send them to school a bit, we can't tell.”

Sara Ann leaned back in her chair, covered her face, and took another cry over the kind, cheery brother gone, over sister Margaret whose widowed desolation seemed to be renewed in this loss, over Grandma Milbury bereft of her eldest son, over the three girls who had lost a second father. And what could these girls do? Daniel would help them his best, but Daniel was heavily weighted in the race for life; his farm was under mortgage, his six boys ranged from three to eighteen years old, he had his aged mother to make comfortable, and within a month had received into his home his wife's invalid sister.

The neighbors were as much troubled about the case of Adam's daughters as was their aunt Sara Ann. Were there four more helpless women than Adam Milbury's amiable widow and three neat-handed daughters?

Well, if these four women were deplorably ignorant of business, if they did not one of them

know how to draw a check or cut a coupon or earn a dollar bill or sign a conveyance, unless they were told exactly where and exactly how to put their names, they were just and they were generous. Not one word of condemnation of the unhappy Aaron escaped their lips; no repining over his weakness or his recklessness or his folly was ever uttered, possibly such a thought scarcely rose in their heads. Their home, their all, must go to pay for the mad schemes, the vices, the extravagance, the stock-gambling of a defaulter who had traded on the genial nature and ready truthfulness of Aaron Milbury. They accepted their lot in perfect silence; whatever they may have felt, they did not utter a word of anger or repining.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE.

“E'en such is time, who takes on trust
Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust.”

UNCLE AARON was buried on the last day of August. The next morning Uncle Daniel and lawyer Deems came to Poplar Rise and explained to Mrs. Milbury and her daughters the misstep which had cost them their home and all that they had hoped to have. The following day the appraisers and an agent came to inspect the property. The agent told Mrs. Milbury that the crops could be sold as they stood, and the stock, farm-implements, carriages, and part of the household goods at public auction within three weeks. The new owner of the farm when it was sold would not take possession until late November, and until that date the widow and her daughters could remain at the farm. Mrs. Milbury bore up wonderfully at first; she went through the house with the appraisers, pointing out the articles which belonged to Grandma Milbury, and must be sent to her at Daniel's; she also indicated the various pieces of furniture

brought to the farm by herself when she married; and whatever, as the piano and Van's bedroom furniture, had been personal gifts to the girls from their uncle.

To these the agent added many necessary housekeeping articles, which he said would be of much use to the family, but bring practically nothing at a sale. All the little ornaments made by themselves he also indicated as private possessions of the girls.

"We shall have enough to furnish a little home decently," said Van, striving to imitate her mother's calm, "and we will sell the piano to help pay the rent."

But after this business was finished, and the simple mourning had been prepared, Mrs. Milbury gave way under the strain of grief and loss, and was ill for several weeks. When her husband had died nothing in her home surroundings had been changed; she had had the strong aid and comfort and sympathy of Uncle Aaron, whose sorrow had seemed almost equal to her own; and then cares for her little children had diverted her mind. Now, prostrated, she fell helplessly back for the time on the care of these same girls, children no longer, but young women, though in a business point of view as helpless as children.

"There's one thing, girls," said Van to her

sisters one night, after their mother had been seen comfortably in bed, "we must look out for our affairs ourselves now, and not bother the mammy. We must see to hiring a house, and arrange for the moving, and decide on some way of making a living."

They were sitting in the dining-room in the dark, and Ben, the eldest of Uncle Daniel's boys, was with them. Ben stayed at the farm at night now, for the farm-hands were gone, and Hannah had been sent to Uncle Daniel's to live when grandma's goods had been removed from Poplar Rise. The Milbury maids could not afford longer to keep a servant, so Hannah, having helped dismantle the old home, had taken her leave with grandma's Penates.

"We must live near the village," said Myra, "for whatever work we can find to do must be found there."

"I wonder we have not heard from Uncle James," said Van. "He just sent a single line saying he 'was very sorry,' when he was written to about Uncle Aaron's death and that we were left destitute."

"Father says he is not the right kind of a man," said Ben stoutly. "I remember him when he was here five years ago; he looked like a mongrel made up of cur and fox."

"I don't know how it is," said Myra in a

vexed tone ; “ country men and boys always seem to hate people from the city.”

“ At all events we must look to ourselves, and not to Uncle James,” said Teddie, “ and I’ll tell you how far I’ve gone in the work. I went and asked Mrs. Lowell if she knew of any teaching I could get for the present—just of little children, you know. I could teach English, and begin them in music, I suppose. She spoke to Mrs. Steele, and she said I could be daily governess for her children, three of them you remember. She will want me from nine until two, and I will get dinner there, and not be needed on Saturdays. Mrs. Steele proposed that we should rent their little brown house of Mr. Steele, at the edge of the village. We could have it for three dollars a month if we would mend the chimney and the roof.”

“ That house !” cried Myra. “ Why, that isn’t fit to live in, child.”

“ Oh yes, it could be made to do,” said Teddie. “ I took the key and went through it, and brought the key here so you can go see it tomorrow. There are two rooms below and two above, small of course, and a kitchen in the L. There is a little garden that has not been cultivated for years, and three or four panes of glass are out. But the house is whole, only one place that needs shingling on the roof, and the chim-

ney should be built up a few courses of brick that blew off."

"If that is all that is needed," said Ben, "we boys can do it for you; and we have bricks and a bundle or two of shingles; that will be enough. You know father makes us learn everything, and we shingled the gable of our barn this spring and laid up the chimney of the new smoke-house."

"The rent is cheap, and it will be near the village and near my work," urged Teddie, "and near church."

Yes, that was a great consideration. Hitherto the Milbury girls had felt the satisfaction of having done their whole duty if they appeared in church every Sunday morning and now and then in the evening. But since this trouble had come upon them they longed more for the Lord's house; they wanted to be at the Sabbath-school, and felt as if the weekly prayer-meeting would be a comfort to them. Mr. Lowell, their pastor, seemed much nearer to them. Van even forgave him for having the temerity to preach a sermon to young women. It would be a pleasure to be nearer the church, truly.

"And how much does Mrs. Steele mean to pay you, Teddie?" asked Van.

"Two dollars a week and my dinners," said Teddie hesitatingly.

“Well, that is munificent!” cried Van angrily; “but the Steeles are all noted for their greed. She rates her old house high and the teaching of her children low, seems to me. Two dollars for five days’ work! Less than her kitchen-girl gets.”

“But we are not where we can choose, Van,” said Teddie, “and I only engage by the week, and when something better offers I can take it. Half a loaf is better than no bread, and two dollars a week will be a help. I shall study hard evenings, so that in the spring or next fall I can get a good school at forty dollars a month. And I can do most of the housework afternoons.”

“What a pity that I had not tried the book-keeping course a year ago, when there was plenty of money for it!” said Myra. “Now I cannot afford it at all. If I had gone last year I could be getting two hundred a year now. Oh dear!”

“Never mind, we will think of something else,” said Van. “I am going to try for places to go out sewing. I can get sixty cents a day for plain sewing and seventy-five cents if I venture on children’s gowns. I think I can find work three or four days in the week at least.”

“You have always hated sewing, and it tires you so,” sighed Myra. “You need a more active life, Van.”

"I need just now what I can get," said Van.

"Well, I shall take in sewing at home," said Myra. "I am first rate at making quilts and comfortables, and I can do pretty well on little boys' clothes; I have helped Aunt Sara Ann so much on them. I've spoken to Miss Prudy Steele and to Mrs. Deems to try and help me find work. I suppose I shall get precious little for it."

"It wont cost us much to live," said Van. "I think we have on hand clothes enough for two years all but the shoes. We can be very economical and work our things over."

"And your living will not cost much," said Ben. "Father says he will send you all your wood and apples and potatoes and corn-meal and whatever else you need from the farm. We boys will always see to wood and kindlings and make the garden for you, and if you take the little brown house Ned can bring you milk each day as he goes in to the High School. We mean now to try and pay you back for some of the things you have done for us: you have helped mother with nearly all her sewing, and have had some of us fellows here for weeks at a time; and you have always had us here for Christmas and New Year's and Thanksgiving. Now we'll stand by you, see if we do n't."

Myra refreshed her soul by a cry at these

reminiscences. Van looked severely out into the moonlight.

The next day Van, Ben, and Myra went to visit the little brown house, and at evening its merits were again discussed.

“I’ll tell you one thing, you girls can’t be going out for wood and coal in all kinds of weather,” said Ben. “You’ll have to take that L room for a fuel-room, and we’ll build you a coal-bin in it with a slide-door at the bottom, so you can get coal out easy; and we’ll build a wood-pile up along one side, and store your kindlings in there too; and the pump is there already. You girls have not been used to roughing it. You’ll get sick if you do n’t look out.”

“We can’t afford to be sick,” said Van; “but can we ever make that place look decent? I shiver at the idea of putting poor little mammy in there. Such worn-out paint, such rough, ugly walls! And her home has always been so nice.”

“I’ll tell you,” cried Teddie, clapping her hands. “We can any of us put on paint, and out in the barn there are three or four paint-brushes and two or three little pails of good paint, slate color, white, and brown. You know Uncle Aaron was always painting things up, pumps, farm tools—”

“And I used to help him; I know how,” interrupted Van. “That is it! We girls will go

paint that house inside; it's not big enough to take much time. That will be a help."

"And we'll paper it," cried Myra, "at least some of the rooms; there is such a lot of wall-paper up in the garret. Don't you know, Van, mother bid it off at an auction at the store once? There are two kinds, and a good many rolls of each."

"Van and I can hang paper," said Ben, "with one of you to help. We papered grandma's room for her last spring for a surprise."

"Well, with new paper and clean paint and our furniture it may be made to look tolerably decent at the brown house," said Van.

"And I'll mend up the front step and paint the front door and the window-frames, if you have enough brown paint," said Ben.

All this planning the girls kept to themselves, to give their mother a surprise when she became better. But she also was planning as she lay in her room. The first evening that she was able to sit up she said, "I shall soon be able to do something, girls, and I have concluded what to do. I have talked with the doctor about it, and he thinks the idea a good one. I am a splendid nurse, you know, and I shall go out nursing. A nurse among the sick is greatly needed about here, and I should be sure of being well treated among my neighbors."

“Oh, mammy,” cried Myra, “we don’t want you to do anything. We will take care of you; we are young.”

“And I am not old,” said Mrs. Milbury, “and I am yet able to work. If we all do all we can, and thereby manage a living, we shall do well, my poor dears. I can keep house well, and I can take care of the sick; that ends my accomplishments. I cannot leave you and take a place as housekeeper. If I go out to nurse I can be at home with you often.”

The Milbury maids looked down blankly. They had contemplated wage-earning for themselves without bitterness, but that at fifty years of age their widowed mother should go out to earn her bread among strangers seemed cruel enough. Van did a little sum in mental arithmetic, and found that if she and her sisters worked every day in the year at the best pay they were likely to get, eight dollars a week would be the sum total of their earnings, and this could not provide for the necessities of four people. Nurses were paid four, five, or six dollars a week in that neighborhood, and Mrs. Milbury might be able to make a living if her health proved equal to the undertaking.

When Mrs. Milbury was able to go out the girls took her to the little brown house, all freshly papered and painted, the kitchen L pro-

vided with fuel, the front door, roof, and chimney mended. "Could she feel any way comfortable living there?" they demanded anxiously.

"I ought to feel happy anywhere," she answered, "since God has given me three such dear, good daughters."

Winter came early that year. The moving from Poplar Rise was to take place on the eighteenth of November. Uncle Daniel's boys and their big wagon were to transfer the remnants of the Milbury household goods from the Poplars to the little brown house. On the evening of the seventeenth Mrs. Milbury was called away to nurse a neighbor who had broken her leg by a fall. The girls were left to do the moving alone.

"All right, mammy, keep up heart," they cried as she drove off with the doctor's boy; "we shall have the little brown house in apple-pie order when you come back."

The next day the snow was falling thick and fast. The big wagon came to the Poplars on runners, not on wheels. Uncle Daniel urged his nieces to go to his house for a few days, but they persisted in making the move. Teddie had begun teaching for Mrs. Steele and could be at home Saturday and Sunday to help settle. Myra had engaged to make two quilts the next

day, and Van had three places to go to for sewing. They would move at once and take up the work of self-support.

“Sha’ n’t one of the boys stay with you for a night or two, then?”

“No,” said Van, “we are not afraid, and we must learn to be alone. Besides, we have n’t any room or any bed for one of the boys. Get our goods moved, uncle, and we’ll do the rest.”

The snow thickened and drifted and made the work tedious at both ends of the route. There were three loads, and then the boys and Uncle Daniel were obliged to stop between whiles and set up the cook-stove in one room below, carrying the pipe up through the bedroom above; and then, in the other down-stairs room, the base-burner must be set up and the drum arranged in the room overhead. All this took much time, and the short November day had closed when the last load was brought in. All was in confusion at the brown house.

“I hate to leave you in such a plight,” said Uncle Daniel.

“Go quickly or you’ll not be able to get through the drifts,” said Teddie. “To-morrow Ben and Ned are coming to put down our carpets and put up the curtains. Call for us Sunday to go to church and you will see how cosey we look. Go now. We have plenty of fuel,

good fires, and aunt has sent up a basket of provisions."

Uncle Daniel and his boys left reluctantly and heard Van bolt the door of the little brown house.

Teddie lit the lamp; she could find but one. Then she and Van went up stairs to make the beds which the boys had set up. They were busy for some time making things as orderly as they could, filling pitchers, seeking out towels, and hanging up clothes. When they came down there was Myra sitting behind the kitchen stove, her head buried in her arms, crying as if her heart would break. Poor Myra's courage had entirely broken down; an awful home-sickness had come over her; she realized more than ever that every fibre of her heart had grown about Poplar Rise; and, moreover, Myra was especially the "mother's girl" of the family. She had never before been parted from her mother, and now, to think of the lost home and the severed household was more than she could bear.

"Are you sick?" cried Van.

"Are you having neuralgia?" asked Teddie.

Sobs redoubled on Myra's part. The sisters understood and applied remedies according to their nature.

"It's hard for us all alike," said Van. "Brace

up, girl, and do n't make it worse than it is ; crying like a baby wont help matters."

"Cry all you like, my darling, and you 'll feel better for it," said Teddie, going down on her knees on the rough floor and folding her arms about her disconsolate sister. "Something good may come to us yet, my dear! Suppose Uncle James should buy back the farm! I'll write to him again next week, sure."

"A good supper will do her more good than all the coddling in the world," said Van. "She's tired and cold and lonesome and discouraged. Here, Teddie, move yourself out of the way of this oven door. I'm going to heat up this corn-cake, make a good cup of coffee, and broil some ham; and here are some of Aunt Sara Ann's pickles and apple-butter; we are not likely to go hungry at all events." And Van put up a table-leaf, found a tablecloth and dishes and prepared her supper, singing in a doleful voice,

"For men must work and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep."

Myra still wept on. Teddy gave her a final kiss and then set herself to unpacking the dishes and kitchen utensils and disposing them in their proper places. Teddie as well as Van had her song for sorrowful occasions, and now she sang it half aloud, giving no heed to Van and her strain,

“Last night the queen had four Maries,
To-night she 'll have but three :
There was Mary Seaton and Mary Beaton
And Mary Carmichael—and me.”

The wailing of these two tunes, each on its own individual account, and commingling with the singing of the tea-kettle and the sputter of ham, caused Myra to break into hysterical laughter.

“Come to supper,” said Van, “and if that does n't settle your nerves I 'll put you to bed or box your ears, I do n't know which.”

A comfortable meal eaten leisurely served to strengthen and calm the tired and lonely sisters. When the supper was over Teddy brought the Bible from the side table. Since Uncle Aaron's funeral the girls had in turn read the chapter and mamma Milbury had made the prayer.

“It is my turn to read to-night,” said Teddie, and presently her sweet voice began: “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee and to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee to know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

"Teddie," said Van, "how came you to think of that chapter for to-night?"

"I did n't think of it," said Teddie. "Grandma said she wished she could be here with us to comfort us, but as she could not I was to choose for her that chapter which she would read and talk over with us if she were here. And we must talk of it and get comfort out of it. And she sent us a word too; it is 'Honey out of the rock.'"

"Forty years!" sighed Myra. "Girls, we seem to have got into the desert land sure enough. What shall we do if it is for forty years?"

"Dear Myra," said Teddie, "God will not try us above what we are able to bear—and—even if it should be forty years, you know one grows used to almost anything, and the longest time looks short when it has gone by. When we get to heaven you know all the time in this world will seem very short indeed."

"The chapter says 'to prove thee and know what was in thine heart,'" said Van. "I'm afraid that when God is proving me, he will find very little patience, courage, faithfulness, or submission to his will, and very much of discontent and despair."

“To know what is there that should not be, and what is not there that should be, is worth a great deal,” said Teddie. “Dear Van, ‘when He hath tried me I shall come forth like gold;’ it will be yours to say that. And think of that verse in James that Uncle Aaron loved so much, ‘Ye have seen the end of the Lord, that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy.’ Van, mother is not here”—

“I will pray,” said Van. But when they had knelt, and for the first time in her life Van tried to pray aloud and before others, a sudden sense of her helplessness, her sorrows, came upon her, and after a few words her voice trailed away into sobs. Then Teddie put her arm around her sister and took up the supplication: “Oh, Saviour! help us to know that ‘these light afflictions that endure but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’” That was all of Teddie’s prayer, but it was enough.

Early the next morning the girls were astir, but lo, the bread could not be found.

“I put it in the tin boiler for the last load,” said Myra.

Teddie, who had very good eyes, descried down the road a little hillock in the drift from which something white and red flapped in the wind.

“I believe,” she said, “that that is a corner of the blanket that is around the bread. The boiler has fallen off the wagon and is down there in the snow.”

“Well, Myra, come on, we must get it,” said Van; “we cannot lose our six loaves. Give me the shovel and broom, Teddie, to break a road out of our door; we are snowed in.”

“I wish we were boys!” panted Myra, as she and Van, carrying the derelict boiler between them, struggled back through the snow. “At least we would be more reasonably dressed for such expeditions as this. My skirts and shoes are full of snow.”

“Here you are,” said Teddie, flinging open the door. “Go quickly and change your shoes and get the snow off your clothes; we dare not afford the luxury of being sick. Hurry up, I’ve got a hot breakfast all ready; our cook-stove burns like a daisy.”

Before breakfast was over Ben and Ned came in covered with snow, but bringing loving messages, and ready to wield hammer and tacks in defence of their cousins, the “Milbury maids.”

CHAPTER V.

ADMINISTERING A DEFEAT.

“He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless air thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.”

MONDAY morning found the three “Milbury maids” sitting at their breakfast and in a more cheerful mood. The work of Saturday had brought the little brown house into fair order; the sun was shining; they had “rested the Sabbath day,” according to the commandment, and were feeling the good effects of it; Uncle Daniel had come by with his great sleigh wherein were grandma, Sara Ann, and five boys, and room had been found for the three nieces and they had all gone to church.

“Teddie,” said Van, mashing a potato, “you had the best sense of any of us. When we concluded that we ought to do something, you found something right at hand that was possible and you went to work. I only talked, and Myra put off. You did what you ought to do.”

“But I found the suggestion of this very thing in that book that you so unceremoniously

tossed into the corner and broke off the cover. That book told me to *do something*; not to waste time wishing and planning, but to take the simple thing near at hand and reasonable, do it well, and make it a stepping-stone to the next thing."

Miss Milbury blushed a little, remembering her destructiveness.

"You cannot be surprised that Van should be guilty of a *vandalism*," observed Myra coolly.

"But my theory was right," said Van, bristling up; "it was right if the canon in literature is correct, that one must write of what one knows."

"Question is of the limits of what we may know," said Teddie. "A person may know of a thing without being it. A lady may write a good and reasonable book about the duties of servants without having been a servant. The 'looker-on in Venice' may see some things even more clearly than the Venetians. Given good natural sense, good education, good powers of observation, good intentions, a person may write a good book about women, even if the person is so unfortunate as to be—a man! And there is something useful in almost every book."

"Dear me!" cried Van, "how independent and argumentative you are growing! Once

you took my word for law; now it seems you are setting up for yourself."

"I'm a bloated aristocrat with my two dollars a week," said Teddie, "and I must be off to earn it. Sorry I cannot have the pleasure of staying to wash the dishes for you. But the tea dishes shall be my part. The road is pretty well broken, isn't it?"

"It seems cruel for you to have to go out in such cold and in deep snow, and for such beggarly pay!" said Myra mournfully.

"I don't mind it; I'm strong," said Teddie.

But here there was a vigorous stamping on the door-step, and in came Ned with a bottle of milk.

"Halloa, girls! How's all here? Give me the shovel while I make paths for you."

So to work went Ned, shovelled out paths, pumped two pails of water, put coal on the fire, and filled an extra scuttle.

"Any fire in the other room for me to see to?"

"No, you jewel of a boy, we are being economical, and while the mammy is not here we shall keep only one fire. This room looks pretty well to live in," said Van.

"I should say it did," cried Ned—"real cosey," and he looked about the little kitchen sitting-room. The stove was shining, and upon

it hissed a resplendent copper kettle; curtains of fancy-colored muslin were draped away from the two windows, two pots of blooming geranium stood in the sunshine, the rag carpet was new and bright, the sewing-machine stood near a window, the side table had a red cover, here and there were bags, racks, little ornaments which had helped to beautify the Poplar Rise homestead. The whole place told its tale of being the abode of young and refined women. Our surroundings take the mould of ourselves as the wax takes the impression of the seal.

“Teddie,” said Ned, “you’re not afraid of horses, and Turk is gentle; get on behind me and ride pillion in old-fashioned style to Steele’s. It will be much better than walking in the snow.”

Away they went, the rosy laughing Teddie clinging to Ned’s waist, her light curls blowing about her shoulders from under her black hood.

“Darling Teddie!” cried Myra, “she ought to have everything that is luxurious and beautiful, and not be going off to Steele’s to slave for those three saucy little imps.”

“Nonsense, Myra,” said Van, “the Steele children are fairly nice, and no doubt the Lord is as much interested in Teddie as we are and knows even better than we do what is good for

her. Let us hurry up with the housework and I'll help you get that comfortable in the frames. To-morrow I am going to Mrs. Deems' to sew for three days, and to be there early enough in the morning I must stay all night. I'll tell Ned to stay here while I'm gone. He'll be that much nearer school."

Ned was the third of Uncle Daniel's boys, the bookish boy of the six, going through the village high-school and hoping to go through college and become a journalist. Daniel, the second son, was in Westchester learning printing. Ben was the right hand of his father, the farmer of the family.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—what long days those were to Van Milbury as she sewed for Mrs. Deems. It was one thing to cut and baste and stitch for the home folks, chatting the while merrily with the sisters, taking counsel over abstruse points with the mother, disputing in lively fashion with Myra or Teddie as the shining needle flew up and down and the white seams travelled off under the steel foot of the machine—this was one thing, and hiring out for a day's sewing was quite another. True, Mrs. Deems was kindness itself, told Van just what she wanted, and sat helping and talking with her as sister with sister. But Van was so afraid of making mistakes, or of not giving Mrs.

Deems the full worth of her money! It fairly made her nervous. Thursday night she went back to the little brown house after dark, riding with a neighbor who was going that way.

The girls had finished supper, and Ned had gone home. Teddie was busy working out problems in the Normal arithmetic, Myra was setting sponge for bread. The two precipitated themselves on Van and welcomed her as if home from foreign wars.

“See here,” said Van, after she had put away her wraps and seated herself by the lamp, “here are my first earnings. I am twenty-two years old, sound in body and mind, of good family, and had, until within six months, supposed that I was properly educated. I have worked eleven hours a day, minus meal-times, for three days, and here are all my wages—one paper dollar and eighty cents in silver. Here’s richness!”

Myra and Teddie flung themselves upon Van, petted and patted her, called her a “poor dear,” a “darling,” a “treasure.” It was their way of consoling each other. Van laughed, pushed the pair off, looked brave.

“Anyway,” said Myra, returning to the bread sponge, “we have not had to spend a cent this week, and Teddie’s work has more than paid for the rent. Besides, I’ve made money. See here! a silver dollar for two comfortables, duly sewed,

knotted, and finished, by my ten fingers, and carried off by Mrs. Carey."

"Two dollars and eighty cents, and I shall have a dollar and a quarter beyond the rent; four dollars and five cents for the week's work of three able-bodied, refined young women," said Teddie, doing mental arithmetic. "Well, I see our aunt Harriet was right: girls should be trained to do well something of practical money-bringing value."

"Who is that coming to the door!" said Myra, "not a robber?"

"Robbers never come to poor folks," said Van, opening the door.

The guest was the son of the farmer where Mrs. Milbury was nursing. He had brought a letter from their mother, and sat by the fire while they read and answered it.

"I came for medicine," explained the lad, "and brought the letter, and she says for one of you to come and spend Thanksgiving with her. Father will be over to church, and fetch the one of you that goes out to our house in the sleigh."

What a beautiful boy this was, bringing letters and invitations! They considered that thing in the "plural of excellence." Teddie fed him with apples and doughnuts, while Van and Myra concocted a very cheerful reply to the absent mother, telling her that they were becoming

quite rich, and that Myra could go to her on Thanksgiving, and the other two would spend the day at Uncle Daniel's. They hurried with the letter so as not to detain the boy.

"You 'd better not be quite so keerless openin' your door after dark," he said as he rose to go. "S'pose I 'd 'a' bin a tramp?"

"Pooh!" said Van courageously; but they all felt lonely after the echo of the boy's whistle died away on the frosty air.

The girls were becoming somewhat accustomed to their new manner of life by the time they had been a month in the little brown house and their mother came home. They made a feast of that occasion. A fire was built in the base-burner in the sitting-room; Aunt Sara Ann sent over a basket of pies, cake, and a roasted chicken; the girls put on their best gowns and their most cheerful faces. The sitting-room was furnished with the pretty ingrain carpet that had been on Van's bedroom, the sofa, table, and chairs which Mrs. Milbury had brought to the Poplars when she was married; a large what-not, a Christmas gift to their mother from the three girls two years before, stood in one corner and became a bookcase. Several pictures hung on the wall, fancy-work that the girls had wrought on in the garret at the Poplars, mantel ornaments which Uncle Aaron had brought

home after his semi-annual trip to the city; thus the exiled maids had furbished up their sitting-room, and warm and bright, and echoing with their welcome, their tired mother found it pleasant indeed.

There was so much to tell—all that had happened to the girls, all that Mrs. Milbury had experienced in her first absence from her daughters.

“And let us count our money!” cried Teddie. “Mamma, you are the millionaire of the occasion, you begin.”

Mrs. Milbury laid down twenty dollars. To this Teddie added five; the other three dollars of her “eight dollars a month” salary had gone for rent. Myra added four dollars, and Van six.

“Thirty-five dollars and the rent for our month’s work,” said Van.

“Only think,” said Myra unguardedly, as she looked at the little heap of silver and paper, “last year if any one of us had wanted that much, Uncle Aaron would have handed it over to us without a word, dear blessed man that he was!” And as none of them were of heroic mould, down went four heads at this reminder, and there was weeping, rather for lost Uncle Aaron than for lost home and fortunes.

“I declare, this is a shame!” said Van, the first to recover herself; “crying the first evening

the poor little mammy's back. And we meant to have everything so cheerful! Myra, you ought to be sent to bed in the dark for your misbehavior!"

"Never mind," said Mrs. Milbury, "we must all have our times of looking back and grieving, and we would n't forget Uncle Aaron if we could. We have plenty to cry over, and also plenty to be very thankful for. This is a very cosey little home, and we are well, and thirty-five dollars is not a sum to be despised. But, my daughters, in these nights lately, when I have been wakeful with my patient, I have been doing some thinking for all of us, and one of the things I have thought of is that we must not dwell on our sorrows and disappointments; that will only weaken power and courage. We must fix our thoughts chiefly upon our mercies and all that we have to be thankful for. The apostle tells us in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* to let our requests be made known unto God. Now that suggests that we have much cause for thanksgiving in every lot. It will help us also to remember that even our trials are God's way of doing us good, and that 'affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.' Let us also think that if we are not likely to grow rich in this world's goods we can 'be rich in faith and

heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love him.' Now that is my little sermon."

"And a good little sermon it is," said the girls, and after sitting in thoughtful silence by their mother for a time they returned to the other affairs of their firm.

"Yes," said Myra, who in spite of herself seemed doomed to croak that night, "but every month mammy cannot be out and earn twenty dollars; she'd be killed if she tried it. See how tired she looks! And this month we have spent nothing, and have eaten up nearly all we brought from the Poplars. We must have a barrel of flour next week, and meat, and the coal will not hold out over next month."

"Myra, will you be still!" cried Van; "you are positively wicked and unscriptural. Does n't it say, 'Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself,' and 'Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things'? It is well that to-morrow will be Sunday, so you can go to church and lay in enough religious common sense to carry you through the week."

Mrs. Milbury smiled at Van and patted Myra's cheek. Teddie ran into the other room and came back with a dish of cracked walnuts, which Uncle Daniel's boys had contributed for

the family festival. Then she brought a basket of apples and a corn-popper, a dish, and some shelled pop-corn.

"Come now, girls," she said, "arrange the table, and which of you will shake the popper over the coals in the base-burner? These are the mammy's favorite apples, and we are going to sit up till ten o'clock, and I shall tell you all the horrid and all the funny things the Steele children have done. Last Sunday, in the infant class, Judge Deems was talking to the youngsters about serving God, and he pointed to Tommy Steele and said, 'When will you be old enough to love God?' And Tommy rose up in his place and replied loudly, 'Next year, when I get into pants, judge.' I was teaching Minnie Steele to say 'Now I lay me,' and when we got to 'I pray the Lord my soul to take,' she said, 'Take *where*, Teddie?' 'To heaven,' I said. 'Well, I don't want to go,' she said. 'I don't believe they have any rabbits up there, and I don't like blue anyway, and I wont go. I'll say it "Pray the Lord my soul *not* to take.'" And we can't get her to say it any other way."

The popping of the corn over the coals kept time to Teddie's anecdotes, and the Milbury family began to be cheerful.

"There's one thing," said Van, the next day at breakfast, "that we may say for ourselves and

our neighbors. You know in stories and in books it is always stated that when people lose their money and get poor and girls have to go out and work, their friends fall away from them and slight them. Now with us it has not been so in a single case. To begin with the minister, Mr. and Mrs. Lowell have been to see us much oftener than ever before."

"Well, we are nearer them," said Teddie, "and we are ourselves more friendly with them, and we are at Sunday-school and prayer-meeting and at evening church. We give them more encouragement. I suppose that ministers and their wives cannot go on for ever being intimate with folks who give them no encouragement."

"It is the same with other people," said Van; "folks were never so friendly, never had so much to say to me as they do now."

"Well, Van, some of the reason for that may be in yourself. You see people are now less afraid of you. You have always had a sort of stand-off, high-and-mighty way with you that kept people at a distance. Now that does n't go so far. People sympathize with us, and wont be put off with a cool nod."

"There is something in all that," said Mrs. Milbury, "but after all I think people are less inclined to neglect the unfortunate, and treat those coldly who have had losses, than we give

them credit for. I know, for my part, I was always more to people who were in trouble. As long as folks had no need of me I might think little about them, but the people who needed me were the people I went to."

"Mrs. Deems was saying yesterday," said Myra, "that she did wish that the world had something better for women to do than toil at a little cheap sewing when they are left to earn a support. She wished we could find really profitable employment. Women seem so shut out, she says."

"That is not so," said Teddie warmly; "they are only shut out by their own prejudices, or their own carelessness in not providing themselves an occupation, as young men do. People talk as if in Bible times women were crippled and harassed and hemmed in. I don't think they were. I'd like to see any modern woman rule her house with a higher hand than Sarah did. When Jacob meant to make a move, he called Rachel and Leah to the field to consult them; in one of the prophets it says that God sent before Israel 'Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.' Miriam is put with her great brothers as a leader. I think I told you before that Deborah judged Israel, as well as led an army, and Huldah was a prophet and consulted by the king and his princes. The queen of Sheba ruled a kingdom,

and Jezebel ran her husband's kingdom as she chose, and made a mess of it. There was nothing to hinder them from doing what they could and would. The wise woman of Tekoah came to Joab's help, and the Shunammite woman managed her own affairs. In history it has been the same; great nations served queens just as well as they did kings: women were college professors and artists and poets and authors, and led armies and were doctors. If you'll remember, there was an age when all Europe was ruled by women—in 1560 and a while after. Elizabeth ruled England; Mary Stuart, Scotland; Portugal was ruled by the Infanta; France by Catharine de' Medici; Spain by its French queen Isabella, daughter of Henry II.; Navarre by Jeanne d'Albert; Holland by the daughter of Charles V. I was studying it all up this week. I think, take it all in all, women when they are hampered and restrained, are hampered and restrained by themselves and their sisters; and when they can and will do anything well, it is open to them to do it. Trouble is, most women drift, just as we have drifted. They forget that they owe the Lord work as well as words."

Teddie was quite flushed and eloquent.

"Bravo, Teddie!" cried her sisters, clapping their hands.

Slowly the winter lapsed. Christmas and

New Year's reversed the long-honored order of Milbury exercises, and now the maids and their mother went to Uncle Daniel's, and he and the boys and Sara Ann exerted themselves to make the maids forget that now they had no ample, well-provided home in which to entertain the Milbury family great and small. They never went to Uncle Daniel's without getting an unspoken lesson from the valor and resignation of grandma, half of whose heart had gone into the grave of Aaron her first-born, but who with steadfast courage strove to do all that she could for those left to her, and, like Job, "murmured not, nor charged God foolishly."

Mamma Milbury was sometimes away for two weeks, sometimes for three, sometimes at home for as long. Teddie brought home five dollars monthly and kept a roof over their heads, and Myra and Van averaged about two dollars and a quarter a week each with their needles. People in that vicinity owned sewing-machines and hired very little sewing but dress and cloak making, which the Milbury girls did not know how to do.

And how this miserably paid sewing tired Van! Van like many another was fighting against masterful nature without knowing of her error. "Oh how I hate this sewing!" she would sometimes cry out at night. "It tires me

so! I had much rather work on a wall, like Shallum's daughters. I believe I had even rather make brick!"

It had never occurred to any one that these girls as children should have been studied and taught to do that for which mentally and physically they were best fitted. A deal of superfluous energy was thrown away by Van and Myra as they sewed, and sewing wore on them. They felt as if they had lost ground in every way that winter; they thought so. But their minister did not think so; he saw character daily maturing, and spiritual experiences growing deeper and richer. They were not girls given to much speech about religion, but theirs was a noble, simple daily living out of Christianity.

CHAPTER VI.

“FROST’S EXTREMITY.”

“If as a flower doth spread and die,
 Thou woudst extend to me some good
 Before I were by frost’s extremitie
 Nipt in the bud.” GEORGE HERBERT.

To be young and active, habituated to and fond of out-of-door life, and then to be obliged to sit all day long bent over a sewing-machine, making sheets, pillow-cases, and shams—there is a certain hardness in this fate. To be scrupulously conscientious, desirous to do well what is done, and give the most honest of work for wage; to be high-spirited, and averse to being a recipient of charity, and yet to feel more than a suspicion that your best work is not up to the highest grade even of plain sewing; to have your suspicions about the accuracy of your tucking and the beauty of your ruffling more than confirmed by the scarcely hidden annoyance of your employer and the little lines of dissatisfaction drawn about her mouth; to be made somehow to feel that the work is given to you out of kindness, while others would do it far better—there is a certain hardness in this fate. And then to start out for a mile walk in the dark,

alone and unprotected after years of tenderest protection; to go against a sharp wind sleet-laden, and feel that your clothing is too thin, and that the slush of the trodden mid-road is creeping into a hole in your overshoes and making your feet wet with an icy wetness—there is a certain hardness in this fate.

All this hardness fell to the lot of Van Milbury, one winter's day when she had been working for Mrs. Gore, and had started home before tea because Mrs. Gore was "going to have company to supper," and Van was not invited to stay. Van instinctively felt that she was not invited partly because Mrs. Gore was vexed about the sewing, and partly because Van's black gown was shabby, and she was no longer Miss Milbury of Poplar Rise, but a seamstress.

It is undoubtedly true that the hardness of our fates, in its true errand to our souls, should be as furnace fires to raise to nobler grade the common metal that is in us; but when one is young and unused to the discipline of life, and feels the present pain rather than perceives the possible harvest, wrath and repining are apt to get uppermost in the heart.

Van, struggling along the dark, cold, uneven way, felt a dumb rage against her surroundings and as if she hated Mrs. Gore.

When she reached the little cottage, affairs

were not reassuring. True there was a good fire, and Myra hastened to take off Van’s shoes and put on dry stockings and slippers for her and help her into a thick wrapper—their joint property. Then Myra put tea and toast on the table, and said that Teddie had gone to Mr. Lowell’s to stay all night.

But as Myra sat down to pour the tea and the lamplight fell strongly on her face, Van saw that she had been crying. This started up afresh the train of Van’s own grievances, and as a very curious way of administering comfort to Myra she burst forth into an account of her own afflictions. “And what has happened here?” she demanded; “something has, I know. You have been crying; you need n’t deny it, Myra.”

“Miss Prudy Little was in here,” replied Myra, “and she said she saw mother yesterday at Mrs. Saxon’s, and mother did not look well; and Miss Prudy asked if it was absolutely necessary for mother to go out nursing. She said mother nearly fainted yesterday, and if we did not take care we’d lose her! Oh, Van! Just as if we wanted mother to go out nursing, or as if we weren’t willing to take care of her, if only we could!”

Myra fled to the lounge and hid her face in the pillows for another cry. Myra was a genu-

ine mother-girl; to Myra her mother was all the world. Van returned to the stove, and putting her still benumbed feet on the hearth, sat moodily gazing at the twinkle through the isinglass doors. She could not relieve her rage and grief by crying; her heart grew harder and harder every minute; she felt as if "bound in fetters and iron," and while called upon to work out a deliverance for her mother and sisters, yet unable to move hand or foot. The girls needed Teddie with her Faith and Hope and Love—three graces that hourly attended her virgin soul. But Teddie was at the minister's.

There was a knock at the door, as if with a whip-handle. Van opened it and a man stepped in, the sleet clinging to his red beard and fur cap. He moved towards the stove, saying, "Don't you know me? I'm Timothy Drumm. Reckon you saw me up at what you called Popple Rise. I used to be there now and then, having dealings with your uncle Aaron."

"Oh," said Van, coming back to the stove. "Take a seat, wont you, Mr. Drumm?"

Myra straightened herself up. Mr. Drumm stood by the stove. "Looks pretty comf'able here; fire feels good too. Thank y', I can't sit. I just called in to ask when you could settle this little bill of your uncle Aaron's." And he held across the stove a soiled strip of paper.

Van took it with a sinking heart. It was a bill for a pair of oxen ; price one hundred and twenty dollars. Van remembered the oxen, Raspberry and Blackberry Teddie had named them ; and Timothy Drumm had driven them into the yard one summer day, about a year before Uncle Aaron died.

“ There’s some mistake,” said Van ; “ Uncle Aaron never let bills stand. He must have paid this.”

“ No he did n’t. I brought them to him just before the crops were sold ; and he laid out to pay me when he sold his wheat, and he did n’t sell till late that year ; and one way and another I did n’t call for the money ; and so it went.”

“ Why did n’t you bring your bill in when we were settling up then ?” cried Van excitedly.

“ Well,” said Mr. Drumm, twisting his cap uneasily, and winking a good deal to get the sleet out of his eyes, “ I says to my old woman, ‘ Milburys is honest folks, and Adam’s gals wont see wrong done, nor no dishonesty lying against Aaron, I says ; and I a’n’t so hard set for that money but what I can wait till they have time to turn themselves. So I waited. But now I’ve got my mortgage to pay, and I’ve *got to have that money*. Sharp’s the word, now,” he added, gathering courage from Van’s overwhelmed expression. “ I’ve been real patient.”

"It has been paid! I know it was paid!" cried Van angrily.

"Is that bill receipted then?" demanded Drumm.

Van was silent.

"If you've got a receipt show it, and in course I'll back down. I don't want my money twice," said the creditor.

Mr. Drumm, judged by his hard face, was not the man to have showed either the consideration or the carelessness about his business which his account indicated. Myra came and bent over Van's shoulder; evidently the bill had not been receipted, and it was ruffled and soiled. They could not remember that Uncle Aaron ever spoke of having paid for the oxen, but he had said that he had taken them "earlier than he needed them for the fall ploughing, because Drumm had more stock than he could take care of." Drumm was neither thrifty nor popular.

"Now see here, Miss Milbury, I've got to have my money, and I won't stand being cheated neither," spoke up Drumm.

The word "cheated" fired Van. Cheated! when all the Milburys had been the very soul of honor; and now the name of poor generous Uncle Aaron was in the keeping of the Milbury maids!

"We never cheat!" cried Van; "we leave

that for other people. I must see Uncle Daniel about this.”

“It is none of Daniel Milbury’s affairs,” said Timothy.

“It is his affair to advise us, and we always go to him,” said Myra. “He will perhaps know if this bill has been paid.”

“It has n’t been paid, I tell you,” said Timothy.

“Certainly we have not the money in the house to settle it now,” said Van. “You can leave it and come again.”

“I’ve got to have it precious soon.”

“You can come again Saturday,” said Van.

When their guest was gone Van and Myra, with more serious troubles to think of than they had had an hour before, sat by the fire considering how, if this were a just debt, that is, if they could not prove it unjust, they could pay it when they had nothing wherewith to pay. A hundred and twenty dollars! What a sum it seemed to them.

Early next morning Van set off for Uncle Daniel’s. Her heart was so full of care that she scarcely noticed the sharp wind, the hard roads, the length of the way. She hurried by the gate of Poplar Rise with the usual pang of homesickness, and all the kindest ministrations of grandma and Aunt Sara Ann could not drive

the hunted look from her eyes nor take the hard lines from around her mouth.

Uncle Daniel heard her story, examined the dirty bill, and could not remember having heard Aaron say that the bill had been paid. "Tim Drumm is a rascal," said Uncle Daniel, "and up to anything; but I don't recollect that there was any receipt for the money for those oxen in Aaron's papers."

Uncle Aaron had had so few papers; he had not been very business-like in some of his methods. However, what few papers there were were here in Uncle Daniel's desk, and he and Van looked them all over before dinner.

"I'm dreadfully afraid we'll have to pay that," said Uncle Daniel. "Tim Drumm is not a man to be kept out of his money, and I won't have poor Aaron's good name at his mercy."

"But how *can* we pay it?" said Van with a dry sob.

"I reckon I can borrow it of Miss Prudy; she has some money to put out just now," said Uncle Daniel; and he did not know that he gave a patient sigh at the thought of this new debt.

"But then we can never pay *you*!" cried Van. "We don't make more than we live on now."

"Never mind, child," said Aunt Sara Ann; "we'll get on."

“The Lord will show us some way out,” said grandma, with the bright look so like Teddie’s.

At that moment Mr. Summers came in. Van had not thought that the politics of her State would have anything to do with her way of making a living; but Uncle Daniel unfolded the present difficulty to Mr. Summers, and Mr. Summers was running for State Senator, and he saw his way clearly to accommodate Uncle Daniel and Timothy. He advised that Timothy be paid, and he offered to find Van a position where she could earn the whole sum desired in six or eight months and make her living beside.

“My brother-in-law near Harrisburgh,” said Mr. Summers, “is a doctor and keeps a Sanitarium, or ‘Retreat for Nervous Patients.’ It is a very elegant, high-toned place, and every patient has an attendant to sit contentedly with her and talk to her and entertain her. No menial service is expected except a little friendly waiting on, and everything is provided. Pay is sixteen dollars the first month, and then twenty or so. I’ll write to my brother-in-law at once and get Miss Milbury a vacancy.”

Mr. Summers offered to take Van home in his sleigh, and on the way he talked very cheerfully of the pleasantness of the position, the good that might be done in it by a right-minded occupant, and the handsome sum that might be

made in a year. Van's spirits rose and she was prepared to argue down all Myra's objections.

On Saturday morning Uncle Daniel was at the little brown house to pay Timothy Drumm his hundred and twenty dollars and "take a right tight receipt for it *this* time," he said meaningly. Timothy shrank a little, but made no reply as with many contortions of his face and shoulders he signed his name on the dirty strip of paper.

Uncle Daniel had brought Van a letter from Dr. Morton. "Could she come by the next Friday? He had a very interesting patient to commit to her care. He understood Miss Milbury had recently met with a loss; she could sympathize with her charge then; but he must warn her to be very cheery and smiling; also, probably she was in black. While with the patient black was not desirable; would she bring a dress in either plaid or blue or red? Miss Ames, the patient, liked those colors;" and so on.

Myra twisted up her face a little. "Go if you will, Van, but you'll never do for that place. If you are wise you'll just send Teddie in your stead. Teddie *could*—"

Could what? Van suspected what was hidden in this elliptical form of speech; she knew wherein Myra suspected that Van would prove insufficient to the task which she imposed upon herself, and wherein little Teddie would be

strong. But a certain fury had possessed Van against the sewing-machine and Mistress Gore and all the narrow miseries of her lot. She wanted to break the envious bars of fate and fashion something better in her life. Go she would and in her own strength too. She looked loftily at Myra and responded that she “should not leave Teddie to do *her* work.”

“All right,” said the easily relenting Myra, putting her arms about poor Van, who had a certain forlornness in the midst of her assumed dignity. “Bless her, she will do finely her own self! But, Van, how about the expenses of the trip and the goodly Babylonish garments which you must wear?”

Uncle Daniel had gone his way and the girls were alone.

“Eight dollars will do it,” said Van, “four for the trip and four for the goods. There is some pretty dark red stuff quite cheap at the store, and we can make the dress ourselves in three days. Mrs. Lowell will lend me patterns, and we’ll make it elegantly.”

“But the eight dollars?” urged Myra.

“I must borrow them of Mrs. Lowell,” said Van stoutly, “and I will send them back out of my first month’s salary.”

“I see you must be well dressed at this stylish place,” said Myra. “I have two pairs of

nice gloves, and my best patent-leather shoes, you shall have them; and Teddie will surely give you her two best white aprons that she trimmed with tatting."

"Yes, I shall rob you both," said Van bitterly.

"Never mind; when you come home in a year with two hundred dollars you can pay Uncle Daniel his hundred and twenty and buy no end of things for the rest of us with the other eighty. I shall need a new dress by then."

O Almaschar, how often do the daughters of men repeat in their own experiences thy story and build their hopes on a basket of glassware!

It was Myra that went to Mrs. Saxon's and secured the mother's consent to Van's departure and skilfully concealed the story of Timothy Drumm's bill. It was Myra that kept up Van's courage and put no end of beautiful briar-stitching on the new gown. Finally, it was Myra that saw Van to the train on Friday morning and courageously went home alone.

But it was Van who went forth alone among strangers, the first Milbury maid departing from the home-roof to make her way in the world, far from the counsels of the mother, the strong care-taking of Uncle Daniel, the sweet ministrations of her sisters, the blessed influences of that eldest saint of their household, dear grandma,

rooted and grounded in faith by the hard shock of many a life-storm. Oh how forlorn and miserable poor Van felt! She shivered at the thought of meeting strangers; she found in herself a sudden unfitness for these new duties; she had a terror at thinking that her trunk-check and fifty cents in her pocket represented all her fortune!

People had been wont to call Van “the proud Miss Milbury” just as they had called Teddie “the pretty Miss Milbury.” There had been a certain amount of self-sufficiency in Van, and now all at once this gave way before an overwhelming self-distrust. She wished she had let Teddie take the place. She wished she could stop the cars and run back home. But what was it that grandma had whispered last night when she clasped her tall granddaughter in her arms and bade her good-by? “The Master go with you, child, and make you a blessing.” Oh thought of supreme consolation! Not alone. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee!” One who held all time and all eternity, all human hearts and human destinies, in his keeping had pledged himself to be with her to the end. How close Van Milbury drew to her Lord that day as the miles of her journey lengthened on!

Van had never entered such a luxurious house as that of Dr. Morton. The doctor’s pri-

vate carriage waited for her at the station, the doctor's footman in livery opened for her the front door and with a cool stare led her to the office, where he was very obsequious to the doctor.

Rich portières hung over all the doorways; colored glass windows shed rainbow-tinted light; statuary holding vases or baskets of blooming flowers or trailing vines occupied the corners of the halls and the turns of the staircases; the carpets were velvet; a profusion of elegant trifles lay here and there, wherever they would be most effective. Van felt lost in the largeness and magnificence. Oh for the little brown house! Oh for Myra's stout heart and Teddie's caress! Oh for MOTHER!

Dr. Morton was courteous and soft-spoken to a marvel. He took Van's hand gently, as if she were a patient whose pulse must be felt, without seeming to do so; he looked into her eyes to read her state of mind, while his own were inscrutable.

"I am glad you have come," he said. "Miss Nellie Ames' other attendant leaves this evening. She must have some one I can trust with her. Mr. Summers says I can trust *you*. Please attend to what I tell you of your patient. She is twenty-five; very lovely girl, very wealthy, very melancholy. You must keep her in good

spirits, amuse her, talk to her; do not let her brood. You will sit with her, ride with her, sleep on a couch in her room. Above all things watch her, but do not let her see that you do; occupy her mind; try to make her fond of you.”

“But what am I to watch?” asked Van.

“See that she does not harm herself. I must request you not to have a pocket-knife nor any but small round-pointed scissors, and never leave any knives or forks to tempt her. If she does not wish to go to her meals, then you will take them to her and coax her to eat them. Keep her so entertained that she will not observe that she is eating.”

“But what is the matter with Miss Ames?” demanded Van.

“She is morbid, melancholy, does not want to live. We fear she will become insane. Her family are terribly anxious about her. She is a very cultivated girl, worth half a million.”

“What is the cause of her state?” asked Van, less overawed by the half-million than Dr. Morton had expected her to be.

“She lost her father and her brother within a year of each other, and she has been very wretched since, she is so sensitive.”

“Has she no family left?” asked Van, interested.

“Oh yes, she has two sisters and a brother,

all fond of her. The brother and one sister are married."

After this Dr. Morton rang for a maid to show Miss Milbury up to a room next that of Miss Ames, where she was to unpack her trunk, put on her red gown, and prepare to meet her patient. Van hardly noticed the luxury of the room, with the private bath-room opening from it, she was so lost in contemplating the, to her, singular case of Miss Ames. Living among plain and active people, Van had never before come upon an instance of irreconcilable quarrel with death, or the Lord of death.

"Nice room," said the maid, "our best suite. Miss Ames is the richest patient; she pays four thousand dollars a year."

CHAPTER VII.

VAN FAILS IGNOMINIOUSLY.

“My life is cold and dark and dreary ;
It rains, and the wind is never weary ;
My thoughts still cling to the mouldering Past,
But the hopes of youth fall thick in the blast,
And the days are dark and dreary.”

LONGFELLOW.

THAT one of the “Milbury maids” should be so far from her mother and sisters, in so magnificent a domicile, and burdened with so great a responsibility, was surely of the unexpected things that are always happening. If the neighbors had been consulted, no doubt they would have considered Van the one of the sisters best suited for such an experience, she being generally looked upon as the leader of the maids. Van’s own opinion of her fitness was doomed to suffer change.

When the red gown and the white apron had been donned Dr. Morton took Van to her patient.

“Here is your new companion, dear Nelly,” he said in his particularly soft, persuasive voice. “I have been telling her how happy she will be with one so kind and gentle as you are.”

Miss Ames, pallid as one dead, and dressed

in the deepest black, was lying back in a large chair, her hands clasped above her head. Everything about her, from the small white hands to the small slippered feet, indicated luxury, fastidiousness, and weakness. She did not raise her eyes as the doctor spoke, but in a plaintive voice with a note of fretfulness in it said, "Happy with one so wretched as I am! O doctor!"

"Come, come, she will help to make you happy," said the doctor in the wheedling tones one uses to a petted child. "A change of attendants will help you. I have brought the best I could find."

"Doctor, if instead you could have brought me death! I sit here and fancy death, not a grim spectre, but a white and gentle angel, to lead me to my father."

"By-and-by, by-and-by, many years from now," said the doctor. "Come, wont you take a look at Miss Milbury?"

Miss Ames lifted a pair of sad eyes, heavy with weeping.

"There, now," said the doctor aside to Van, "I'll leave you. Cheer her up; tell her something new—amuse her, be witty;" and away he went, leaving Van standing before Miss Ames, and struck particularly dumb. Nothing so kills the capacity for being amusing as to be ordered to exercise it.

The silence lasted some five intolerable minutes. Van Milbury had evidently not the faculty of adaptation.

“Why do n’t you talk?” said Miss Ames querulously. “Dr. Morton told you to talk, did n’t he?”

“What do you wish me to talk about, Miss Ames?”

“Do n’t say Miss Ames! I have been called Nelly—oh so gently—and no one calls me Nelly now, unless I make them. Oh I have lost so much! Do you know how unhappy I am! Did you ever lose any one you loved?”

“I lost my father when I was quite a little girl,” replied Van.

“Ah! you were too young to feel it.”

“And last summer a dear good uncle, just like a father.”

“Yes? But then uncles are not fathers.”

“And my home and all the money we had.”

“I do n’t think I should mind having lost such things as that. Have you any one left to care for you?”

“A darling mother and two sisters,” said Van.

“Oh you are fortunate! Every one is better off than I am!”

“But have you not sisters and brothers?”

“They are older than I am. They do n’t care for me the most of any one in the world.

My brother Ben and my father did. They lived for me and petted me. I was everything to them. I don't see why my father could not have lived!"

"If you had never lost him, some time he must have had the grief of losing you. Perhaps he had already borne many sorrows, and God thought it well to spare him that. If you think he is happy now in heaven, all the joy is his and all the sorrow is yours. Perhaps we ought to be willing to bear our share of this kind of sorrow rather than wish our loved ones away from their glory and joy."

Miss Ames had never heard of being willing to suffer rather than to have others suffer. It was incredible doctrine!

"My father was stronger and braver than I. He could have endured it better than I. I think no one would feel losses as I do. I am so sensitive. I live in my affections. I have always had too much sensibility. When I was a child I loved my dolls so that I cried for hours if one was broken. I was sick in bed for a week, once, when my canary died."

"My mother never would allow us to give way to our feelings like that," said Van. "She said we had no right to trouble those around us by giving way wildly to sorrow. We were taught that trouble was meant to give us training in

courage and patience, for we could not expect to go through this world without meeting both."

"How hard-hearted she must have been!" sighed Miss Ames.

"Oh! she is the kindest, gentlest mother in the world."

"My mother died when I was a baby. My father was not hard like that. You must have been very unhappy at home."

"Unhappy! We were the three happiest girls alive! Our home at Poplar Rise was so comfortable, and we were always busy about something, and we used to go up in the big garret and hold conclaves and make speeches to each other. When we wanted anything we used to make speeches to Uncle Aaron or mother, and when things did not suit us we never went farther than to sit in a row and sing, one of us, 'The Three Maries;' another, 'Lorraine, Lorree,' and the other, 'The Three Fishers,' and Hannah would say, 'Do, Mis' Milbury, give them girls what they want. There they are singing them doleful ditties again!'" Here Van laughed out at the recollection, and Miss Ames started. The flood of Van's memories had been set loose, and she told of going to the district school and building playhouses of broken china, stones, and acorns; of visitors who came to pull candy and pop corn; of husking frolics

in the field, and rides on loads of hay, of finding Hannah ill, and having to rise betimes and do all the work with the help of Myra and Teddie; of having breakfast in the winter by lamp-light—

“Oh how unhappy you must have been!” moaned Miss Ames. “But then as you never had a very good time, you had less to lose and do not feel so wretchedly unhappy as I do. And then you are not so sensitive. My father and brother waited on me always. They would give up anything for me. If I only said I liked a thing I got it. They would stay from business or anything to read to me or sing to me. Oh I have lost so much, I hate to live.”

“I think that was a very bad way to be brought up,” said Van frankly. “We should all learn to think of others and make some sacrifices. To do service and consider the good of others before our own seems to me the chief part of religion.”

Van after a few days found that waiting on Miss Ames was no sinecure. She “could not bear servants near her.” Van therefore must bring her nearly all her meals and coax her to eat them. She wanted her long thick hair brushed by the hour, and meanwhile wept over how her father had admired it and how proud he had been of her. For hours she would insist on the

room being nearly dark. "She hated sunshine since her father died." A true hothouse plant in her fashion of life, she kept the rooms at a heat which suffocated Van. When they rode out the closed carriage must have all the windows up and hot bricks piled on the floor so that the air was as warm as the house. If they passed a graveyard Miss Ames nearly wept herself into hysterics: evergreen trees of any kind sent her into floods of tears.

Van considered Miss Ames shamefully selfish and extremely foolish. She thought her bringing up had been an outrage on common sense, and in point of fact Van soon had very little sympathy or charity for her patient. She would despair in her efforts to entertain her since none succeeded.

She failed to consider that Miss Ames' grief was as overwhelming as if it had had a more reasonable foundation. She felt angry and scornful because Miss Ames had so little of unselfishness and of common sense. Teddie, the embodiment of Biblical charity, would have pitied Miss Ames for her very faults. This bruised reed would have aroused in her a divine sympathy. Poor Van, on the other hand, needed yet the tutelage of suffering before she could exercise a due compassion. It is only in sorrow's garden we can gather the herb called sympathy, and that not merely from sorrow but from sanctified sorrow.

“Do n't sew,” Miss Ames would moan; “the steady motion of your hand drives me wild.” If Van picked up one of the numerous pieces of fancy-work whereby Dr. Morton tried to tempt his patient to amuse herself, the cry would soon be, “Do put that out of sight. Do n't embroider; it reminds me of how much interest my dear father and brother took in my embroidery and painting. How they praised all I did! Oh why, why did I lose them!”

Sometimes in desperation Van would begin to sing. If she burst into, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come!” “Oh stop! stop! Father! father! That was *his* favorite! How he would stand and sing it in church! Why did he die?”

Was Van's effort “Annie Laurie,” “Hush, Miss Milbury! You kill me! That was the first song I learned to sing to dear father when I was only eight. Oh how proud he was! oh me!”

Van found that the “fine cultivation” of which Dr. Morton spoke meant music, French, water-color, fancy-work, and a general acquaintance with the novels of the day. Van was given to groaning to herself that she wished Miss Ames had been taught arithmetic and history, or anything to educate her in common sense and reasonable thinking. If Van spoke sharply, or disputed, as indeed she often did, Miss Ames would fling herself face down weep-

ing, "Ah, my brother never spoke so! Oh come back, father! come back, brother! Why did you die!"

Too often Van would view the weeper with indignant eyes, thinking, "Teddie is ten times as pretty as she is; Myra is worth a thousand of her. Why must she have a half-million, and my poor dear girls be fighting for bread!"

Then at night when her patient was asleep, but moaning in her sleep, and sighing, "father," "brother Ben," Van would relent and say to herself, "Myra should have had this place, she is so much more considerate than I am. Teddie would have done far better here, Teddie is so much more tender than I am. Teddie has such true *gospel* spirit. She would have tried to do real good."

Then Van would make resolutions to aim at doing real good next day. She meant well, but perhaps her methods were wrong. Perhaps no methods would have succeeded. Thus:

"Dear Nelly, do not allow yourself to cry so much. It may make you blind. Think how terrible that would be."

"Nothing is more terrible than what I have. I don't care if I am blind. I see no one that loves me or needs me. I have to cry. I can't help it."

Or, "Dear Nelly, if you allow yourself to

brood so, you may lose your mind ; think of that ; it is your duty to be more cheerful."

"I don't *allow* myself to brood. I am so sensitive I cannot help it. I don't care if I do lose my mind. I may then forget how sad I am. How can you ask me to be cheerful, with Ben and father dead?"

"It seems to me that to encourage grief as you do is to quarrel with God. God knew what he did. What God does is well done. Are you not a Christian?"

"A Christian? Why, of course. I've been a church member since I was ten. My father was so pleased when—oh dear, I want my father!"

"Then as a Christian why do you not think that you should take Christ for an example, who bore all sorrows and sufferings patiently?"

"But you know he was God. That is different."

"But he was also man, with man's capacity for suffering."

"It is not the same at all. I cannot expect to be like *that*, and I do not believe that any real, just human person ever suffered as I have."

"But some people have lost all their friends, their home, and their health. Suppose you were a poor sick pauper in a hospital?"

"People of that sort are not so sensitive as I am, you know."

"I don't know that. But for others, do you not think the mother of Christ had as great sorrows as yours when she saw her son crucified? Was not that a heavy sorrow?"

"But she was the holy mother whom all nations call blessed, and all the band of the apostles loved her and thought for her. I am alone."

"But think of missionaries who have gone alone from friends and home into wild savage places."

"They were *willing*. They chose. I was not willing to give up my father."

"Perhaps that is the trouble, that you are unwilling for God's will to be done, and are unhappy because you fight against God."

Miss Ames took refuge in tears, and Van in proud silence.

At another time when Miss Ames was declaring herself the most wretched and unfortunate of the human race, Van asked her if she remembered the cases of the martyrs.

"I don't know anything about the martyrs," said Miss Ames, "except that they were people who chose to be burned rather than believe what they wouldn't believe. Father never allowed me to read or hear sad things; he thought it would hurt me, I am so sensitive."

"I think he prepared sorrow for you by over care," said Van.

"I don't believe any martyrs suffered as much as I do. They must all have had something to keep them up," replied Miss Ames.

"They had faith and courageous spirits. You can have both if you will."

"Tell me about them," said Miss Ames, flinging herself on the couch. "I have cried till I have no more power to cry."

Van was not particularly well posted in martyrology, but in the dear old garret had been one or two books on that theme. She told of fair Margaret with the Solway's tide rising over her innocent lips, of good Lord Cobham, hung to slowly roast in chains, of three young children burned at Smithfield, of Ridley and Latimer whose death-pyre lit Oxford in 1555. As she grew eloquent about Anne Askew on the rack, and John Rogers marching to the stake, Miss Ames went into a paroxysm of sobs and tears and cries. Van ceased narrating and tried to calm her patient. She could not control her; the poor girl's frail frame worked convulsively, and Van, terribly frightened, rang for the doctor.

"What in the world brought this on?" asked Dr. Morton, after he had quieted his patient with a hypodermic injection.

"She — told — me — such dreadful things —" gasped Miss Ames.

"I only told her what she asked me to, for a change," said Van.

"About — people — being — women and children—burned and tortured and drowned. I never knew the world was so cruel and bad and dreadful! Oh, I can't live! I wont live! I want to die!"

"I should think," said Dr. Morton, taking Van aside when Miss Ames was asleep, "that you would know better than to tell her such things. Patients should not have their morbid desires indulged. She does not know what is good for her. Forget whatever is sad or dull and be funny."

"I don't feel as if I ever knew or heard or said a funny thing in my life," said Van despairingly. Up in that famous garret she could keep her sisters laughing by the half-hour, but then they were cheerful people.

Again when Miss Ames was bewailing that she had nothing to live for, Van tried a new method.

"Our minister's wife says that Christians have always something to live for as long as they can serve God. Christ lived to do good, and when all else is lost to us, we can still live to imitate Christ and do good to men. If health fails us and nothing remains but to suffer, then we can glorify God in the fires, and suffer patiently, uncomplainingly."

“But I can't do any of those strong-minded things; I am not made that way,” wailed Miss Ames. “I can only break my heart; I always knew that I was born to die of a broken heart.”

“Only think,” urged Van desperately, “of the good you might do with all your money. Think how many sick poor people there are who have not the comforts of life: think of the poor little orphans, of the poor women making shirts at a dollar a dozen and very nearly starving to death at their machines. Why, you might go to them like an angel of help! You could go about doing good as Christ did! Oh why won't you rise up and do good?”

“I can't—I never could. I should be frightened to death by those people. I am so frail. I cannot endure such places where there is so much dirt. The rude noises alarm me and the smells make me sick. My father never let me see horrible sights to hurt my feelings. Besides those people do n't care for me, and I do n't care for them. I want those that love me.”

“Christ came to those who did not love him. Do you not think that to a holy soul like his this earth with its sin was a continual pain? He had lived, not merely in a home like yours, but in heaven; he left his eternal Father and came to live in the vile, sickening sights of earth

to do good. I should think if you were half a Christian you would be glad to use your money for him. The trouble with you, Miss Ames, is *you are selfish*. All your life has been selfish; you have been brought up to think first and only of yourself. Your sorrow is selfish, and being selfish it is wicked."

Poor Miss Ames had never been so roundly spoken to. She cried, "You are scolding me! I cannot bear it! My father never allowed a cross word to be said to me! Oh, you cruel girl! Oh where is my father to defend and comfort me. Oh go away from me! I am afraid of you. Go! go! go!" and wringing her hands, tearing her hair, and falling back on the bed, she went into a violent fit of hysterics. Van, penitent, alarmed, having never seen an attack of the kind, rang for the doctor. When Miss Ames could speak at all it was to moan, "She scolded me."

That evening Dr. Morton sent for Van.

"Miss Milbury, I find you quite unsuited to this position. You do not know how to humor our patient or how to amuse her. Your trial month is about ended. I have telegraphed for another attendant. I am sorry you have failed, but I must consider only my patient." He handed her sixteen dollars. "The first train in the morning the carriage will be at the door for you," he murmured.

"I suppose I am all wrong," said Van, "but the whole trouble with Miss Ames seems to be lack of common sense."

The doctor smiled gently.

"That lies at the root of half of human troubles. But we must take people as we find them. Constitution, heredity, very foolish rearing, no doubt, no doubt. Good-by."

When Van appeared again before Miss Ames, who had slept and was revived, "What have you been crying about?" asked Miss Ames.

Van flushed. "I am going to leave you tomorrow morning."

"Oh! And you are really sorry for that—to leave me?"

"No," said Van frankly. "I see I don't understand you, and I am glad to go. But what I am crying about is that I came here to get money to pay a debt—a hundred and twenty dollars—and—after this month—I shall have just four dollars when I get home. Foolish to cry for that, am I not?"

"Crying about money! Such a little bit! Why you poor dear, let me write a check. I have plenty! Here, I'll make it five hundred, will that do? Where is my check-book?"

"Stop!" said Van proudly, "I cannot take a penny from you. We Milburys never take charity. We will work it out somehow. No,

you need not say a word about it. You see that there are various kinds of trouble in this world. Mine is but one. I'll bear it somehow."

"I really like you," said Miss Ames wistfully. "I wish you were not going."

CHAPTER VIII.

MYRA GOES TO SEEK HER FORTUNE.

Thy God hath not denied thee all
While he permits thee grace to call.
Call to thy God for grace to keep
Thy vows, and if thou break them, weep.

—G. HERBERT.

HOMeward went Van Milbury, full of shame and remorse over her failure. Had she not shown some of the lack of common sense which she had criticised in Miss Ames? As the cars rushed along Van shut her eyes from the wintry landscape and passed the four weeks of her absence from home in review; and now that the excitement of it all was over, she weighed herself in mental balances and found herself wanting. There was no one at the station to meet her; no one knew that she was coming. Snow still covered the earth, but the roads were better beaten than when she left, and with her little bag in hand she trudged towards the brown house.

It was Saturday afternoon. Teddie was at home. Mamma Milbury was at home also for a few days, and they had just been talking of Van, while Myra fried such doughnuts as Van

most affected. And lo, coming into the gate was Van, with a crestfallen, defeated look about her which none of them had ever seen in the valiant Van before.

Out dashed the sisters. "Van, you blessing! What good luck sent you home? Oh we were just wishing for you. You have come to your senses and found that, 'be it never so homely, there's no place like home.' Mamma, here is our prodigal. She has found Dr. Morton's turkeys and lobster-salad but husks, and has come home to eat my doughnuts! Sit down, Van, and have a hot doughnut, just as you like it. Why, girl, you look perished with cold." Thus the younger two in chorus, pushing Van into her mother's arms, and then into a chair near the stove; and Teddie took off her sister's coat, hat, gloves, and overshoes, and Myra bestowed fried cakes upon her; while mamma Milbury sat near at hand smiling at her, and saying how good it was to see her three maids together again. Thus Van was made much of because these women instinctively recognized that the world had in some fashion gone hardly with her.

Van presently took a little courage from the heat, the welcome, the doughnuts, and the general home feeling. She arrived at a point where she could speak without crying. She must tell her story and she burst forth,

“Myra, you were quite right! I was not fit for the place at all; I have so little tact, so little patience, so little sympathy and considerateness. You would have done much better; you know how to make allowances for people. Teddie would have done much better; Teddie is so loving and so *gospel-like*. But oh I made such a mess of it!” And then followed a description of Dr. Morton’s Establishment for Nervous and Morbid Patients, of Nellie Ames and her history and ways, and Van’s methods with her.

“Poor unfortunate girl,” said Mrs Milbury, “what a pity she has not been more reasonably raised!”

“We are not the worst off people in the world it seems,” said Myra. “What good does all her money do her?”

“The fact is,” said Van, “I really am afraid I was mean enough to be privately contrasting her money and our poverty, and thinking how much more good we could do with the fortune than she does. I would n’t wonder if I should have been more patient with a poor girl in such a state.”

“A poor girl does n’t get in that state,” said Myra. “She has no time. She has affairs of bread and butter and boots to attend to. She has not been so accustomed to sleep on rose-

leaves that she is frantic if even the rose-leaves are crumpled. I think your patience must have been taxed."

"I sent Mrs. Lowell her eight dollars a week ago," said Van, "and here I am, with just four dollars for a month's work."

"Never mind, dear," said Myra, "you did the best you could."

"I wonder if Mrs. Gore wants any more pillow shams made?" said Van meditatively.

"Don't think of that now," said Teddie. "This is Saturday evening. We cannot do any more work until Monday morning. Let us have a truce of God until then from outside worries, and let the peace of the Sabbath fall on us. Let us just forget the world as it forgets us, and be ourselves for ourselves, and enjoy having mammy and Van here with us. Myra, how lonely we were here last Saturday evening, you and I alone here, and it stormed so!"

Monday morning, "The truce is over," said Myra as Teddie wrapped herself up to encounter a storm as she went to her pupils. "Now we must think 'what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed,' or where the money for all this eating and drinking and clothing shall come from, which amounts to the same thing."

"Well, don't worry over it," said Teddie.

“Do n't forget that our Father knoweth that we have need for all these things; and as the old Scotchman said, ‘It is for His credit to keep his children decent.’”

Teddie was hardly gone before a passing acquaintance handed in a letter that had come with the morning's mail. It was from Dr. Morton. Finding Miss Milbury gone, Nelly Ames had refused her breakfast and dinner, refused to be comforted, and blamed herself for Miss Milbury's failure to please. She was greatly disturbed by what she had learned of Miss Milbury's financial condition, and insisted that Dr. Morton should contrive some way for her to make Miss Milbury a present. As Dr. Morton thought that not feasible, she threatened hysterics unless a new situation should be provided for poor Miss Milbury.

“You see,” wrote the doctor, “in spite of her morbidness, Miss Ames is one of the kindest creatures in the world. I have only calmed her by letting her know that you shall suffer no loss by leaving us. I telegraphed to my friend the superintendent of the Insane Asylum at ——, and asked if he had a vacancy as attendant for you. He telegraphed that he had, and for you to be there Tuesday. The salary will be eighteen dollars a month, with your board provided. I am sure you can fill the position admirably.”

“I can never do it, I know I never can,” said Van. “I shall make some dreadful mistake at once. You go, Myra. You have twice my sense. You can just tell the superintendent that I could not come and sent you. He will like you as soon as he looks at you. There is something stanch and reliable in your very expression. Do go for me. Come now, I have hardly worn the good shoes any, and have only used one pair of the gloves. Miss Ames hated sounds so that I had to wear wool slippers. I stole about so soundless that I kept fancying that I was the ghost of myself. I will shorten the red gown a couple of inches and you can have that; you can take Teddie’s aprons. There, your outfit is provided. I’ll pack your trunk. Say you’ll go. One of us must make some money, and you see how I feel.”

Myra felt as if she could not go: to leave her mother for an indefinite time seemed a fate that she could not face. But she noticed how nervous and pale Van looked from her month of care and close confinement; perhaps she was unfit for a new task. Should she go? She questioned her mother with her eyes.

“I hate to have any of you go away alone,” said mamma.

Suddenly Myra thought, “Suppose mamma should feel compelled to stop nursing for a

while, and there should be no more money in the house! How much harder it would be for the poor mother!" She put on an air of courage.

"I believe I'll go. It is well for all young birds to fly from the nest a little, isn't it, mammy? I feel a desire for adventures rising within my soul. You are right, Van; it is my turn. But you must work hard to get me ready."

Thus it was when Teddie was brought home that evening by Cousin Joe that she found another of her sisters going forth to seek her fortune. The little trunk that had come home Saturday night was packed ready to set out on Tuesday morning; Van, with a very red face, was ironing Myra's clothes; Myra was doing the last few stitches of mending; and mamma was putting up a little box of sewing materials for Myra to take away with her.

"Come home in a month, dear, and then I'll take my turn," said Teddie, resolved to keep up the family heart. "The Milbury maids must each make a little journey into the world to seek adventures, as the famous knights of old."

In her heart she wondered how Myra could endure the idea of going among crazy people. To Teddie it seemed a frightful position. Meantime Myra was sedulously keeping it to herself that she was fairly shivering with fear every time that she faced the situation.

And so next day, by that fatal early train, another Milbury maid was launched upon the world. Returning from the station where she had been to see her sister off, Van considered that it would be only kind to write to Miss Ames and thank her for her interest. She felt too as if she owed Miss Ames an apology for not having had more patience. After she began the letter she concluded that she must explain that Myra had gone among the lunatics in her place. "Myra is so much kinder and more considerate than I am, that she will do more good. I was sure if I went I should be constantly making mistakes, as I was with you; and as one of us must make some money to 'keep the pot boiling,' why she was very glad to have the opportunity to go."

With all her heart she longed to say something that might be helpful to poor Nelly. But whenever she had tried she had made a mistake and had done more harm than good. She folded her letter and unfolded it. Finally she wrote—"And He, bearing his cross, went forth." "The noble army of the martyrs praise thee."

This little effort to do good was all that she could make. She was not eloquent in letter writing nor wise in counsel, and she and Nelly Ames seemed to be so far apart that she could not get near her in helpfulness. She had in her

hand but those two little seeds of good words. She dropped those and went her way, knowing not which should prosper, this or that, or whether they should both alike be good.

After the letter was sent away Mr. Lowell came in. Van told him the story of her failure as companion for Nelly Ames.

“You can see she was really kind-hearted, she felt so sorry for me when I came away. I feel as if I ought to have been able to do her some good. I felt so to-day when I was writing to her. And yet all I could send her was two forlorn little lonesome sentences at the end of my letter.”

“Well if that was all you could do, and all the Lord had given you for her, it was all you were responsible for. It is not by small or by great, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Did you ever think, Van, what has been wrought by little things that were in some one's hand? The instrument at hand is that which we are responsible for using. Samson found at hand a jaw-bone, and he smote the Philistines with a great slaughter. Moses had a rod, and with it he wrought the prodigies that freed Israel, and led them through the desert. Miriam had only a tinkling timbrel, but with it she led forth in joyful worship the Hebrew women. Ehud had a trumpet, which he blew so loudly on the moun-

tains of Ephraim that his people 'slew of Moab at that time ten thousand lusty men of valor.' Gideon's host had his lamps and pitchers, but with them they cast off the yoke of Midian. Jael had a tent-pin; it served her for slaying Sisera, the tyrant of the people. Rahab had a scarlet thread; with its use she purchased the lives of all her father's house. David had a sling and smooth stones of the brook; with them he slew Goliath. Shamgar had only an ox-goad, but with it he delivered Israel. A little lad had five loaves and two small fishes, but given to Christ they fed the multitude. Mary had only a box of ointment, but broken over the head of Christ its perfume has filled the world for two thousand years. Peter of silver and gold had none, but he had a word of power in Christ's name—'Rise up and walk.' 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' I finish, Van, where I began."

"It was a very good beginning, and a very good ending," said Van. "Such thoughts would be so strengthening if we could only take them along with us. We should be likely to do more good."

"We shall never know how much good we do until the day when all work is reckoned up," said Mr. Lowell. "Perhaps then you may find that some of your brusque talk or the little

words that ended your letter have helped Miss Ames."

"I wonder how much good Myra will do in the insane asylum," said Van to Teddie as they went to bed that night, and thought of the other Milbury maid spending the night in the asylum.

Uncle Daniel had been at the brown house that evening, and had given his views as decidedly against "Adam's daughters going off from home." "I did n't take to the notion when Mr. Summers brought it up," he said, "but Van seemed so set on it; and this notion of being an attendant in an asylum is still worse. For my part, I do n't like to see women rambling off that way. No doubt it is all right for them to do something; but so far from home do n't strike me as just the right thing."

"But, uncle," said Teddie, "since poor unhappy women do go insane, and as most of them have to be taken care of in asylums when they are insane, you see there must be women for attendants to take care of them and try to help them; and when a good kind girl like Myra will do it, why so much the better for the poor patients. We must not be selfish."

"Perhaps so; perhaps so," said Uncle Daniel, shaking his head, "but I do n't like to see Adam's daughters left in this case. And Sara

Ann do n't think any better of it than I do. I wish you girls had the farm. But what is done is done."

Meanwhile Myra, after a number of hours in the cars, came to a straggling village lying on a level and dominated by a vast pile of masonry stretched along a low hill. Handsome grounds surrounded it on every side ; the setting sun cast the shadows of the evergreens on the snow, and flamed redly against the multitudinous windows, until the distant building seemed on fire.

A gayly painted omnibus marked ASYLUM stood at the station, and in it Myra took her place. A very pale young woman accompanied by a sad-faced man got in next ; then two men holding between them a strong man whose hands and feet were tied, and who ducked his head from side to side in an effort to bite his keepers. Failing in this, he took a mouthful out of his coat or shirt bosom, wherever he could fix his teeth. A tall woman in widow's weeds took her place, and the load of human sorrow was complete.

"Henry," said the pale woman, "why do n't you take me home? The children want their supper, Henry, and I ought to be there to get it. I'm afraid of that man, Henry ; I'm afraid he will find the children and hurt them. There is a nice bed for us all down there in the pond."

The man turned to Myra, who sat next him. "Three of them," he whispered, "three such pretty children, all died in one week of scarlet-fever. She lost her mind from it. I wanted to keep her at home, but she tries to drown herself, and our doctor said perhaps here at the asylum they could cure her."

"Henry," urged the woman, "why do n't you let me get the poor children their supper?"

As for Myra, her sympathetic heart was full of pain for the wretched husband and wife; she was in mortal terror also of the lunatic opposite her, who fixed his red eyes on her, and shaking his head, which looked as if no comb had ever touched the shock of coarse hair, informed her roundly that "he'd as soon eat her as wink."

"Come and sit by me if you are afraid," said the woman in black; "I am more used than you to these things. The men will not let him get away. Are you going to the asylum?"

"As an assistant," said Myra, trembling as she changed her seat, while the maniac bit at her gown as she passed him.

"You look as if you would be kind to the poor creatures," said the widow. "Do n't be afraid; they shut up wild ones like that. I have a poor sister who has been a patient here for six years. I come to see her once in three months. She is very mischievous, poor creature."

"Do they never get well?" asked Myra.

"Oh yes, a number go out cured every year. The first year there is great hope of them; many are cured the second year; after that the chances are less and less. Epileptic ones and rum maniacs are pretty hopeless cases."

They drove through the great arched gateway. Myra saw that all the windows were barred, and behind the bars gibbering faces leered at those that passed; fists were shaken; sometimes from an open window came a loud cry to be "saved," to be "taken away from there." A chill horror fell over Myra. This place was a prison; the prisoners were victims of misfortune. Behind the same bars hide crime and misfortune, as crime and folly reap the same fields.

The omnibus stopped. "Henry" led his plaintive wife to the office. Three or four strong men came to secure and carry away the biting madman. Loud laughter, wild cries rang out now and then. A very elegantly dressed young woman, with a white-aproned attendant close behind her, swept along the hall with a grand, empress-like air, her silken skirt trailing after her. She turned towards Myra with a swift action and spit at her. As Myra drew back the attendant caught the girl's hand and said, "Do n't do that again!"

The widow had passed on; the girl gathered up her trailing skirt, ran forward, and with a sudden motion jerked the long crape veil, and shrieked with laughter as the widow's hat fell off.

"This *is* a fearful place," said the widow to Myra, "but I do not know how we could get on without it. Six hundred patients here that could not be cared for anywhere else. Oh when I am here I can hardly understand that text, 'The goodness of God endureth continually.' And then I consider how very much better these poor lunatics are treated than they were years ago, and I remember how at the feet of our Lord lunatics sat down clothed and in their right mind. As you are coming here to be an attendant, let me tell you, miss, that your word should be, 'There is balm in Gilead, and there is a Physician there,' and you'll find the name and words and thoughts of the dear Lord will go farther than aught else to quiet these poor torn minds and to stay and balance your own mind while you are working here among them."

CHAPTER IX.

MYRA HAS VARIOUS EXPERIENCES.

“ In the deep heart of man care builds her nest ;
O'er secret woes she broodeth there.” FAUST.

THE clerk of the asylum took Myra up two flights of stairs to a long, wide hall, carpeted and furnished, from which small rooms opened on either side. One room, larger than the others, was arranged as a dining-room, and a table was ready spread for tea. Opposite this room was another, with a bookcase, a parlor organ, a stand of flowers in the bay-window. Had it not been for the wild noises and curious antics and dark, despairing faces of the dozen or fifteen women, the sight of the iron bars at all the windows, the noise of the key in the lock at each opening of the door, Myra might have thought it a not unpleasant place.

“ Miss Munson, here is the new attendant,” said the clerk. “ Miss Munson has been here three years ; she can tell you all you need to know ;” and he went away, Miss Munson carefully unlocking and locking the door.

“ Your room will be at this end of the corridor,” said Miss Munson, taking Myra to a small,

neat room, where her trunk was presently brought. "You had better settle yourself at once; tea will be ready in an hour."

Myra began to arrange her hair and her belongings. As she did so the door was flung open two or three times and inane faces looked in with a giggle, a hiss, or a twist of the tongue.

"Lock your door if you wish to be let alone," said Miss Munson, coming by smiling. "When one of us is in the corridor, the other can lock herself in for a little."

When Myra was ready to come out of her room she found the corridor lit by the electric light. One patient was racing up and down the corridor at the top of her speed; one, a lovely young girl, lay on a lounge, her hands clasped over the white lace trimming of her pretty blue wrapper, a look of utter despair on her face, and sighing deeply; one patient was quietly reading; another was trimming herself up with strips of paper and inquiring of her neighbors as to the general effect. The widow who had come with Myra was holding the hand of a woman who sat by her on the sofa and whose restless black eyes rolled incessantly, as if in search of something. Alone and desolate stood the bereaved mother who had come in the omnibus. She kept repeating, "Why don't the children come in? I

must give the children their supper and put them to bed."

"Oh are you here?" said the widow to Myra. "I'm glad of that. I like your looks. You will be kind to my poor Lizzie. Miss Munson," and Lizzie broke away from her, "is she any better?"

"No," said Miss Munson, "worse, I think. She makes more trouble than any one else in the ward. But then she is never ugly; she can be controlled tolerably well." Then, as the running woman dashed by her, she added, "Oh how she tires me when she gets one of those spells at evening. I'll be glad when supper is over and I can put her in her room. Sad case, this Mrs. Ferrol."

The poor mother, Mrs. Ferrol, recognized Myra, and coming to her and taking her hand, said, "Wont you call Henry for me? I want him to take me away. I don't like this place; the people act so queer, and I want to see the children. Is that girl on the sofa wanting *her* children?"

"Suppose you stay here until after tea or till to-morrow," said Myra persuasively, "and these people may act better, and you can find out what is the matter with the girl. Perhaps she would like to have you sit by her and tell her all about your children."

She led Mrs. Ferrol to a hassock near the sighing girl.

"Ah," said Miss Munson, "you will make a good attendant. I see you have tact."

"Does an attendant ever get used to it all?" asked Myra.

"Some never do. They get so nervous that they cannot sleep and are threatened with nervous fever. Others get hard-hearted and impatient and tyrannical, and if it comes under any one's notice they are sent away. Others hear of better positions and hurry off. Such a place as this is pretty hard, I can tell you. I have been here three years and I think I ought to be promoted pretty soon. If I am put in charge of a floor I shall get twenty-two dollars a month instead of eighteen."

Here the supper-bell tinkled, and some of the patients ran into the dining-room, others had to be persuaded to go. The sad girl refused to leave her sofa. Mrs. Ferrol took her place quietly, but looked with disgust at the tin plates and cups.

"I can't eat off *tin*," she said. "Why do you treat me so? I am not a beggar. Henry will not like this. Why am I here? Young lady," to Myra in a whisper, "let me out of this place. I know of such a nice, quiet bed in the pond."

"Lizzie," said Miss Munson in a sudden sharp

tone, "if you throw that plate up to the ceiling you cannot have any tea."

Myra looked, and Lizzie, with her plate poised for a skilful throw, was hesitating whether to forego mischief or tea.

"Be good now, Lizzie; I have come to visit you," said the widow.

"Do n't set me a bad example," said Myra.

"Oh let us *all* throw our plates! Come now, all ready!" cried Lizzie.

No one responded to the invitation and Lizzie ate her supper.

After tea Miss Munson put each patient in her own particular room and locked each door. Some were perfectly silent and seemed to be undressing; some raged and kicked the doors; the running woman jumped for a while, but at last subsided. The widow was allowed to go in with Lizzie and sit with her until she fell asleep; Miss Munson coaxed the sad girl off and remained with her, brushing her hair, patting her hands, rubbing her head until she too slept. She explained to Myra that this girl's friends gave her a fee for rendering extra attention to her; also that the girl had lost her mind on account of a railroad disaster in which her parents and sisters had perished. Myra was allowed to take Mrs. Ferrol to her room, unpack her trunk, and get her to bed. "The children!

the children!" sobbed the poor creature continuously.

"Yes, yes," said Myra, "let us think that they are in bed in the next room. I will sing you and the children to sleep." She began to sing softly,

"Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber,"

and repeated it again and again, until the tired mother's complaints ended in unconsciousness. As the low, sweet notes and simple words stole over the corridor the tumultuous noises began to die away, and finally all was silence.

The widow went away to the part of the building reserved for guests; Miss Munson came from Miss Waters' room. She tried all the doors to see if they were locked, then throwing her arms over her head she stretched herself with a deep sigh, as one casting off an intolerable burden. "At last! quiet at last!" she said.

"Is this the way all the time?" asked Myra.

"Yes, unless it is worse. They are pretty quiet to-day. The racket begins in the morning, and we are well off if it is not set up by some one in the night. If Miss Waters wont eat tomorrow morning we will have to make her. She has missed two meals now, and she is not strong."

"Wont she eat when she is hungry?" asked Myra.

“No; it is a favorite fad with them to starve themselves.”

By good luck the patients slept well. The next morning not only Miss Waters but another patient had to be forced to eat. Miss Munson skilfully slipped an elastic jacket or bag over their heads, drawing it down over their arms, then fastening them in their chairs. She had Myra hold the cup of food while each patient had a certain number of spoonfuls of nourishment poured into her throat.

“When it comes to this,” said Miss Munson, “we give them only what is needed, and that of the strongest kind of beef extract.”

“How do you know what is right?” asked Myra.

“By the doctor’s orders. He comes in every day.”

“Does such feeding do them any good?”

“Not as much as food willingly taken, of course; but it keeps them alive. Crazy folks are not the only ones that fight against what is good for them, though.”

The doctor made his rounds; the patients were more or less worrisome. Miss Munson persuaded some of them to read and some to play games. The doctor’s wife came with materials for fancy-work, and several of the women took interest in making really pretty articles.

"I think it a duty to try and keep them happy, if I can," said Miss Munson. "I am here to earn my living, it is true; but the institution hired me not for my benefit, but for the benefit of the patients."

"I should think any attendant would feel that God took particular notice of the treatment of such unfortunates," said Myra.

"Half of them never think of such a thing," said Miss Munson, "and they act atrociously when the doctor's back is turned. If I am made overseer of a floor some of these attendants will have to walk straighter than they do."

Thus the days went on. Within the first week Myra went to her room, which she had inadvertently left unlocked—for it was hard for her to fall into the lock-and-key system—and lo, the troublesome Lizzie seated by her trunk, scissors in hand! She had just cut up all Myra's handkerchiefs and her two best white aprons, and was about to attack her underclothes, when Myra appeared. Myra cried out in dismay.

"Lizzie, I shall put you in a strait-jacket for this," said Miss Munson; "you know better. But, Myra, you must lock your trunk and your door. If some of the women had got those large scissors we might have had a suicide."

"Not a handkerchief nor apron left!" said Myra, ready to weep.

"I am going into the city this afternoon," said Miss Munson, "and I will buy you some."

"But—I have—no money," said Myra, flushing.

"Never mind ; I 'll lend you some."

Myra was ashamed to ask for the cheapest purchases ; besides, she had no idea of city prices.

"Six handkerchiefs and four aprons—three dollars," said Miss Munson when she returned at night.

Mrs. Ferrol was Myra's self-chosen, peculiar care. She felt much compassion for her and remembered so well the unhappy face of "Henry." One day, being on an errand in the room of the wife of their corridor doctor, she saw a lovely colored picture of "Christ blessing little children," and borrowed it.

"See," she said to Mrs. Ferrol, "I have found out where your children are, and I have brought you a picture of them. Do you see?"

"So they are!" cried the poor creature. "There is my baby Grace, with her yellow hair, leaning on that—that One's breast. Just so she used to sit on Henry's lap. And there is Carl, and there is Ruth standing by His knees. Why did you not have them turn their faces more this way so I could see them better?"

"They want to look at Him, you know. He

loves them and they love him. See, they are happy. They are not cold or hungry or tired, as you think they are. They are not in the pond; they are in this Teacher's school, and some day you will go and find them there."

"What is he saying to them?" asked the mother.

"He says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Why, I think I taught Carl that once. What is His name?"

"His name is Christ," said Myra, "the lover of children."

Mrs. Ferrol carried the picture around with her, large as it was, and sat looking at it by the hour.

"See my children," she said to the women as they passed her. "See how pretty they are and how happy they look! He takes good care of them. Does Henry know where they are?"

"Yes, he knows," said Myra. "Keep it in mind that they are all right and want nothing."

"What more does He say to them?" she urged again.

"'I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.' And again: 'All thy children shall be taught of God; and great shall be the peace of thy children;' or, 'I say

unto you that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' ”

Mrs. Ferrol grew quiet, but also she grew weak. At the end of a fortnight she was carried to the hospital ward.

“Brain fever,” said the doctor. “She may come out of it cured ; she may die.”

But on her bed in the hospital she would not rest unless the picture was within reach of her hand ; and when, now and then, Myra could go and whisper to her “ what He was saying to the children,” she grew calmer.

The day Mrs. Ferrol left the corridor Miss Munson was promoted, and her place was taken by a large, coarse girl who had been six months as an attendant in the asylum. Roughness characterized all her dealings with the patients. Her loud, harsh voice exasperated them ; her rude, unsympathetic ways stirred up antagonism. The only quiet time now was when it was the turn of those especial patients to be taken out to ride in the omnibus.

One morning when it was necessary to feed one of the patients, who shut her teeth and made the matter difficult, the new attendant gave her a violent slap in the face.

Myra was coaxing Miss Waters to eat. She looked up and said, “I will not endure seeing

these unfortunate creatures abused. I shall report you as soon as the doctor comes."

The attendant looked alarmed. "I did n't hurt her," she said. "I did not think what I was doing; she vexes me so. What is the difference? They do n't know anything."

"They do know; they are made worse by such conduct. You are rough and unkind to them generally. I do n't think you should be an attendant," said Myra stiffly.

"Come now, do n't blab."

"I shall report you as a duty."

"See here, I'll lose my place if you do. I wont do it again. I need my wages here. I have no home and no friends."

Myra hesitated. "If I say nothing this once, will you promise me to be kinder and never strike one again?"

"Oh la, yes. I did n't mean any harm," said Miss Boggs.

Myra concluded to pass over the error and wait for a reform. But in a day or two Miss Boggs' disposition overcame her again, and Lizzie being caught tearing up a large flowering geranium, Miss Boggs struck her twice with fury. Lizzie filled the air with her shrieks. This excited some of the others, and for an hour Babel reigned. Scarcely was the tumult over when the doctor came in, and Myra reported

Miss Boggs for striking a patient. Miss Boggs roundly denied it. Myra appealed to Lizzie herself.

“La! you can’t believe her; she’s crazy; she says anything,” said Miss Boggs.

“You certainly struck her, and it is not the first time,” said Myra.

“You are here for the good of patients, not to abuse them,” said the doctor. “I will refer your case to the physician in charge.”

Later in the day Miss Boggs was sent for. She denied doing more than “just tap” the patient, and begged so hard against a dismissal that the chief doctor allowed her to stay, with a warning against any rude treatment of patients. Miss Boggs became more careful, but would not speak to Myra.

The day that Myra’s month was up at the asylum she was called to the office. “Here are your wages,” said the head surgeon curtly; “we shall not need your services further.”

Myra was amazed. She did not like asylum life and she longed unutterably for the little brown house, but she did not take kindly to such unceremonious dismissal.

“May I ask what fault you have to find?” she asked.

“It does not matter; you do not suit. Your place is filled.”

"I recognize your right to make any change you choose, but I have tried to do my best, and I think I ought to be told what my offence is," said Myra firmly.

The doctor hesitated. "Very well, then. It seems that you take exception to our ways of managing here, and are saying that when the State Board meets there will be a change of officers."

"Sir!" cried the astounded Myra, "I *never* said such a word. I did not even know that there was a State Board. Who accuses me of such things?"

"Miss Boggs reports you as constantly talking in this way."

"If I constantly talk so," said Myra stoutly, "then others beside Miss Boggs must have heard me. Ask others. I deny it."

"You deny it. Miss Boggs affirms it. I have no time to sift out such matters. One against one it is, and I cannot decide between you. You see yourself that such language would be ruinous to all order and discipline here."

"Certainly it would, doctor, and if I used it I should deserve dismissal. But I never said such a word. Consider that I have no reason to make remarks against the administration, but Miss Boggs thinks she has reason to revenge

herself on me. I reported her for striking patients. She said then she would 'be even with me for it.' This is her way."

The doctor looked annoyed. He had forgotten that Miss Milbury had reported Miss Boggs. But he had already engaged an attendant in Myra's place.

"It may be as you say," he said coldly. "We are obliged to act upon what we hear. No doubt Miss Boggs denied that she struck a patient. I took your word for it then—I take hers now. If mistakes are made it cannot always be helped. No doubt your ward doctor can give you a recommendation to some other asylum. After to-morrow morning you will not be needed."

Myra, pale with indignation, went to her little room to pack her trunk. She observed that Miss Boggs looked triumphant.

CHAPTER X.

SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.

“In summer when the days are long,
I love her as we loved of old;
My heart is light my step is strong,
For love brings back those hours of gold.”

THE ward doctor raised his eyebrows and looked sharply at Miss Boggs when Myra told him of her curt dismissal.

“I am sorry you are going,” he said. “I thought you would be one of our best attendants. You did Mrs. Ferrol a world of good. I have hopes of her coming out of this sickness all right.” But though he appreciated Myra’s work and regretted her departure, he did not feel that he was called upon to remonstrate with the surgeon in charge.

Myra had a vacant hour in the afternoon and she went to find Miss Munson.

“That Boggs is a wretch,” said Miss Munson, “and in a place like this such a revenge as she has taken is easy. I know many attendants who pass over instances of cruelty and unkindness which make their blood boil; but they are afraid to speak for fear it will react on them.”

"I should not think any position worth purchasing by even tacitly conniving at what I felt was wrong," said Myra. "I think the doctor was more than half convinced that I had been slandered, but he had made his plans and would not change them."

"If he suspects that Boggs has made him her tool to punish you, you may be sure she will not be here very long. He will watch her closely, and at the first fault she goes. What do you mean to do?"

"Go home," said Myra heartily.

Miss Munson led her to the window and looked critically at her.

"Yes! Go home. Boggs has done you a service, though she did not intend it. This is no place for you. You feel things too keenly. Here one must be nice, but not too nice! I see you have lost flesh and color and there are dark circles around your eyes. Let me look at your tongue! Yes, I thought so—tremulous. You are not sleeping well, you have no appetite, and you are growing nervous. This life does not suit you; go home."

"I mean to," said Myra. "Oh how good it will seem to be where I am not shivering all the time at unexpected horrible noises, and where I am not quaking with fear lest Lizzie or some one of the others should pounce upon me!"

Now tell me one thing: why is it, when attendants like Miss Boggs are so hated by the patients, that they are not attacked? There are enough women in that ward to tear her in pieces. I should think she would be afraid of her life."

"Her safety is in their having no power of concerted action. They cannot act in unison. If one alone attacked her, she could help herself, or some of the others would be sure to help her, finding a *melee* very entertaining."

Myra went back to her corridor and Lizzie asked her to sing. Miss Waters had been taken to a ward on Miss Munson's floor. Myra began to sing to Lizzie, and the others came near and seemed unusually quiet and contented. Miss Boggs said sneeringly, "Singing? *You* don't seem to mind being turned adrift."

"I don't," said Myra, "for *I* have a good home and plenty of friends." With which little fling at Miss Boggs she contented herself.

But next day when Myra was homeward bound, she indulged in a little unsatisfactory retrospect. She had left her home to make money and how much had she made? Lizzie's caper had cost three dollars, her home trip and incidentals five dollars. She had in her pocket a new ten-dollar bill, sole result of her month's work, and she had used Van's four dollars for

the trip to the asylum. "Ten dollars!" said Myra bitterly, "as the result of two months' hard labor of two healthy and respectable young women! Really this world is a very difficult place in which to make a living."

She reviewed her life at the asylum, and felt that she had thrown her whole heart into her work and had done her very best, and she felt also that she had been treated with monstrous injustice. It is true she might have posed to herself as a martyr, suffering for having done her duty; but Myra was not one of the women who enjoy the *role* of martyrdom. The more she considered the situation the less she was pleased with it. She wrought herself up into a state of indignation; her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled; she neither noticed the landscape nor the people in the car nor the few crowded stations at which the express stopped.

When she left home she had fancied it would be very pleasant to spend a day in the great city ten miles from the asylum. But now she had neither heart nor money for such an outing, and she had not so much as looked upon the distant roofs. She called to mind a little song of an old man whose life dream it had been to see Perpignan, but going there—

"The old man died upon the way:
He never saw fair Perpignan."

Just here, when she was becoming very furious against her fate, she remembered that word of grandma's when trouble had come upon her, "Well, well! If it pleases the good God to send me to the school of affliction, Satan shall not rob me of the best lessons that are to be learned there." This memory was as a reviving breath from the home-land, and calmed a little the tumult of her spirit.

At this moment some one came down the car and spoke her name.

"Miss Milbury! Good morning. Have you been off on a jaunt? I did not expect to see any of our people so far from home."

It was Mr. Banbee, a member of Mr. Lowell's church, and owner of a large farm about five miles from Poplar Rise, a rich man, hale and cheery; when he had shaken hands he sat down beside her. "Been pleasuring by yourself?"

"No, indeed," said Myra with wrathful joy. "I have been off in a situation, to try and make my living; and I did not suit and was dismissed."

"The people must have been hard to please," said Mr. Banbee. "Your folks will be glad of it, I know. They must have missed you. If you had stayed long you might have found things you liked better than our country ways."

"I shall never like anything better than the

country," said Myra, "but in the country it is very hard to make a living. Our mother is working more than is good for her, and we felt that we ought to relieve her. First Van went off and tried to do something, and she failed; and then I went off and tried, and I failed. I don't think we shall let Teddie follow suit; it does not pay."

"That's right," said Mr. Banbee. "Stay at home. That's the best place for all of you. I don't think the city ought to rob the country of its best people. And you don't care for the city?"

"I don't know what I might do if I had a chance," said Myra, "but as it happens I have never been to the city but once in a while for a day's shopping. At present I am not likely to go on such errands, as I have no money to shop with. I have not been to the city, Mr. Banbee; I have been to a lunatic asylum." And then Myra described the asylum and its fashions to Mr. Banbee, who found the tale very entertaining.

"If you like," he said, "I'll write to that doctor and tell him he is a great idiot and a confounded rascal."

"No, don't," said Myra, laughing, "for he is neither. I think he is a very fine doctor, with a very heavy responsibility on his hands. Anyway, I am glad to get home again."

"Yes," said Mr. Banbee, "I think it would be

more justice to write and thank him in the name of your family, and of our town and church, for not keeping you away longer. What put it into your head to go to such a horrible place?"

This opened the way for telling Van's story of the "Retreat for Nervous Invalids." Myra expounded that matter to Mr. Banbee, who listened with great interest. As she ended with the conclusion which she and Van had reached that Myra must go to the asylum to seek her fortune, the whistle blew for the junction, and in a little while after Myra was back in her own village.

"My sleigh is here," said Mr. Banbee; "I can take you and your trunk home. I go right past your door. Here, Ned," he cried to his son, "take Miss Milbury's check and look up her trunk."

Thus it happened that Myra went home in much better style than Van had done. Instead of trudging through the snow, carrying the weight of her woes and her little hand-bag, she drove up snugly seated in Mr. Banbee's sleigh, with wolfskin-ropes tucked about her and Ned Banbee to carry in her trunk.

Van was the only Milbury at home. Mamma was out nursing, and Teddie was not yet back from school. Van rushed to greet her sister. These girls were fond of each other, and effusive



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in their methods no doubt. They had not been told that heartiness was "bad form."

"You are not sick, Myra dear!" cried Van.

"No; never was better in my life," said Myra, as she waved good-by to the Banbees and entered the kitchen.

"I've seen you look better—nearly always," said Van as she took off Myra's hat. "I have no hot doughnuts for you, girl, but I can make you tea and toast in no time."

"Don't," said Myra. "Mr. Banbee was on the cars, and he bought plenty of luncheon for us both. I should have kept a banana for Ted, only I thought it would look so queer. I want to talk. What are you doing? Sewing?"

There was a child's flannel wrapper on the machine. "I have six of these to make," said Van. "Almost the first work in since you left. But I have four aprons engaged for Mrs. Gore."

"That reminds me; here is my contribution to the family purse. Observe, ten dollars; your four and my six. We do not return to the parental roof overburdened with gold."

Just here in came Teddie, who had caught a ride, and then Myra's story of "Four Weeks in an Insane Asylum" had to be told, and the dusk came down over the three Milbury maids as they sat around the kitchen fire and heard how Myra had failed to make her fortune.

“Uncle Daniel and Aunt Sara Ann would find in this full justification of all their warnings not to go abroad for work, but to make our living at home,” said Teddie.

“But—if the living wont be made?” said Van.

“It will, somehow,” said Teddie. “I shall have to play I am grandma, and quote her text, ‘I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.’”

“It is well,” said Myra, “that we can expect something from the Lord for other people’s sake, if we cannot for our own.”

“It is always for some other One’s sake, and never for our own,” said Teddie gently. “Whatever comes, comes through Christ, and you know it is written, ‘If he spared not his own Son, but gave him for our sakes, will he not with him freely give us all things?’”

“You are a dear little soul, Teddie,” said Van, giving her sister a pat on the head, “and thanks to your two texts, we will not strike up ‘The Three Maries’ nor ‘Lorraine, Lorree,’ but we will get our supper and go to bed.”

Myra came home on Tuesday afternoon. Saturday morning she was busily making bread and pies, while Van finished the aprons for Mrs. Gore.

“There is Uncle Daniel,” said Myra, looking

through the window. "I wonder what is up? He is in his good sleigh and has the buffalo robe over him." She went to open the door for her uncle. She had on a great blue calico baking-apron and there was a little spot of flour on her nose.

"He has on his best Sunday suit, too," said Van, making a pause at her machine work. "Where can he be going?"

And here Uncle Daniel came in saying it was a cold day, and he had never known so many days of sleighing without a thaw, and if winter held on at that rate, it would be impossible to raise crops.

"I saw a bluebird this morning," said Van, "in spite of snow."

"And a large flock of wild geese flew northward in a great straggling V," said Myra, "so I think the weather is going to break up. Are you going anywhere, uncle?"

"Only here," said Uncle Daniel, laying aside his best overcoat. He handled his overcoat with respect; it was his most expensive garment. Van remarked a certain importance in Uncle Daniel's mien. Had he come into a fortune by any chance?

"Seems you came home with Mr. Banbee, Myra!" said Uncle Daniel, warming his hands by the stove.

“Yes,” said Myra; “he came on the cars when I was about half-way home. He was real kind and pleasant.”

“Eh, so,” said Uncle Daniel. “Well, he was round to see me last night and wanted me to do an errand for him. Mostly I think people had better do their own errands.”

“If he wants shirts made,” said Van, “we can’t do it, because we don’t know how. If we tried we should make them badly and he would not want to wear them.”

“He does not want shirts,” said Uncle Daniel.

“What does he want, then? A wrapper for his mother? We could do that, I reckon. Myra, I hope you didn’t say anything that made him think he must send us work out of charity,” cried Van.

“Of course not,” said Myra, pinching the pie-crust into a neat pattern.

“He does not want a wrapper,” said Uncle Daniel. “He wants—Myra.”

“Wants Myra!” cried Van, turning from an apron. “Does he think we are so bad off we have to go out to service?”

“Van, don’t put your oar in all the time,” said Uncle Daniel. But Myra turned with a flaming face; she understood.

“Uncle Daniel, how could you come!”

"I had to. The man is in earnest, and he is a good man, healthy, well-to-do, well spoken of, kind-hearted."

"His wife has only been dead six months!"

"Well, it is a little hasty, but when a man has a farm and a family he may be excused about waiting."

"Uncle Daniel, he is twice as old as I am."

"But that is n't old, Myra, and he's active as at twenty."

"Why his boy Ned is fourteen!"

"Yes, nice boy too, and he has only him and his mother in the family. He said to tell you you could have whatever you liked, and not work more than you chose, and always keep a servant, as you did at the Poplars, and have a horse and buggy always at your command."

"Uncle Daniel, please stop! I should not think of such a thing. The idea of marrying for such considerations!"

"I've got to do my errand," said Uncle Daniel valiantly. "He says that he will ask nothing better than for you to bring your mother to live with you, and she need never do a turn of work again as long as she lives; only sit and visit with his mother. He is inclined to be very liberal and considering."

"Van," said Myra, turning to her sister, "I want you to notice. I have been dismissed from

the asylum, but I am offered a situation where I am to get my board and clothes, the use of a horse, and the support of my mother, a situation, mark you, from which I cannot be dismissed at a moment's notice—a permanency. Uncle, why didn't you tell him we girls had always said we never meant to marry?"

"Because that's a point where girls are always changing their minds," said Mr. Banbee's ambassador.

"We have not changed ours," said Myra, "and if we ever do, which we wont, it will be because we marry for love, and I think love would only come after a reasonable acquaintance with a person of proper age—and—and—all that. I am sorry you came. You'll have to tell him, 'No, no, no! not on any consideration, now nor ever'—and—and—I suppose, Van, I ought to say I'm much obliged?"

"Say, 'No, thank you,' like a polite child," observed Van.

"You understand, uncle, it wont do, and I don't want to hear any more about it," said Myra, putting her pies in the oven and shutting the door with a vindictive bang.

"Final, is it?" said Uncle Daniel, a twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes, final," said Myra.

"A very good home, a good husband, and

plenty of money ; it might be worth consideration. But if you wont, you wont. Well, Van, what do you say? If Myra would not, I was to make you the same offer. Will you take it?"

Van was on her feet in a second, her cheeks crimson, her eyes blazing.

"I might as well have touched a match to a powder magazine," soliloquized Uncle Daniel.

"Uncle, how dare you! It is an insult. How could you!"

But here in the midst of Van's tragedy Myra cast herself on the nearest chair, crying out, "O Van, Van! You are the second choice—only think!" And the comedy of the situation overcame Van so that she too sat down and laughed till the tears came into her eyes. Uncle Daniel joined the chorus.

"If he is in that frame of mind," said Myra, "willing to take one or the other, without any violent preference for either, he is not likely to break his heart over a refusal."

"You see," explained Uncle Daniel, "he sort of made me say I'd do his errand before I quite understood what was up; and after all I reckoned you'd take it easier from me than from him, and I do n't blame you a mite. If he wants a housekeeper let him hire one, but I do n't hold to marrying without love. I married Sara Ann because I loved her, and I've loved her better

every year since. It's only love, girls, that can help you over the hard places that come in every married life. I'm mighty glad not to see Adam's daughters marrying for a home."

"I think that would be positively wicked," said Van.

"Girls," said Uncle Daniel in his quiet, emphatic way, "I should be glad to see you married, if you married for love good men with whom you could walk hand in hand towards heaven. Marriage is a holy ordinance instituted by God, and it is for the happiness and benefit of mankind. But I find in the Bible that marriage is a type of the union between Christ and his Church, and so I don't take it that it should be just a business relation for convenience, but a spiritual relation of love and faith. If we have no love in the married relation, we cannot show the patience and self-sacrifice and trust and devotion that are in the relation between Christ and his Church. I see in the Bible that very much is made of the love between the Lord Jesus and his people; and love, girls, is not a thing to joke and trifle about, and I've never seen you inclined to do that; it is something serious and holy, and to my mind it does n't start in a man's wanting a nurse or a housekeeper, or a woman's wanting a home or gowns. You've looked at it right, just the way I knew you would."

At these earnest and simple words from Uncle Daniel the merriment of the girls subsided for a little and they wondered within themselves whether ever into their hearts should come this holy and satisfying love of which Uncle Daniel spoke.

“What next is likely to happen?” asked Myra of Van, when Cupid’s envoy had buttoned himself up in the big beaver coat and departed.

“We are going to have our humble dinner and get up a jolly good story to tell Ted and mammy,” replied Van.

In spite of Uncle Daniel’s prognostications a thaw set in. The bluebirds and wild geese had been true weather prophets. Uncle Daniel’s boys announced that they were coming soon to “make garden” for their cousins. “We’ll get it all dug and smoothed and laid out, and you can do the rest. Father says it will be good for you. You will feel more cheerful if you have a nice vegetable garden and some flowers.”

So they mended the fence, trimmed up the one cherry and two apple trees; pruned the ancient currant-bushes and dug about the roots, and soon peas, lettuce, onions, and cucumbers peered in delicate green above the brown earth.

CHAPTER XI.

A COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.

“Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes ;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees it close ;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.”

SPRING and early summer, which hitherto had seemed to fill the Milbury girls with their own vigor and general rejoicing, did not bring much jubilation this first year of their exile. All the former years of their lives they had found so many interests in the return of the seasons ; now they had no wide fields, no luxuriant gardens, no barnyard full of mild-faced calves, no pasture-land where bleating lambs and their snowy mothers were to be visited and petted, no scores of fluffy yellow chicks and callow ducks. The rich promise of the autumn days had mocked the four, as Hagar-like they had left their home. Their only item of landed property was now that lot in the village cemetery where their father and Uncle Aaron were united in death as they had been in life.

The girls were young, they had youth's fund

of cheerfulness and hope and desire for happiness, but they could not hide from themselves that things were going but badly with them. People said that "the Milburys must be seeing hard times; they didn't see how they took care of themselves. Of course it would end in their falling back on Daniel. Daniel's house ought to be as big as Noah's ark, with his six boys, his wife, his mother, his sister-in law, and now these other four to take care of."

But the Milbury maids had no idea of falling back on Uncle Daniel.

"There's one thing," said Myra to Van, on one of the very many days when they had nothing to do but work in their little garden; "Uncle Daniel must not know how little we earn, and whatever we do, we must not add to his burdens. If he has us to take care of he will not be able to let Ned go through college, and Ned is the only one of us all, unless it is Teddie, who cares for a good education. And then too there are yet seven hundred dollars of mortgage to be paid on that farm, laid on when his big barn was destroyed. Uncle Daniel will have all he can do to provide for his old age and bring up his family."

"We'll keep off his hands, whatever happens," said Van, "but I feel downright discouraged. I haven't had two days' work a week for

nearly two months, and you have not had over seven or eight dollars' worth of sewing at home in that time. If we knew how to make dresses handsomely we could have made Nell Gracy's wedding clothes and Nora Bell's outfit for school. But we cannot make dresses, and we sew slowly, and our button-holes are only moderately good. I've calculated that poor little Teddie walks eighteen miles a week, and her eight dollars a month don't go far after the rent is paid and her shoes and overshoes are bought."

"And mother's nursing is only for about half time, and some of the people cannot pay over four dollars a week. And it is just as well mother cannot get work all the time; she would simply kill herself. She is breaking down as it is; she never was used to lifting, and night work always hurt her; she needs her sleep. It makes me nearly cry to see how hollow her eyes look;" and the tender-hearted Myra bent her head over the beets she was weeding and cried in earnest.

"Whatever shall we do?" continued Myra in a distracted way. "I have thought and thought, but there seems no opening for us, not even service! Folks that want work-girls here want those able to lift and do big washings, and milk cows, and work twelve hours in the day. We don't know how, and we are not able to do it,

and Uncle Daniel wouldn't let us. I wish we could run away from here and find any kind of work. I'd go as chamber-maid in a hotel if I could find a hotel that would take me."

That was it, what could they do for a living? The question which when the last year's roses bloomed had first confronted them as a mere matter of speculation, now stood before them in deadly earnest, as an instant and pressing necessity.

"I think," said Van, meditatively surveying her beet bed, "that the work that has paid us best since April has been this in the garden and the raising those two broods of chickens; those and the three laying hens have supplied us with three-quarters of our living. And to keep the fowls and the garden apart *has* been work."

"The garden and the chickens wont bring us clothes, and shoes will be a cause of outlay soon enough," said Myra. "I wonder if we could take an agency of any kind."

"I should hate it," cried Van. "I know just how it would be. We should wear out more shoes than what we really earned would replace, and people would say, 'Of course we didn't want this or that, but it was one of the Milbury girls brought it and we could not refuse.' Then they'd go on with the old story, that we did not make half a fight for our property, and we should

have brought our case into court. As if we would have gone to court to show that Uncle Aaron had signed for more than he was worth, and had claimed as his what was ours!"

"It would be like begging, I suppose," said Myra, reverting to the agency. "If we beg let us do it far from here. I have wasted a dollar in stamps writing to advertised places where it was promised that 'Ladies could find useful and easy occupation without outlay and at home.' Most of the places proposed that I should send them one dollar, two, or five, for materials and directions for the work. One brought me a vile book and two insulting letters. I'm afraid to write any more replies to advertisements; I'm afraid to start off alone and look for work. I'd write to Aunt Harriet Proctor for advice, though she is not a real relation and we have no claim on her, but she is very sick I hear, and has been taken to the mountains."

"Let us try to work out our way for ourselves," said Van.

"I believe I should have taken hold as Teddie did, and prepared for an examination for teacher's certificate. I think some of the trustees who know of our case would give me a school if I was fit to teach. Oh I wish I had."

"Do n't wish *back*, work *forward*," said Van. "Begin now, and Teddie can help you perhaps."

If Teddie gets a school this fall you can take the Steele children, and at least keep a roof over our heads. I'd begin that right off if I were you. I'll do all the housework and gardening, and you study when we have no sewing."

"It is better to have an object at least," said Myra, jumping up from her weeding and repairing to the house, where, having washed her hands, she took down Teddie's books and went valiantly to work at an arithmetic. Van heard her practising herself on tables.

"The ranks of teachers are over full," said Van bitterly; "and where there are more teachers than there are schools one who has not great gifts and been through the Normal is not likely to get a place except as a matter of charity or favoritism of trustees."

And so it went on through June, July, and August. Mrs. Milbury's health seemed slowly giving way.

The wolf at whose intrusive nose Van and Myra had been pricking with ineffectual needles, and whose entrance Teddie had tried to debar with two silver dollars a week, now put not only his nose but his head and paws over the threshold, and was very threatening indeed. By this time clothes became a prominent question. The two black gowns each, and that of cheap material, which they had allowed themselves the year

before for their mourning, were nearly worn out; the hats were so cruelly shabby, and the shoes! Oh how much shoes cost! They had made, re-made, and mended their wardrobes in the many hours when no paid work had come in; they had gone back to their colored clothing, but even that would give way before another year was out. Myra sang "The Three Fishers" more than ever, and Van sang "The Three Maries," and when they were both terribly downcast they sang "Lorraine, Lorraine, Lorraine;" and Teddie coming home from her teaching would hear them and say brightly, "Cheer up! God is the God of the poor."

Did Teddie have some source of good-cheer more than the rest? Van and Myra thought so. Wallace Cranshaw, Mrs. Lowell's brother, always came home from church and prayer-meeting with Teddie. Destitution of fashionable apparel had not seemed to detract from this young woman's charms, and Teddie appeared to be just as happy walking and talking in her shabby black gown with young Cranshaw as if she had a racket in her hand and the most artistic of tennis costumes to set off her beauty. Her sisters began to make little hints and invidious suggestions, and as Teddie failed to retaliate they grew more bold in attack.

"Dear me," said Teddie one morning, "I

must be off on part of the twenty miles a week which bankrupts me in shoes."

"I think you rather enjoy the walks, you are so sure of company," said Myra. "Don't you walk farther than you need sometimes?"

"Last night, for instance, you forgot the danger to your shoes," said Van, "and passed the house by a quarter of a mile, when you came back from prayer-meeting."

"But," continued Myra, "this week she will not need to go to the postoffice so frequently as last week and week before."

"Perhaps you are contributing to the magazines, Teddie," said Van.

Teddie looked down, flushed, but only said, "What trash you talk!"

Mamma Milbury had seemed not to hear. Now she looked up. "Teddie, will you get my valise ready? I may be called away to-day. See that all the buttons are on my flannel wrapper, and don't forget my work-bag, with buttons and darning cotton."

Then, when Teddie had gone up stairs, mamma showed that she had heard all her daughters' nonsense. She looked at Van and Myra and said earnestly, "Now I want you two girls to let Teddie entirely alone about Wallace Cranshaw. There is not a better young man in the State. I have talked with your uncle Daniel about him.

He is a gentleman and a Christian, healthy, amiable, well brought up. I see plainly that he is very fond of Teddie, and I think she cares for him. Do not by your teasing and joking make her afraid or ashamed of an honest affection. As the wife of a good man Teddie may find her best happiness."

"But, mammy," said Van, "you know that we intended to be 'the Milbury maids' to the end of the chapter! We don't want to lose Teddie!"

"We have little to offer in the way of keeping her, poor dear," said Mrs. Milbury with a sigh. "But that is not the question. To love and to marry has been the world's way since Eden, and if the Lord orders this way for Teddie do not let us interfere. When I go away to-day I want to feel that you will let Teddie strictly alone in this matter, and not attempt either to make or mar."

"All right," said Van dolefully; "but if Teddie betrays us, Myra, you and I will stick stanchly to each other and to mammy."

A day or two after when Teddie came in about three o'clock from her governessing, she found Van and Myra sitting close together working on a large braided mat some one had asked them to make. She stood by them half shyly for a minute, then bent and kissing first one and

then the other said warmly, "You have been such dear good sisters to me!" Then she went up stairs.

"What does *that* mean?" said Myra, looking at Van.

Van mused. "I know what it means. Come on, Myra, we'll have it out with that Teddie!" And she led the way up stairs. Teddie had been washing her face, and her wet curly hair lay all about her shoulders. Her other dress—she had but two—her best gloves and necktie, were on the bed. Van led the charge.

"Teddie—Theodora Milbury! I know you mean to marry that Wallace Cranshaw!"

"What if I do?" retorted Teddie courageously, but disappearing in the towel as she rubbed her face vigorously.

"Well—you—little goose—I hope—you'll be happy!" said the showery Myra with a great sob.

Van braced herself up. "Of course, Teddie—you have a perfect right—and I did n't expect it of you—yes, I *did* though, and—after all it is sensible, and all right, for he is very—nice and I am sure you care for him, Teddie."

"But you are not going to be married right off! Where are you going, Teddie?" gasped the weeping Myra.

"Right off!" cried Teddie, coming out of the towel eclipse radiant, and bursting into laughter.

“Myra, are you crazy! Why we shall not be married for months, for years! He is nearly as poor as I am, but I like him all the better for that. Where am I going? Wallace is coming for me, and we are going to see mamma, and then to see grandma and Uncle Daniel’s folks. That’s all.”

Teddie and Cranshaw remained to tea at Uncle Daniel’s, and then came back to spend the evening with the girls at the little brown house. It was a warm, moonlight evening and the doors and windows were all open, as the four sat together and chatted of the future.

Teddie’s lover was a courageous, enterprising young fellow, whose chief capital consisted of good sense, good character, and good intentions. He had been somewhat over a year in the village, his brother-in-law, the pastor, wishing him to settle there. But fortune came too slowly in the sleepy old Pennsylvania town; Wallace Cranshaw was in haste to have a home to offer to Teddie. He meant to go West immediately, and hoped in a year and a half to have prospered so well that he could come back for a wife.

This first love affair in the family awakened the intense interest of Mrs. Milbury and the two elder girls. Dear Teddie’s lover was at once looked upon as a son and a brother, and the deepest anxiety was felt for his happiness and

safety. He had shown his good sense in admiring Teddie beyond all other girls, young or old, rich or poor; Teddie loved him, and that was enough for Teddie's family; they took him at once to their hearts.

Teddie's future home and its furnishing stood equally large in the future of them all; indeed Van and Myra considered these matters far more than Teddie did. Saying good-by to Wallace Cranshaw for an indefinite period filled Teddie's thoughts, while her sisters had time to think how Teddie's trousseau should be provided. There was a deal of pride in the Milburys in spite of their misfortunes, all the more perhaps because of their misfortunes. The girls considered it quite impossible that Teddie should marry without a suitable wardrobe and a fair share of blankets, napery, and other household plenishing. While Teddie was yet in tears from the parting with her lover, Myra and Van were immediately discussing the question whether in two years' time they could provide their darling Teddie with a suitable outfit to go away among strangers.

Van inventoried the family treasures, and laid aside for Teddie the dozen silver spoons, the butter-knife, cake-basket, caster, and silver pitcher which remained to them out of the wreck of their family fortunes. These were

polished, wrapped in tissue, put into two flannel bags, and laid away for Teddie. Teddie remonstrated in vain.

"We are never going to marry," said Van and Myra, "and besides we shall be here among those who know us. You will go among strangers, and people are apt to judge one by what one has."

"You'll be getting married, and need these things yourselves. You have the better right to them; you are older," said Teddie.

The others scoffed at the idea. "Never! We'll never marry! We wouldn't think of such a thing! Besides, you'll be getting rich out West, and be able to fit us out like royal princesses."

"We ought, as descendants of the Puritans, to be above such nonsense as dress," said Teddie, between laughing and crying. "In 1651 the Council rebuked the Puritan citizens 'for intolerable excess and bravery in apparel,' and forbid 'all good Christians to wear gold or silver lace or such other gew-gaws.' Does n't St. Paul say women don't need adornment of gold or pearls or broidered array?"

"Be sure you'll get neither, dear Ted," said her sisters. "If we find you in enough cotton and woollen gowns we shall do well."

But at midnight, when mamma Milbury out

nursing was busy over her patient, and curly-headed Teddie was sleeping the sleep of the just, Van and Myra held a family council, something after the fashion of the year-gone garret conclaves. They were in night-gowns and slippers, and sat on the bed in the room over the sitting-room. When Mrs. Milbury was at home she and Van shared this room together. The kerosene-lamp on the bureau, rather uncomfortably near the bed, illuminated the girls and the treasures they had spread on the counterpane, their remaining contributions to Teddie's future outfit, and which Van had just rescued from the camphor chest, which, covered with chintz and placed under the window, served as a divan, and made up for the lack of chairs.

"One counterpane, three pairs of nice pillow-cases, three damask towels, one table-cloth, and six napkins," enumerated Myra. "Oh, Van! what a beggarly little lot it is for one of the Milbury maids. Our Teddie cannot be married and go off among strangers with only such a few things, and where are we to get more?"

"And then her clothes!" said Van. "When we come to count them up after two years' more use is taken out of them, she will be really with nothing to wear, a true Flora McFlimsy!"

"Do n't joke, it's dreadful; it paralyzes me to think of it," said Myra, on the verge of a cry.

"We are not saving anything; we are getting behind rather, and our clothes will soon be mere shreds. If Teddie is shabby now, what will she be in a year and a half? And she is so cheerful and hopeful, poor little soul."

"The thing is," said Van, "that I believe Teddie is a better Christian than any of us, and trusts in God more, and prays more. She does n't say much, but I believe she prays over everything, and then just leaves her troubles with God and takes courage. I wish I could."

"It would be right," said Myra questioningly, "to pray over this matter of getting Teddie properly provided with clothes, and so on?"

"Of course it would!" cried Van warmly. "I was talking about prayer with Mrs. Lowell, the last day I sewed there. She says she prays over everything. I asked her if she would pray over finding her thimble if she had lost it. She said, 'Why not, especially if the loss was hindering needed work and making me nervous and irritated? That would be more important than the hair of my head or the fall of a sparrow.' She said that the calm and comfortable mind of one of God's children was not a matter of indifference to him, and it was right to pray over whatever disturbed us."

"I've been thinking of something like this," said Myra, laying their treasures back in the

camphor chest, "and to tell the truth, Van, I have prayed more this last year than ever I did in my life. It has n't come to much yet though."

"Perhaps it's helped you to *grow*, Myra," said Van thoughtfully. She was handing Myra the tablecloth as she spoke, and the eyes of both fell on the meagre little store they were hoarding for Teddie. The lamp was nearly burned out, and gave a depressed melancholy light, low as their fortunes. They stood together looking gloomily at their collection and their prospects.

"More must be earned!" said Van decisively. "Teddie will need a black silk dress, a colored muslin, a travelling suit, a neat afternoon dress, a couple of wrappers, besides two each of hats, wraps, pairs of gloves, and boots. And then there will be white goods, hose, handkerchiefs, collars and cuffs; our father's daughter shall not look like a beggar!"

"Horrors!" cried Myra, "we shall *never* get all those things together; we might just as well give up in despair."

"I wont give up in despair," said Van. "I'm going to think a way out of it. We'll talk it over, when I have thought."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY OF REST.

“That which the hour creates,
That can it use alone.”

FAUST.

“OH dear me! I am so tired I'm nearly dead!” Thus sighed Teddie. Teddie was lying on the lounge in the kitchen; her hands were clasped above her head, and she lay on her back with her feet—in very shabby boots—resting on the end of the lounge. A somewhat unlady-like position, but restful, and just then Teddie was intent rather upon rest than etiquette.

“You have had a hard day, have you?” said Myra. It was Saturday night and Myra was putting away the work.

“I should say I had! As the nurse is gone, Mrs. Steele brought the baby into the school-room, remarking that ‘she must spend the morning at the dressmaker's, and the baby would n't be a bit of trouble.’ Trouble! He distracted the children so they would not study. He showed the most amazing appetite for chalk, ink, and paper. Then Geraldine had an ear-ache, and cried and cried. I put cotton in her ear and tied her head up in a silk handkerchief,

but she just howled with pain. Then I remembered grandma's remedy, and I went to the kitchen for some raisins and the olive oil. I had to take the baby along for fear of what he might eat in my absence. I boiled the raisins over a spirit-lamp, dipped one in oil and put it in Geraldine's ear. Then I went for a shawl and a pillow and made her a little bed and tucked her up warm. She began to feel better, and I thought it was time to put in a fresh raisin, and there, while I was fixing Geraldine's bed, that Clarence had eaten up the rest of the raisins! I had to go for more, and every time I left the room I had to carry the baby, and he weighs twenty-two pounds! Next Gertrude became very saucy and said I was spending all my time with 'those brats' instead of hearing her history. I reproved her for very improper language, and she flounced out of the room and banged the door. Then Clarence announced that he meant to go out and play. It was Saturday, he said, and I had no right to expect lessons. As it was morning I refused to let him go, and he flew into a rage and threw his arithmetic through a window-pane. The pane was large and expensive, and when Mrs. Steele came home she was very angry."

"I hope she gave the young man a whipping," said Van.

“She did not; she never reprovèd Clarence at all. She said I ought to have enough government over the children to prevent such occurrences. It seemed to me that, as she has had that boy on hand for eight years, she should have had enough government and taught him self-control so that he would not give way to his temper in that style.”

“She had no business to ask you to come and teach Saturday,” cried Van. “The five ordinary schooldays are all you engaged for; and here is the second Saturday she has kept you teaching.”

“Not teaching, nurse-maiding. It is all because she has no nurse, and so she requests as a favor that I should be there Saturday, and I do n't know how to refuse.”

“You shall refuse or I'll go and refuse for you,” said Van. “You are all tired out, and this is not to happen again. Your dealings with Mrs. Steele are business, and she has no right to try and sneak in favors.”

“Well, never mind; I will not do it again, and I shall be rested by to-morrow morning. How glad I am that to-morrow will be Sunday! What should we do if the week had not such an entirely beautiful day as the Sabbath in it? I feel as if the cares and worries of the week fall away from my spirit as one drops off a soiled or

worn garment, and I may put on garments of praise. Mrs. Steele is always quoting Emerson, and she goes over some saying of his, that good clothes give a person a feeling of satisfaction and nobility which even religion is unable to bestow. I do not know whether she has quoted right or not, and I am not sure that good clothes would have such a mellifluous effect upon me; but I do know that when I put away the week with all its vexations and small irritations and its tire and strain, and get where I can read the Psalms or Isaiah or Revelation, I feel as if I had gone up into better society and reached a higher level, had on a wedding garment, and was called to the King's feast and must behave accordingly."

"Sweet day, so calm, so cool, so bright,
Bridal of earth and sky,
The dews shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die!"

recited Myra.

"That is not so good as—

"The Sabbaths of man's life
Are jewels threaded on Time's string,
A necklace to adorn the wife
Of heaven's most glorious King,"

said Van, looking up from her book.

"What are you doing, Van?" asked Teddie, drawing a long breath. Already her inelegant

position and the talk with her sisters was resting her.

“Working at my Sunday-school lesson for that terrible class,” said Van.

“If the class is terrible why don't you give it up?”

“Nothing could induce me to part with it, because the class says if I desert it it will march out of the school. I call it terrible because I feel so incapable of teaching such a class, and I am so afraid of every individual in it. I am always in despair lest I shall fail to interest the creatures, and they will begin to whistle or sing street songs or do something dreadful. When the door is closed between my class-room and the big schoolroom my heart sinks way down into my boots.”

“It was so funny,” said Myra, “that when Mr. Lowell had succeeded in hunting those ten young men into the school, and they all sat there by the door ready to bolt at a minute's warning, they declined Mrs. Steele for a teacher because she ‘wore too many fol-de-rols,’ and Miss Sharp because ‘she looked too old and feeble-like,’ and Mrs. Dean because ‘she was n't good-looking,’ and singled out *you*, demanding to be taught by ‘that there tall miss in black;’” and Myra laughed, as she had often laughed before, at the case of Van and her class.

The class in question consisted of ten stalwart working-men, most of them young, who had come to the village for a time to build a railroad bridge. To get them into Sunday-school at all Mr. Lowell esteemed a great achievement, and as Van was the teacher of their unanimous choice, with all her inexperience she had to assume the task of instruction. There was a certain originality in Van, and perhaps the men had intuitively divined it.

“Can I teach just as I choose?” Van asked Mr. Lowell.

“Any way so you keep them every Sunday and give them the gospel.”

“I cannot sit down and teach the regular lesson,” said Van. “I doubt if I could hold their attention, and in six or eight weeks they will be gone and might have received but little help from the few scraps which would be to them disconnected. If I can get them to know something of the *Bible*, to care to read it, to want to own it, to go to it for instruction, I think that will be the best thing I can do for them.”

“So do I,” said Mr. Lowell. “But not one of them now reads the Bible or owns one.”

“Then,” said Van, “I wish you would put ten of the Bible Society’s forty-cent Bibles on my class-room table next Sunday.”

This was done, and Van made her little speech.

“This is the book we are to study. Here is one for each of you. They cost forty cents each; but I do not want you to buy books you do not know anything about and may not like nor want to take with you when you leave. I lend you the books for the time you attend here. When you are ready to go, any one who wants to buy his book can buy it; any one who would like his book for a present, but does not find it worth the money, can have it as a present.”

On these terms the Bibles were distributed, and the next thing was to try and get them to read them.

“Open the books at the first chapter,” said Van. “This first book is called Genesis, because it tells about the beginnings of all things. It is a book full of very curious and interesting stories, and I wish that to-day and during the week you would read as much of it as you can, and see which of the stories you think the most interesting, and let me know next Sunday. I am a little curious to know whether any three of you will prefer the same story. There are some of the chapters which you had better skip, for they are merely lists of hard names, and if you went to work on them it might make you sick of the whole book. Just make a note to skip the fifth, tenth, eleventh, and twenty-sixth chapters at least, and perhaps some others. You are to read

this time for the sake of getting interested ; and the book of beginnings is very interesting, as you will find."

"Tells of beginnings, does it?" said one, eyeing the clean pages askance as if the book were some curious monster. "Tells about the beginning of the world, I've heard say, and how all the things in it came."

"I wish, then," said another, looking very knowing, "that it could tell me which came first, a hen or an egg. Was there a hen that never came from an egg, or an egg that was never laid by a hen?"

"That is a very good question," said Van with aplomb, "and the book answers it in the first and second chapters. Why do you not also ask whether there was a tree that never sprang from a seed, or a first seed that never grew on any plant?"

"Well, yes, I would like to know that too."

"Then let us turn to the first chapter of Genesis and read round, and we shall find out, I think," said Van.

She had no learned information to give them, for she was not learned. She did not know how wonderfully that description of beginnings tallied with the latest discoveries of geology, and the Book and the rock-beds told the same tale of earth-building. She did not know that modern

science announced as a discovery what the Book told long ago, that the sea was the first home of life, and creatures swarmed there before the land knew trace or step of living thing. She did not know that what geology has discovered as first forms of life were laid down as such thousands of years ago by Moses when he wrote. She could not understand the wonder of it, that the ancient Word had set the order so, of creatures of the sea and flying creatures and reptiles and the mammals of the sea, and so on up the ascent of life to man—wonder that can only be unravelled by the fact of inspiration. Van had studied none of all this; she had common sense and she studied the Book, and so it happened she and science arrived at the same goal.

That first Sabbath she interested her class. They were all there the next Sabbath and had been reading the Book. She invited them to develop their sentiments, and they developed them roundly.

“I never knew before where the first folks came from, but it looks uncommon reasonable.”

“And I never knew, but I’ve often wondered, how such a lot of sin got into this world, but now I see; it was the devil came a meddling. Great pity that. I wonder, if the Lord is so powerful strong, he did n’t keep him out of that there garden.”

“That garden fetched me,” said another. “I used to be with a gardener myself, and that there is as handsome a piece of landscape work laid out as ever I’d wish to see. Four rivers rambling round the whole of it, and fruits and flowers!”

“The part I liked best,” said another eagerly, now that the tide of speech flowed freely, “was about that man Moses. That is finer than any dime novel I ever read. The idea of his being adopted by a queen! And then when he kills his man and lights out and takes service at that Jethro’s sheep-ranch and marries his daughter, well, it just fits in like a fairy-tale. I could n’t get my mind off of it. I meant to read in the beginnings, but I cast my eye along on the next book and lit on that spot about the way they served the babies; and I’ve got a kid of my own at home and it interested me, and I sat up three nights and read on till I ended Moses up. I say, mates, a hundred and twenty years old he was when he died, and just as good as new.”

“I don’t believe it,” said one of his mates with refreshing frankness.

“You’d better believe it; *it’s so*; I read it,” said the champion of Moses.

“I never read a nicer bit than that about Joseph,” said the youngest of the class. “It beat the Sunday papers hollow. The way he han-

dled his brothers was a caution, and they did n't seem such a bad lot, after all."

"I read that too, and it *is* good and no mistake. And did you get to that place where the woman has two sons and she likes one of them best, and she takes t' other one's good Sunday clothes that he'd left in her care and uses them against him? There's a pretty specimen of a mother for you! I don't hold with having favorites in families."

Such was the class before which Van found herself placed as teacher each of these spring Sabbaths. Expectation of the Sabbath ordeal filled her with terror; but, after all, the task of dealing with this blunt strength was more to her mind than contending with the morbid weakness of poor Nelly Ames.

When the Sabbath-school hour had ended and she could take refuge in the family pew, generally happy in the consideration that a number of her class had accepted her invitation to attend service, Van felt as if some labor, mighty as that of Hercules, had been accomplished.

Perhaps it was from this Sunday morning strain on brain and nerves that sometimes on Sunday afternoon Van was given to brooding over her own general incompleteness and inefficiency.

“Don't fret against yourself so, Van,” said Teddie; “it's all wrong. You should not give way to discouragement.”

“I should and I will,” retorted Van fractiously. “I have good example for it, let me tell you, Bible example. There was Job; he cursed the day when he was born; Moses was all worn out with the behavior of the children of Israel, and asked the Lord to kill him out of hand; Elijah got completely discouraged and went up and sat on Horeb; Jonah thought it was better for him to die than to live, and so no doubt it was. John the Baptist in his dungeon began to wonder whether Christ was Messiah; Paul in Corinth became so discouraged that it took an angel or a vision to encourage him. I don't live in the days of visions and such comforts, and I can't and wont be cheerful.”

When Van reached such a point as this she generally ended with a laugh, which restored her good-humor.

“My Van,” said Teddie, “you are well read in the Scriptures, and you bring forth out of your treasure things new and old; but let me show you the other side of those pictures. Job lived to teach the world to ‘count them happy which endure;’ he became greatest of the men of the East and his house was full of treasures and children. Moses lived to be the world's

great lawgiver ; Elijah came down from Horeb to do God's will and pass into glory without dying ; Jonah lived to be ashamed of his petulance ; John the Baptist had this word of Christ passed on him, ' Among those born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist ; ' Paul finished his work in Corinth and learned to say, ' None of these things move me. ' Listen to something I was reading to-day : ' Our lives are full of Marahs ; out of the thirsty desert we come and hope to find water, and it is bitter and we cannot drink it. But if we cry unto God he shows us Christ the Branch, the Branch of the tree of life, and by him even the waters of Marah become healing floods. ' As I read that I thought it was like the food the angel brought to Elijah, in the strength of which he went to Horeb, the mount of God. For us the thought may be so good that it will help us to get through the worries of the week and come in six days to another truce of God. "

" Yes, " said Myra, " a week is not so very long, and we have only to live by the week or even by the day— "

" Why do n't you say by the hour? " laughed Van.

" I do ; or by the minute, for that matter. What was it that Mr. Lowell quoted last prayer-meeting? something like

“ ‘That which the hour creates,
That can it use alone.’

I have been trying to get at the meaning of it ever since. I get a glimpse of it, that it is a help over hard places, a live-by-the-minute doctrine.”

One, two, three, and on to nine, the clock pealed out its strokes. Van rose. “Myra, is the house locked up? We cannot sit up late; Ted has to start off early. Ted, our beautiful day is ended.”

“Well, we have had the good of it,” said Teddie, lighting a lamp, for they had been sitting in the dark, “and next Sunday will bring another day of gold. I read such a lovely name for Sabbath lately—Elim—where there were twelve wells of water, every hour a well. Good-night, girls!”

CHAPTER XIII.

UNCLE JAMES AND UNCLE DANIEL.

“Happy the man whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
On his own ground.”

MYRA was working away at mental arithmetic and Van was working in the garden. Van pulled weeds, picked tomatoes, and thought; she also had her problems. She went up to the open window by which Myra sat. “It is of no use to look back,” said Van, setting her teeth; “we must look forward, we must work. All these things which we shall need for Teddie must be gotten within eighteen months. We will lay them up by degrees, and Teddie must do all her sewing herself and make what she has nice by nice work. Hereafter we must see that Teddie keeps every cent of her earnings for herself to supply her needs.”

“Much that will be,” said Myra, with contempt. “In eighteen months she would only earn one hundred and forty-four dollars at the present rate; and out of that you must take some twenty dollars for vacation-time. You will see how much will be left if she does n’t even buy a

shoe in all that time. And who meanwhile will find her in shoes and hats? The child cannot go ragged. I don't wonder Uncle Aaron died when he saw at a flash all that was coming upon 'Adam's daughters.' "

"We must all make a move; we must do something better," said Van, who, being inexperienced, was confident. "Teddie will now be able to teach a school. To-morrow she is going to the School Superintendent's examination; and I know she will get a good certificate for a year. The school at Barley Centre is vacant now; the girl who had it last term has gone West. I know two of the trustees. I mean to go over to Uncle Daniel's, borrow a horse and buggy, and drive over to the Centre this afternoon and ask if Teddie can have the school if she gets a certificate. The salary is thirty-five dollars a month. Old Mrs. Clapp, who lives near the schoolhouse, boards the teacher for ten dollars a month, because she needs some one in the house with her. Teddie can do her own washing, and do her sewing out of school-hours as she picks up material. That is a rich district, and they have school ten months each year. That would give Teddie fifteen months' teaching from next month out, which will bring her five hundred and seventy-five dollars of salary. Take out of that ten dollars a month for board and six dollars for

current expenses, as shoes and clothes, and she will have, let us see, how much left?"

"Two hundred and seventy-five dollars," cried Myra joyfully. "Let us be *real* cautious and say two hundred and fifty. She can do very well on that. Oh what a splendid idea! I wish I had your head, Van!"

"Thanks. Headless, I suppose I should look like one of Bluebeard's dear departed wives! Yes, with thirty-five dollars a month for ten months in the year Teddie can save two hundred and fifty, and laying it out where she can get good bargains, and making up her goods as she has time, and putting in spare time in knitting and crocheting lace and making tatting and embroidery, she can have real pretty things, bless her!"

"Sounds so much like the calculations of the 'Maid with the Pail of Milk' which used to be in that old blue Webster's Spelling-Book father and Uncle Aaron had studied! or like the calculations of the Turk—Hassan, was he?—with the basket of glass, in our 'Arabian Nights'!"

"It will come out better than that, you see if it doesn't," said Van gayly. "I counted my chickens before they were hatched last spring, and they every one came as if made to order. Witness them over in that yard now. I'm going to start for Uncle Daniel's right off, so I

can set out to Barley Centre as soon as dinner is over. I'll take little Nolly along with me to keep him out of Aunt Sara Ann's way."

"How I should like a drive!" yawned Myra; "it is so warm. But I must stay here lest any one comes with fifty cents' worth of sewing or mother gets back unexpectedly."

Night had fallen when one of Uncle Daniel's boys, Daniel, Jr., brought Van home in the buggy. She had hardly touched the ground when Teddie and Myra had seized her, crying, "Van, what news? Did you get the school?"

"No, I did n't want it. But Teddie is to have it sure, if she brings the certificate, as she will to-morrow. The trustee, Mr. Ball, said he had known father and Uncle Aaron well, and he would do anything in his power for one of Adam Milbury's children."

"You see righteous parents are an inheritance to their children," said Teddie. "I'd rather have my father's good name than a mint of money! What else, Van—anything?"

"Yes, I went to see Mrs. Clapp and engaged board for you. She is a nice old lady, old friend of grandma's, and says she will be glad not to be in the house with no one but the little work-boy she has taken to take care of the cow and the garden. She showed me the room. It is very neat and sunny and large enough, and it

will be warm enough in winter, for the kitchen stove-pipe goes through it. She wants you to sit in the sitting-room with her and make yourself at home, and she has a real nice sewing-machine."

Teddie seized Myra in her arms and danced in and out of the two rooms of the ground-floor of the little brown house and down the path to the gate and back. After this excursion Myra said to the family autocrat, "And what shall *we* do, Van--keep on here?"

"No; we get worse and worse off every day. This village is too small to give us working-room. We want that as much as a cobbler. Even if you get Mrs. Steele's governess place we could n't live."

"She can't get it," said Teddie. "Mrs. Steele means to send the children to the public-school next term."

"We must go to the city," said Van with decision. "I shall write to Uncle James to-morrow to ask him if he cannot find work for us."

"Uncle Daniel will not like that plan one bit," said Myra, admiring Van's enterprise, and secretly longing greatly to try her fortunes in Philadelphia.

"I can't help it if he does n't like it," said Van pugnaciously. "Uncle Daniel has crotchets; he is mad about farming and the safety and comfort

of a country life, and considers the city a den of wild beasts."

Now Uncle Daniel, while the kindest-hearted, most true and generous man in the world, was bluff and outspoken, looked rough and rustic in his red shirt and big boots and faded overalls. Also, at times, Uncle Daniel, who had a family of six exuberant boys to keep in order, was dictatorial. But when, five years before, Uncle James had visited them, he had had a smooth voice and a constant smile. He had called the nieces "my love," "my dear," "my beauty." He had worn fashionable clothes, kept his boots shiny, had shirt-studs, gold sleeve-buttons, a necktie with a pin in it. He had also been free in saying that as a bachelor he had no dearer relations than the Milbury maids, daughters of his step-sister Margaret, and he meant to leave them all his money. He "hoped to be rich some day, and then the dear girls would have a pretty plum." True, since Uncle Aaron died, and the three girls had had hard work not to be hungry, Uncle James had not offered them the least bit of a bite out of said plum. He rarely wrote, saying he hated letter-writing, but when he did write he addressed his "lovely nieces" and "his dearest sister," and remarked that he was "most anxious for their welfare and was their devoted James Apsley." True, the Milbury maids had

sense enough to know that words and deeds are two very different terms of the equation of life, but they believed Uncle James was unencumbered and flourishing, and would be reasonably helpful to them, and get them easy and well-paid work, in which undoubtedly the city abounded.

Van wrote her letter. Teddie passed a very good examination and was promised the Barley Centre school, which would open the twenty-first of September. A week after Van wrote to Uncle James she had his answer in her hands. It did not make her particularly jubilant, but she was in no wise shaken in her resolve to go to the city fortune-seeking. However a move could not be made without consulting Uncle Daniel, their nearest friend and relation. With some trepidation she went to the farm.

Uncle Daniel was in the sitting-room talking with a gentleman who had just moved into the neighborhood as purchaser of a fine stock-farm about four miles from the Milbury property.

Van chatted with Aunt Sara Ann and waited, but her courage oozed swiftly, and Mr. Benjamin detected her casting anxious glances at the big farmer.

"I fear I am in the way of conversation Miss Milbury wishes to have with you," he said shrewdly.

"Oh, no," said Van, bracing her courage for

a hasty revelation. "I only came to tell uncle we thought of going to the city, and wanted to talk with him about it. We cannot make a living in the country."

"Don't go to the city," said Mr. Benjamin fervently. "It is the very worst and most hopeless place in the world for women without fortune, a paying occupation, or friends—"

"But we have an uncle there to go to," exclaimed Van.

"Ah, well, if he can take care of you—"

"We can take care of ourselves," said Van haughtily.

Mr. Benjamin was rebuffed, Uncle Daniel lost all his interest in long-horns and short-horns, Jersey and Alderney, and the pedigree of horses. Mr. Benjamin divined that another day would be more favorable for getting information and buying calves and colts.

"What's all this?" demanded Uncle Daniel, when he had seen Mr. Benjamin to the gate and returned to the sitting-room.

"Uncle," said Van in her most wheedling way, getting by his elbow, "you know that Wallace Cranshaw has gone West to make a home for Teddie, and in less than two years hopes to come back and get her."

"He'll do it too—he is the right kind of a man, Cranshaw; I like him."

“Oh yes, we all do! And Teddie, you know, has been studying very hard, and got a year's good certificate at the examination, and is to have the school at Barley Centre, with thirty-five dollars a month. She will not spend over sixteen dollars, and she is to keep all the balance so that she will be able to buy her a nice outfit when she goes away West.”

“Very good. Better and better,” said Uncle Daniel. “I don't see but what you are getting on very well. Are n't you satisfied, child?”

“No,” said Van. “What is not so well, uncle, is that during this last year we have really not made our expenses. We have been using up all the clothes we had on hand and all the food stores we brought from the farm. We have worked our best, and saved every cent we could, and we are out of money. And, now, if we have not Teddie to pay the rent, we shall be worse off than ever; you can see that.”

Uncle Daniel whistled and then groaned. “Why did n't you tell me?”

“We would n't tell now, if telling meant falling back on you as a burden. You are burdened enough. We find we simply cannot make a living here. Mother is nearly broken down. She must give up nursing, and we must take care of her, and we are going to the city where we can do it.”

“The remedy is worse than the disease,” said Uncle Daniel. “The city is the worst possible place for you, utterly dangerous and hopeless.”

“You talk as if God lived in the country and never had anything to do with the city,” said Van in a vexed tone.

“I talk as if when God made people he put them in a garden to dress it and keep it; he set them to get their living from the ground.”

“But, uncle, perhaps that was because two people would not make much of a city,” suggested Van.

“And the first city was built by Cain, who killed his brother; it was a murderer’s refuge,” said Uncle Daniel, who taught a Sabbath-school class, and was well up in Biblical information, and particularly strong in prayer-meeting.

“I hope the city has some good and moral people in it and a few Christians for its many churches,” said Van, “for we are determined to go to Uncle James.”

“Has he agreed to do anything for you?” demanded Uncle Daniel.

“Well, not very much,” admitted Van reluctantly. “Perhaps that is all the better, so we shall not be disappointed. He has already said we are to have all his property, and to look to him if we need anything. He wont let us want, of course.”

“He is only your mother’s step-brother! What after all does he care for any of you? Your blood is not in his veins, as it is in mine.”

“But there’s family feeling and gratitude. Uncle Aaron lent him money and gave him money when he was in difficulties, and so did father. Now is the time to make return for it. No doubt he feels that, and will do well by us. You can read his letter; here it is.”

Uncle Daniel read the letter of Uncle James and avowed that he did not think much of it. “Here’s a pretty uncle,” he said, “and pretty family feeling, and a pretty amount of gratitude! If he was half a man he’d offer you a home and the place of daughters! He can give you work in his establishment! Van can bring her sewing-machine, set it up in his work-room, and have constant well-paid employment! He don’t say how much. And Myra can run his knitting-machine in like manner. Also, as you are his nieces, he will not confine you too closely to machines, but you shall have rest and change of occupation by helping in the salesroom and with letters and accounts. He can tell you of plenty of places where you can find three rooms to keep house in, and you’d better bring furniture enough for so many. Freight will cost little. Now I don’t call that a nice letter. There’s

something in it that I do n't like. I do n't like any of it."

"I'm sure he means well," asserted Van, against her inner consciousness.

"The idea!" cried Uncle Daniel, "of turning a feeble widow woman and two young country girls off by themselves to live in part of a cheap house in a strange city. Why do n't he take a house and let your mother keep it, and make a home like a man, and have you work at home, not in a shop! You can stand in a hot, draughty, public store! You can sit in close, dark, stuffy rooms, among a lot of ill-bred girls! Folly!"

"But we must have bread," said Van, "and, as you say, he is not a real blood uncle. And he may be poorer than we fancy."

"Since it is settled there is no use of my protesting," said Uncle Daniel, shaking his head in a doleful way. "No use to say a word, mother and Sara Ann. I only wish these girls and Margaret will not wish themselves back in no time." Then expansively, "And if you do, come! Van, remember it, this house—all we have—our hearts are open and ready for you all. Come any time!"

This generosity made tears gather in Van's eyes, and Uncle Daniel showed nobly in comparison with Uncle James. But then, Uncle James might be better than his letter.

However Van went home secretly uneasy and discontent. She found her mother lying on the lounge. Mrs. Milbury had had to leave her place before her three weeks of nursing had been finished. She was worn out and had had a chill. Myra was petting her, bathing her head, and feeding her some beef-tea.

“I see I must give up the nursing or I'll not only be on your hands for a support, but an invalid in the bargain,” the mother said despondently. “I do n't know what we can do but go to James. James never seemed very free-hearted, but then we are all the family he has, and he is past middle age and may be lonely, poor man! Of course Daniel objects.”

“Objections which do n't include a more promising way of getting a living do n't count,” said Van. “Teddie will leave on the twentieth, and we'd better be off by the thirtieth. A change will help you, mammy. Do n't you fret; we'll take care of you.”

“Had n't you better go to-morrow and talk over the plan with Mr. Lowell? He has lived in the city, and has been very kind to us,” suggested Mrs. Milbury.

Next day Van took Uncle James' letter—not that she was very proud of it—and went to the parsonage, where she bluntly unfolded her plan to Mr. and Mrs. Lowell, who were more than

ever interested in the Milbury maids now that the youngest was to marry Mrs. Lowell's brother, Wallace Cranshaw.

"My dear young lady," said Mr. Lowell, reading the letter, and looking earnestly at Van, "I fear you are making a great mistake. The letter seems to offer you unlimited work and offers with it no fixed pay. The pay will not be in home and support, for it seems you are to set up—in a very narrow way—for yourselves. I have lived in the city, and it seems to me that your chances of health, comfort, respectability, success, are better by far here in the country, among old friends, in the midst of your own church people, than they will be in the city. Here you are respected for what you are in yourselves, and are not judged by what you wear or by the work you do. In the city a shabby hat, a worn dress, a mean home, will stamp you and cause you to be neglected by those who if they knew you, might be really proud of your friendship. A thousand stings and humiliations will wait you in the city which here you never knew. Does the city seem to you, Van, a centre of interest, of opportunity, riches, glitter, entertainment? That is only the brilliant surface. You, by your poverty and daily toil, will sink below that surface and find black and bitter depths."

"But we shall always have our uncle to pro-

tect us, and we shall always be women able to respect ourselves and hold our own," said Van proudly and flushing.

"If you knew the city—as I know it—you would dread it accordingly. Oh how much sorrow, how much secret, hidden sorrow, how much reserved, proud, agonizing want, move about in the city! The cruelest poverty is of those too proud to complain, used to better days. We notice in the city the ease and splendor, the happy homes; we see on the other hand the foul dens full of loud-voiced vice. Between these extremes we do not see respectability, decency, wrapped in its last-saved garments, sensitive souls who walk in daily martyrdom as over red-hot ploughshares, want pressing them, terror of pauperism, known, public pauperism, before them—behind the biting, blinding memory of better days."

Van heard this and trembled. She had never heard Mr. Lowell speak more warmly even in the pulpit. His words seemed almost like a prophecy of coming miseries, when she and Myra and their mother should be of those sensitive souls, shrinking, reticent, concealing their sorrow as a crime! She trembled; and yet the prospect of casting her life into the whirling and scintillating vortex, the distant city, fascinated her as the snake charms the bird.

While Mr. Lowell warned her of the city, he offered no assured livelihood at home, and if the Milbury maids must be destitute and desperate they preferred it should be where none of the old friends should know. They were emphatically of those sensitive souls Mr. Lowell had depicted.

Van went home heartsick, but would not tell her mother what Mr. Lowell had said. "He is sorry we are going, wishes we would not. But he knows of nothing here," she said. "Evidently to go is all that we can do."

With a feeling of homesickness and despair she listened to Teddie gayly planning how her sisters would thrive in the city, how mammy would rest and revive, and what she herself should buy when she had saved up some money.

"They are headstrong girls, Sara Ann," said Uncle Daniel to his wife. "If they can't make a living, why don't they come here? We should make them welcome. I declare, I wash my hands of them."

Part of his fashion of washing his hands of them was to fill three barrels with potatoes, apples, turnips, beets, butter, lard, and pork, and other products of his farm, and ship them to the city, so that they should be there when the girls and their mother reached their abode. Then "the boys" aided their cousins to dismantle their

home and start off to the city the furniture for three rooms. The camphor chest went to Uncle Daniel's, the rest of their possessions were sold to get money for their tickets to Philadelphia.

That evening when he went home, after seeing his sister-in-law and nieces start for the city, was one of the most unhappy of Uncle Daniel's life. These girls had grown up at his knees; he had had no daughters and they had been as daughters to him. And now they would not share his home, they rejected his counsels, they cast themselves upon the good offices of Uncle James, a man whom Uncle Daniel despised and distrusted. At first Uncle Daniel had been angry, now he was sad.

"That Apsley do n't make any pretensions to religion," he said, "and I've found in this world that such goodness and morals as are not built on religion are pretty poor stuff. I feel as if the girls had forsaken their own mercies, going off from their early home. And dear knows how we have prayed for them."

"And those prayers will be answered," said grandma. "God is more interested in Adam's girls than we are. They are children of the covenant, cast upon God from their first breath. Perhaps God sees that they need some particular kind of training that they can't get here, and he is taking them away to get it. He will allure

them and lead them into a wilderness and there 'speak comfortably to them,' and 'give them their vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.' Seems to you he's leading them a roundabout way, but you may be sure he's leading them home. Christian in the 'Progress' found his way to glory lying straight through Vanity Fair. Be sure every prayer for our girls will be abundantly answered in God's time, and God's time is right time."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHIVALRY OF UNCLE JAMES.

“Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude:
Thy tooth is not so keen
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath is rude.”

“DON'T be doleful on this breaking up of our family,” said Van to Teddie. “I suppose it had to come some time, and as long as the Lord sends it, no doubt there is a needs be and a good reason in it. Time will not seem long while you are busy. Only ten months! And in vacation you will go to Uncle Daniel's. Mother will go there too, and you will be together for seven weeks.”

With this prospect Teddie with some fortitude tore herself away from her family. Van's misgivings were greater, but she did not express them; a stout mien she must maintain.

They set out for Philadelphia in a night-train, but could not afford to take a sleeper. Uncle Daniel put them aboard, and was very lugubrious.

“If I did n’t feel that there was a good God over all, pledged to look after widows and fatherless children, I do n’t know but I’d break right down,” he said, as he looked at these three simple souls going out to exile. “But city or country, you can’t get out of God’s keeping. And though you will be out of reach of my hands you wont be out of reach of my prayers, and make up your mind there’ll be plenty of them, plenty of them.”

Off whizzed the cars into the darkness, and Van was amazed to find how hard it had been to part from Uncle Daniel, and how forlorn and helpless she felt without him. But then there was Uncle James; soon he might seem as near and dear as Uncle Daniel.

Mrs. Milbury and her two daughters reached Philadelphia after a night of travel. The city in the raw foggy early morning looked as unkempt and unpleasing as some frowsy maid who rises too late, cross and sleepy, and neglects to put on a clean apron, collar, or do her back hair “until high noon.” The smell of cheap breakfasts from cheap restaurants pervaded the air; the pavements were littered with bits of paper, orange and banana skins, and peanut shells.

Paris, rising early, makes, its trim toilet by grace of a well-ordered army of street-cleaners, and, fresh and well washed, greets the sunrise.

American cities have instead the fashions of the sloven maid above broadly hinted at.

These cities tolerate and maintain a vast army of idlers and ragged ruffians whom Paris would put into tidy uniforms, furnish with shovel, broom, and a share in a barrow, and set to work in the cause of health, beauty, order, and public safety.

The thick air, the uncleanliness, the confusion about the station, sent deep heart-sickness through the three weary and worried countrywomen. A friendly face, a hearty hand-shake, a familiar voice, would have brought comfort and the home feeling, and they looked eagerly around for Uncle James. But no known countenance was seen, and after some search they concluded that Uncle James had failed to meet them. Not that he had promised to be there; he had carefully refrained from promising anything; promises did not seem to be in James Apsley's line. But he had known just when they were coming, and judging uncles by Uncle Daniel, they expected him as a matter of course. Uncle Daniel would have been there, ready with a greeting, with well-laid plans, and with a means of conveyance for them and their belongings, and also with a breakfast in readiness. Well, there are varieties in the genus uncle.

As they were abandoned to themselves, Van

took the party to the nearest decent eating-house and ordered a fairly good meal. She was appalled at the price of a breakfast. The simple country dainties, fresh eggs, milk, fruit, seemed so dear in the city and so poor! Still they were near Uncle James, near a fortunate life, near plenty of easy, well-paid work, in fact, on the threshold of Utopia. What need to mourn over this breakfast inroad on the slender purse? Would not the purse be immediately replenished? After breakfast Van said if Myra would bear the tired mother company at the station she herself would find her way to Uncle James'. She had never been in so large a city before, and the noisy, unfamiliar streets daunted her. But by inquiring her way along the city of method, she finally found Uncle James' establishment, a 'gentleman's furnishing and ready-made clothing store.'

At first the niece and uncle did not recognize each other. In the five years Van had passed from young girlhood into early womanhood, and a year of sorrow and care had sobered her. For her part she was just making in her mind condemnatory remarks anent a chief clerk who rudely scolded a pale work-girl, when she discovered that the objectionable clerk was the proprietor of the place, no other than Uncle James himself! He was a little balder, a

little grayer, a little more wrinkled and shriveled, a little less spick-and-span tidy than when he visited Poplar Rise. She stifled her inner voice of chiding and made herself known to him.

“Oh! Van? Yes. I had quite forgotten you were coming to-day. I have so much on my hands. Are you all well? When did you reach the city? Have you settled yourselves?”

“Settled, uncle!” cried Van blankly. “We have not the least idea where to go. We reached here this morning, at six. We hoped you would be at the dépôt to take us somewhere, and mother and Myra are waiting at the dépôt while I find you. Have you thought of a place for us? Have you engaged rooms for us?”

“I? Bless me, child, I have hardly time to eat my meals! I am busy. How robust you look! Down at the dépôt, did you say? Well, I suppose I must run over there and speak to them.”

“But mother cannot sit there all day, Uncle James,” said Van indignantly. “She is not well. She is very tired. Do you not know of some boarding-house where we can go until we get rooms?”

“Dear, dear! How helpless you are, Van, for a full-grown woman!”

“But I am only a child as to city ways and

localities, uncle. Cannot we go and board where you do, for say one week?"

"Oh, no! no! Only gentlemen are received there. But I have it! There is a place on Cherry Street that will do, and I have so little time to help you to look. But we'll run round a bit for rooms at once. Where's the 'Ledger'? I'll look at the advertisements of rooms for light housekeeping as we go."

Uncle James turned to get his hat, lock up the cash drawer, and give orders to a clerk. Van waited, wonderfully cast down.

Van did not know that some centuries ago Froissart had written in his "Chronicles" what would well apply to Uncle James: "He was but a small gentyman, and that well shewed after; for a very gentyman will never set his mind on so evil an intent."

Still his speech had not been unkind, though careless. Van, who from doing battle for bread was becoming observing in some things, remarked that he did not offer to provide for their stay at the cheap boarding-house whither he presently escorted them. The board seemed very high to the country-bred girl, and telling Uncle James that their finances were very low, she said she must procure rooms and move at once.

"By all means, and then you will have nothing to take you from your work when you

begin. I'll point out some places to you." At the second or third place the astute landlady asked,

"And will *you* be responsible for the rent, sir?"

"The rent! Oh my, no!" said Uncle James airily. "What do you want security for? They will earn enough to pay their way; they are honest country people. And there will be their furniture; that will be security enough."

Van's eyes opened a little wider at this conversation, and so did her understanding. When they reached the street she said, "See here, uncle, we must get a home at once, for the price asked at that Cherry Street house where mother and Myra are sitting is quite too high for our pocket. We have not money enough to pay for a fortnight's stay there, and what we have we need to pay our freight-bill and moving expenses. We must not take rooms so dear that our furniture is likely to be seized for rent before we can pay. What have we but that little furniture?"

"Dear me!" said Uncle James, "are you so bad off as that?"

"You *know* we are. What do you suppose we left our dear home and came to the city for, if not that we are ruined and must begin our life over again?"

"Mighty bad business that, your uncle Aaron going security! I would not do it for any one,

not for wife or child if I had them, which I have n't—and so much the better for *you* some day—eh, niece?"

"What I think about is how to get on now."

"I suppose so. Couldn't you find your way about alone, child? I'll give you the 'Ledger.' You can make your way to these places, can't you? I am so busy. Perhaps, after all, it was a poor move for you to come to the city. You remember I never suggested it."

"It is too late to discuss that," said Van, burning with rage. "We are here and we must find a shelter for our heads. Uncle, we are very poor; we must get a cheap place, or we shall get in debt for rent; it must be decent and safe; we are three lonely women; it must be within walking distance of your store if we are to work there; we cannot pay for rides."

"Quite right! quite right," sung out Uncle James briskly. "You show yourself quite a business woman, my dear. I see you are well able to carry out this matter alone. Now I have given you the paper and shown you the streets a little, and explained the manner of numbering, and I must leave you to attend to my business. Let me hear how you get on; good-by, my dear!"

Van stood alone in the street. The clock struck nine. The life of the city was in full distracting swing about her. She wondered if

that landlady's word about security had alarmed Uncle James. She reeled under the horror of her disappointment. But she had Myra and the mother to battle for. She must bear up. Her heart rose in a wordless cry to God to show her the way, to bring her to a safe home, to protect her in that terrible Babel.

For two hours she followed out "Ledger" advertisements, but none of them suited her. At last she noticed a piece of paper pinned at the corner of a house, at the entrance of a quiet, decent, shabby, very shabby "*No Thoroughfare*." In a cramped hand was written, THREE ROOMS TO LET, UNFURNISHED, AT NO. 8, BY "NANCY TEMPEST."

The worn-out, heart-heavy Van repaired to No. 8. Nancy Tempest was elderly, clean, shabby, keen-eyed, hard of voice. The rooms were clean, small, oh so poor and shabby! A little dim back kitchen, never lit by the sun, a small sitting-room, and a bed-room almost as gloomy—these were the rooms.

"Is there a church near?" asked Van. "Our mother is not strong, and we should wish to go to church."

"What church do you go to?" asked Nancy Tempest.

"The Presbyterian."

"So do I. And your 're from the country you

say? I was raised in Berks County. I'm clear wore out with men lodgers getting in all hours of the night, and me setting up for 'em. I'll be glad to have women in these rooms. There'll be just that many less to sit up for. And then I must rent to some one who can furnish. I had a spell of sickness, and had to give up the furniture out of these rooms for rent. Yes, there is a church near. When did you leave the country?"

"Last night," said Van. It seemed as if it must be a year!

"Deary me!" said Nancy Tempest in a voice out of which the freshness and laughter had perished years ago, but which yet retained some sympathetic chords inwoven in its very structure.

"I was once young and just from the country! I wish I'd never left it. It was a hard move for me. It is for most poor folks. Well, if you want these rooms, my dear, you may have them."

Van wanted to be safe about the rent, and she saw that her landlady was poor. She paid for two months in advance, and said she would like to come in at once. It was twelve o'clock, could they get in that day?

Nancy Tempest's heart opened to her new lodger more and more. "My dear," she said,

“let me advise you a bit, for I know this cruel place. I will go with you into the court and hire black Jerry’s big van ; he ’ll bring all your goods for a dollar, seeing it is me. And as it is the first of October, and coal is cheaper than it will be, you had better, if you can manage it, lay in two tons. Perhaps you can get along through the winter on that, if so be you burn only one fire. From this out the coal will rise every week. There’s a separate coal-shed you can have just by your kitchen door.”

Poor, plain, peremptory was Nancy Tempest, yet Van felt drawn to her, ready to take shelter under her experience. It was so comforting to find a Christian woman in that noisy, strange city, the unchristian side of which had been so badly revealed to her by Uncle James. On the common ground of their membership in Christ she and Nancy Tempest, strangers half an hour ago, had come into intimacy. Van realized as never before the bonds of Christian communion, of brotherhood in Christ. In Him who sticketh closer than a brother there is a tie nearer than that of blood. She looked at Nancy Tempest with earnest, confiding eyes that touched the lonely elderly woman’s heart.

Van had already begun to be full of alarm and to feel her courage departing. A sudden meekness to advice came upon her. She delivered

herself over to the direction of Nancy Tempest. She went out with her, hired Jerry, gave him her freight-bill, and sent him for the goods.

“Jerry will be honest; you could trust him with a fortune. He is a right honest old man,” said Nancy Tempest.

The next move was to order the coal, and then some kindling-wood of a cheaper kind than the bundles sold at the grocery store. Van then went for her mother and Myra and took them to the new rooms, explaining her need of removal to the landlady in Cherry Street. That astute dame had read care and poverty in their faces, was civil and in a manner kind, but very glad to get rid of them. Arrived at Aspen Square—grand name for the dismal little *no thoroughfare*, name given in behalf of one nearly dead aspen-tree which for years had shivered over the doleful fortunes of the neighborhood—they found Jerry and Nancy Tempest unloading the big luggage wagon. Nancy continued to help them with such good-will that by ten o'clock that night they were pretty well settled, and too tired to sleep until the clock had sounded three. In the morning they woke late, had the breakfast to help prepare, took to Nancy Tempest some of the nice fresh butter, vegetables, and home-cured meat that Uncle Daniel had given them, and at nine appeared before Uncle James.

“ You are late, my dears,” said Uncle James blandly, “ but of course that wont occur again. You ’ll be here by seven. I expect you to be models to the entire establishment, models of industry and cheerfulness and punctuality. Van, where is the sewing-machine? You know you were to run your own machine. Much better for you too; mine are all too heavy for you. You should have had the carman bring the machine here, not to your rooms. It will now put me to the trouble and expense of sending for it. But we ’ll say no more of that. What ’s your address? 8 Aspen Square? Sounds quite stylish. I ’ll send for the machine. Is this Myra? I thought Myra was the pretty one, with yellow curls and blue eyes—a *very* pretty girl. Where is the pretty one?”

“ She is Teddie—Theodora ” said Van. “ You know I wrote you she is engaged to be married, and she has taken a school and is to stay in the country. I told you Myra was to come with me.”

“ I will do very well to run a knitting-machine, if I am not pretty, uncle,” said Myra dryly.

“ Humph !” said Uncle James sourly. “ I had meant to have you learn how to do the thing well and gracefully, and then have the machine set in the big plate-glass window and have you run it. I supposed you were the pretty

one, and there would have been a crowd at the window all the time, and custom brought into the store by it, too."

"I'm very glad," said Myra shortly, "that I am not pretty enough to be set to knitting in that big front window for the crowd to gaze at. And Teddie would n't have done it either, uncle."

"And there's the clerking in the store," said Uncle James in an angered tone. "I wanted the pretty one to help clerk."

"If we are civil, and know prices and where to find the goods, that will be enough," said Myra stoutly. "Good looks are not a part of a clerk's outfit."

"You have country ideas," said Uncle James cynically.

The sisters were as much disappointed in the "establishment" kept by their uncle as in the uncle himself. The stand was only third or fourth rate; shoddy, flash, sordidness, greed characterized the entire place. The girls who worked in the second-story room were tawdry, noisy, bold, poor-looking. Van noticed that every one of them seemed dissatisfied, and commented freely on Uncle James, his appearance, principles, manners, and ways. Two young men down stairs, clerking, were pert, glib liars, and conspicuously given to paste jewelry, gawdy neckties, bear's grease, and peppermint lozenges.

At first Van and Myra, as nieces of the proprietor, were looked upon as spies, and openly spoken of as "the favorites" and "the pets." Uncle James favored this opinion; his underlings might be more dutiful if they supposed that some among them sided with the employer and would make reports to him of all that happened. Moreover the plain dress, quiet manners, gentle soft voices of Van and Myra marked them out as strangers in the work-room, strangers to its manners and its morals. The sisters were like "the speckled bird" of the prophet, and these other girls made themselves assiduously disagreeable to them, picking at them, teasing them with questions, mocking them. Did they go to the theatre? Had they never a young man to take them out in the evening for an oyster supper? Why did they dress in fashions forty years old? They must have been unpopular, if they never had found any one to give them a ring or a locket or a bracelet! Did n't go to the park or a concert-hall or the beer-garden on Sunday! What did they do? Go to church! Well, of all things! Did they come out of the ark? and there was a roar of laughter.

Van and Myra were made of metal that could stand this fashion of attack bravely.

"Poor souls," said Van, "they have never had the least chance in life. They don't know

what it is to be happy and well behaved. I mean to make them like me, and do them some good too, before I've done with them. It will be a pity, Myra, if our miseries cannot bring good to some one."

So there was always the quiet "good morning" and "good evening," "Is your cold better?" "I hope your head does n't ache to-day," from the sisters to their fellow work-women.

"Let me thread your machine-needle for you when it needs it," said Myra to one girl. "Your eyes are weak; mine are as strong as a hawk's."

"There, now," said Van, sprinkling water on the face of a fainting girl, and making a bed of shawls for her on the floor, "lie there and rest a couple of hours. I'll do my day's work and finish out yours. I can make a machine whizz when I choose."

"If the old man catches you doing other folk's work he'll blow you sky high," volunteered one girl.

"Let him," said Van; "I'm not the least bit afraid of him."

"I suppose he'd not turn you off as he would us," said another.

"If he did I'd trust God for another place," said Van reverently.

The girls looked at each other. The name

of God was not known here except as in profanity.

“You’ve cut this muslin on the sleeve, and must pay for the shirt!” cried Uncle James angrily in the work-room, one day.

“Indeed, sir, it was cut when I got it. I showed it to Ann. Didn’t I, Ann? Oh do speak! Indeed, sir, my week’s wages half gone in the shirt! Oh, I can’t; I shall starve!”

“Don’t be so careless, then. You’ll pay for the shirt,” said Uncle James. Up rose Van. Ann had not dared speak. Van spoke. “Uncle, I saw that sleeve when she unfolded the work. The cut was in it. I noticed particularly.”

“And I,” said Myra, looking the wretch in the eye, “saw when the cut was made by accident, down in the shop, where I was clerking.”

CHAPTER XV.

NANCY TEMPEST, AT YOUR SERVICE.

“Be to her faults a little blind,
Be to her virtues very kind.”

FROM seven in the morning until six at night, with a begrudged half-hour to eat the small luncheon brought with them, Van and her sister toiled for Uncle James. He had said he “must take care for their health,” and he told them change of occupation was rest! Having given them the rest of change, he made them work hard indeed. Myra, who wrote an admirable script, was kept copying and answering letters and making out bills at the desk in a little dingy corner lit by yellow gas until even her strong eyes ached. Both the sisters were called upon to clerk behind the counter. “My customers much prefer to buy their gloves, shirts, and ties from a lady,” said Uncle James. “Why are you girls so reluctant to clerk in the store? I told you before you came that I should expect it.”

“Those two horrid fellows you keep there for clerks,” burst forth the girls, “are impudent to us. They use profane language before us.

They will pull us by the elbow or touch us on the shoulder when they want to call our attention."

"One of them called me Van!" "One of them called me "*My*," said the sisters. "We will not go into the store unless you make them behave."

"The cubs! I'll learn 'em," said Uncle James. "Clerks are plenty. I could get any amount of chaps for five dollars a week."

"Dear me," said Van to Myra, "only five dollars a week to pay for clothes, board, washing! I don't wonder they are cheating and tricky and mean every way. It is pretty hard to be very virtuous when one is very poor, I suppose."

"Don't you get cynical," said Myra; "remember Teddie's song, 'God is the God of the poor.'"

But though Uncle James proceeded to keep his clerks in order, he merely laughed and scoffed when his nieces took umbrage at the manners of their customers. "I wont stand it," said Van indignantly, "to have those odious men with their breath foul with beer and tobacco, men whose names I don't know, say to me, 'How much are these gloves, my dear?' 'You pick out my tie for me; I shall like it much better,' and then hang around to talk after their parcels are made up. I wont answer them. I wont clerk. I'd rather sew till I dropped."

"You are the most high-and-mighty pair

of girls I ever saw," growled Uncle James. "What harm can these trifles do you?"

"Well, I wont fit on their gloves for them," said Myra. "I just say I don't know a thing about gloves."

"I suppose you'd prefer to find other work, or starve," sneered Uncle James.

"I've got one uncle that would n't let me starve!" cried Myra, her heart yearning for Uncle Daniel's honest strength.

"And he would not allow us to be overworked and insulted so, either," said Van; "*he* is a man, a Christian man."

"Well, I don't make any pretences to Christianity," sneered Uncle James.

"If righteousness exalteth a nation, so it does an individual," said Van, "and you'd be a thousand times more honorable, agreeable, useful, and happy if you not only made pretences to Christianity but had it. You could do good in this store and not evil. It makes my blood boil with anger, Uncle James, to see the bad example you set and the bad passions you raise in your work-people. Wha twill you answer for these people when God takes account of you?"

"Get to your work and cease your preaching," said Uncle James.

And all this mortification and fatigue came to so little! The mother did all the work at their

rooms, even the washing. It was over-much for her, and she pined and failed in the loneliness and lack of sunshine and fresh air. The daughters had made their mother's health and comfort a main reason for coming to the city, and what they had brought her to was far worse than what she had left. And then the money matters. The first Saturday night when the other employes received their wages not a cent was given to Van and Myra.

"Probably it is because we have not worked a week," said Van; "we began on Wednesday. Next Saturday it will be all right." Next Saturday it was the same way. The clerk came through the work-room paying wages, taking receipts in the week wage-book, taxing for broken machine-needles, flaws in garments, late arrival; in fact, instituting a series of petty persecutions; but not a hint of money to Van and Myra.

The girls accordingly went to Uncle James.

"What money! Nonsense! What in the world do you want money for? You have your rent paid, your fuel laid in, all those provisions which Uncle Daniel gave you. You are well off."

"We have just one dollar in cash," said Van, "and of course we are not working for amusement, but for money, and we want it."

“Tut, tut; it will be wasted by you. As long as it is in my pocket it is perfectly safe. I’m a good banker for you, my dear.”

“A little too safe,” retorted Myra, who had taken a dislike to Uncle James, and whose dislike showed itself clearly in her tone and looks.

“We are not children, Uncle James,” said Van firmly. “We work for you as we would for a stranger, and you treat us as you do strangers. We wish to be paid as you pay strangers, our weekly wages.”

“Yes, yes,” said Uncle James cheerfully, “but be easy on me. I had a large bill of rent to meet yesterday, and I am short. I cannot spare much to-night. Here are three dollars now.”

Three dollars for ten days’ hard work for two!

The next Saturday they were again left to go and demand their money. When they went to his desk he continued writing. At last Van interrupted him. “Uncle! We must have our money.”

“Why, girls!” cried Uncle James, looking up as if just realizing their presence. “I am getting deep in your debt. You’ll be rich when I pay up all arrears. I am short again, but it is only because of the season. It is the middle of October, and I’m finishing buying my fall goods. I always buy for cash. I can buy cheaper, but

some weeks it nearly cleans me out. How is your dear mother? Give her my love. I'll call on her some day."

"Our dear mother needs better fare and more sunshine, and we want our wages so she can have what she needs," spoke up Myra. "How much do you mean to pay us, uncle?"

"We-ll-ll," drawled Uncle James, "beginners don't usually get very much of anything; but I want to be liberal to *you*. Van runs a machine tolerably well. I'm disappointed that the pretty one did not come; but, well I mean to be liberal to you. You shall have four dollars a week each when you work full time."

"Four dollars!" said the girls blankly.

"Yes. That is very large wages. Two and a half or three would be the most any one else would give you. But I'll pay four."

"I suppose we cannot help ourselves," said Van mournfully.

"And two weeks and a half for each one of us at four dollars a week, that will be twenty dollars," said Myra. "And you have paid us three. Will you give us the seventeen, please, uncle?"

"Eh, seventeen? Why I don't expect to pay anything for that first part of a week; you were learning the ropes then. And the four is only from this out. I think two and a half each for those other two weeks will be ample. You'll

have to trust me a little for that. I owe you, it seems, seven dollars, but I am short, as I said. I can only spare four dollars to-night. Of course I must pay those other girls, for they have no homes, and no mothers and uncles to fall back on."

Thus it was regularly, two, three, one, five; those would be the sums paid on wages to the two, and they must buy shoes, groceries, milk, kindling—so many things.

The girls grew pale and listless, what with overwork, bad air, lack of sunlight and good cheer, and over-much worry. They grew too tired during the day even to be lively and merry in the evenings.

Sunday they went to church with Nancy Tempest, but they felt so shabby and discouraged that they were glad to slip into a back seat in the gallery and get out of church as fast as they could, before the leisurely, well-dressed crowd came from the aisles.

The pastor in his regular visitation of his flock called on Nancy Tempest and she told him about her lodgers. Unluckily Mrs. Milbury was out buying their few groceries, and missed the call. But the minister remembered to tell his wife about the strangers from the country, and one day she went to "No. 8 Aspen Square." That day Mrs. Milbury was lying in bed nearly

frantic with a violent headache. She could not see any one nor endure a word nor a ray of light. The lady left her good wishes and her sympathy, but as in both their calls none of the Milburys had been seen, very naturally they were for the time forgotten.

The congregation maintained a Bible-woman and a deaconess who might have found the Milburys had they lived elsewhere. But Nancy Tempest, good soul, was endowed with an irascible temper which volleyed forth against transgressors for whom she had no affection. The Bible-woman unluckily gave Nancy "A Word to the Unconverted," urging her to read it.

"Read it!" shouted poor Nancy, throwing it down. "As if I have n't sat at the same communion table as you this three years, and in the same seat with you more than once, and am always at prayer-meeting. And here you don't know it! Pretty Christian sister you!"

The unhappy Bible-woman wanted to apologize and explain, but poor Nancy was nervous and cross, and drove her out with declarations of permanent hostility. Of course she repented that night even with tears, but the Bible-woman knew nothing of that, and dared not return to No. 8 Aspen Square.

The deaconess and Nancy also had a falling

out. They met in the same sick-room and disagreed about a poultice. The deaconess was amiable, Nancy was imperative, and avowed that "she could not see any sense in deaconesses any way, and their church was unlike any other church in the city in having such an order, and she did n't want any meddlers about her." Very naturally the deaconess was not a frequent visitor at Nancy's house.

These idiosyncrasies of their landlady shut the Milburys from the acquaintance of their church people.

One comfort to the girls and their mother was that Teddie knew nothing of all their troubles. They wrote her a weekly letter, and she wrote to them every Saturday. Her letters were bright and happy and loving. She liked her school so much. Wallace wrote such splendid letters. Wallace was doing so well; he was arranging to build a little house; he had bought some land Mrs. Clapp was so kind. She herself was very saving and very industrious, and a young lady living near her was teaching her to make ever so many kinds of fancy-work and trimmings. She was piecing a silk quilt and a table-cover and a sofa-pillow. Her pupils brought her quantities of pretty pieces. She had three lovely patterns for aprons. She sent ten dollars for them to buy her some goods to send back by one of the Bar-

ley Centre people, who called for it at Uncle James' store. They were to be sure to keep one dollar to buy something for mother.

The girls cried over the dollar, and made mother take four rides to the park and eat beef-steak bought by the poor little dollar. In return they wrote of how busy they were; how quickly they had got settled, how fine the weather was; so many interesting sights in the city; such a good preacher; coal laid in; rent paid in advance; such a kind landlady!

That last item was the most solidly true of all their reports. No one could be kinder than Nancy Tempest was to them. Nancy from the first had taken her lodgers, especially Myra, to her heart. Every washing-day she came in to help Mrs. Milbury, though her own washing was not only for herself but for the up-stairs lodgers and their rooms. She would bring Mrs. Milbury into the front room, where for an hour or two each day the sun entered, and placing her in the old rocking-chair in the sunshine, would proceed to entertain her. True, Nancy was rather depressing company; the world had treated her but hardly, and she knew it and was bitter over it. All that she had to say of her neighbors or those with whom she had come in contact was either commiserating or condemnatory. Sorely pressed by poverty, lonely, living for years with no one

upon whom her really warm, true heart could lavish its affections, poor Nancy had grown tart and hard. Many were her secret charities, many her self-denials. Strong was her faith, and she had in some directions reached rare depths of spiritual knowledge; but owing to the misfortunes of her lot her nature had been warped and dwarfed, as a tree deprived of sunshine, set in arid rocky soil, and pressed by walls and buttresses of granite. "I know," she said to Mrs. Milbury, "that I am not the kind of Christian I ought to be. I mourn over it. I am hot-tempered and too quick of speech. A Christian should be cheerful and gracious like the dear Lord was. I know it. I mean to be it, and then—I fail, oh how I fail!"

She occupied all her spare minutes making button-holes for tailors, and her fingers mechanically flew over the strong silk stitches on vests, coats or tronsers, as with iron-bowed spectacles on her hooked nose she worked, and her tongue flew as fast as her needle. Doleful tales she told of Mrs. B——, whose husband had deserted her; widow D——, whose son had disappeared, and who daily waited with heart-sick longing for one who never came; Mrs. A——, who had gone crazy; Miss E——, who had lost all her family and friends; Miss T——, who had been taken to the poorhouse; the G—— family,

who had all gone to ruin ; the H—— household, who had been impoverished by a sharper.

Nancy was a constant reader of newspapers. Now newspaper and periodical reading is to the reading of books as gossip is to conversation. The person whose reading is papers and magazines picks up varied information, but of a scrappy desultory character, and the mind remains incapable of sustained lines of thought, as the gossip who deals in the small information of the neighborhood and the minutæ of personalities becomes incapable of sustained and valuable converse. Nancy read the papers, a little after date as she picked them up in her lodgers' rooms, and she rehearsed their canards, their details of robberies, murders, suicides, accidents, with a morbid relish. "It's awful what a wicked world we live in, Mrs. Milbury," Nancy would say. "Folks a'n't moral and kind-hearted like they was when I was a girl, an' lived in the country. Nobody's happy, nobody's to be trusted, these days. That Uncle James your girls are working for is a terrible skinflint. I read rascal in his eye. Just to see what he was made of I dropped in there for button-holes. If he was n't worse than a Jew I would n't say so. Fact is, when I've worked for Jews they treated me best of any folks I ever did work for. Not lavish, but honorable, reg'lar, and civil."

Sometimes the Milburys talked softly together of their misgivings about Uncle James, and admitted coming to the city had been a terrible mistake; but now they had no money to go back home with. Perhaps something would turn up better. At all events it was so good that one of the Milbury maids was happy and comfortable. Dear Teddie was set free of the family miseries. Her day of love was not darkened by the shadow of Uncle James, his shop, and the city. They never told Teddie that Uncle James never visited them, never helped them, paid them almost no wages. They never said how the city fell as a blight on the three strays from the country.

“I wish I could tell you of even anything better,” said Nancy, “but here I am, with scarce a whole gown to my name, and worn to a frazzle wrestling with lodgers and button-holes. I’d give half of whatever life is left me if I could get back to the country and take you along with me. All my folks are dead, and seems like you were nearer to me than any one else in the world. I never took to folks as I did to you from the first time I laid eyes on you. Well, if I don’t help you ’t a’n’t cause I do n’t try.”

“You do help us, Miss Nancy,” said Myra, putting her arm about Miss Tempest and patting her shoulder. “Have n’t you arranged for us all to sit together evenings, and so saved us half

the light and fuel we would have to use? Do n't you save us nearly all our fire, having mother sit in here with you and cook her dinner on your stove? Do n't you tell us where to get things the cheapest, and how to buy economically? We'd never get on without you."

Nancy Tempest liked this. She was lonely and longed for affection, and Myra was demonstrative and caressed her, and respectful and called her "Miss Nancy." The lodgers and neighbors usually called Miss Tempest "the old gal." She hated that. One Sunday she brought Myra a silk handkerchief. "I want you to wear it to church," she said. "It will look mighty nifty on you, but it do n't become my age nor yellow skin. A lodger gave it to me once; he was a real well brought up young fellow; used to tell me about his mother. He gave me that when he left. He got a good place on a paper in Boston. Deserved it, too. You keep that handkerchief, child." Miss Nancy had another gift from a lodger, a big dark picture in a rather handsome old-fashioned gilt frame. It hung on the wall of the sitting-room, and Miss Nancy was proud of it. "It looks rather stylish somehow," she would say. "Not that I set much on the picture. It is black and ugly; you can't see very much of it only that horse's head. I've thought I'd like to be able to buy some of those

nice bright chomos you can get all framed for two dollars, but I've never been rich enough. Now they look like something, and set off your walls. This picture I value for the lodger that gave it to me. Ten years ago it was he died in this very house. Five years he'd been here, a very quiet, nice Englishman, trying to invent a perpetual motion machine, and I'm told that's a thing that can't be done. He'd say to me, 'Miss Tempest, if I could invent my perpetual motion machine, and discover how to square a circle, I'd know what I was born into this world for.' And I says to him, 'La, Mr. Dotter, as to squaring a circle, all you have to do, if it a'n't too stiff,' I says,' is to press the side flat and pinch out the corners, and there you have it. But what you came into this world for,' I says,' is, according to the catechism, "to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever;" see you do it, Mr. Dotter.' And when he'd get low, and mourn over bein' of no use in the world, I'd say to him, 'It is written, "What doth thy God require of thee, but to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Be content with fillin' that bill,' I says to him. Well, he fell into consumption and finally died. I took care of him to the last. He gave me thirty dollars to buy his coffin and get the hearse and see him buried in the free part of the graveyard. He told me to give old Jerry

his clothes, and he gave me that big print Bible with long s's in it and Apocrypha! It had been his mother's. And he says to me, 'Miss Nancy, I've nothing to pay you nor to give you but my hearty thanks and that old picture that belonged to my grandfather and he thought much of. I have no relatives, so you keep the picture to remember me. And I have asked God to reward you, as he has said, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days.'" I haven't found it yet," Miss Nancy would add. "I've been in such tight places that once I tried to pawn the picture to old Spillman. He offered to cut out the canvas and buy the frame, but that seemed sort of desecration, an' I do n't hanker to part with it, so through thick and thin there it hangs."

When the girls came home from the shop Thanksgiving Eve, they found at No. 8 a box from Uncle Daniel by express. They eagerly broke it open. There were riches from grandma and Aunt Sara Ann—a roast turkey, two mincepies, dried fruit, two loaves of bread, doughnuts, cookies, a paper box of eggs packed in corn-meal, five pounds of butter, a jar of pickles, a bottle of jelly, some home-made cheese, a ham, stockings and mitts of grandma's knitting, cracked nuts and pop-corn from the small boys.

That box made high festival. Myra rushed off for Miss Nancy to come and see, and invited her to not only Thanksgiving dinner but Thanksgiving breakfast with them. "Real country eating, Miss Nancy!"

"We'll have the meals in my room then," said Miss Nancy, "and use my stove and fire; we've more sun and space there. Well, if this a'n't a treat! I have n't been asked to a party for years."

Miss Tempest did honor to the occasion by putting on her best clothes—best, but poor enough—telling again the story of Mr. Dotter, his aims in life, disappointment, and death, and rehearsing all the terrible stories contained in the papers of the last week and the sorrows that had marked Thanksgiving-times in days gone by.

But they all made a good breakfast, went to church, took a walk, and ate a royal dinner at three o'clock.

"Sit by," Miss Nancy said, taking the lead, when the table was spread and the provisions all ready. When offered anything which she chose not to take, she bowed ceremoniously, saying with elaboration, "Thank you, I don't use." When urged to take more turkey, after refusing, she remarked, "Well, I won't be strenuous about it; if I must I must." When the evening was half gone, Myra popped an ear of corn and but-

tered the snowy grains, and they set forth the nuts the boys had cracked, and some lady-apples; and as they feasted Miss Tempest regaled them with several harrowing murder stories and told of the death of her most intimate friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

“GENTLEMEN’S FURNISHING AND READY MADE.”

“Give thou me my share, with every other,
Till down my staff I lay,
And from this world away
Wend to another.”

“WHAT did you do yesterday?” This was the question which in the work-room of Uncle James passed from one to another curiously, listlessly. Only Van and Myra looked and felt as if the holiday had been a source of any satisfaction to them. “What did *you* do?” asked Van of the palest and most quiet girl in the shop, Delia, a girl who seemed unfortunate and unhappy rather than hard. Van pitied her and often tried to cheer her with a little chat as they worked. But it was hard to talk, with six machines whirring and some of the girls quarrelling, some singing, some whistling. “What did you do, Delia?”

“I went to the Dime Museum as soon as it opened in the morning.”

“Why, how queer! What was there that you wanted to see?”

“Nothing. You did n’t suppose I wanted to see anything, did you?”

“I supposed that was what people went there for,” said Van.

“Much you know,” said Delia tartly. “I don’t know how you are living, but I know I share a garret with a girl that I don’t like, and our garret has no fire and no sun in it. I haven’t a place where I can find a comfortable seat, a ray of sun, and a decent fire. If I had I’d have planted myself in it and rested all day long. As I had n’t I tried to make our room decent. Crane never will sweep or make a bed. She has a restaurant to wait tables in, so she was off, and I did up the rooms as well as I could. Then I put on the best I had, and that is pretty poor, I can tell you, and I took fifteen cents, and with five I bought a banana for two cents and two stale biscuits, pretty big ones, for three cents. I paid my ten cents to get into the museum, and then I was where I had a dry, warm place to stay. As I was early I could get a seat. I took one in an out-of-the-way corner. I have been there before, I did n’t care to see things, and I had n’t money for side-shows. I liked the band music pretty well, and I got a chair to see the play morning and afternoon. I watched the crowds. I had my banana, a biscuit, and a drink of water for dinner. I slept in my seat two or three hours. I ate the other biscuit and had a drink of water for tea, and at half past seven I went home and

went to bed. I had a horrid day; all my days are horrid. I wish I was dead!”

Van had been feeling herself the poorest person on earth, but here was a depth of poverty of which she had had no idea. How cheerful and homelike looked No. 8 Aspen Square with mother and Miss Nancy in the foreground and with Uncle Daniel, Teddie, and the others in the background! How warm Miss Nancy’s kitchen, how luxurious their yesterday dinner! And what a forlorn time this wretched Delia had had! Van had felt herself entirely too poor to be able to help any one, but she saw that even she had had opportunities and had neglected them. If she had asked Delia to spend Thanksgiving with her, oh! that would have been a way to give thanks, “to draw out her soul to the hungry.” How little they would have missed Delia’s dinner portion! What a life-long good it might have been to her to see honest, brave Miss Nancy and the dear gentle Christian mother! What an opportunity lost!

The stout-hearted Van did for Delia’s woes what she would not for her own, she bent her head over her *and shed a big tear*. Delia looked at her curiously.

“Did you hurt yourself?” she asked.

“No,” said Van, “I’m sorry for you; I did not dream you were so poor.”

"Well, I am," said Delia, "but there, I feel better if any one cares."

"I wish I'd asked you to visit me," said Van. "But I can now. Mother wont have dinner to-day until we get home; wish you'd come with us and spend the evening. We shall have a real good dinner of what was left yesterday. Do come. Mother would be so nice to you."

"I wonder if I could run round to my place at noon and get my other dress and neck-tie on," said Delia eagerly. "It is near."

"I'll tell you," said Van, "I'll tell Uncle James that I am going to work for you fifteen minutes at noon, so you can have that much longer to go home."

There was a great clamor among the work-girls; a marriage was to be celebrated at a Roman-catholic church near by at noon, a fashionable marriage. They wished to go and see at least the entrance of the bride to the church; perhaps they could crowd in and watch the ceremony. At noon they bolted from the work-room and dashed down stairs three steps at a time, screaming and shouting. Myra was eating her dinner at Uncle James' desk, having told him of Van's work for Delia. Van, alone in the work-room, ate a big sandwich made of Aunt Sara Ann's bread and butter, and worked away on Delia's machine. Were there any more op-

portunities she had missed? Was there any good Samaritan work left even for her in her disasters? In every depth was there a lower depth?

The work-girls came tearing back. High above the whizz of the machines rose their clamor. “Did you see her dress! White satin, and such elegant lace! Oh she has had a chance in life! I’d give my head to be her.”

“I heard some one say he made all his money by gambling, and had been in several fights with knives and pistols.”

“Who cares? I’d marry anybody to have such a veil and white satin slippers, and nothing to do but eat and sleep.”

“I say, Anna, if you were rich what would you do?”

“Drive in the park and go to the theatre every night.”

“I’d go to Atlantic City every summer.”

“I’d rather be a great actress than marry a rich man.”

“If I had n’t lost my voice, I’d sing at a music hall. Oh you need n’t laugh. I had a good voice when I was little, but I was hired out to a company to sing as a prodigy when I was seven years old; and when I was twelve my voice was gone.”

Then one of the girls began to detail all the scenes of a flash novel which she had been read-

ing late at night when she should have been asleep. Another girl interrupted with a tale of having gone with six others in couples to a dance hall, and one of the girls had taken too much beer, and they could scarcely get her home. Witness, there she was sleeping over her machine now. "If the old man finds her nap out, he'll dock her of her wages. He'll come creeping up in list slippers to spy on us in a minute."

The quick ears of Myra heard the door below open. She leaned over and gave the sleeper a great jerk. Mechanically the girl lifted her head and the treadle worked again as Uncle James came creeping in.

"That was mighty good of you," said one of the girls to Myra, when he had gone. "You are n't a spy if you are a prude and a prig."

"I'm sure," said Myra to Van, "that we are particularly unfortunate in our uncle and in the shop we work in. Other employers must be better than he is, give better wages, and hire a less rough set of girls. As for me, it is almost more than I can do not to hate him. Yesterday I gave a very short answer to a customer who said he 'wanted a pair of gloves the exact color of my bright eyes!' And Uncle James had to sell him his gloves, for I left the shop. Afterwards Uncle James called me down and said I was a fool, and that a girl as homely as I am

should be glad of any compliments! I wasn’t worth my wages, he said. Wages! I haven’t averaged two dollars and a half a week since I came here. And yet I run that miserable knitting-machine indefatigably. Oh if were back in the country!”

“All the hands seem to hate him,” said Van, “and for good cause.”

Yes, they all hated him. He was a cruel task-master. Van inquired into it. All had the same story—small wages, irregularly paid, all manner of excuses for taxes and docking the miserable stipend of each weary worker. “He puts the shop clock ahead five minutes to shorten our noon-time.” “Keeps his clocks fast and docks us for being late in the morning.” “Gives us poor thread and then counts the work poor because the thread has broken.” “Rude words.” “Hateful clerks.” “Drive, drive drive, like a slave.” “Such cruel overwork.”

“Why do n’t you leave him, then?” demanded Van.

“He owes me money, eight dollars, a fortune to me; if I left I never should get it. Perhaps I never will as it is.”

“I’ve heard something about a Woman’s Protective Society, or Industrial Union,” said Myra, “to take up such cases and make the men pay their work-women.”

“Wish I knew of such a society to put the screws on the old scoundrel for me!” cried Anna. “I’d fetch him.”

“We could n’t get *recommends* from him if we left,” said Delia, “and might not get places without. The slack season will be here after a while and then work will be scarce everywhere.”

“How about other shops and other employers?” asked Myra.

“It is all of a muchness, as you’ll find out if you live in the city long enough,” said Kate. “The one object of the masters is to screw out all the work they can get for the least wages.”

“Not if they are Christian men,” said Myra. “Christian men bring Christ’s law of love into their business, and try to deal justly with their fellows as serving God in their trade as well as in church.”

The girls burst into a loud, derisive laugh.

“You think that is not so,” said Myra, “but it is because you girls have kept yourselves out of the way of seeing true Christianity in its work in the world. Truly Christian men bring their piety into their business, and do unto others as they would be done unto. The Bible tells them that we are ‘all brothers,’ and that he is ‘blessed who considereth the poor.’ In the early days of the church, just after our Lord went to heaven,

no man said that anything he had was his own ; but people had all things in common and every man sought not his own but his neighbors’ good.”

“Yes,” cried Kate, “I wish those times would come back !”

Softly Van began to sing,

“Brief life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care ;
The life that knows no ending,
The deathless life, is there.”

“We may admire,” says Froude, “the confidence of that other age which expected every man to prefer the advantage of the community to his own ; when parliaments rebuked tradesmen for ‘their greedy and covetous minds, as more regarding their own singular lucre and profit than the common weal of the realm.’” If ever there was such an age we do not know. The historian may have seen it in the beautiful glamour cast by distance in either time or space. If ever such a time shall be hereafter, it will come because the kingdom of the Nazarene has been set up on the earth, and the nations have been brought into it, and love of Christ proves a free fountain of love to our fellows.

Every day the debased character of Uncle James and the unhappy condition of the shop-girls grew upon Van’s mind. If their week-days were miserable, how sordid were their Sabbaths !

She heard of these Sabbaths from the girls who came in drowsy and weary after a Sabbath spent in a beer-garden or an excursion. They rose so early to make ready, for their garments always needed cleaning, mending, or altering. They purchased all that they called pleasure so dear, at cost of so much exhaustion and striving! Cold, wind, mud, sleet, snow, smoke, these were the environment and atmosphere of their winter recreation Sabbaths. Did they visit the libraries, museums, galleries of pictures, which some claim should be open for the Sunday benefaction of the poor? Not they; the companions they knew, the clothes they wore, the tastes they had formed in their circumscribed lives, were below these levels. To go where they could shout and laugh and stare, and eat cheap dainties and bandy saucy words—this was their ideal of pleasure. Was it their fault or their misfortune? Had any one ever offered them what was better? Van. felt sure that warmth, light, change, food, were the attractions to many of them, the entire reason perhaps of their entrance into this reckless life. If some one had provided a warm dry, sunny, cosy place, with lounges and rocking-chairs, books not too dull or difficult, black-board drawings, pictures, cheerful hymn-music, a place not too restrained and methodical and autocratic, how many of these girls might have

risen by it to brighter things! Long excursions to the parks, rides if they could find some one to take them, all these Sabbath occupations found them more exhausted at the end of the day of rest than at its beginning. Van and Myra were the only ones who seemed half alive on Monday morning.

But after that evening spent with the Milburys Delia began to cling to Van and try to model herself after her. She dropped her slang, in which she was not like Anna naturally expert; she was more neat about her hair and hands; she spoke more quietly, and again and again she spent the evening at No. 8. Not that they could often ask her to a meal; even meals must be counted, they were so poor; but they had warmth and kindness, and managed to pop some of the cousins' corn in Miss Nancy's frying-pan, and poor Delia enjoyed it wonderfully.

Van would have preferred the evenings alone with her mother, Myra, and Miss Nancy, but she could not resist the hungry, appealing eyes of Delia. This little hospitality was the one method left her for doing service to God in humanity, and she would say, "Come to us this evening, Delia," and after a little they grew not to mind Delia's presence, and she began to know as much about Teddie and Wallace and Uncle Daniel and Poplar Rise as the rest of them. The Milbury

maids and their changeful fortunes were the most interesting romance that Delia had ever known.

Miss Nancy Tempest took Delia into her friendship. Finding that Delia owned her mattress, a pair of comfortables, a washbowl, a pillow, and an old trunk, she told her she might move those things into a little lumber-room in the attic. Dry, unplastered, yet having the sun through a window in the roof, and with the back chimney passing through it, such was the room. "You can have it for nothing," said Miss Nancy, "and evenings you can sit by my fire and lamp. It is not much the Lord has left me that I can do for him, and I lay out to do what little I can."

Delia came to No. 8 as to paradise, and found no fault with her bed on the floor in the lumber-room. It was safe and clean, and much warmer and brighter than anything she had had for months. She insisted on paying her pence weekly for share in the fire and light, and was very thankful for a chance to wash her clothes in some of the suds left after Miss Tempest's laundry work was over. "It don't take much to content some people," said Miss Nancy; "depends altogether on the disposition. I'd be contented with a cabin, three dollars a week, and six or eight square yards of grass in the country. But land of liberty! I'll never be that rich."

I reckon I ’ll die right here, or in the poorhouse, likely.”

Delia even began to go to church with her hostess and the Milburys, although her shabby clothing almost deterred her.

Van said so much about Sunday desecration that Delia made a vigorous effort to get right in that particular if in nothing else. The street-venders, the newspaper boys, the barber-shops and cigar-shops in full swing, outraged the religious sense of Van, the country girl. Going to church one Sunday morning, a little lad ran up to her, offering a few violets, and crying, “Buy ’em, lady! You looks kind, buy ’em.”

“I have n’t any money,” said Van, “and if I had I should n’t buy the flowers on Sunday. Don’t you know it is wicked to sell flowers Sunday?”

“Well, miss,” retorted the boy, “if you do n’t never do anything no worse nor to buy a boket of a Sunday from a poor fellow like me, you wont never do no great harm in this yere world, no you wont.”

Van was so astounded by this string of negatives that she stood gazing speechless upon its originator. The boy continued,

“What do you take me for, miss! For a rich cove as goes about selling flowers for to get a little fun out of livin’? Do you think as I’ve

breakfast of isters an' boiled ham an' chicken an' taters? You just bet I have n't had a bit this morning, and a'n't likely, along of no one wantin' flowers."

"Come back home with me," said Van desperately, "and I'll find something to fill you up if I go without my own dinner. You do look kind of hollow. Uncle Daniel's boys look so different!"

She left the others to go to church and took the boy back to No. 8. She heated the coffee left from breakfast, took a thick crust of bread and spread it with molasses and gave it to her guest. He ate with an eagerness that made his plea of hunger good.

"You are a precious good un'," said the boy, "if you are of the pious kind. I knowed another of your sort once. She give me ten cents if I'd go sit in church and not cut round with the violets. I'd sit in church any time for ten cents. All I want is the dime; it does n't make no difference how I get it."

Van had no ten cents to offer as a bribe. She let the boy go his way. For herself she was late to church, and sat the sermon out thinking that "something was rotten in the state of Denmark."

"It was a mistake our coming to the city," said Myra to Van. "All here is so different

from what we have been accustomed to, we were so used to sunlight and fresh air and quiet and neighborly ways, that the city is much harder on us than on those brought up here. At home I might have worked on until I could get Barley Centre School when Teddie married, and with that I could have helped you and mother so well. This change is killing mother. She does not know how little money we get, but she suspects, and she lives in dread and anxiety."

"If we were in the country again where mother could work in a garden in pure air, I believe it would do her worlds of good," said Van. "Here she cannot do anything. That effort she made last week to go and nurse for three dollars a week is too much for her. She will be back Saturday nearly dead."

In fact she came home so sick that Nancy Tempest sent her to bed and nursed her for four days, while the girls were at the shop. Myra told Uncle James that his sister was sick.

"So?" said Uncle James. "I'm very sorry. Women that do nothing are apt to be sick. Nothing like hard work to keep folks well. You girls were terribly spoiled by that uncle Aaron of yours. He was one of those men who think their women-folks are made of wax and treat them accordingly."

Myra felt as if she would like to beat Uncle James with the heaviest yard-stick, or throw the stove poker at him. Uncle James succeeded in keeping his younger niece in a very unchristian frame of mind.

Van presented him a bill with all the arrears of their weekly pay duly set down therein, and demanded a settlement.

“Always wanting money!” cried Uncle James. “I have more hands now than I need in these hard times. Trade has fallen to nothing. Why can't you trust me a while? You ought to be the ones to help me on; you'll have all my money when I'm gone. Seeing hard times now, and learning how to save, will teach you money's worth, so you wont be extravagant and wasteful when you come in for a plum. Money! money! Well, there are five dollars. Give me that bill. What do you know of making out bills? You have wasted more material now by mistakes than all that comes to, only I've been so easy on you, I never said a word about it.”

“I have n't wasted a cent's worth,” retorted Van. “This claim of waste is extortion. You charged Delia thirty cents for a mistake on a shirt last week, and said you'd have to sell it that much lower, and I saw you sell that very shirt for full price.”

“You’d better tell her,” sneered Uncle James.

“What is the use when she cannot get away?” said Van wearily.

“None of you can get away ; places are not so plenty,” chuckled Uncle James. “It is Hobson’s choice ; my establishment or nothing.”

“You are a wicked man,” said Van ; “you act as if there is no God who will measure to you as you measure to others. Why are you so greedy ? Why are you not contented to take a fair, honest portion of this world’s goods, serve God, and help humanity ?”

“Better go for a missionary,” said Uncle James ; “you have gifts that way.”

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WINTER BLASTS.

“Far from the rustling of the poplar bough
Which o'er my opening life wild music made,
Far from the green hills with the healing glow
Of flashing streams whereby my childhood played.”

A NOISE of heavy feet and loud voices, with unceremonious use of the knocker, called Miss Nancy Tempest to the door of No. 8 Aspen Square about seven one evening.

“A'n't the Milbury girls living here? We want to see them,” said the leader of a group of five young women whom Miss Nancy admitted to the hall.

“They're in there,” said Miss Nancy, pointing to the kitchen sitting-room, and big Anna led the way, crying, “Halloa there, Van, you did not expect us, did you? That you, My? Well, Dele Evans, how ever did you come here?”

“I lodge here now,” said Delia, as Van and Myra rose to meet their unexpected guests.

“This is our mother and this is Miss Tempest, our landlady,” said Van, introducing Anna, Kate, Sadie, Melvina, and the others. Then as Miss Nancy had but six chairs, Van and Myra hastened to their own rooms to bring others.

Big Anna was the speaker of the occasion. She seemed a little daunted by the quiet, the neatness, the homelikeness of Miss Nancy's poor room, and by the ladylike mien of Mrs. Milbury in her black dress and widow's cap. But Anna was not largely endowed with capacity for embarrassment, and she presently burst forth, "We a'n't just out for fashionable calls, Van. You never invited us to make you a visit, but we're out on business. That's lawful, a'n't it? When first you came to the shop we thought you were spies of the old man, but we find you're real bricks, you two girls, and you've stood up for us time and again, and you get treated as bad as any of us, or worse, he pays you worse than he pays us. Now that is what we want to talk about. The old man's shop a'n't endurable any longer. If just one of us gets mad and breaks off, she may go; 't wont make any difference to him. He can find another. If we all do something at once, we may scare him or we may be better able to get into other shops."

"And how about the other shops and employers?" asked Myra; "are there many better ones?"

"It's terrible anyway," said Kate. "I've got a cousin in Boston who works for the great B—— firm. She has to wear a nice dress and nice collar and cuffs and tie, and her wages are

so small she has to have a room without fire or light, only a little tallow candle she buys for herself. Her underclothes are all in rags; she can't afford noon lunch, she is not able to get good shoes or rubbers, and her feet are wet and cold all winter."

"It's so with more than half the shop-girls," said Delia. "Before I got sick with fever I worked for S——, and they are called very liberal and have evening lecture courses and so on for the girls. But if we work from half-past seven in the morning till six at night, what time have we but evenings to make, mend, and wash our clothes? Though the S——s pay five and six dollars a week and so are more liberal than others, we cannot get board in a really decent place under four dollars a week, in the top stories or hall bed-rooms with almost no heat. Our clothes, shoes, medicine, little extras, washing, must all come out of a dollar and a half a week. The P—— firm is praised for giving all the clerks a Christmas present of five dollars, but the clerks in the holiday-time work forty extra hours, and that's worth the five dollars and more too."

"I've got a friend," said Anna, "working for the C——s. She gets three dollars a week the first year, four the next two years, five the next, and is liable to be turned off summers in

the slack season. She lives with her folks, and her ferry tickets are a dollar and ten cents a week. At the B——s' store five girls in the shoe department have died of lung fever or pneumonia or consumption in two winters, the draughts in that part of the store are so dangerous. But they're only work-girls! Let them go to the hospital and the potter's field. Who cares?"

"Here's another one going there, if she does n't look out," said Kate, pointing to Sadie, who was coughing violently. "Old Apsley owes her six dollars, and she has n't a rubber to her feet and her shoes are all broken. Just you look at her feet! sopped in this slush, and she coughing like that, and not a bit of fire to dry herself by. She's booked for the graveyard sure!"

All eyes were directed to poor Sadie's ragged feet.

"Why, you girl!" cried Miss Nancy, "what a fix you're in! I never saw the like! Your feet are bare on the pavement! Move right up to the stove and put your feet in the oven and dry'em good, and all your draggled petticoats! Now just wait a bit till I mix you up something for that cough and spread a piece of flannel with lard and pepper to put on your breast."

Miss Tempest was never better pleased than

when she was nursing somebody who was amenable to good counsel.

Mrs. Milbury went to her room and returned with a pair of thick woollen stockings of grandma's knitting.

"I can spare these," she said; "put them right on, you poor child."

"But, ma'am, thank you," said Sadie, much subdued by the attention she received, "as soon as I step out, all these nice stockings will be soaking wet without rubbers, ma'am."

"Put on them stockings!" spoke out Miss Nancy with the imperativeness of pronouncing a ukase. "As for rubbers, you can have a nearly new pair of arctics. A lodger of mine left them last week, a young boy who got a chance to go to Cuba, where arctics a'n't needed. They are too big for my girls, and you're welcome to them." And Miss Nancy went down on her knees and ferreted out the arctics from her pot-closet.

"If we could all get fixed out as prompt as that," said big Anna, "we'd be well off. Talking of the hard times shop-girls have in winter, they do n't fare surprising better in summer. In the M——s' store there's eight girls working for dear life at four dollars a week, and expenses about five or six, and that work-room is so close and hot that two or three of the girls fainted

every day last summer; but there they work, risking their lives, and much the M——s care.”

“What idiots you two girls were to come from the country,” spoke up Melvina to the Milbury maids. “You were fat and rosy when you first came to the shop, and your clothes looked so nice. Now you are thin and fagged out and pale. Your clothes get shabbier. You are no better paid than the rest of us. I tell you hunger, illness, beggary, early death, are the lines laid out for most of us.”

“How about the dressmaking establishments?” asked Van. “Are they not better than the gentlemen’s furnishing places? As women keep them, I should think women would be better treated in them.”

Her guests howled with derision.

“Just as bad! The women are on the make as much as men, and just as bad screws. I did hear of one lady who set up to open a religious dressmaking place, and paid fair wages and furnished things, and gave the girls hot tea and bread and meat at noon, and didn’t pick and tax, went on the ‘do as you’d be done by’ rule, and read ’em a chapter of the Bible every morning, and asked ’em if they went to church Sundays. Nice shop that was; but she failed in a year. Had to close up and go out by the day herself.”

“Why see here!” cried Anna, “most apprentices to dressmaking get nothing the first year but a lunch of weak tea and dry bread. Glad to have a chance to learn, and the way they teach them is to keep one girl sewing on skirt braid, another pulling out bastings or overcasting inside seams or putting in bones. Have to furnish your own needles and scissors, be sent out to carry work in all kinds of weather. Most of the sewing rooms are cold and dark. The missis and her forewoman must have the places by the windows, and then when missis sits down to sew she reaches out and borrows one girl’s scissors and another girl’s needles. Does n’t furnish her own.”

“But, I say,” called out Melvina, “this is n’t doing our business. We came to get Van and My to tell us how we could work the old man to get our money. He owes us all money. I owe my brother-in-law for three weeks’ board, and they need it. My sister has a baby only two days old. The old man owes me six dollars, and puts off paying till I believe I’ll never get it.”

“Jinny is home crying her eyes out,” said Sadie, “because to-morrow she is to be turned out for not paying her board, and they mean to keep her trunk, and Jim Apsley owes her seven dollars. She begged him for it to-night as hard

as she could pray, and he told her to find another shop if she liked; it was n't pay-day, and he had n't looked over her pay-book."

"See here," said Anna, "I've got it all down what he owes each one of us. I'll read it out," and she read over the list of names and the deficiency. "He owes Job Burrel three dollars and Nate Ames four fifty. How much does he owe you two girls?"

"Seventeen dollars and thirty cents," said Van.

Anna wrote it down. Then she looked about. "How can we get it? It costs money to sue him, and if we tried it we'd not get another place in the city perhaps. The employers would say we are troublesome. I've thought I'd scare him and tell him I'd burn down the place. But I expect if I tried that he'd arrest me."

"See here, Anna," said Myra, "are you really willing to try and get this money if I tell you how? Will you be afraid!"

"Afraid? You catch me being afraid of that little whipper-snapper!" said big Anna with fine scorn.

"And will the rest of you leave it to Anna, and be contented if you are called up and given your money?" continued Myra.

"You'd better believe we will. Money is what we're after!"

“Anna, come into the other room with me,” said Myra.

After about fifteen minutes the two came back. “It is all arranged,” said Myra quietly, “and I feel pretty sure that to-morrow noon Uncle James will pay you your dues.”

The girls with shouts of joy prepared to leave—all but Sadie, who was asked to remain with Delia and have her cold further doctored by Miss Nancy.

“Myra, what have you planned?” Van asked her sister when Miss Nancy and Mrs. Milbury had gone to bed, and the two sisters sat over the last spark of the kitchen fire.

“I could n't bear to tell it before mother, and I did n't want the other girls to know,” said Myra, “but in that little dark place where the customers go to try on clothes Uncle James keeps a great quantity of cigars that have n't any stamps on them, and sells them to his customers—smuggled cigars, you see, and cigars that have not paid revenue duty. It is an offence and would make him liable to a big fine. I read all about it a week or so ago in one of the papers while I was taking care of the desk, and I saw Uncle James was liable. He does n't mean any one in the shop shall go in that little room, and he keeps the key. But one day the shop was empty, and I saw the key in the lock and

I walked in, driven by my curiosity, like Bluebeard's wife. And there I saw all one side of the wall piled up with unstamped cigar-boxes, exactly as I had been reading in the paper. Now I have told Anna and that I will go with her to Uncle James and demand settlements for all the girls, and tell him if he refused we'd call in a policeman and we'd tell about his cigar trade. He will pay rather than be arrested and fined for revenue cheating."

"It is a hard remedy," said Van, "but I believe you are right, Myra. These girls are in a terrible strait. They may just go to destruction for want of their little wages."

"I did n't want them all to know," said Myra. "It seems a dreadful thing to meddle with anyway. But I must do it."

The next day, just before the noon bell, Myra and big Anna went to the shop and called Uncle James aside. Anna held her roughly drawn up bill of deficits.

"We all want what's back paid to us this noon, Mr. Apsley," she said. "We wont wait any longer."

"Whistle till you get it," said Uncle James with a leer.

"I'll whistle for a policeman," said big Anna, "and have you arrested for cheating the revenue. How many boxes of cigars

have you in the dressing-room? I'll tell of those."

"Nobody will believe you!" screamed Uncle James.

"They'll believe me!" said Myra quietly. "Besides, Anna will not stir from before this dressing-room door till I call in a policeman. Our minds are made up, Uncle James."

Uncle James was a wizzened, small man, big Anna was like a German woman of the day of Tacitus, six feet tall, strongly made, large armed, tawny-haired, white skinned. There was rumor that big Anna sometimes got drunk, and was a fury, and had even repented of her ways in the station-house. Uncle James before her snarled and spit like a cat taking umbrage at a huge mastiff.

"Hurry up," said big Anna; "call the girls down and settle. They don't know this yet, only Myra and me. If you don't pay, all the city will know it. Cash up quick; your fine would be ten times the wages you have kept back."

"I have n't any money," said Uncle James.

"Oh you can find plenty, I've no doubt, at the cashier's desk," said Myra; "and if not, the bank is not far off and we must have the money at once or it will be the worse for you."

Uncle James yielded. He doggedly put on

his hat and with reluctant steps went to the bank a few squares off and drew some money. The noon bell had struck when he returned, and drawn up in line the shop-girls waited to receive him and their money. Great was the eagerness to know by what means Anna had gained her victory. Anna, however, for the present, kept her own counsel.

"Uncle James, are you going to sell any more of those cigars?" asked Myra.

"No," said Uncle James shortly.

"I don't believe you," said Myra frankly; "but I may as well take you at your word. It is not my business to turn informer. I felt bound to help the girls get their money."

"And your own," sneered Uncle James.

"We are very poor," said Myra. "That money will pay three months' rent, half a month being now due. It will buy us a sack of flour and a ham and some kerosene oil. We need it."

"I wish you'd stayed in the country, you and Van," said Uncle James.

"So do I, with all my heart," said Myra.

"Hereafter I don't pay you and Van but three twenty-five a week. Take it or leave it as you like," said the model uncle.

"We hope that will be regularly paid, in which case we shall be better off than we have

been since we came to the city," retorted Myra. But she felt rich with her seventeen dollars in hand.

The next week Myra took a heavy cold and was very near having pneumonia. She could not leave the house for over a week. The doctor said she needed heavy flannels, and how were they to be bought? Christmas came with no good cheer except that Teddie was well and was to spend a week at Uncle Daniel's. The mother succeeded in getting some knitting of baby socks to do, but the pay was very small. Mrs. Milbury was not a rapid knitter. Grandma had done all the knitting.

Mrs. Milbury and Van had gone to prayer-meeting and Myra was lying on her bed well covered up, though she was dressed and had sat up all day. As she lay there she heard a great crash in Miss Nancy's room. Alarmed for her hostess, Myra rose and groping through the dark hall to the kitchen sitting-room, found Miss Nancy standing aghast, and on the floor lying the famous picture bequeathed to her by Mr. Dotter, the frame sadly damaged. Miss Nancy was in tears.

"Miss Nancy! what happened? Did the picture fall down?"

"I dropped it. I reckon I a'n't quite as peart as I used to be."

“But what were you trying to do with it?” demanded Myra, stooping to pick up some of the large gilded pieces that had broken off. “The frame is not broken, that is, not the wooden part, but this heavy plaster moulding which is gilded is badly broken.”

“I’ll tell you the blessed truth,” said Miss Tempest, dropping into a chair. “I sat here studying over you and how you could have some stout flannels before you went out next week. Van said to-night you must have a pair of heavy flannel-lined boots and she could manage them, but the rest she did not know what to do about; so I thought of the text ‘that the life is more than meat and the body more than raiment,’ and I put it a dear girl like you was more to me than a picter and a downright home-ly picter too; so I says to myself, ‘Nancy, the frame is handsome; you take down the picter and slide out with it while they’re at prayer-meetin’, worshippin’ God, and you sell it and buy that girl a suit of flannels, or some flannel goods for her mother to make up. Perhaps you can make a bargain, the Lord helping you, Nancy, and it will be your style of worship this evening,’ I says. ‘The Lord a’n’t particular; he takes what you do to his children as done to him,’ I says. So up I got on a cheer and took the picter from the nail. But I kinder lost my

balance, and like an idiot I dropped the picter. So there it lies, ruined, for the frame is all about it worth a dime, and I'll own I'm sorry, for it was the only real aristocratic-looking thing I owned. Maybe I took too much pride in it. Well, I am a fool! Crying over a picter! As if by this time old Nancy Tempest had n't got hardened to misfortune."

"And you were willing to sell your picture to buy me some flannel!" cried Myra, flinging herself upon Nancy and hugging her desperately. "Well, you are good! I never heard the like! And now your picture is spoiled for me." Then with another hug, "Let us look at it," and down on her knees on the floor, she laid the wrecked frame on its back and began fitting the pieces of gilding in their ancient seats. Myra was skilful, the heavy English moulding had not crumbled into petty fragments. Miss Nancy bent forward and began to be interested in seeing her frame grow together again. Myra went for a cup of flour and wet it into a dough-like paste. Finally it was done just as Van and her mother came in.

"There, let it lie in the corner on its back for two or three days and then it will be solid and we'll hang it up," said Myra, and told the tale of Miss Tempest's sacrifice. "Do n't fret, any of you, about the flannels," said Myra. "I reckon

the Lord cares for me as much as Miss Nancy does, and either he 'll send the flannels or help me not to need them." And again Miss Nancy was treated to tearful thanks and caresses.

"Never mind the picter," said Miss Nancy; "it looks as well as ever, but the frame being ruined, it's past selling. Now it is only worth anything as reminding of poor Mr. Dotter."

The next day was New Year's, and early in the morning came a letter from Aunt Harriet Proctor with ten dollars for a Christmas gift for the "Milbury maids," a similar ten having been sent to Teddie to help her with her purchases. Now there would be flannels! An hour after the expressman brought a somewhat belated box, which, as the weather was very cold, had not suffered by delay. This was a royal box, packed by Teddie, Aunt Sara Ann, and grandma: home-made nut-candy and pop-corn balls, jumbles, a raisin cake, a roasted roll of beef, butter, bread, pickles, jam, two chickens dressed but uncooked, a round box with four mince pies packed therein, a little knitted shawl for each of the girls and Mrs. Milbury, and a dollar each. The Milbury maids and Delia danced about the box, Mrs. Milbury cried, Miss Nancy cried, Delia was sent out to invite Sadie to a feast, and great were the midwinter rejoicings in No. 8 Aspen Square.

When they were seated at dinner in Miss Nancy's kitchen, all in their shabby best, but looking very happy, said Miss Nancy, "I want to make a clean breast of it. Last evening, as I sat here worrying over Myra's flannels, I was not laying the case before the Lord as much as on my own heart; I wasn't asking God's help with all my heart, but I was inquiring what Nancy Tempest could do. So I figured out that way about the picter, and you see how it ended. After I got to bed it came to me as clear as if a voice spoke it, 'Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths.' So I thought how foolish it was of me not to get my liberty out of my troubles by that key of *Promise* which Bunyan's Pilgrim used to let him out of Doubting Castle. Like him I had kept it forgotten in my bosom. So I went to praying and pleading the dear Lord's promises, and it helped me amazingly to think that Mrs. Milbury was no doubt praying for help for her child, and Van too and Myra; and I thought how it is promised that when two or three of us agree here on earth touching something to pray over it shall be done by the Father in heaven. When my mind was fixed on that I slept as easy as a baby, realizing how good it is to cast all our care on Him that careth

for us. Why I just *knew* that help was coming ; and now observe all the Lord has sent us over and above what we asked for !”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Milbury, “it is true that we have strong consolation and a door of hope in prayer. Every day I seem to be learning more of how I may go to God with all my affairs ; and oh what a comfort it is to feel that I have put all into His hands who has for me a Father’s heart !”

Delia and Sadie listened with astonished, wide-open eyes. This was strange and wonderful to them

CHAPTER XVIII.

STREET BOYS AND STREET BEGGARS.

“Every smallest hand can lend some kind and helpful touch,
Lift the weight a little, and the many make the much ;
Shared feasts are savory feasts, shared joys are best ;
And the sharers and the shared with both alike are blest.”

S. COOLIDGE.

THAT stouted-hearted word of Grandma Milbury, “Well, well, if the Lord chooses to send me to school to affliction, Satan shall not hinder me of the best lessons to be learned there,” had become a word of power in the family. They had learned from it to get the best that was possible out of trouble, and from disaster, of body or estate, to gain the spiritual or mental good.

Having fallen into very difficult places in Philadelphia, they had need to be constantly reminding each other that it was well to take heed and not be demoralized while they were defeated.

“We must not let retreat become rout,” said Myra to Van, “even if we are conquered in our battle.”

“As to retreat, I do n't know where we would

retreat to," said Van. "We have no one to fall back upon."

"Hush, child," said mamma Milbury; "you have God to fall back upon. You'll learn that after a while."

Perhaps it was because they were not each one left alone to gnaw their hearts over their trials, but had the strength of such mutual encouragements, that trouble did not make them sour and neglectful of others, but more full of sympathy. Feeling their own toes and fingers nipped, and shivering themselves in sleety storms that were not met in the bracing power of plenty of good food, they turned comprehending, not indifferent, eyes on those evidently more impoverished than themselves. Van was especially tender-hearted towards the poor; and I think that in these bitter days Van suffered as much for the wretched paupers that she saw in the city about her as she did for herself.

"I hate the city!" she cried to her mother, "when I can do nothing to lift this load of misery that I see bowing people down to the earth. I think if I had such a fortune as Nelly Ames, and could live here and help folks, I should be perfectly happy."

"Perhaps in your lack of experience you might do as much harm by lavish giving as Nelly Ames by withholding," said her mother.

"O mother! Of course I should know a poor person when I saw him," said Van confidently.

Among those who moved her heart was an old woman who lived in a tiny alley that opened out of Aspen Square. The bent form and gray hairs of this desolate creature, her ragged clothing, the dim eyes, the yellow wrinkled hand stretched out for alms, nearly broke Van's heart. Oh! to think of grandma or mamma Milbury in such a state! Poor as she was herself, Van could not resist dropping a penny now and then into the thin cold hand, and she always spoke pleasantly to the miserable beggar when they met. They met often, for the old woman set off for her niche on Chestnut Street about the time Van and Myra faced the raw cold morning, hastening to their work for the inexorable Uncle James.

"Heaven bless you, ladies dear!" the old crone would cry after them, and a smile would break over her haggard face at Van's hearty "Good morning, grannie!" In fact the beggar believed that these words from a girl so innocent and kindly had the potency of a charm or an amulet, and she would linger about the doorways of her wretched neighbors until she saw the sisters passing the end of the alley as they went down the court, when she would hobble after them.



Adam's Daughters. Page 295.

One evening Van was coming home alone, and had overtaken the old woman, and could not resist giving her a nickel. "I'll eat less to-morrow, and make it up," she said to herself.

"The blessing of all the saints be on ye, darlin'," said the beneficiary, pocketing the coin.

Van passed on, smiling, and Nancy Tempest came up with her.

"You ought n't to do that, Miss Milbury," said Nancy. "You've no money to throw away."

Van reddened. "I know I'm poor, Miss Nancy; but I'll make it up somehow. I'm not so poor as she is. It makes me sick to see her, so old and so forlorn."

"Maybe you're wasting your pity," said Nancy. "How many people in a day do you suppose feel for her rags and her misery, just as you do? You haven't the only soft heart in the world."

"I hope not," said Van coldly.

Nancy never minded the coldness. "I think these street beggars find their trade a good one, and bring home more in a day than honest people."

"If she got much she would have a warm dress and shawl—"

"And a muff and fur-top overshoes?" said Miss Nancy. "How many hearts would she touch if she went out rigged up in that style?"

No, no, Miss Milbury, you take my word for it, her rags and her whine, and all that, are part of her stock in trade. When I first came from the country I felt as you do, but I've learned better. People like that are not the real objects of charity. It is poverty that stays at home and works and starves, not that whines on the streets, that is the real suffering poverty. There's plenty of misery around us, and the heaviest part of it is the part that tries its best to keep hid, as sure as my name's Nancy Tempest. Does any one guess, seeing a respectable lady-like young woman like you going along, holding your head up and your shoulders back, that maybe you have scarce a nickel in your pocket and are fretting where your next meal is to come from? When folks see me going along with my little marketing in my willow-basket that I've carried for twenty years, my shawl thick, if it is pretty rusty, my bonnet well brushed, if it is about ten years behind the time, no rags to show on my gown, my gloves mended, do they imagine that some days I go without my supper, and that I know the inside of a pawn-shop, and am fighting just as hard as woman can fight for holding soul and body together? The city is full of such kind of misery."

"You only make me more and more unhappy," cried Van, laying her hand on Miss Nancy's

shoulder, for they had come into the house and stood by Miss Nancy's stove. "And yet, because there is horrible poverty that I don't suspect, I should not shut my eyes to the poverty I see. Why I *must* be kind to that old creature! I dream of her."

"I don't say not to be kind, child. Speak kind; kind words go a long way in helping."

"Words, words, words are only breath, Miss Nancy. Don't you know St. James says, 'If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?'"

"That is all right, but there's the 'brother or sister' and the 'naked and destitute of food;' are you sure of that?"

"But, Miss Nancy, she must be destitute—look at her. And as for the brother and sister part, I know God does not mean to limit our giving to Christian folks. In proportion, I fancy only few Christians in this country are very needy. Does it not say in the Bible that God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and the unjust'? That is example for us."

"That's true. But God sends sun and rain where they are needed and well used. The

ground a' n't ungrateful as folks, child. I count that there 's more vice than need in the old woman."

That night Van remarked to Myra that "it was a pity that Miss Nancy was so hard-hearted." But Van found that Myra would not admit that Miss Nancy was hard-hearted. A day or two after, as the sisters returned home, they met Van's old woman coughing violently and leaning against the wall at the corner of the alley. Evidently she was nearly exhausted.

"Myra," said Van, "you go home or mother will worry. I will help this poor old soul up to her room and see if I can do anything for her. Don't fidget about me ; I am not afraid."

She took her protégé's arm to aid her, and after a time got her up the three flights of stairs to the attic where she lived. Lightless, fireless, desolate ! Van struck a match and found a little dirty lamp with a few spoonfuls of oil in it. She put the old woman in a chair and made a tiny fire with a handful of wood and coal which lay on the hearth of the broken, rusty grate. Then she put a battered kettle over the fire, with some water to heat, and made up, as well as she could, the dirty, ragged cot-bed, which she drew near the fire. The old woman had pulled off her shoes, and informed Van that she "always lay down in her day clothes, as she had no night-

dress." With some disgust at this revelation, Van helped her into the cot and tucked the torn shawl over her as additional covering.

"You need some coal and some oil, and some ginger and sugar to make you a strong ginger tea," she said. "Have you nothing here in your room?"

"No, my dear young lady; go and get them for me."

"But—I have no money," said Van; "not a cent."

The old woman began to moan.

"I think I should send for an ambulance and have you go to a hospital," said Van. "I think you are going to be very sick unless you are taken care of at once."

"Oh I can't leave my room," cried the woman frantically. "Go get me some medicine, and some hot broth or coffee, dearie."

Here Miss Nancy Tempest suddenly appeared, and Van felt full of gratitude for her opportune and thoughtful arrival. She spoke with decision. "The young lady has no money, and I have none; we are both as poor as Job's turkeys. But you have n't held out your hand all day and got nothing. If you want things, I'll go and buy for you."

The woman groaned, fumbled in her clothes, and handed Miss Nancy a number of dimes,

nickels, and coppers. Miss Nancy took an exhaustive survey of the room and went out. While she was gone Van found an old broom and brushed up the dirty floor, discovered some parts of an old towel and a lump of brown soap, and used the water she had heated to wash the patient's hands and face. By the time this was done, and water had been heated again, Miss Nancy returned with a boy bringing fuel. Miss Nancy gave the shivering patient a bowl of hot ginger tea and made a slice of toast, mixed a poultice of lard and mustard and put it on her chest, heated a brick from the hearth and laid it at her feet.

"Now," she said, "I'll go to the dispensary and get you some medicine, and ask the doctor to come and see you. Then I must take the young lady home, but if you want one of the neighbors to stay with you I'll bring one."

"No, no," said the woman in alarm. "Don't bring any one. I am better. I'll sleep. I'd rather be alone, dearie."

When Miss Nancy was gone the old woman said to Van, "I'm so awful poor, dearie. Tomorrow noon wont you go to the soup-kitchen and get coals for me? There's my tickets on the mantel-shelf. Just you ask for my pail of soup and a loaf, and tell them to send me a bushel of coal, dearie."

Accordingly next day Van spent her noon-hour in going for soup, which with a loaf she carried in haste to her old woman, heated the soup, made toast and fed her, and told her the coals would be sent. Evidently the poor wretch was very ill. Her anxious furtive eyes rolled here and there as she gasped for breath. She refused to have her bed re-made, and lay panting and groaning.

“Doctor says its newmony,” she gasped; “but don’t let ’em take me to no orspital, dearie!”

For two or three days Van did what she could for the old woman. She grew accustomed to the alley; no one molested her; the few men stepped out of her way, and pulled their caps in sign of courtesy, as she passed on her errands of mercy. On Sabbath she remained with the woman most of the day. The doctor had sent plenty of coals, and a lady from the Soup Kitchen Committee had on Saturday brought a night-gown and a clean sheet and some towels.

On Sunday afternoon it was evident that the woman had but a few hours to live. She asked Van to send one of the neighbor boys for her priest. The priest and his attendant came, and Van withdrew to the shelter of the dormer window, and looked out upon the snowy roofs, while the dying one made her confession. But when

it was over, and the oil had been touched upon the head, hands, and feet of the woman, the priest did not go away; he took his chair and sat by the fire reading his breviary. He sent away his deacon, and Nancy Tempest came in and tried to give the dying beggar a little tea; she declined; she had confessed and been absolved; she wanted nothing. She signed to Van.

“Dearie, reach under me tick, an’—pull—out—the two rolls—there—O Virgin of Sorrows! have pity on me!”

Van reached between cot and tick and pulled out first one and then another roll, made of stocking-legs tied at each end, between the thin web of which shone silver and gold, and little lumps showed crumpled bills. The priest drew near the bed with interest.

“Lay it here near my breast,” said the woman, clutching and hugging her treasure as a dying mother might clasp and hold a babe. “Father, ye’ll lave it me till the breath goes out of me body? An’ then ye’ll bury me—with it dacent; and put—me up a stone—an’ ye’ll have the rest of it—for the church—an’ the howly saints—an’ ye’ll say plenty of prayers for my soul?” This with gasps and groans.

The priest bowed his head. “Yes, yes; I will see to your burial and the masses.”

“All that money!” cried Van; “and see!”

she swept her arm around towards the dirty, empty room.

"Five thousand it is," said the woman, hugging it.

"Wretched creature! she has made an idol of it!" said the priest to Van softly, then opened his book and began rapidly to read the Prayers for the Dying, for an awful change had come over the withered, sallow countenance; the eyes set and the lean jaws fell.

With a face of horror Van gazed at this death-bed scene. A convulsion shook the passing miser, one of the rolls dropped from her clasping arms and fell upon the floor with a crash. The old stocking-leg burst open, and gold, silver, and bills rolled upon the foul boards. No one stooped for it; the owner did not miss it; a rattling sound filled the attic.

"Gone," said the priest, and closing his book made the sign of the cross. Just then his deacon returned with four long candles, a crucifix, a vase of holy water, and a large clean linen sheet.

"We will send some of the neighbors up," said Nancy, and taking Van's hand she led her away, leaving the corpse on the bed, the priest reading his breviary by the fireplace, and the deacon on his knees gathering up silver and gold.

"Who'd have thought," said Miss Nancy as

they went down the stairs, "that in that wretched attic we should learn so well what is meant by 'The love of money is the root of all evil!' 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Where is that soul's profit now?"

"But, Miss Nancy, see how little of what we call worldly good she had. No comfort, no luxury, neither cleanliness, warmth, food, friends, beauty—nothing but a few bits of hard metal and crumpled dirty paper," cried Van.

"Yes, it seems very little; but suppose the worship had been not of the money itself, but of the personal selfish luxuries that money brings; suppose, instead of a miser beggar, this had been a selfish, self-serving, God-forgetting millionaire, would the soul have fared any better? And to God's angels looking on would it not have all seemed equally base and blind and miserable—all dross and filthy rags?"

Van's nerves were completely unstrung; she cried all the way home, and more or less for the next two hours. "I'll never dare to pity any one again," she sobbed.

"Oh yes, you will," said Miss Nancy, who had told the strange tale to Myra and mamma Milbury. "Just leave the professional beggars out. Stick to the children. They're always to be pitied, and the hard-working, half-paid ones,

and the sick. The good Lord knows there 's always call enough on our feelings."

The children! Yes, indeed, Van and Myra and mamma Milbury felt for them. They never spared kind words and smiles for the poor little *gamins*. Every bit of tinsel or handkerchief ribbon, every fancy card that Van and Myra could pick up from the waste of the shop, every clipping of striped silk lining, they carried off to give the careworn small girls who nursed babies in every court and alley-way, or to the poor little forlorn ones turned out on the curb-stones while the mothers gossiped or toiled or perhaps drank in the rum-shops.

And how often on the Sabbath Van led home some wretched, small, cold, lean Arab of the streets, soused his head and neck in hot suds, sewed buttons on his clothes, and gave him a big bowl of hot soup, made in mamma Milbury's incomparable style, which secured wonderful soup out of very cheap materials. Van's Sunday soup tasted so much better when some hungry child sat toasting his cold legs by the stove and drank soup with hearty relish.

After dinner Van showed her Sunday company pictures from the Milbury big Bible, told him some stories, gave him some sound warnings about stealing, drinking, and lying, and sent him away at nightfall with her blessing.

"I know you 'll get fever or small-pox, or something awful, from such ragamuffins as you bring in here," said Miss Nancy; "but poor little rabbits, how I pity 'em! If you do catch anything, I 'll nurse you!"

These little charities threw some small gleams of light along the dim and weary path that Adam's disinherited daughters were now treading; which pathway led daily into deeper and deeper depths of night and sorrow, and yet each day they felt more fully that their Lord was near them leading them through this darkness, and they leaned on Him who in all their afflictions had been afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HEGIRA OF UNCLE JAMES.

“Who bears no trace of passion’s evil force,
Who shuns thy sting, O terrible remorse!
Who would not cast
Half of his fortune from him but to win
Wakeless oblivion from the wrong and sin
Of the sealed past!”

A LARGE part of the world dates all its transactions from the flight of Mohammed in A. D. 622. In 1688 a very bad dynasty, that of the Stuarts, took its flight from England, in the person of James II., and a very good man named William of Orange came in. History has embalmed for later admiration or imitation many of these Hegiras. Four hundred years before Christ the Greeks under Xenophon made an orderly and famous retreat from Persia; if it was a flight, it was methodical and of fifteen months’ duration and ended in immortal renown. Thirty years before Christ Antony made shameful flight after a galley with purple sails wherein reclined the fatal Egyptian.

When Mary of Scots took flight for England she went to be a prisoner, not a guest; the retreat of Bonaparte from Moscow became a rout which

finally landed him in St. Helena. In 1709, after the battle of Pultowa, Charles XII. of Sweden ended a magnificent career by flight to try the tender mercies of the Turk. When in 1807 the royal family of Portugal fled from Lisbon to Brazil, they went to over eighty years of empire; so brave a man as Lafayette fled in 1792 from the rage of the Jacobins only to spend five years in an Austrian prison. Thus the great people of the earth have taken to flight, with result fair or foul as may be, and history chronicles and the world looks on. Only such simple pages as these record, and a few humble shop-girls and two seedy clerks kept in lifelong remembrance, the FLIGHT OF UNCLE JAMES.

It was on the last day of January; the morning was cold, sleety, miserable; the streets were full of slush, and the gutters ran curb-high with dirty icy floods. The breakfast had been but scanty, the mother had looked unusually pale; Van and Myra arrived before the "Gentlemen's Furnishing and Ready Made Emporium" to find the shutters up, the door open, no fires, strange men in charge, a dozen of angry employés in a noisy crowd telling how they had been tricked and defrauded. It was Saturday morning; all were out of a week's wages. Uncle James had gathered together ten thousand dollars and fled, leaving the sheriff in possession. Rumor

was not very precise as to why he had gone. Some said big Anna had taken too much beer and had discoursed freely of revenue cheating; others said that Uncle James had paid neither rent nor bills for many a day, laying by in store for the hour when his numerous creditors should come upon him and he should fly with his gains. The only thing certain was that Uncle James was gone. Says Bulwer in his "Parisians," "In Paris mankind is divided into two classes: one bites, the other steals; shun both; devote yourself to cats." Uncle James did not live in Paris, but he had improved on the Parisian type of character: at once savage and mean, he both bit and stole.

Van and Myra, amazed at this new crisis in a fate already sufficiently evil, stood silent, while their comrades cried and recriminated. "Come, come, there is nothing here for any of you," said the man in charge. "You are in the way; you disturb us. Go out, will you?"

"But our money, our wages! We want what is due us."

"Just now an inventory is being made, and until that is done nothing else can be done. Come back with your claims to-morrow or next day. Perhaps there will be something to settle with then."

"But," said Van, "I ran my own sewing-

machine. It is the best one in the shop. I brought it when I came. I must take it away. I will bring a man at once."

"No you do n't," retorted the fellow roughly. "Next move every blessed girl of you would be carrying off machines. We have no right to let a solitary thing go out of this shop. We are in possession for the creditors and they'll get precious little."

"But the machine is *mine*; I brought it from home; I must have it."

"It is part of the assets now," said the sheriff deputy. "Can you prove Apsley had not bought it of you? Have you any paper to show that he had hired the machine of you? What rent did he pay you for the machine? Where is the receipt?"

Alas! Van had not been shrewd enough to claim pay for the use of her machine, nor had she any papers to show why it should not be counted as Uncle James' property.

"I know it is hers," said Delia. "It was brought the day she came, and she always said it was hers. Mr. Apsley never claimed it."

"He kept it though," said the man; "it's his in law unless she can prove it is hers. You'll have to apply to the court about it, young woman. The machines are the best part of the stock, and we can't have them carried off."

“My machine is up there too,” called Kate. “I brought it here with me and I mean to have it.”

Now Van had often heard Kate say that she had sold her machine to Uncle James, and that part of the back debt he had been forced to pay her was on the machine. Yet here was Kate claiming the machine as her own and making Van's case worse than ever.

“Come, you must go. You can bring your claims in next week, and see if there is any one here to attend to them. As to the machines, if they are yours you'd best go see a lawyer about it.”

The men pushed the excited shop-girls towards the door, and Van and Myra were the first to hurry out.

“We really cannot go home and tell this to mother until we have arranged some way of getting on,” said Myra.

“I'm going down to the restaurant where Bell Crane is,” said Delia. “They want a dishwasher and I'll try that for a while.”

Delia went off and Sadie lingered near the sisters. “I'm real sorry for you,” she said, “and you've lost your machine, Van; you will never get it. I'm going to a cousin of mine. I was there last night, and her husband said he'd give a girl a dollar a week and board to tend his wife

and the two children for a month, so I'll go there and do that while I'm looking for a new place. What will you do?"

"We'll find something," said Van bravely. "Good-by, Sadie."

"Where can we go to think?" said Myra. "We shall freeze in the streets. My feet and skirts are wet now. Oh even that work-room looks safe and comfortable, now that we have nowhere to go."

"Let us go to the railroad station," said Van desperately. "We can find chairs there and a nice waiting-room and registers to dry our feet by. Come on, Myra, we will think it out there."

Entering the station they found nearly every one running out the further door. "You've lost your train," said the woman in attendance. "The B—— train is just gone. You'll have to wait three hours."

Van made no answer but a nod, and she and Myra sat down to dry their feet. The room was clean and comfortable.

"We wont tell mother just at present," whispered Van to Myra. "She has about as much now as she can bear."

"She'll find it out when we don't go to the shop nor bring home any money," said Myra.

"I'll tell you what we must do about her," said Van with decision. "I'll go over to that

little stationer's shop and get paper and envelope and write a letter to Uncle Daniel. I'll tell him that mother is not at all well, the city does not agree with her, and things are not going just as we had hoped. I'll say we can stay with our landlady, Miss Tempest, and get on very well if he will invite mother to go out to the farm until spring. Then she can go and see Teddie for two weeks. I'll tell him we will send mother all the money we can, for we don't mean to burden him, and he is not to let her know we wrote, but just beg her to come and see grandma. When once mother is gone, you and I can pinch ourselves as much as we have to, and no one need be any the wiser. We can go out working or do anything. We wont let Teddie nor mother know one word about our hard times. If we can keep them out of the trouble you and I will stand by each other and bear it."

"Well, that plan may work," said Myra; "get your letter off in the noon mail, and Uncle Daniel will have it Monday, and we will send mother off in a week's time. Suppose you ask the woman at the stationer's if she knows of anything you can get to do. While you are gone I'll see if the waiting woman here can throw any light on our case. It must be so big a city has some work for us."

The letter was sent to Uncle Daniel; the day

had cleared a little, the girls were warm and dry, and they set out to look for work.

"We have the railroad stations to rest in," said Van; "we can go into another when we are tired out."

The search for work did not open well. The "holiday rush" was over and the period of inaction had come. They had made no acquaintances in the city but with shop-girls even more forlorn than themselves. None of their home friends had known any one in Philadelphia to whom to give them letters; Mr. Lowell's city life had passed in New York. They had learned little of the city since they entered it except the sordid misery about them; to go from 8 Aspen Square to Uncle James' emporium in the morning and back at night, and two squares for church on Sunday—this was all which they had seen of the splendid city which had lured them from afar. And also Van had gone to the Chestnut Street warehouse for which her mother did a little knitting.

Every one said that "work was scarce and hands were being dismissed, not taken on." Finally one place was found where the manager was willing to take Van for three dollars and a quarter a week, if she brought her own machine and a good recommendation. "It was the machine that decided it."

“But my sister?” said Van; “we want to go together.”

“Could n’t possibly take two. Would n’t take you, only a girl who can bring her own machine is pretty sure to be respectable and steady.”

“We must go again to see about that machine,” said Van.

They were so tired they could hardly move, but returned to the emporium of the missing Uncle James. Confusion reigned there. Goods were being carried away. Van again asserted her claim upon the machine. “That next one is mine!” she cried.

“Suppose all the girls claimed their machines!” said a man. “There was another one tried that game this morning, you know.”

“But this really is mine. I can prove it.”

“How?”

“By my sister here; she knows I brought it from the country.”

“Pooh! Pity you had n’t kept it there.”

“The other girls know it too,” insisted Van.

“Poor proof. They know what you said about it, that is all. There is no proof that he had not bought it of you or taken it on a debt. It is found among his things. If it really is yours, more is the pity; you are so much out, that’s all.”

“Wont there be money enough out of the stock to pay what is due?” asked Myra. “We are all owed wages.”

“Stock! It was run down to mere nothing, worth nothing; all was shoddy, shoddy, shoddy.”

Once more the girls left the shop of Uncle James, never to enter it any more. On Monday it was closed, and for many days after. Van never saw or heard of her machine again. It was lost utterly in the wreck of Uncle James' fortunes.

The next day the girls rested at home, for it was the Sabbath. On Monday they renewed their weary round, and Myra got some crochet work to do from the firm where her mother had had work. She gave the dollar sent from home for a New Year's gift as security for her needles and wool. Myra was quite expert with the crochet-needle; she could make thirty-five or forty cents some days. She remained at home working on the wool, saying Uncle James did not need her for the present. Van alone pursued the weary round of the city streets, looking for work, following up advertisements found in the newspapers.

They deceived their mother in so far as they kept these new disasters from her. Uncle Daniel answered their letter very promptly, and also, with the prescience of love, sent money for the railroad ticket; Uncle Daniel saw farther into

Van's forlorn little letter than she had dreamed that he would. He wrote that he "wished they would all come back to the farm and sink or swim together. They would be sure of food enough there, anyway."

The girls urged their mother to go. She objected to leaving them alone in the city. To her and to Uncle Daniel these young women would always be "the girls," with the glamour of childhood about them, to be loved and protected and advised and helped along. The "Milbury maids" were seeing more of the world than ever their mother had known, but they were "the children" still.

"Miss Nancy will look out after us," said Myra, humoring her mother's idea. "You'd be so much better in the country. Teddie wants to see you, and poor grandma is growing old; you really ought to go. And then, as times are so slack now, it would be quite a help to you to be at Uncle Daniel's."

"If you break down and get to be ill here, it will be so dreadful for us all, mammy," said Van. "If you go home you can help Teddie with her sewing and do some for us by-and-by."

Thus urged, Mrs. Milbury agreed to go. Van took her well treasured Christmas dollar and bought something for the mother's luncheon, and little city nick-nacks, unknown to country

stores, for grandma, Aunt Sara Ann, Teddie, and the three younger of the six Milbury boys. A little money goes so far at five and ten cent counters, and these purchases gave quite a festive look to Mrs. Milbury's trunk and soothed Van's pride. No one would know just what they cost, and they would be saved the humiliation of seeming as poor as they were.

The girls took their mother to the dépôt and saw her off. It was just a week since the flight of Uncle James. Mrs. Milbury had said perhaps she ought to bid James good-bye and tell him to be kind to her girls, but Van dissuaded her.

"I feel like a criminal," said Van, when having watched the car out of sight she and Myra left the station. "We don't know how to deceive; we never before cheated the poor dear mammy."

"It was for her good, to keep her from breaking her heart," said Myra.

"I feel," said Van, "as if I were treading sure enough 'the hard and thorny way to heaven.' I don't know who said it."

"Ophelia, in 'Hamlet,'" said Myra. "It was in our quotation book."

"It is a pity, Myra Milbury, that a girl with your memory should be tramping the streets of Philadelphia, vainly looking for shop-work," said Van bitterly.

“It is a greater pity,” said Myra, “that a girl with my memory did not set herself diligently to learn, when she had opportunity, some useful, really necessary, and money-worth occupation really well, so she would not have been reduced to such straits as this.”

“We must go right back to the house and tell Miss Nancy the entire truth about Uncle James,” said Van. “I shall die of keeping it to ourselves any longer. It seems only fair to poor mother, now she is away, to be frank with Miss Nancy.”

They returned therefore to 8 Aspen Square. Miss Nancy was at her window making button-holes. When they came in she looked over her spectacles, demanding,

“What have you girls been doing with yourselves since your uncle James ran away?”

“Looking for work,” said Van promptly. “When did you find it out? You didn’t tell mother, did you?”

“I found it out yesterday from an old—week old nearly—paper I picked up in one of the lodgers’ rooms. I concluded to let your mother get a good start and then have it out with you.”

“We came home to tell you,” said Myra. “We are nearly killed keeping it; and we’ve looked everywhere and we can’t find a thing to

do; and we've nearly used up our shoes tramping after work."

"You poor dear souls!" cried Miss Nancy. "A'n't this a cruel hard world for young folks! People ought to be born fifty years old, to say the least, and then made to stay in the country."

"Delia never said a word about it, did she? She is washing dishes in a restaurant and getting her meals and two dollars a week. Perhaps we'll have to come to that," said Myra ruefully.

Van shook her heartily. "Don't talk that way! What would the good people near Poplar Rise think if 'Adam's daughters' came to that?"

"Well, Van," said Myra, "I hope for better work, and I don't know that we are made so that we could stand all day in a reeking, underground kitchen, washing dishes and listening to the cook swear, varied by the swearing of the restaurant keeper. But whatever we have to do, I mean to try and remember that there is no sense at all in feeling humiliated, degraded, ashamed, disgraced by anything that does not concern *character*; what I am myself, not what I am forced to do to earn a living, is what is going to look large to me, and He knoweth the way that I take."

"Yes, yes, children," said Miss Nancy, tossing one vest on the table and picking up another, "there was One who said, 'I am among

you as he that serveth.' After such a stoop as that, there's none of us can reckon we stoop at all, whatever we do. You can't make button-holes, can you, girls?"

"No," said Van; "it seems as if we can't do anything that is wanted. I can make very poor paper flowers and silk embroidery."

"I can crochet after a fashion," said Myra, whose ivory needle was flying. "If I work all day I may finish this thing they call a 'fascinator,' and will get thirty-five cents for it."

The Milbury maids were at a great disadvantage in that they knew nothing of many of the great movements and associations of the city. At home Uncle Daniel had taken an agricultural journal with a domestic and story department, the weekly paper of the county, had bought, in times of special excitement, a copy or so of the New York "Tribune" or "Herald," and had regularly subscribed for a missionary journal and a temperance monthly. He thought his family very well furnished with current literature.

But these papers left the girls without a hint of the great philanthropic undertakings of the day especially for women. The Consolidated Charities, at the office of which aid is rendered in securing work for strangers; the Women's Christian Association, with its offices; the Wo-

men's Educational and Industrial Union, were unknown to them. They had never heard the names of good women in the city whose social position placed them where their aid was efficient, whose hearts would be ready to hear a sister's story, and whose hands would be ready to give aid to her.

And though Miss Nancy Tempest had lived over thirty years in the city, she had been in such fear of being patronized or made an object of charity that she had kept as assiduously to herself as a snail to its shell. She plodded on in her own honest, difficult way, getting poorer each year, doing many an act of charity, and carefully shutting herself away from those who, given opportunity to know her, might have loved and respected her. Miss Nancy could only tell the girls of the old wornout paths of labor, and warn them with pathos to be very careful where they went, and not to answer advertisements in a reckless fashion.

The night after their mother left Van and Myra counted up their capital; they had three dollars and twenty cents, and rent paid for seven weeks. That was all.

CHAPTER XX.

A GOOD FIGHT.

“Doth thy heart stir within thee at the sight
Of orchard blooms upon the mossy bough?
Doth their sweet household smile waft back the glow
Of childhood’s morn, the wondering fresh delight
In earth’s new coloring, then all strangely bright?”

Now were Van and Myra in a hand-to-hand struggle for bread. They had thought they were poor that first year after Uncle Aaron’s death when they were in the country, but what was that poverty when compared with this? The little cottage had cost far less than these three dismal rooms, and what fine sunshine and sweet air, what openness and cheer of surroundings, that cottage had! They looked back to it now as to a little Eden from which, by their own folly, they had been banished. True, as a cottage it was a prettier study for a painter than particularly commodious as an abode; but oh to have it back, all sweet and sunny, all their own!

“Here,” sighed Myra, “everything costs money! Look at the kindling! five cents for a little bundle which Miss Nancy can make do for two mornings, but I can hardly light a fire with it, it is so little! In the country we could pick

up kindling anywhere; as for fuel, I look at every good lump of coal as if it were gold, it is such a price. How cheap wood was at home, and Uncle Daniel would at any time bring us half a cord for nothing! When I see poor little youngsters trotting about the streets carrying armfuls of bits of wood and rubbish to burn, I think of the quantities of better fuel rotting in our woodlands, or burned in the brush-heaps every spring, and here it would cost so dear."

"Nothing is cheap here but human sorrow," said poor Van, looking anxiously at her thin, fast-shrinking purse. "Did you ever hear of meat being so dear? and potatoes, and all kinds of vegetables? The price is way up. As for butter, we haven't thought of tasting that since mother went away; and, Myra, we are at the last milk-ticket and we can't afford any more; we must do without milk."

"Small loss," said Myra; "the milk is so poor I don't yearn for it. When I think how much sweet milk and rich buttermilk we gave in the country to the very pigs! and now we can't have as good for ourselves."

"Uncle Daniel, I know, thought we were just like the prodigal in the parable, when we gathered up all we had and came into a far country. But I'm sure, for one thing, we haven't spent our money on riotous living. How we have

counted every cent and thought twice before spending it; how we have economized, even in food!"

"But we have come to the prodigal's end," said Myra, "envying the very pigs, and thinking how the hired help in the country have better rooms, more light, air, food, fuel, than we can get."

"I wonder," said Van, "that I had n't heard that parable preached on often enough to be a warning to me in my life conduct."

"Unluckily, Van, the preaching is done by *men*, and you don't admit that they can give girls or women any particularly good advice. You toss their books into corners," said Myra dryly.

"Why will you bring that up," said Van between laughing and crying; "I reckon that then I had a deal more self-confidence than I have now. But oh, Myra, how it all comes back to me—that great garret so sunny and sweet-smelling, the fields waving on every side, the music in the poplars, the flowers in the garden, the singing of the birds, the hum of the bees; such plenty, such peace; good Uncle Aaron, so proud of us and so kind; mother, the pattern and adviser and centre of her whole neighborhood! Oh, Myra, we did n't dream how fortunate and happy we were!"

“No, Van, we did n't; we took it all as a matter of course. As I looked into my Bible this morning for a verse for the day, I saw this, ‘Behold thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God,’ and I thought that we had sure enough—a real little Eden.”

“And we have behaved just like Lot, who for the sake of gain went to live in Sodom! Can we ever be forgiven for our folly?” cried Van.

“God remembered Lot even in Sodom, and sent angels there to him. Perhaps angels are on their way to us. At all events God can bring us good even out of our errors. You know ‘He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder he will restrain.’ Who knows? our Father may lead us back to Eden when our lessons are learned.”

Yes, they had lived in a sweet and homely Eden of plenty and safety and neighborly kindness. Sometimes when they had read of millionaires, of summers at Saratoga, of winters in Florida, of trips to Europe, they had counted themselves poor. They had been sure they were poor in the little brown house, but what was that poverty to this? At home! They never thought of calling this shabby den a home. Home was in the country, with its friendly faces, words, and deeds.

Even if they had become very poor and

shabby, no one at home would have thought the less of them for that. They had been invited as before to all the social gatherings, the picnics, sleigh-rides, barn-parties; at church how many cordial hands had grasped theirs; how many invitations to tea, to rides, to church sociables had multiplied to them! And these recreations had been dear to their hearts. They had enjoyed croquet and lawn-tennis as much as any girls, and had been leaders when conundrum parties, tableaux, or soap-bubble parties had come off.

When their fortunes had fallen lowest did any one guess it that first this neighbor and then that came with the little kindly offering?— a pie, “because it was so nice,” a cake, “because one too many had been baked,” a roll of butter, “just to show what I can do,” a string of sausages, “because, Mrs. Milbury, I want you to see that I am nearly as good a hand at sausages as you are.”

These were of the offices of humanity and the amenities of life in the home which they had so lightly abandoned. Now Miss Nancy Tempest was their only friend. Perhaps that was their own fault for not trying to make friends, but it is very hard for poor and sensitive people to thrust themselves upon those who seem to be more fortunately circumstanced.

Miss Nancy was kindness itself, but she was so worn, so pinched, so despondent, so homesick for the scenes and fashions of her youth, that the girls had nearly as much heart-ache for Miss Nancy's troubles as for their own. As for other people, what cold stares often met their faded gowns and the bonnets dismal from many an unexpected wetting, as they had trudged through the wintry city seeking work. How hard were the pavements to feet accustomed to turf and springy roadsides, and now aching in badly worn shoes. How often their feet were wet, their skirts draggled; what miserable colds Myra had—Myra who had always seemed so healthy. At market or grocery what open scorn on the faces of trades-people at the meagre, miserable purchases which were yet so heavy for their diminishing means.

“I'm afraid we'll come to the soup-kitchen and the free bread and coal distribution,” said Myra with a burst of tears.

“I'll die first!” cried Van, the proud Milbury maid.

“You are right about it,” said Myra, sobbing. “We are not to forget what is due to our father's honorable name. Our people have always paid their way and been honest. Uncle James was not any of our blood; he was only make-believe kin.”

Then the two took "a good cry" together. It was not often they cried, except perhaps at night when they none of them had anything to do, or Miss Nancy's eyes were too poor to make button-holes, and they all crept early to bed to save fire and lights.

On such occasions Miss Nancy had to lie awake in wrapper and slippers until her last lodger was in. This wakefulness at night was a great grievance to Miss Nancy. "To think," she would say, "how lovely it was at home when I was a girl. I used to go to bed before candle-light often, and the windows were open and honeysuckles grew about them and made the air so sweet as I lay in bed and saw the stars shine through the leaves. Then in the morning we were up early, and the dew sparkled on the grass, the sky was full of splendid colors, and my morning-glory vines were full of colored bells waving in the wind. Oh if I could only go to bed at seven or eight once more, it would make a new woman of me!"

One evening Sadie came in; it was about the end of February. "I've come to say good-by, you were all so good to me," said Sadie; "I'd have been dead by now if you had not helped me. I'm going away. I'm going to live in the country. You all said so much about the country and how nice and safe and healthy it is,

that I'm going to try it. I'm going to live with a nice old market-woman. I met her in the market as I went there to get things for my cousin, and she said I looked delicate and ought to live in the country, and I said I wished I could. So we talked it over, and she offered to give me a dollar and a quarter a week to live with her. It is not much, but I'll have no expense for washing or living; I am to be just like one of the family and have a good room to myself, and once a month I am to come to town with the market-wagon for the day. I think I'll like it. As for the money, I never had a dollar and a quarter a week just for clothes in my life."

"You've got good sense," said Miss Nancy; "I wish all girls had as good, and there wouldn't be as many shop and factory girls left in the city, and what were left would stand at a premium and be better treated."

Van and Myra had seen none of the other girls of their shop but Sadie and Delia since Uncle James departed.

"I'll tell you what you'd better do, girls," said Miss Nancy, soon after their mother left. "Furnished rooms bring twice as much as unfurnished. Suppose you rent the rooms furnished, and then you may come in with me and will be at no expense except your share of the

fuel and light. I would n't take that from you if I could help it. And when the time you have paid for is up, you can just pay me for the rooms and keep the difference you get on your furniture. Every little helps in a tight place."

"But how could we sleep?" asked Myra.

"One of you could sleep with me, and you could bring your lounge into my sitting-room and one of you sleep on that. Or I'll sleep on the lounge and give you two the bed—I do n't care."

"Well, you are the kindest! You remind me what it says in the Bible of the 'riches of the liberality' of some who were really poor," said Myra. "You must come of the family of the woman who gave the two mites—all she had."

So once more on the wall of the corner house was pinned a strip of paper written, not now in Miss Tempest's old-style cramped hand, but in Van's broad script, and on it "Three Furnished Rooms to Let at No. 8 Aspen Square—Suitable for Housekeeping." The time must have been unfavorable, or Aspen Square, sunless, with its doddered black tree, its broken sidewalk, its gutter running full with mud, soap-suds, refuse, did not attract a house-hunting public. Only two or three ventured to No. 8 to inspect the three furnished rooms, and none of

these seemed struck with the bargain. "Too dark." "Wanted more beds." "Rooms too small." So no tenants sub-let Van's apartments, and the 'Milbury maids' held the ineligible quarters still.

"Don't fret about the rent," said Miss Nancy, "for I lose nothing by your keeping the rooms till some one offers, at least. And on the paper was written, "Three Rooms, Furnished or Unfurnished, etc."

Myra wrote a very good hand, and after haunting offices until she was ashamed to be seen in them, she by dint of persistence obtained some copying to do now and then. There was a very good offer of salary made by a literary lady who wanted an amanuensis and reader. She seemed interested in what Miss Nancy told her of the country sisters, and perhaps one of them might have had the place, but neither of them understood any French for the words and phrases constantly in use; also they were unable to pronounce the scientific words in general use in works on botany, geology, or other of the natural sciences.

"Why did n't we study harder, go to school longer, get better educated?" groaned Van. "Why did n't we know something *well*—even how to read?"

"Miss Nancy told me to-day not to fret; she

would make more button-holes and share her last cent with us; and that poor dear Delia told me she owed all the comfort she had to us, and she'd share her wages with us," sobbed Myra. "I declare, Van, it is just like the early Christians who had all things in common. It is a comfort in our troubles to see what hearts of gold the Lord has in the world, and I know there are thousands more, if we could only find them, or they knew how to find us. The brotherhood spirit must be in the church yet."

The papers which Myra copied were a poor enough recourse. Bending over a table in the dim light of her own or Miss Nancy's room, her fingers often stiff and blue with cold and the unaccustomed work of holding a pen for hours at a time, by hard toil all day she could earn forty, even fifty cents! She was not a rapid scribe. But she was not able to get copying for over one or two days in a week.

The crochet-work was giving out. The warehouse did not want too large a stock of these wool goods for the summer weather. Much of this kind of work was now on hand. Twenty or thirty cents a day Myra made for a time, and then there was no more of that employment. She tried a slop-shop and asked for flannel shirts to make by hand.

“What! no machine! The shirts are eight cents each all done, and you can't make over two a day by hand, sure.”

“That will be better than nothing; I have no machine,” said Myra.

“Well, you can try half a dozen. Where is your money for security?”

“What security?” inquired Myra.

“For the goods. We can't risk losing our goods, having strangers sell them or pawn them and never come back,” replied the shopwoman.

Myra's face crimsoned painfully—her eyes filled with tears. The forewoman was not hard-hearted and she pitied the girl.

“We have to do it, child,” she said more gently; “a rule is a rule, and you'd be amazed if you knew what ways of tricking there are in this world. You're from the country I'll venture.”

“Yes; and I don't know anything about trickery.”

“Be careful then, or you'll get victimized somehow. In the cities the bad ones and the tricky ones make their living, leaving the hereafter out of their account.”

“I have only sixty cents,” said poor Myra, looking at the flannel shirts done up six in a bundle.

“Well, there, I’ll let you have the bundle and take the risk outside of that. I know you’re all right. Dear me, what danger you’re in.”

“Could n’t you tell me what to take care of, or be afraid of?” said Myra, who in point of fact had been afraid of everything she saw in the city above the size of a six-year-old child. “I live in terror of I do n’t know what snares and pitfalls.”

“Well, look out for advertisements that promise much and end in only meaning harm to you some way. All these extraordinary promises mean cheating. They do have a society that looks after these things, and warns the women, and prosecutes; but they have their hands full, there are so many ways of deceiving. Why I’ve known girls to be cheated out of their trunks and their last cent with promises of a splendid situation, and they to hand over the money for a ticket, and their trunk to be checked, and they left standing half a day crying in a station, while Blackleg, he or she, had made off with the money. Oh this is a hard world!”

Thus February passed, and Miss Tempest was complaining of feeling very ill. “Every bone in me aches. I’m so stiff I can hardly move. I know I’m in for a siege of rheumatic

fever. I can hardly see with pain in my head. First shivers and then heat. My hands tremble so I can't set a stitch. Promise me, girls, make me a solemn promise, you'll not send me to a hospital."

"But, Miss Nancy, they say they are so much better—"

"Van Milbury, hush! You don't know what you are talking of. I have held my own, such as it is, and I *wont* go to a pauper ward. Let me die first. Promise you'll keep me here."

"Yes, yes," said Myra, "so we will, and nurse you our best, too."

"I don't know how we'll get on," groaned Miss Tempest, between pain and anxiety. "There are the rooms to take care of and wash for. And the lodgers' rent just pays my rent, fuel, gas, and water-rates. All my clothes and food and extras I get out of the button-holes, and when I can't do those"—

Delia had stood by the stove drying her feet and dress at the oven. She had just come in. She spoke up. "I didn't tell you before. I've been out all day looking for work. I had to give up my place as 'dish-wash' because the cook's niece is just come from Ireland and he wanted it for her. So I'm out of work just in the nick of time. Miss Tempest, you go to bed and tell me just what to do for you. I'll bring

your bed in here; it will be much better than in that little dark room where it is. I'm strong and willing, and I'll take care of all the house and do the washing just the same as you have, and what time I have I'll make button-holes to bring us in some money for food. I was button-holer at Apsley's and I'm pretty good at it. I'll try hard to make them nice."

"Perhaps I can manage a few," said Miss Nancy. "What a blessing you are, Delia!"

"You've been like a mother to me," said Delia.

"Bread cast upon the waters, Miss Nancy, and found after many days," said Myra. "Who knows but some other of the bread will come flocking home when you least expect it, and make you flourishing?"

The girls helped Delia move the bed and give Miss Nancy a hot bath and a rub with some lotion of her own compounding. But as they woke up through the night they heard her groaning. They had moved their lounge into Miss Nancy's room for Delia.

"I'm afraid Miss Nancy is going to be very sick," said Myra.

"I wonder we are not all very sick," said Van, "this house is so dark and dank. The cellar is full of water. I know the drains leak. I think if the Board of Health did its duty, it

would make a visitation and abate this entire square as a nuisance and a typhoid-fever bed."

"It is not as bad as some places in the city by half, and yet people—even babies—live," said Myra. "They live in spite of unsanitary conditions."

"Our rent is part of what Miss Nancy has to pay her rent with," said Van; "one thing is sure, we must re-let our rooms, or we must pay the rent ourselves, even if we starve. We cannot make her destitute."

She had walked weary miles and many days to find a place to sew with a dressmaker. She had secured one finally, as she could run a machine rapidly. Wages, a dollar and a half a week.

"Your learning will be worth a fortune to you," said the *modiste*. "Most ladies do not pay their apprentices at all. And then you get your dinner."

The dinner was cold tea and dry bread, small slices of cheese or mutton being added every other day. The boasted learning consisted in being sent out on innumerable errands to match goods, buy sewing-silk, thread, needles, or buttons, going home with big boxes or bundles of work, running a machine, tidying up the work-room morning and night. She had a walk of a

mile and a half morning and evening and was sometimes kept out until late at night, frightening Myra nearly to death by her absence. The exercise may have been good for health, but it was very bad for her shoes, and the first fortnight's wages went in shoes and overshoes. Even this poor place was not a permanency. Lent was come and work slackened. After three weeks Van was told she would not be needed any longer. The next morning an advertisement for a "companion" met her eye. She started to interview the lady at the address given.

"La!" screamed the maid at the door when Van stated her case, "*you* wont do. She wants some one stylish, as can sing Italian songs, play cards with her, and dress up to the last notch!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HAND OF MERCY.

“What griefs that make no sign,
That ask no aid but thine,
Father of mercies! here before thee swell!”

MISS NANCY TEMPEST was now in the midst of a rheumatic fever, and fearfully tormented as if possessed by a demon. Delia was indefatigable in caring for her and for the house and in making button-holes. As Van and Myra were perforce idle part of the time, they also helped nurse Miss Nancy. To conceal their miserable poverty, they kept more in their own room, and Myra made much of the little copying she found to do, and Van never told that for her three weeks' work at the dressmaker's she received only the dollar and a quarter that she paid on the rent and the money which bought her shoes. She was careful however to show her shoes.

That Miss Nancy should not guess how very poor they were was one great object in their lives now, and that the home people should not know it was another. It sounded well to write that Van had a place in a fashionable dress-making establishment, and that Myra was doing

copying for a lawyer. When Van was given her *conge* by the fashionable dressmaker they failed to report it.

“This is going to be a terribly late spring,” said Myra to Van. “It is the first of March and as cold and raw as mid-winter. If only warm weather would come we could do better—no fuel, no lights to use, food so much cheaper. How I long for something fresh out of the ground, good fresh vegetables! Why did n’t we rely more on Uncle Daniel’s advice, Van?”

“We thought less of him because he was abrupt and plain in his speech and ways, although he was true and kind. Uncle James was dapper and smooth-spoken and made indefinite large promises; we thought him much nicer than Uncle Daniel, but see what a cruel, greedy, scheming, wicked man he was! I am glad he was not our mother’s real brother!”

“If we could only get back to the country,” said Myra, “it seems as if I’d never want to leave it again and never want anything again.”

“But we cannot get back,” said Van. “We have no money for our railroad fares, and we could not pay for moving our few things. Our clothes are worse than ever; we really have nothing good. We have no money to hire a house, and nothing to put in it if we could hire it. We will never be able to go back.”

“O Van, Van, whatever are we coming to!” cried poor Myra despairingly.

“I see what we might have come to and where we have been so wretchedly foolish,” said Van. “People who from childhood have been used to city life and city ways might get on better than we do. If we had had a better education we might have fared better. I have heard of one young woman who gets an ample living canvassing for advertisements for newspapers; a great many girls are employed as book-keepers and type-writers. As I lie awake at night I see how we might have done better in the country. Uncle Daniel was always saying that we should make our living from the ground. O Myra, we might have set ourselves to raising fowls, eggs, and fancy birds. We could have had canaries and pigeons, kept bees, and raised small fruits, mushrooms, and silkworms. There’s a good sale for all the cocoons of silk you can get. They bring a dollar a pound, and from Washington they will send you eggs and full directions free. If we had only had sense and enterprise, and been willing to do what was at our hand and that we could do! I see in the stores and markets so many things which we could have raised for sale. Then at home you and mother could have done as much crocheting and knitting as you do here,

and have sent the goods by mail to the shop; they are light; or they could have been expressed once a month."

"It is too late now," said Myra wistfully, "unless we tell Uncle Daniel the whole story. And it would break mother's heart and Teddie's to know how we have suffered."

"It seems as if I can't tell it to any one," said Van passionately. "It seems as if there is a seal on my lips, a stone on my heart, and I cannot speak of what I have gone through. And as for Uncle Daniel, you know he is not rich. I doubt if he is yet out of debt. I think his mortgage is not cleared off; and his home is small, and besides all his big family, he has grandma and mother and Aunt Sara Ann's sister there. No, we must not burden Uncle Daniel with the results of our own obstinacy, or rather of mine; I was the one who planned all this coming to the city. We made our bed, as they say, and now we must lie on it. It is a very hard one, Myra."

Yes, it was a very hard bed, and like some other poor ones seemed destined to get harder every day. To the daily quest for work always the same reply, "Nothing to do," and the city seemed thronged with people looking for employment.

"We are so over-stocked," said the forewo-

man of the "knit goods warehouse" to Myra, "that really we dare not give you any more work. I'm very sorry, for I know you are in a strait. You look sick and troubled. It is dreadful hard to be poor. I have all I can do to make both ends meet for myself and my old mother. I wish I could think of something for you."

"Everybody says the times are so hard," sighed Myra.

"They're always hard in these over-crowded Eastern cities. I don't know what they are in the West. Just as bad, I suppose. I wonder that women will come from the plenty, quiet, safety, respectability of the country to swell the wretched crowds in the city. Now I was born in the city. If it had n't been that I found myself here, when working days began for me, I warrant I would n't have come here. I'd go West now, only for my old infirm mother. Why did n't you go West?"

"Why did n't I stay where I was?" said Myra.

"If those born in the country would stay there and work, the ones born in the city and bound to stay there would have a better chance of work and better wages. But I reckon you did what you thought was right."

"I fear we did what we wanted to, and did not pray over our plans and take counsel of

God," said Myra. "We are learning late that God is willing to guide us every day in little things and great, if we will be guided. Just now I suppose we are eating the fruit of our doings so that we shall not be so headstrong in the days to come."

She went languidly home to Miss Nancy. Delia was gone for more vests to distinguish with button-holes. She had pulled down the blinds on account of her patient's weak eyes, and Miss Nancy was lying alone in the gloom, seemingly watched by the big white horse's head in the picture bequeathed by the late Mr. Dotter. The white horse stared from the wall, the white face of Miss Nancy stared back from the bed.

"How are you, Miss Nancy?" asked Myra, dropping into a chair and leaning against the bed. She was so weak and so breathless; she felt like lying down and never stirring again.

"I was thinking," said Miss Nancy, "that things might be worse. Suppose I had n't Delia, or that Delia was not such a good girl. If she was a girl to be shiftless, or go snooping 'round and gossip with the lodgers, what a case I'd be in! But Delia is that good and hard-working and grateful! Myra child, you look sick. You ought to be back where you were a year ago, among green fields and kind friends.

Why did you ever think of leaving a place where you were so well off?"

"The answer is as I found it in a poem called 'The Letter L.'

" 'It may be so, for then,' said he,
' I was—a fool.'

And like other fools, Miss Nancy, I'm learning a hard lesson."

"Where is Van for this two days?" asked Miss Nancy.

"She—has work, waiting—in a restaurant. She only gets a dollar and a half, as she is a beginner," said Myra, flushing.

But that night Myra was very ill and delirious, and the next day Van could not go to her restaurant, but must stay at home and nurse her sister. She went for the "poor doctor," as the people in the neighborhood called him, not as denoting ignorance of his profession, but that the city paid for his services to the poor. She received medicine as a dole from the public dispensary. This was bitter enough for Van. She thought of the country, of the genial "family doctor," also one of their church elders, who had a good word for the soul as well as the body, and who came as friend as well as physician. And then, what a nurse the mother had been, and how ready all the neighbors were with helpful offices!

The two sisters had striven gallantly with adverse fate, and now at last they seemed finally conquered. That first night after Myra was taken ill Van sat by her dying morsel of fire and "counted up what she had."

Van's habit of counting up her money had been, in more prosperous days, a family joke. She had a fashion of dividing her funds into portions, each designated to a particular use, and would never by any stress of circumstances be driven to take from one part of her hoard to fill up a deficiency in another. When Van would get out her pocket-book and begin to tell out little piles of bills and silver from the various divisions of the book, Uncle Aaron and the mother and the girls would begin to laugh. And what pleasure Uncle Aaron had taken on such occasions in dropping a dollar, or a quarter, or a half-dollar upon one of the little heaps of treasure, secretly, to bring Van's calculations wrong, or openly and boldly avowing that this especial heap was under his particular patronage. Good Uncle Aaron, how faithfully he had loved Adam's daughters, and ruined them at last, by forgetting that his BOOK was a safe business guide!

These thoughts, these tender memories, came to Van as she sat taking account of her fortunes while Myra, sleeping in virtue of an opiate,

tossed and moaned on her pillow. "Rent paid up till April first. Fuel enough to last the month of March out. In cash, fifty cents. Nothing to do." The sick sister to nurse and provide for. Van had need to be stout-hearted. This was a dismal outlook. Most of that fifty cents went for little things for Myra, for Myra was the one to be deceived now, and Van kept a brave face and bought an orange or a lemon, or a little ice to put on the burning head, and tried to turn Myra's wandering thoughts from the question of finances. Now and then, when Delia could sit with Myra for a while, Van would take an hour to look for work which she could do at home; flannel shirts at eight cents each, overalls for the same price, were not to be despised. But she was not a regular hand, and was met by the remark, "No more work. Times are hard now." Poor soul, who knew better than she did that times were hard? Finally Van resolved that if by the end of the week relief did not come she would write the whole story to Uncle Daniel and ask him if she might sell off her little furniture, buy tickets with the proceeds, and come with Myra to his house. She well knew what the reply would be, as well as if the uncle were instead her father. He, like the father in Scripture, would wait for her, seeing her afar off, and run to meet her, give her a kiss of welcome and

all the best that his house afforded. And not one of the six cousins would complain!

During this crucial week the "Milbury maids" lived on two cents a day. Myra lay quietly in bed, her fever broken, and ate without a word the little boiled rice or the slice of toasted bread without butter which Van prepared for her. Van ate boiled potatoes with salt, or corn-meal mush without any condiment. The corn-meal cost two cents a pound; a pound lasted Van over two days; she bought potatoes for a cent a pound, and a pound was all she ate in a day; not that she thrived or felt strong on this bill of fare, but—she lived.

"Van," said Delia to her one evening, when Myra and Miss Nancy slept, "have you tried the Young Women's Christian Association Employment Office?"

"Did n't know there was such a place," said Van. "Up in the country the Young Women's Christian Association do n't have anything like that. I do n't know exactly what they do have; I never took much interest in it some way. I seemed to feel as if everybody was comfortable, and no one needed anything to be done for her. But I fancy the truth was I was idle and selfish and did not want to do my fair share of church work. It sounds as if it ought to be something real good. Do you know what it is,

Delia? What do they offer you, what do they ask of you?"

"I don't know much about it, but I've seen a sign up in a street not far from here, and I mean to go there when Miss Nancy gets so I can look for work again. The book-keeper at the restaurant where I washed dishes is a very nice young lady. She was very kind to me, and I know she thought it was not fair that I should be turned off so the cook's niece should be taken on. To-day I met her—the book-keeper, you know—as I was going to the dispensary for camphor for Miss Nancy. She asked me all about what I was doing and so on, and said I was a good girl and for me to go to the Young Women's Christian Association to look for work when Miss Nancy was better. She said she got her situation through them. She said they were all so kind and so interested in you, and tried so much to help you, and didn't ask any fees. It sounds as if it ought to be nice—'Christian' and 'young women' and 'association;' it sounds good, don't it?"

Van began to remember how in happier days she had said she "didn't want to belong to the Young Women's Christian Association;" she "couldn't see any use in it." It struck her that she had been rather a captious and hard-headed young woman; she repudiated the idea that

ministers or other men could tell her what was suitable for young women to do; and when her sister-women undertook to solve some of the problems in the case, she would have none of them either! She concluded that she would go to the place which Delia described to her and see if her sisters of the city had any helpful advice to give her.

As a stranger to the city's good as well as ill, she had known absolutely nothing of the workings of the Young Women's Christian Association; and having in the country sedulously kept herself apart from its work, she knew nothing of its aims and ramifications. Once Van Milbury had not realized that young women needed any helping or any association for mutual aid and protection. Well, Van Milbury was learning something.

The next morning she told Myra that she was going out on an errand, and gave her a little bell to ring for Delia if she needed anything.

As she turned out of Aspen Square she met the doctor. He was tearing along as usual, as if his day had not half enough hours in it, but he stopped, seeing Van.

"How is your sister?"

"She has no fever, but she looks so very weak; she is so wasted."

"Any appetite?"

Van flushed and stammered. She did not know whether Myra had any appetite or not. She had not experimented upon it.

“She needs good nourishing food—cream, fresh beef, fresh eggs, a few raw oysters. Those rooms you’re in are not healthful for you. Few cheap rooms are fit to live in. There’s a lack of sunlight and chance for ventilation. Drainage is bad. You ought to go to the country.”

The doctor hurried along and Van moved on her way, resolving to get Uncle Daniel to send for Myra, and she would continue her fight for bread alone. But would Myra, who understood it all so well, who had been so fully behind the scenes, permit that?

It was rather early in the morning and few had reached the office of the Christian Association. Van went in and quietly asked the secretary for work. She had no references but her landlady; she knew no regular work. As the secretary questioned her, it seemed that there was nothing which she could do but a little hand-sewing, or she could run a machine, if some one supplied the machine.

“Really,” said the secretary, “we have so many applying—and there is so little work demanded just now—and the lack of city reference, you see. I may hear of something soon. I hope I shall. You might leave your name,

but I do n't think of anything at all for you to-day."

Her last hope was gone. Van's resolution and calm gave way.

"I'd—I'd take *anything*—housework, chamber-work, anything," said poor Van, clinging to the desk, she was so faint and weak and her head reeled so, and then she burst into tears. The secretary looked at her keenly. She had held her place a number of years and was shrewd. The neatness, the good material, the nice fit of Van's well-worn clothes, the refined air, the soft voice, the thin white face, the wasted well-shaped hands, the quivering nerves, the heavy dark lines under the eyes, all told the story to her experience. She came out from behind the desk, took Van gently by the arm, marched her into the next room, placed her at a little table, and said, "Waiter, a good breakfast, quick!"

Van could not stop to reflect that this was the first meal ever served out to her by charity. The aroma of the coffee, the homelike look of the nice bread and butter, the appetizing odor of the steak and potato-cakes—there was no resisting them. Van found that she had an excellent appetite herself, whether Myra had or not. Besides, she had not had so good a meal for over two months. That was hard on a girl used

all her life to mamma Milbury's admirable cooking. She ate and was refreshed.

She had no words wherewith to thank the secretary for that breakfast. She returned to the desk and, speechless, looked at her. A little color was creeping into her wan face, her eyes were brighter, her drooping figure erected itself. She was Van once more.

"Give me your address," said the secretary. "You say you are from the country and have only been six months in the city. I do not know but I have thought of something for you. I will see. Go back home and don't go out again to-day; I may send you word. Your sister is sick you told me? This has been a very sickly season. You do n't look well yourself."

"If I could get something to do," said Van, "I should soon be all right. I am naturally very strong. There is nothing the matter with me but hard times and worry."

"We all have our share of those," said the secretary, "and in the end even those may do us good. When we can say to God, 'Thou hast known my soul in adversity,' we shall do well."

Van felt brighter and better as she went into the street. How much she wished she had always belonged to the Young Women's Christian Association! She had five cents in her

pocket. She bought a little milk-biscuit of yesterday's baking for a cent and two oysters for four cents. The man opened the oysters for her and Van carried them very carefully in their shells round the corner into Aspen Square. She spread a quilt over the big rocking-chair, bathed Myra's face and arms, did her hair beautifully, put her wrapper on her, bolstered her up in the chair with her feet on the stove, and gave her the two oysters and the biscuit for her dinner, arranging them as nicely as she could on plate and napkin. She was cheery and she made Myra cheery.

That afternoon, while Myra still sat in her chair, Van, like the widow of Sarepta, was baking a little cake of the last left meal. Presently she heard a deep sigh from her sister.

"You feel weak, dear," she said. "I wish I had something nice to give you."

"I wasn't thinking of my food, Van, but of that verse about the unjust steward: 'I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.' How many of us are in just that case!"

"For my part," said Van, "I feel as if I'd like nothing better than to dig, if only I had some rich, well-sunned ground to dig in! I believe I could dig to profit."

CHAPTER XXII.

“ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.”

“What might be done if men were wise ;
What glorious deeds, my suffering brother,
Would they unite, in love and right,
And cease their scorn of one another.”

MYRA was silent for a few minutes. Van put her little corn-cake on the stove to bake. She had had an excellent breakfast at nine, but now it was three, and, unfortunately, she was hungry again !

“Van,” said Myra softly, “you need n’t think you deceive me. You and mother and I came here and kept our poverty secret from Teddie and Uncle Daniel ; then we sent mother away, and you and I have hidden our miseries from her. But you need n’t think you can deceive *me!* You have trusted to my feeling too sick to notice, but I have seen all. Where are the things which you do n’t want me to know are missing? At the pawnbroker’s my poor, dear, kind sister ! The clock, the tray with the big glass pitcher, the silk pillow we had made for the lounge—you carried them off at night while I slept ! It was a hard experience for you, my

proud Van. I hope we have clothes enough left to look for work in.”

Van stood overwhelmed. This was all true, and Myra also had carried the burden which she had thought to bear alone! Happily Delia came in with a letter with the home postmark. It was from Cousin Ben. “We all miss you so much. Aunt Margaret looks so anxious whenever we speak of you that we feel sure you are not really thriving or happy in the city, and that you are not well and strong there as you were here. Why don’t you come back? The little brown house is vacant still. Father says he is sure you would do better there than where you are. Father says if you are wise you will seek your living from the ground. The earth is a generous mother, and when her children go to her for bread she does not send them empty away. She is liberal like her Maker. Father says if you’ll come back and take the little brown house and the acre that is about it, we will plough and lay it out for you, and you can get here by the time seeds begin to come up, for the season is late this year. Come home, girls; we all want you, and I’m sure you want us.”

Over this letter the sisters spent a plentiful rain of tears, and were in the midst of this shower when Delia returned conducting a lady—a lady not so old as their mother, a lady who

looked as if the world had gone well with her, or as if she had the happy alchemy which finds good in all things, and brings from basest metals—gold. Not an imposing and fashionable lady, but with the delicate air of the city's very best refinement and culture, one of those who create their home wherever they are, even for a few moments, and draw instant confidence.

There are some people whose souls are like the sea; they receive the overflowing fulness of the sorrows of other souls, which emptied into the depth of their silence and strength, if it ever comes forth again, returns in other forms, in the guise of gracious dews and showers of ministry. Such a soul was this which met Van and Myra in the deepest of their misery, and into which, to their own amazed relief, they poured their whole story. That dreadful week was ended, and with it ended the period of their direst tribulations.

“No wonder you find it easy to be good and strong and helpful,” said an admiring but superficial friend one day to Mrs. Arden; “you have found the world always going well with you and have never had any trouble.”

“I am glad indeed if I am helpful,” said Mrs. Arden, no shade falling over her steadfast face. But who knew better than did she that it is only in sorrow's garden we gather the herb called

sympathy? In this world it happens that the people to whom others are always drawn to tell everything, themselves tell nothing. It is this very capacity for silence that secures confidence.

If twenty-four hours before this visitor came to their gloomy room any one had told Van Milbury that within such a space of time she would be sitting on a small stool at a stranger's feet, holding a stranger's hand, and pouring into a stranger's ear all the story of their loss, their struggle, their Uncle James, their entire and pitiable defeat, she simply could not have believed it. Proud, sensitive, and reticent as she was, would she be likely to tell how they had been cold, hungry, in the dark, saving up as a talisman one small half candle, "lest anything should happen in the night." For within a fortnight the gas had been cut off from No. 8 Aspen Square, as poor Miss Nancy could not afford longer to pay gas-bills. The lamps of the joint household had been handed over to the inexorable lodgers, and bits of tallow candle had sufficed the sore pressed women on the first floor. Did Van think she could ever tell this? No, not to mother or sister or friend, much less to a stranger. But there, the secret was told. Mrs. Arden from the instant her hand touched theirs and her voice entered their ears was no stranger. She had drunk deep of the words and spirit of

Christ's saying, "All ye are brethren." Christ proposed that spirit of Christian brotherhood as panacea for most of the woes and losses of humanity. That household spirit of self-forgetting, of genial altruism and hourly helpfulness, how it would "smooth the furrows on the front of care," bring hope to the despairing, joy to the mourning, strength to the weary, would *level up* humanity! It should be the constant spirit, the natural atmosphere, of the Church of Christ.

Van wondered much afterward that within only thirty minutes of acquaintance she had been able to tell this dark-eyed lady with the sympathetic face and winning smile all the hidden and bitter secrets of her life. But it all came out then, how mother and Teddie never knew, but were quite deceived, and supposed that the two girls were very busy, so that they could only write once in ten days. "But we could not afford envelopes, paper, and stamps oftener," said Myra.

They even told how they had been living on two cents a day. "We have almost had to hurt dear mother's feelings, writing to her not to come back before the end of summer," said Van. "We could not have her here starving, and yet she feels that she cannot burden our uncle Daniel. It is awful for a woman of mother's age to find herself with no home and no support."

“Not that Uncle Daniel for half a minute begrudges our mother anything or feels her a burden,” said Myra. “He wants to have her there, he asks us all to stay there. He lives in the country where everything is plentiful,” and she sighed, as if one who had wilfully gone out, and shut behind him the crystal-barred Eden-gate, would say, “He lives in Paradise.”

Then they gave this new friend Ben’s letter to read.

This conversation, this sudden warm outpouring of Van’s long-sealed heart, had also given Myra her enlightenments. Sick and half-conscious, she had not really known the depth of their destitution, nor realized how much Van had taken to the pawn-shop nor how very, very little had there been given for the articles which they cherished as most precious. Neither had Myra known how Miss Nancy Tempest was also terribly destitute, now only able to sit up in bed after her weary illness.

Back again came Delia, showing the way to a boy with two big baskets. “They are not for us; there is some mistake,” said Van, as he blundered through the dark hall, walking “sidewise like a crab,” for convenience of his burden.

“Oh they are my baskets, please,” said Mrs. Arden. “That will do, Terry;” then turning to Van, as one asking a favor, she said, “Wont you

get supper now, please, out of the things in the basket? One of them has coal and wood in it. And you will let me have a cup of tea? I have been out since eleven."

Van felt shy of doing this; but the hungry eyes of the convalescing Myra rebuked her, and she hurried to get a comfortable supper. They had not had one of their pretty little table-cloths with its napkins laid out since New Year's day. The red tray was at the pawn-shop, that was a pity; but how fortunate that the blue Japanese tea-pot had been held back! Van had meant to take it off under shelter of the coming night!

As Van stirred up the fire, made tea, spread out the bread and butter and cold chicken and tongue and the raspberry jam, Myra talked to the visitor. The secretary had sent a note to Mrs. Arden telling her of Van. "She knew I would come," said Mrs. Arden; "it is my hobby to look after strangers in the city and—get them off out of it as soon as they can go."

She heard on the other hand from Myra all about Teddie and the trousseau and the absent lover who was doing so well in the West. Then Van poured out the tea, and Mrs. Arden took a cup, but said she could not stay to eat; she had other calls to make. She would be back in the morning and bring her minister. They would like to see him; he was a very good man, and so

interested in young women struggling to make their own living. He would be helpful to them surely. So off she went, leaving Van a five-dollar note, saying it was “pay in advance for some work she would bring the next day.” She also left the sisters to cry heartily in each other’s arms, and then revive, and prepare to eat that delightful supper. But they both vowed they could not eat it without Miss Nancy and Delia.

“I can walk into Miss Nancy’s room,” said Myra, “I feel so strong since that cup of tea. Call Delia to help you take in all the things, and we’ll lay the cloth on the table by Miss Nancy’s bed, and we’ll all be festive. I am sure it will cure Miss Nancy.”

So Myra was escorted in state to a place beside Miss Nancy’s bed, and Delia and Van, with joy and laughter and volubility, carried in the viands, and the tea was renewed, and what a supper they had! Did n’t that big basket contain two pounds of sugar, a can of condensed milk, two whole loaves of home-made bread, a pound of butter, besides the chicken and tongue and half a boiled ham, a dozen of eggs, and a package of maccaroni, not to mention a paper of rice and a can of tomatoes!

Somehow, now that Van’s mind had been relieved of its load, she felt less reticence about her troubles, and as they ate supper, between

Myra's frankness and Delia admitting that she had seen and guessed much more than she had previously intimated, and Van's unusually free speech, they told the whole story of the month of March.

Then indeed was Nancy Tempest confounded. "You girls! Well, I never! Two cents a day! Of all things! And the pawnbroker and all. I never knew you were so bad off as that; and you kept such a steady front. To be so pushed and pressed and half starved, you poor dears!"

"I felt as if I were stealing from you every time I carried anything out of the house," said Van.

"Why you owe me nothing, my dear."

"Still I had nothing to pay any more rent—and then—"

"You'll be all right now," said Delia. "I never saw such a dear sweet lady. She'll see that you find work. And look how Miss Nancy has brightened up with a good meal! The truth is, Van, I'm slow at the button-holes, and have n't much time, and Miss Tempest and I are almost as bad off as you are, or I'd carried you in something; dry bread, weak tea without milk, a little porridge without milk, a herring—that's what we've had to live on."

"I told her all about Miss Nancy, and about you," said Van, "and she said to ask Miss Nancy

if she could call to-morrow when she came to see us. She may, Miss Nancy?”

“Delia,” said Miss Nancy with solemnity, “to-morrow, early, you do up this room your best; rub the stove well with newspaper; put on the bed that best red-and-black-patch quilt that I made at home when I was a girl, and get me out my best bed-gown with the ruffle on the neck and sleeves. I’ll let her see that Nancy Tempest is a respectable person.”

The next day came Mrs. Arden bringing a bolt of linen towelling, which Van was to cut into towels, fringe, and tie the fringe properly; also some crash to make into kitchen towels. She brought also a quantity of children’s clothing in which Delia was to make the button-holes, at twice the price the tailors paid her. She had also a pretty little basket tied with a ribbon, wherein were fruit, jelly, sago, and a bottle of rich milk, for Miss Nancy. Evidently great care had been taken that this basket should be attractive, and seem a friendly gift, not charity, to the touchy Miss Nancy.

Shortly after Mrs. Arden came in came a gentleman whom she introduced as her pastor—Dr. Linsdale.

“Your pastor has gone to Europe; so I must look after his sheep a little,” said Dr. Linsdale, and began to converse with them pleasantly

about their home in the country, their church, Mr. Lowell, the Sunday-school, their loss of their home. "I remember reading about that at the time," he said, "and I felt much sympathy for the ladies so suddenly deprived of their home by a wicked act of defaulting. I wish I had known you sooner. No doubt, Miss Myra, I could have found you a place as a nursery governess."

"Myra," said Mrs. Arden, "what I want to do is to drive round here this afternoon and take you to my house to stay two weeks, until you are quite strong. I have two little girls there to amuse you, and you can amuse them, telling stories and reading to them. Will you come?"

Myra hesitated, but Van spoke firmly. "Yes, indeed, she will. I'll have her all ready. Now you *will* have a chance to get well, Myra. O Mrs. Arden, what shall I say to you?"

"Nothing, but to tell me when to come for her. Does it not say in the Book, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares'?"

"It says also," burst forth Van, "'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me.'"

“I wonder,” said Dr. Linsdale, “if we Christians remember as we ought to thank God for opportunities of service.”

“I will come for you at five o’clock,” said Mrs. Arden.

“I—have nothing fit to come to your house with—” began Myra.

“Nonsense. That wrapper looks very neat and nice. And while you are with me we will devise something for the benefit of this original, odd, generous, good Miss Nancy and her faithful Delia.”

“That is the nicest minister I ever saw,” exclaimed Van, when Dr. Linsdale and Mrs. Arden left. “He’s even nicer than Mr. Lowell. He seems to know so well what to do and say, he is so full of reasonable *conversational* suggestions. I wish I had known him when we first came to the city. What a help he would have been!”

“Do you know who he is?” said Myra, laughing. She had talked most with Mrs. Arden, Van with the minister.

“No; he is Dr. Linsdale.”

“He is the author of that book you flung into the corner of the garret and would have none of, because a man wrote it!” cried Myra in great glee.

“That unlucky book! Well, it never ceases rising up to confront me like Banquo’s ghost!

Well, I mean to tell him of it. I think I'd feel honester, and he'll understand me about it, I know he will."

But meanwhile Van was rummaging bureau-drawers and their one trunk, looking for the best that she and Myra possessed, for Myra's equipment for her visit to Mrs. Arden. Delia was sent out for soap and starch, and called on to help in some very prompt laundry work, while Myra sat by Miss Nancy and both worked, if slowly, on Delia's button-holes. But then Myra and Miss Nancy felt better. They had all breakfasted, as they would dine together, from some of the contents of Mrs. Arden's noble basket.

Delia was quite in ecstasy over the three white aprons, the half-dozen handkerchiefs and collars, the little shoulder shawl of grandma's work, the gingham gown, which Van prepared in the portmanteau for Myra to take on her visit. Delia thought this array gorgeous beyond comparison. She judged it by what she had not; Van judged it by what she had had. The standard of judgment makes so much difference!

When Mrs. Arden came for her guest she found Myra ready, faint, but flushed and hopeful, Van busy on the towels, Delia at button-holing, Miss Nancy remarking that "there was a

springish feel in the air, and next day she would get up, if it *was* April fools' day."

"I shall come for you next week to spend a day with your sister," said Mrs. Arden to Van, "and she will send you a note every day."

"We'll soon get on our feet now, I hope," said Miss Nancy.

"But I want these girls to go back to the country the first of May," said Mrs. Arden. "I've been planning it all out. I believe they can manage it, and can make a good living there. I am going to teach you girls how to retrieve your fortunes."

"Go home! Leave the city! Go back to the country, to our own people!" cried the sisters in chorus, feeling for the instant as if the gates of Eden had swung open to receive its banished. Then dolefully, "But, Mrs. Arden, how can we? It is not possible. We have not the smallest thing for a start. We are so much worse off than we were last spring."

"You are richer in experience," said Mrs. Arden. "You will also be richer by my advice. I believe that will be worth much to you; and as for how you will do it, we must think it out."

"We left there concluding that we could not make a living unless in the city, and considering ourselves entirely defeated," said Van.

"A mistake, such as many make, but you must not allow it to lie as an incubus on all your

lives. The city is full of failures that come from the country, just as it is full of the success that comes from the country. No doubt over half the leading business and professional men in the city have been brought up, through childhood and boyhood at least, in the country or the small villages. These, coming to the city to learn business, trade, or profession, bring with them the health, industry, economy, morality, gained in their quiet country lives when they were content to fare simply, keep regular hours, and live in the full light of the observation and knowledge and criticism of their neighbors. They come with formed habits of unflinching integrity and activity, and so have often a heavy advantage over the city boy, who has lived in far greater temptations and less helpful restrictions."

"But what do you say for *us*, for girls?" cried Van.

"We'll talk of girls some other day," said Mrs. Arden.

But when Mrs. Arden and Myra were gone, Van took her towel-making to Miss Nancy's bedside and this same theme was discussed.

"She says we are to go back," said Van. "I want to go back. I am sure we can never get on so badly in the country as here. But, Miss Nancy, all cannot go back; and besides, think how many there are who have never come from

the country, who have no friends, no helpers there, no knowledge of the country—the many, many girls born and bred in the city, like Delia and the rest—what is to become of them? Isn't there any help for them?”

“Of course there must be,” said Miss Nancy. “As I have told you, time and again, if it was n't for the overcrowding from the country, folks rushing here as soon as they get into any straits at home, there would be more room, more work, and higher wages here in the city. But your case, child, has set me thinking these long nights while I've been lying awake from pain, and I've done a deal of thinking last night and to-day, since I saw Mrs. Arden.”

“Tell me what you have thought, Miss Nancy.”

“I have thought that there should be free industrial schools for girls, where they could learn to do something well, whether it is to cook, or button-hole, or type-set, or book-bind, or what not. They should come to working days fit to earn wages, and not have to put in time when they need to make their bread learning to do the work, and being fined and taxed for doing it badly. There ought to be organizations of good Christian women to go out after these poor girls who are too proud or shy or ignorant or even evil to want to go to them. And the folks in

your case and mine, child, should n't hold so aloof and be so close-mouthed and proud, towards the richer Christian women. We ought to trust them more and give 'em a chance to be Christlike. There's the help for the poor girls of the cities."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WELCOME HOME!

“My home! The spirit of its love is breaking
In every wind that plays around my track,
From its low walls the very tendrils wreathing
Seem the soft links to draw the wanderer back!”

IT was on Tuesday that Myra went to Mrs. Arden's. Van and Delia worked industriously on the vests and button-holes that had been brought to them, and Miss Tempest sat by the fire and watched them as they sewed in her room. On Saturday Van went to stay with Myra over Sunday. Terry came for her and the work in Mrs. Arden's *coupe*. As Van luxuriously rode to West Philadelphia, she mused on the phantasmagoric changes in her fortunes. The former Saturday, chilly and hungry, with two cents for food; now, riding in a lovely *coupe* to make a two days' visit in an elegant home. Van could hardly believe that she was not dreaming.

She found Myra and Mrs. Arden in a charming little morning-room opening from the nursery. Mrs. Arden was prepared to give the day entirely to the sisters, their plans and prospects.

“Mrs. Arden,” said Van, “you seemed, from what you said Tuesday, to consider the city a good place for country boys to come.”

“Only if the boy has good health, firm moral principles, and such a paramount taste for business that he cannot find his sphere in the country and has a very good chance of distancing his competitors in the city. Even then I believe that his most hopeful prospects would lie in the less crowded new towns of the young West.”

“But you seemed to think that the boys’ chance of success in the city was greater than the girls’.”

“Given equally firm moral character—let us say religious character, as judging from what is best—I think the boy’s chance is better than his sister’s. You will understand that it is easier and safer for a boy to economize and get along on very narrow means in the city than for a girl. There are more cheap, decent restaurants and lodging-houses for men than for women or girls. If a girl comes to the city to clerk or to learn a trade, she should have some relative or friend to afford her a good home. For a long time she will receive only a trifle of wages, which in many instances will not suffice to clothe her as her employers will insist upon her being clothed. Many people think that clerking in

stores offers a girl a fine opportunity for making a living, but really it is very hard and wearing. Long hours, long standing, lifting and reaching for goods, exposure to close air, and draughts, and sudden changes, often great irregularity in the mid-day meal, all these things break down the health of girl clerks. In my view housework is safer, easier, and far better paid. The wages may be the same, but board and washing are included for the house-girl, and eat up all the wages of the clerk."

"But housework of any kind in the city generally means to share bed, room, and table with low, untidy foreign servants, of gross manners and a hostile creed," cried Van.

"That is too often true, except in the case of nurses who are to eat and sleep in the room with their charge. A nurse in a kindly Christian family is a loved and esteemed member of the family, if she shows herself worthy of the position. As to the bed and room, the shop-girl, such as Delia, and the others of whom you told me, have the worst possible accommodations in that regard. My ideal would be that ladies keeping one or two or more girls should select those of like manners and antecedents, give them the comforts and amenities of home life, the rooms, rest, books, that will make life agreeable. In the country the objection you state is

obviated; the working-girl there becomes one of the family, and is loved and considered as she shows herself worthy. But I am not suggesting this line of life to you; we are only arguing on general principles before we come down to particulars."

"We would certainly rather go back to the country," said Myra; "I have not felt real well since I left there."

"I have been making a little plan for you; let us discuss it. I have a fancy that if you follow my advice, you can go home to make your fortunes. How much land was there about that little cottage which you lived in?"

"We only had a few rods of garden, but outside of that there was over an acre that would rent cheap. That house with its land was so left that Mrs. Steele cannot sell it, and it is too small for any man to take, and women don't rent land usually; so it is not very available and would be rented very cheap to any one who would keep up the house and fences properly. I think forty dollars a year would cover the whole, we to do our own repairs," said Van, all her farming instincts awake.

"Describe to me the kind of place it is. Was the soil rich? Is the house dry? Has it a cellar? Has it any extra room?"

"The house was dry and comfortable, and

has a good walled cellar under the whole of it. The cellar has two windows and a sloping outside door. We did not use it. Over the 'L' kitchen was a room which we did not furnish; it had a south and a west window. There is a well of splendid water, and there are two great apple-trees close by the house; and there are some fruit-trees, a good pear and some cherry-trees, along the fence in the acre that we did not rent. As I look back to it now, it seems a dear lovely place. When we lived in it we contrasted it with our large nice house and the handsome farm of Poplar Rise, and thought it very poor."

"If you go back there now and compare it with Aspen Square, it will improve and not lose by comparison."

"But, Mrs. Arden, how can we go back? We have not furniture enough for the house now, though as for that, I suppose we can get on; we are very destitute of clothing; we have no money for car-fare and for moving our things; we could not be sure of earning the rent the first year. I have thought this week that if Myra and I could get work until next spring and save up all we possibly can, we may be able to go back. If Myra could get a place as nursery governess, I should be willing to take anything. If I could find a place in a hotel linen-room, or as

companion to an invalid—if you would only speak for us, Mrs. Arden.”

“I can do better for you than that, I hope,” said Mrs. Arden. “I do not want you to lose a year in your new enterprise; and there is your mother needing a home and longing for you. I think twenty-five dollars each, for clothes, laid out judiciously, now that goods are at the ‘spring sales’ point, will fit you out very well. My husband is one of the directors of the railroad by which you will travel, and he will secure you passes and transportation for your freight. Now several years ago I came into a little property, and according to my custom I tithed it and set apart the tithe—a few hundreds—to use in the Lord’s service; and the manner of use I chose, and it was by Dr. Linsdale’s advice, was to help some of my self-supporting sisters to help themselves. I lend some of this tithe, without interest, for as long as may be needed, to those who can use it to establish themselves in earning a competence. I have never failed in having my loans repaid, often within the time set, though I lend without other security than an honest word. The money is the Lord’s. I lend it in his name and for his sake and he looks after his own. I will lend you of this money two hundred dollars for five years, to be repaid as is convenient during or at the end of that

time, in sums large or small. Of the two hundred, one fifty for clothes, forty for rent for the first year, ten for those small articles needed further for your home, and one hundred keep to pursue your experiment. Have no hesitation, this is not charity; it is a mere loan from your Father through me his steward. Have no fear that you cannot pay it back; I have none. You will succeed."

"But tell us just how you mean us to do!" cried the sisters, bending forward, hope shining in their eyes and gratitude and joy written on their faces. "Oh how good you are to us!"

"I propose that you earn your living, as your uncle advised, from the earth. We will arrange with my grocer here to have your fowls and eggs sent direct to him without middlemen, also all the honey and fresh vegetables that you can raise. This grocer sells butter, eggs, fowls, vegetables, fruits, all only of the very best, to us dwellers on the outskirts of the city, who are willing to pay good prices for the very best. He can take all that you will send and ten times as much, and will pay well for what is nice, fresh, and well-packed. You must keep bees and raise silk-worms—that room over your kitchen will do for them finely. I want you also to raise fancy fowls for sale to a man in the

city, who will buy your fancy pigeons and peafowls and guineas and any feathered thing that you can send him. You must make every inch of ground, everything that grows out of it, available and money-bringing. Each day you will find new opportunities opening to you. Nature herself will be full of suggestions to you. Keep your eyes open, your hands and brains ready. Let Myra, as she has any leisure, continue that plan of studying, so that she will be capable of taking the Barley Centre school when your younger sister marries. By that time your farming experiment will be well inaugurated and Van and your mother can carry it on."

A new hope had dawned for the sisters. They could reconstitute their country home. Myra told Van that each day since she came to Mrs. Arden's she had been reading history and geography and working at arithmetic and grammar. "Mrs. Arden thinks I can soon apply for a certificate," she said joyfully. "She says that my penmanship and reading will go a great ways."

That very night Van and Myra wrote their mother, saying that they were coming home to re-rent the little brown house and make their living in the country. They told part of their plan, saying that they had now money in hand for the experiment. Just the manner of getting

it they meant to confide to their mother privately when they saw her.

Mrs. Milbury wrote back with great joy that she had become so much stronger during her visit to Uncle Daniel's that she had gone out to a place nursing to earn the money needed for her spring clothing, and that the good news from her children was so benefiting her that she felt fully able to earn something more to aid in refurnishing a home. There were to be two or three sales of household goods early in May where their purchases could be made at low figures.

When Miss Nancy heard from the delighted Van the new plan of campaign, she was divided between grief at losing the girls, who during the few months of their acquaintance had grown so dear, and joy at their improved prospects. Joy in the end conquered, for Miss Nancy was of those who can take another's prosperity as cheerfully as if it were their own. She planned for the country life of Van and Myra as if she were planning for herself. "It will do me good every hour to think of you," she said.

"We shall feel less troubled about you, Miss Nancy," said Van, "for Mrs. Arden means to find you and Delia something that pays better than the button-holes. And as soon as we are able to put by money for your travelling expenses, you

must come and make us a nice long visit. Next year perhaps. You can stay all summer with us."

Miss Nancy shook her head. "We may all be dead by that time," she replied. It was a favorite expression of hers.

But if Miss Nancy felt happy that "her girls" were to escape from the hardships of their life in the city, what was the jubilation at Uncle Daniel's!

"I say, sister-in-law and Sara Ann and mother, our girls are coming to their senses," he remarked, rubbing his hands after reading a letter from Van, "coming to their senses with a vengeance. Now they are on the right track at last. Here's Van has written to me asking me to plough the garden and the acre, and harrow it and get it ready for work; and to have the little old barn and the bit of grass near it set off with a high rod and wire-net fence and divided into three parts, for her to raise poultry in. She wants me to buy her some setting hens and put 'em in the barn, and a setting turkey or two, and three hives of bees. She says they'll be home next week, April 20th, and she is going right to work as hard as she can. To-morrow morning every one of my six boys is going to that place to see to that ploughing and chicken-yard, and cleaning up and mending up the old

barn. What a good thing this is, Sara Ann, that it's Ned's school vacation, and our printer is home from Westchester for a vacation. I say, boy, can you hold a plough-handle as well as a composing-stick?"

"You'll see," said the printer. "We boys will put in our best strokes for our Milbury maids."

"Sara Ann," said grandma, "your sister and I will 'tend to all the work here for a day, if you'll take Hannah down to the brown house and get it cleaned for the girls; and you'd best carry over the camphor-chest, and see what stores you can spare them, poor dears."

"Oh there's plenty to spare," said the cheerful Sara Ann; "we have always stores on hand. There's meat and potatoes and beets and turnips and apples and dried fruit. We shall do a big churning the first of the week, and Ben is going to take a grist to the mill Saturday; he'll take the girls a grinding of corn-meal and wheat flour."

"I think I'll look over my big chest and sort them out a couple of pieced quilts, a blanket, and a few sheets and towels," said grandma, very happy and important that she had yet some valuables of her own to bestow on her girls.

Round the neighborhood flew the news that the Milbury maids did not like the city, did not

find that it agreed with them, and were coming home to earn their living among old friends. This soothed the rural pride of the community, and the old affection for one of its best families awoke with vigor. The life-long friends guessed part of the Milbury history and imagined the rest. The error of going to the city was fully condoned by the virtue of return. The Milburys had indeed been recreant to their rustic up-bringing, but now they eschewed urban ways and were to receive bounteous welcome.

“Tired of the uppishness of the city, no wonder; and going to make a living raising things, like Christians.” Thus Hannah, who had never travelled twenty miles in her life, put the experiences of “Adam’s daughters.”

The furniture came back from the city several days before its owners did. The girls were staying at Mrs. Arden’s, who was taking great delight in seeing Myra’s health restored, and both girls busy at her machine on their new clothes.

Aunt Sara Ann and Hannah cleaned and settled the little brown house and put in the goods that the joyful Mrs. Milbury had bought at a sale. Then some thirty of the old friends made a descent upon the little brown house and supplied it with provisions, fuel, little ornamental tokens of friendship, bulbs, garden-seeds,

flower-seeds, onion-sets, cabbage and tomato plants, and seed potatoes of the finest varieties. All that Van would have to do when she came in the morning would be to go to work and complete the planting of her garden, where, thanks to her host of boy-cousins, lettuce, radishes, and peas were already green above ground.

Early in the morning Uncle Daniel met "his girls" at the train. He wanted them to go home with him for a few days and wait for their mother, who was some miles off nursing. But no, Van and Myra said they were not in the least tired, the country air was balm and vigor to them, and every hour now was gold while they could work in the garden.

"But at five o'clock we'll come over to the farm, uncle, and stay all night," said Van.

And now once more they were in the despised little brown house, and it looked a palace to them! What neatness, what comfort, what tokens of liberal love! Oh if Mrs. Arden could see how happy they were! Oh if Delia and Miss Nancy could only share this comfort and joy!

"I shall never rest," said Myra, "until I am able to take care of Miss Nancy's old age as if she were my mother or my aunt. I never shall forget the night when she was going to sell her

precious picture-frame to buy me some flannel. There was a true Christian for you."

"That picture! What is there about that picture?" said Van. "I can shut my eyes and see that big white horse head as clearly as if it were alive and coming towards me!"

Meanwhile the two were putting on old shoes, old flannel gowns, old gloves, and the long unused sun-bonnets, to go out to work in the garden.

But hardly had they begun on the beds, planting cabbages here, tomatoes there, Van directing as to the manner born, and Myra obeying, as she usually did when Van became largely dictatorial, when the little picket-gate began to click, click, click, to the entrance of boys. It was a procession of boys sure enough. The Milbury maids had always been very fond of little boys, and correspondingly popular in return. When living at the Rise they had given nutting, peach, apple, and water-melon parties to the little men of their acquaintance, and had held "sports" and ball and bow-and-arrow tournaments for their delectation. After misfortunes came, the girls had had Sunday-school classes of boys and had been very popular in these. Now the boys had come to welcome their favorites home, and every individual boy had his basket.

“Miss Van, I’ve brought you some goose-eggs, the largest eggs you ever saw.” “Miss Van, I want you to raise some Muscovy ducks like mine. I’ve brought six eggs, half I had; put ’em under a hen, you know.” “Miss Myra, I’m so glad you’re back. Here’s four pigeons—two fan-tails and two tumblers. Can’t I climb up in your barn and fix a place for ’em?” “Miss Myra, I have a couple of pea-fowl eggs here and a hen to set on ’em; she’s a lazy hen, the kind that likes to set on two eggs. I’m going to fix her up in your barn.” “Miss Van, I’ve brought three ears of my new kind of pop-corn for you to plant. It’s splendid; it pops out the biggest Captains!” “Here’s a bag of sunflower seeds; pop said if you wanted to do what was right by your chicken-yard, you’d plant a big row of sunflower seeds around it and down the middle.” “Here’s a lot of plants of sage and thyme and summer-savory and sweet marjoram, to plant near the bee-hives.” “Here’s some slips, Miss Van, roses and geraniums, for near your door, you know.” “Are you afraid of her, Miss Van? She is an Italian queen. I got three yesterday. Do you know how to put her in the hive?” Oh what heartiness, what friendliness, what hopefulness: how good, how very good, it was to be back!

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEREIN CERTAIN SHEAVES ARE GATHERED.

“When I shall to the moment say,
Linger a while, thou art so fair.” FAUST.

NEVER had early summer seemed so fair to the Milbury maids. Every day was more beautiful than every other day; each morning was a marvel of glory, eclipsed only by the glory of each evening. Past experiences of sorrow served but to sweeten present experiences of joy. When the queen of flowers bloomed along the hedgerows and in the gardens, the world seemed in a glow of rosy splendor which vied with the deep clear blue of the skies, the lush green of wayside and field, the sunlight flood of molten gold poured over all.

This beauty, this joy, this peace, set Van Milbury to singing. She rose up from her strawberry bed, pushed back the wide hat, and folding her arms behind her to straighten and rest her shoulders, she broke out,

“Bird of the wilderness,
Blithesome and cumberless,
Sweet be thy matin
O'er moorland and lea.”



Adam's Daughters. Page 389.

She seemed glad as a lark herself. Van had no thought that in her happy heart lay hidden rancor towards any living soul.

I consider that when in the fair garden of the prime, "Satan sat squat like a toad at the ear of Eve," no beast or bird or blossom guessed that here was evil crouched among good, or thought him other than a most peaceable Babrachian. It needed the potent touch of Ithuriel's spear to evoke the undisguised demon from the toad.

As Van stood, resting and singing, a lad in a shabby topless gig drove up and called loudly, "I say, be you Miss Milbury?"

"Yes," said Van, moving towards the fence; "do you want anything?"

"Timothy Drumm wants yer to come ter see him. Says yer kin ride back along er me, an' I lay out ter fetch yer back ag'in. So yer'd better be spry an' git in."

And at the word "Timothy Drumm," wrath and vengeance woke in Van's soul. She perceived that in these months that had grown into two years she had not forgiven Timothy, but held for him an irreconcilable grudge for what she believed to be a fraud. She retorted angrily,

"I want nothing to do with Timothy Drumm. He has swindled us once, and he shall not do it again. If he comes where I am I shall tell him

so," and she drew up her gloves ready to return to weeding.

"Why, girl!" cried the lad bluntly, "Timothy a' n't likely to come to see you nor nobody till he rides in a hearse, an' I do n't reckon that 'll be very long off. Did n't yer know Timothy was a-dyin'?"

"No, I did n't," said Van, and rage began to be appeased in her soul before the chill shade of death.

"He's suffered awful," said the lad, with evident relish at having something to tell. "He a' n't bin out of house for three months. Suthin' growin' in his stomach, doctor says. I live at his house, an' I never liked Timothy anyway, but now I'm main sorry for him, the way he yells sometimes."

Wrath all gone now; in its stead pity in the face of Van. "Did he want to see me?" she asked. "What for?"

"I dunno. But he wants to see you awful bad, he does. He says, 'Jake, you drive over thar an' bring Miss Milbury back along of you. An' you stir your sticks an' hurry, fur if yer do n't git her here afore I die,' sez he, 'I'll knock yer red head off yer,' he sez." Here the boy burst into a loud laugh over what he considered a good joke. "I sez to him, sez I, 'Ef I do n't git back with 'er afore yer dead,' I sez, 'it'll be yer

ghost what 'll knock off my red head, an' I a'n't afraid of ghosts,' I sez. But Mis' Drumm she sez, 'Do, Jake, hurry up, like a good feller, an' git Miss Milbury here, for there wont be any peace till she comes.' Mis' Drumm a'n't half bad; she makes good pies an' nut-cakes, an' she a'n't stingy of 'em neither. So I came along as fast as the old mare could trot it, and yer better come along with me, else that there ghost may knock my red head off some day." And again he laughed loudly.

"I'll come," said Van. "Wait five minutes for me."

She ran into the house for a hasty change of dress, and was soon rolling over the smooth hard roads to the Drumm farm. The distance was seven miles. The lad appeared to have exhausted his fund of conversation, and devoted himself strictly to his driving.

Arrived at the Drumm farm, she found Timothy propped up in bed. He was white, emaciated, evidently near to death. At the sight she melted, and her words, "I am very sorry to see you so sick, Mr. Drumm," were sincere.

"Yes; I wont hold out much longer, Miss Milbury. I sent for yer to settle up a—sort of mistake. Aaron had paid me that hundred and twenty for that yoke of oxen; but Aaron was a careless chap sometimes, an' he paid me one day

comin' out of the bank, and said he 'd get the receipt from me some other time—an' he forgot it plumb. Paid me in bills—the hull of it—but I saw my way clear to get it ag'in from you gals an' Daniel, an' I got it. An' it a'n't done me a mite of good either. It was the meanest trick I ever played, an' it lay pretty heavy on me since I got so low down; an' I told my old woman, an' she sez, 'Timothy, you'll never get ease till yer send for Miss Milbury an' make a clean breast of it.' So finally I sent—and there's the money just as I got it from yer, two fifties and two tens; count it an' see."

Van turned over the bills.

"I reckon Timothy didn't quite calculate how much wrong he was doin' on that there occasion," said his wife.

"I'm glad you have given it back," said Van, "and I hope you'll be easier in your mind. It is written in the Bible, 'Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy,' and you have done both. The Lord is willing to be gracious to you."

"I reckon," said Timothy, closing his eyes and turning away as if he wanted to sleep.

The boy's red head was thrust in at the window. "Yer'd better let me take yer home, Miss Milbury. I've got plenty to do to-day, bein' as I'm the only man on the place."

Van told him to take her to Uncle Daniel's home. He had raised the money, and to him it must be returned. When this affair had been talked over, and Uncle Daniel had his money again, he said, "I was just going over to see you, Van. You will have to go to West Chester to-morrow with me to testify in that lawsuit about Miss Prudy's farm. You and I were there the day the deeds were made, and we heard all that her cousin said. We are Miss Prudy's chief witnesses." Then seeing Van's dismay, "We can start at six, and get home on the night train, so you 'll only be gone one day; and your expenses will be paid. You might as well take it cheerfully, and make a pleasure jaunt of it."

"So I might," said Van, brightening up. "And I must hurry home and do ever so much work if I am to abandon my acres to-morrow."

"Sit by and have your dinner first," said Aunt Sara Ann, "and one of the children can take you over in the buggy. I have ten pounds of butter to send to Mrs. Steele, so it wont put us out any to take you."

The next day Van made her trip to West Chester, finished her business in court, and had a pleasant visit with her printer cousin. When she took her place in the cars to return home she noticed a slender young woman in heavy mourning whose face dimly seen through her

veil seemed in some way familiar. Three fine children were with this lady, and Van knew that she had never seen the children. After a time the lady spoke to the oldest child, a bright boy, and he came to Van and said,

“Miss Nelly Ames wants to know if you will come and speak to her.”

Van sprang up at once. In her joy at seeing her former charge she shook hands warmly. ‘I am so glad to see you improved and going out again!’ she exclaimed. ‘I felt that something about you was familiar, but these children are such unexpected companions for you that—’

“It is all owing to you, Miss Milbury, and the scolding you gave me, as I called it, though it was just the plain sense I needed—and the words at the end of your letter. I kept thinking of what you said, that I was quarrelling with God, and ought to be working for him instead. I began to feel that my excessive mourning was not right and praiseworthy, but really wicked and rebellious. One day I picked up a newspaper that my companion had brought into the room, and there I read of the death of a man, his wife, and youngest child, in a falling building, and that three children were left destitute and friendless. It came to me like a flash that here was a work and a family for me. I resolved to open my house, invite the widow of our former pastor

to live with me, and take these three children and bring them up for God. My brother approved my plan ; my sister feared I could not endure the responsibility ; but I secured the children, had them made my wards by the court, and in a week I was back in my own home where I had been with my father and brother. I think it would have killed me at first, only the children at once seemed so loving and so fond of me, and I so felt that I was doing what my dear father would approve, that I lived through those first few months, and now I feel a different person. We have been up in the country, looking at a little summer place I have where I think of taking my family to spend the hot weather. We have missed our express train and have had to take this train to the Junction. I am so glad, because I have met you."

"And I am so glad too," said Van. "I should be yet more glad if you looked a little stronger."

"I improve," said Nelly. "My wild indulgence in grief has no doubt hurt my constitution, and I never was very strong ; but now I hope God will spare me to bring up these children to be good and happy."

The talk then passed to some of Van's experiences, and to her present prospects, and to the characters and dispositions of the children.

"I thank God that ever you came to the Re-

treat," said Nelly. "By this time I should have been a maniac if God had not sent you there."

As the train drew near the Junction where Van must leave her, Nelly took off her watch and chain and said, "Dear Miss Milbury, I want you to take these, and wear them all your life for my sake, so that you will think of me and pray for me and will remember how you have helped me."

Van could not refuse a gift made in this way, and she and Nelly Ames parted with a warm embrace as of tried friends.

This little episode seemed to add fresh joy to that blessed summer of the return of Adam's daughters. How large a harvest had sprung up in Nelly Ames' life from those two little seeds of truth dropped by Van Milbury—in the name of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXV.

GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY.

“The looks, the smiles, all vanished now,
Follow me where the roses blow.
The echoes of the household words
Are with me midst the singing birds.”

MRS. ARDEN was an enthusiast in any work which she undertook, and had the happy faculty of arousing enthusiasm in others. Her pastor used to say of her that he could not tell whether she was most helpful in what she did herself or in what she made other people do. Thoroughness was one of her characteristics; she did not take up a piece of work, carry it forward until the novelty was worn off, and then drop it for another. Each new plan was carried to a fair completeness.

When she became interested for Van and Myra, she awoke kindred interest for them in her friends and relations, and after they returned to their early home her concern for them continued, and a monthly letter of cheer and advice kept pace with her constant thoughtful suggestions wherever in the city these might be of benefit to them.

The sisters had not left the city empty-

handed. Besides many little presents of dress and household belongings, Van was given a sewing and Myra a knitting machine.

"I'll never lose that machine by taking it to the city and risking it in a store," said Van, regarding her machine with great joy. She had felt wonderfully handicapped without one. These two machines were to be the winter reliance of the Milbury maids; for the summer they had other occupations.

The black chasm of their winter experience made it seem long years since they had been in this home neighborhood, and at first their eyes could not be satisfied with seeing nor their ears filled with hearing. As they worked in their garden how marvellously beautiful and blue were the skies, across which drifted clouds shining as the throne of Oama! What rare domes of fragrant bloom were those apple-trees, and how delicious the multitudinous murmurs of the bees among the blossoms! Sweet and homelike were the deep cooing of the pigeons preening themselves on the barn roof, and the sharp cheep of the downy chicks in the palisaded yard. On every side were freshness and greenness and growth—lush fields of grass or grain eddying like mimic seas, and dark verdure of clover forming close heads of honeyed efflorescence.

And what beautiful and stirring industries were those which they undertook! They were helping God to feed the world. From morning till night Van and Myra were busy in their garden, or among their fowls or bees, or with their silk-worms. What a wonder the silk-worms were for a time, and how many went to visit them in that long low sunny room over the outer kitchen. Their food, their eating, their weaving, their round silken balls, the final process of baking and packing, were subjects of absorbing interest to the village juveniles.

The garden afforded food for the family, and also for the bees, fowls, and silk-worms. Not a corner but had corn or rows of sunflowers for the chickens, and the air was odorous with sweet things spread out for the bees' table.

Van found that with a little help from her cousins she could make bee-hives, chicken-coops, laying-boxes for her hens, as well as anybody, and from the old barn the sound of her saw and hammer might be heard as she "carpentered" with all her might. After such exercise she would come in to her dinner laughing and rosy, very different from the pale, languid girl who had dragged slowly home from the "Ready Made Emporium." Truth was, Van Milbury was now in her element; what she called the "twin brother" side of her character was in the

ascendant, and she thrived as having found the calling for which she was created.

True the neighbors stared for a while, and wondered and then admired; but Van had reached that happy point, *mens sibi conscia recti*, and she was cheerfully *inconscia* of what was said or thought about her. The end would justify the course. It was just so with her pop-corn; the community stared at over a quarter of an acre of pop-corn. "Were the Milbury girls going to live on popped corn! Were they going to give corn-parties all winter?" But when they heard what Van had made on her pop-corn, when shelled and sold without intervention of any other "middleman" than Mrs. Arden, to a city confectioner, they remarked that "Van Milbury had always been powerful level-headed—just like Adam, her father." And then, Van made her own corn-sheller, and a good farmer who came to look at it, and bring her some seeds of a surprising new kind of cucumber, remarked that "that corn-sheller Adam's girl had made beat all nater."

Mrs. Milbury was at home keeping the house and helping in the garden part of the summer, and part of the summer she was out nursing, laying up a penny for winter.

"You've great gifts, mammy," said Van, "in pulling people through pneumonia and helping

them out of disasters like broken limbs. I don't want to interfere with your exercising your gifts, but let us be reasonable and business-like. Go only where there is a servant to do the work, and where you will be paid a fair price; then you will not be so overtaxed and can afford not to go out so often. We must have you at home with us half the time at least. Gardening is what does you good. I believe gardening is the normal occupation of humanity. The Lord knew what was best for his creature when he made him."

"Now you talk," said Uncle Daniel, who was standing by; "that's sense for you; Adam's own daughter, sure enough!"

Uncle Daniel was so rejoiced to have his nieces back near him that his broad countenance glowed like a full moon. Having had no girls in his family, his stout heart had taken his brother's daughters as his own.

The occasion in his life when Uncle Daniel was most thoroughly and seriously angry was one lovely evening when he and Van were laying out a strawberry-bed, and she detailed to him the entire tricks and meanness of Uncle James, from her arrival in the city to his infamous flight.

On that occasion Uncle Daniel exhausted almost all the unprofane adjectives of condemna-

tion in the unabridged dictionary. Van was amazed at the extent of Uncle Daniel's vocabulary of vituperation.

"But it's those other girls that I'm thinking of," cried Uncle Daniel, "the girls that did n't find the friends that you found, that had no little brown house and no family in the country to come to. What about them? Have they to stay there and be brow-beaten and starved and neglected? Who is to stand up for them? Is that villain, Uncle James, the only one of his kind? It is enough to make a decent man wild to think how the poor girls and women are imposed upon."

"It would be a hard case, uncle, if only the few who could be got out of the city could be helped. I talked to Mrs. Arden about it. I found out from her that there were societies where we could have got help and advice if we had only known of them. There are women, and men too, ready to take up the case of the working-girls and defend them, and interest in them is increasing. Mrs. Arden thinks the associations are very good, and that the individual work of women who have time and means and experience and sympathy is better still. She says if such women would open a Working Women's Bureau in every ward of the city, things would improve at once."

“Some one had better hurry up about it,” said Uncle Daniel; “the Lord takes account of evil doings.”

When Teddie came home for the summer vacation there was great joy indeed. The mother also remained at home at that time, and if fingers flew fast, tongues flew faster. Teddie did the sewing needed by the busy sisters, and learned to work on Myra's knitting-machine.

“It is always well to learn something new,” said Teddie as she made the tall needles fly. Teddie also worked in the garden and brought back the roses which had paled a little in the schoolroom. Spare hours were spent in aiding Myra in her studies, so that she would be prepared to take the Barley Centre school when Teddie gave it up. Teddie had proved a very admirable teacher, and the halo of her achievements would surround her sister.

“This little place of an acre and a half,” said Myra, “will be no more than Van can work alone with such help as ought to be given by a boy, and as soon as we can afford it we mean to take one of those poor miserable little city urchins and make a man of him out here in the country. We can afford it when I am teaching; in fact it would be nice to have a boy now; we have to give up some things we could do if we

kept a boy, and we have to call too much on Uncle Daniel's boys for rough work."

But in all these conversations and confidences Teddie was never told the story of the "winter of their discontent."

Teddie went back to school as the glorious autumn crowned the year with fruits. One of their trees bore unusually fine apples, and in an abundant crop repaid the root-culture and careful trimming which Van had in April bestowed upon it. These apples, and the fine winter pears of the great tree near the barn, were sent to the city for sale, the pop-corn departed to the confectioner, the honey was boxed and sent to the grocer, the silk cocoons were sold to the Department of Agriculture at Washington for experiments, and food for the winter was laid in. Thanksgiving saw Van's poultry-yard nearly depopulated, while a barrel of dressed fowls went to the city, Uncle Daniel's three younger boys killing and dressing the fowls and receiving their per cent. therefor. Van had been able to open a very good market for Uncle Daniel's small fruits and vegetables with the grocer to whom she forwarded her produce, and Uncle Daniel found his year's income unexpectedly increased.

As winter appeared a division of lath and paper was built across the attic, and the bee-

hives were placed there to winter. Each hive had sent off a good swarm, and Van had now six of these pretty insect-kingdoms under her jurisdiction.

“Van is showing no end of sense,” said Uncle Daniel. “She sent to that city grocer for an empty molasses-barrel and sugar-hogshead; she got ’em for a song, the freight was n’t much, and she has, in what of drippings and so on is in ’em, plenty to feed her bees on all winter and early in the spring, besides as much that was good for house use as would pay freight. She is going to grow her cucumbers in those hogs-heads next summer and save ground room. Oh, Sara Ann, what a head Adam’s daughter has! I’m as proud of her as if I owned her!”

Winter brought not idleness but change of work. Mrs. Milbury sent several large parcels of hand-knitted work to the city warehouse; Myra found in the village and in Westchester sale for all the goods she could make on her knitting-machine; and Van in her hard apprenticeship to Uncle James had learned how to make flannel shirts, white shirts, and neck-scarfs and ties, and knowing how to do something well, found, either in Westchester or the village, sale for all the work she could do.

But evenings were reserved for reading and study. Mrs. Arden sent Van books on garden-

ing, agriculture, bee-keeping, and poultry-raising, and these Van studied sedulously. She took a first-class agricultural journal and exchanged with Uncle Daniel for his. Myra was working hard at her books and read aloud much history, poetry, and general literature. Mrs. Milbury often read to the girls as they worked during the day. The girls were happy; they felt that they were growing intellectually, and they had the calm that comes from wider resources.

As the Milbury family was one of those domestic sodalities where the joy of one is the joy of all, every one of them took a share in the happiness diffused by a letter from Wallace Cranshaw, and which made the cold dull month of February seem to Teddie as bright as May. Wallace had prospered amazingly in a land-investment which he had made, so that of a sudden he had been able to buy and furnish a lovely little cottage and put several thousands in the bank. How soon might he come for Teddie? His preference was evidently to come by the next train.

This letter was so important that Teddie had to give her school a Monday vacation, so that she could go home on Friday night and return Monday afternoon after spending Saturday and Sunday with her family. Saturday was spent at the little brown house, and after church Sunday

they all went home with Uncle Daniel and grandma. Teddie decided to tell Wallace Cranshaw that he might come for her at the end of June. She had promised to teach her school during the year, and Adam's daughter must keep her word.

"That's it," said Uncle Daniel, "faithful over a few things and the Lord shall make thee ruler over many things," and he read them the chapter where it says, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Mrs. Arden and Miss Nancy were of those speedily informed of the good fortune of Teddie's lover. Mrs. Arden wrote inviting Van to come to the city for a week. She thought Van would improve her business prospects and relations if she came to Philadelphia and interviewed certain parties to whom she could forward produce. Mrs. Arden said she might make a good bargain with one of the hotel proprietors if she came and attended to the business herself. She enclosed a pass for the trip, asked Van to stay with her in the city, and said that if she came prepared to make Teddie's purchases, she could make good bargains and save money.

Van Milbury had never felt any fear of robbers or pickpockets until she started for the city having in a pocket, sewed into the bosom of her

dress, two hundred dollars of the economical Teddie's earnings. She feared to close her eyes lest in some occult fashion this secret hoard should be detected and cut away without her knowledge. What riches that money seemed. The leading school trustee had offered Teddie her March and April salary in advance, so Van departed to the city with her sister's entire fortune. She took also a trunk filled with gifts for Miss Nancy, gifts not only from herself, mother, and sister, but from the larger stores of Uncle Daniel, who sent word that he "should be a proud man when he could make Miss Tempest's acquaintance in his own home."

That was a busy week; Van made engagements to supply honey, vegetables, a certain amount of strawberries, eggs, fowls, and mushrooms to a liberal purchaser. Mushrooms! Here was to be a new industry for Van, wherein she embarked resolute but trembling.

Mrs. Arden took Van in her coupé from store to store to make Teddie's purchases, in which Teddie had insisted on including a dress each for her mother and sisters. However Van bought these dresses of nun's veiling, so they were not a heavy drain on Teddie's fortune.

One day was spent with Miss Nancy, besides several calls. Van had made up her mind that Miss Nancy should come to Teddie's marriage,

and should remain for four weeks. She would send the money for the ticket, and she had in her pocket a little sum donated by herself, sister, mother, and Uncle Daniel, wherewith to purchase for Miss Nancy a gown for the occasion. She and Miss Tempest went out to choose this gown, and while they were gone a gentleman came to see Van. He was on business, and Mrs. Arden had sent him to Aspen Square, where Van was for the day. The business was that he wanted Van to take home with her an eleven-year old lad, an unusually nice little fellow out of very bad surroundings. He wanted the boy to be brought up in the country, and was sure he would prove the very boy that Van needed. He himself would clothe the child and pay his carfare. The gentleman waited in Miss Tempest's clean dull sitting-room. There was nothing to look at but the picture bequeathed by the late Mr. Dotter. The gentleman stared at the white horse, and the white horse stared at him from the wall. The white horse began to seem like an old friend. The gentleman rose, admitted all the light that he could by pulling the shades to their highest, and took a nearer view of the white horse. Then he got out a magnifying-glass and scrutinized every part of the picture, which in Miss Nancy's view had nothing to commend it but "an aristocratic frame." He was so

intent on the horse—which after all was only the head and chest of a horse thrust into the picture from one side, and watching over a fallen knight and other concomitants of a mediæval time—that he did not at first recognize the arrival of Miss Nancy and Van.

Van very promptly met the visitor's views about the boy. To look up and rescue one city waif had been part of her errand to the city. She expected to be very busy that summer, and the first of September Myra would leave her and go to Barley Centre; the boy must be well inducted into his various functions before then. The boy by all means.

“I'll bring him here to-morrow at ten,” said the gentleman, and turning to Miss Nancy, “May I bring a friend to see this picture?”

“Oh, yes,” said Miss Nancy, “but it's hardly worth seeing, now that the handsome frame is so spoiled. It used to be real nice.”

The sharp-eyed Van detected a singular look on the guest's face.

The next day the two gentlemen and the boy came, and Van speedily agreed about the boy. The gentlemen examined the picture. They went into the hall and conversed. Then Van's guest returned, the other departing. “Madam, will you sell that picture—for—a good price?” he said to Miss Nancy.

“For how much?” said Miss Nancy. “Sell it out and out?”

The gentleman hesitated. He was a Christian man with a terrible opportunity to go beyond and defraud his neighbor. But grace triumphed. “I’ll give you three thousand dollars for it.”

Miss Nancy turned pale. She looked at Van. Van was behind the gentleman. To Miss Nancy’s amazement Van shook her head at her not to take the offer! Miss Nancy was paralyzed. But she had the greatest confidence in Van. “I can’t agree to it—to-day,” stammered Miss Nancy.

“For how long does your offer hold good?” asked Van.

“For any reasonable time. It is all I can pay for the picture, and I consider it a fair price.”

“Miss Tempest will consider it,” said Van; “the picture was left her by an English friend who died here in her house.”

“Oh, Van! all that money! Why didn’t you let me take it?” shrieked Miss Nancy when the gentleman and boy were gone.

“Because I think a richer man will give you more, and this is a good offer for a time yet, while we look up the matter.” Van had been reading some things about pictures that winter, and besides Adam’s daughter was developing a

marvellous capacity for business. Some flowers will only grow in the sunshine, and some natures will only grow in the broad light of success. Van's was one of these.

That day Van went to the most distinguished art dealer in the city. Lo! the dealer was the very person who had accompanied the would-be buyer of Miss Nancy's picture.

"Sir, will you tell me who painted that white-horse picture?"

"Philip Wouverman, of Haarlem, born in 1620, died 1668," replied the dealer with courtesy.

"Are his pictures very valuable?"

"Quite so."

"The gentleman with you offered Miss Tempest three thousand dollars."

"It was a fair price. Most of the Wouvermans have brought about that, or less than that. They are desired for all Dutch collections and all galleries. There is one yonder."

"But that is very small."

"Yes, it is. The fact is that the picture Miss Tempest has is a genuine and long-lost Wouverman, one of his largest, perhaps his very largest; and it has a fictitious value from some singular historic associations. As a picture, three thousand is an honorable price. One of our many millionaire buyers, who has a hobby for curios, might run way up beyond that."

“Thank you,” said Van. Then she inquired of Mr. Arden if there was a picture-buyer known to him who did not stand on ceremony about a few thousands where his taste was concerned. Mr. Arden gave her the name and address of a gentleman gone to Europe who would be back in the fall.

Then Van went to the dealer and exacted profound secrecy about that picture, then to the gentleman who had found the boy, and had his offer extended until the January ensuing, and also his promise of secrecy. And then in the night, which brings time for holy meditation and counsel for God’s children, Van, wakeful, admired the dealings of Providence. Here in the city was his child Miss Nancy, growing old and poor. The Father had seen that this sharp and withal somewhat hard nature had needed the tutelage of sorrow. In her toilsome way divine grace had upheld her, and had taught her to succor the needy and do good, hoping for nothing again. And out of a good deed done in Christ’s name to a dying exile God had caused to rise in slow succession the events which should secure for his child, now old, feeble, homesick, and heartsick, a peaceful age. What singular steps in this path!—Mr. Dotter dying and leaving the picture to Miss Nancy; the picture having so little to commend it to the eyes of ignor-

ance that Miss Nancy could not sell it for a trifle even when she would ; the going of the sisters to her house ; the friendship of Mrs. Arden, and so on, one by one, the events unfolding for Miss Nancy's good. How often had poor Miss Nancy looked with terror to her future, when she should be unable to work for daily bread ! And yet all along God had under his hand ample provision for that idle time. " He knoweth the way that I take, and when he hath tried me I shall come forth like gold."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BOUNTIFUL MOTHER.

“ Bland as the morning breath of June the southwest breezes
play,
And through its haze the winter noon seems warm as summer’s day.
The fox his hillside cell forsakes, the muskrat leaves his
nook,
The bluebird in the meadow brakes is singing with the
brook.
‘ Bear up, O Mother Nature,’ cry bird, breeze, and streamlet
free,
‘ Our winter voices prophesy of summer days to thee.’ ”

THE night before Teddie was married Van and Myra held another midnight session, but not of a melancholy character. They had two lamps brightly burning, and in two large trunks they were packing “ Teddie’s things.” Every article had been earned by steady industry, and made by hands interested in the work. Each possession seemed precious for the thought and prudence which it had cost. Every article? Well, there might be excepted a dozen of towels, a dozen of table-napkins, and a table-cloth from Mrs. Arden, and a box full of tidies and toilet-cushions and lamp-mats and bureau-scarfs wrought by Teddie’s friends, and a score of pen-wipers, needle-books, work-bags, blotters, and

holders, the achievements of the Barley Centre pupils. And Barley Centre had outdone itself in presenting Teddie with a handsome silk umbrella.

Van knelt on the floor packing whatever Myra folded and handed to her. There were two quilts, one knitted and one silk, made by grandma; two pairs of blankets made from the wool of Uncle Daniel's own sheep; here was a clock from the six cousins; a sofa-pillow and embroidered shams from the mother; a family Bible from Mr. and Mrs. Lowell, and a noble pile of sheets and pillow-cases and towels earned by Teddie herself.

"What nice things our Teddie has!" cried Myra, "and we were so afraid she would have nothing at all. Van, how very often we are afraid of things which do not happen, as children are afraid of ghosts which do not exist."

"I reckon that if we had plenty of faith, faith to think that God knows and directs all, and is doing just right, we should be much more comfortable," said Van slowly.

"No doubt we should," said Myra, sitting on the floor to rest, and hugging her knees and indulging in a see-saw to and fro, as she sat beside the trunks and peeped into their depths. "Oh how delighted I am that everything has turned out so well! Van, you are a grand planner!"

See how well your arrangements have prospered!"

"Especially that hideous mistake of going to the city to Uncle James," said Van with fine self-scorn. "That was a terrible experience, going there among strangers, in a strange city, to a life we were unaccustomed to, to try and do work of which we knew nothing! Oh that is to me just like a horrible nightmare!"

"Consider," said Myra, who was a true daughter of consolation, "that if we had not gone to the city we should never have found such friends as Mrs. Arden and Dr. Linsdale. It is worth something to know a man who has written a book, even if it is a foolish and ridiculous book—"

"*Will* you hush!" cried Van, crowding one of Teddie's new kerchiefs into Myra's mocking mouth. "It is a fine book!"

"And," said Myra, depositing the kerchief in the trunk, "we should not have helped Sadie and Delia, or taken charge of this boy Tommy, who is sleeping tranquilly in the attic with the silkworms. We should not have found dear Miss Nancy, and she would not have found the fortune you are likely to make for her out of that picture—though I don't believe you'll ever get over three thousand for it, and you should have jumped at that."

“Well,” said Van, “God knows how to bring good out of evil, and it was evidently written in our destiny that we should go to the city. It was there we got our experience. If we were doomed to make fools of ourselves some time in our lives, I am glad it is over and done with, and we can settle down and be reasonable.”

“The immediate show of reasonableness required,” said Myra, “is to finish this packing. I have to shut my mind to the thought of our blessed Teddie going way off to Nebraska,” and she laid a counterpane in the open trunk.

“Don’t look at it in that way,” said Van. “Distance now-a-days is to be measured not by miles, but by the time it takes to travel them; and, after all, we shall be only four days apart. Boston and New York were that far apart once. When we get rich, Myra, we’ll go and spend a winter with Teddie and Wallace.”

The two girls laughed; they could afford to laugh at the joke of getting rich, now that they were not so nippingly poor.

And so the sisters and their mother would not let any grief of theirs come to the surface to dash the happiness of Wallace Cranshaw and Theodora his wife, but with good words and brave smiles sent them forth on their journey to the West. It is true that Mrs. Milbury found it needful to disappear for several hours that after-

noon, "for a long nap:" she did not look as if she had slept when she came to the supper-table. Van, while her mother was "sleeping," retired to the barn, and a great sawing and hammering announced the construction of a new bee-hive. The pigeons, tumbler, fantail, and common, may have known whether any tears sullied the sheen of Van's tools.

Myra put a chair for Miss Nancy in the middle of the garden, and circulated about her intent on her vegetables, directing the boy Tommy in capturing "potato-bugs," and giving Miss Nancy between whiles items of information, for Myra had an admirable memory.

"Miss Nancy, our great-grandfathers had less worry with their gardening than we do. They had no potato-bugs to hunt, one very clear reason for their exemption being that they did not raise potatoes. In 1720 a potato was first given to our ancestors as a vegetable curiosity; and thirty years after a man who laid in a bushel of potatoes for winter was making large provision of that scarce tuber."

"A bushel!" cried Miss Nancy. "Well, Myra, times have changed."

"Yes," said Myra, carefully spreading her tomato vines over their supporting frames, "and here was another vegetable our Pilgrim ancestor did not have to worry with. He called the to-

mato a love-apple and considered it poisonous until 1828. I've heard grandma tell about that. When she was a child she was strictly forbidden to touch one of the dangerous things."

"Seems to me, Myra, I'd be content to pick potato-bugs, or peas either, for the chance of staying in the country. I tell you what, if Van gets three thousand out of that Mr. Barker for my white-horse picture, now that the frame is ruined, I mean to try and get a little place near you here in the country. I tell you what, Myra," and Miss Nancy lowered her voice, "I sometimes feel afraid that Van made an awful mistake not letting me snap at that money, if the man was in earnest."

"He was in earnest," said Myra, "and his offer holds good until January. Even if he do n't take the picture then, the dealer will give three thousand for it, so you're safe for that much, Miss Nancy, only Van hopes you'll get more. She do n't want a word said about it though, for fear it will be stolen."

"Oh it wont be stolen," said Miss Nancy. "Mrs. Arden came and took it out of the frame, and had it put in a bank-vault, to stay till New Year's. The idea, Myra, of all that fuss over that *homely* picture! Now if it had been something bright and handsome I could comprehend it better."

There were a many things which Miss Nancy could not comprehend, and one was why she could not get to sleep by eight or nine o'clock in the evening, now that she had opportunity.

"I declare," she said one morning, "it is the queerest thing. I'm so sleepy evenings at home, I am like to die; feel as if I would give anything in the world to have those lodgers get in, so I could go to bed. And here I go to bed, and all is so quiet and airy, and the crickets and katydids and whip-poor-wills sing and call, and I lie awake till near midnight reg'lar."

"It will take you more than four weeks, Miss Nancy, to get back the habit of going to sleep early," laughed Van.

"I'll get it back," said Miss Nancy firmly, "if ever I'm able to get clear of that No. 8 and come into the country and bring Delia along. She and I will go to bed at sundown, and sleep like tops."

"I'll see you here some time to stay," said Myra to Miss Nancy, as she bid her good-by at the station. Miss Nancy had had a delightful visit; she and Mrs. Milbury and Aunt Sara Ann had become great friends, Uncle Daniel's boys had taken her to ride, and Myra, with pride and regret, had taken her all over the Poplar Rise farm. Miss Nancy and Myra were at a loss to understand why the new owners of

Poplar Rise were homesick and wanted to go back to Ohio.

All the little boys of the neighborhood had smacked their lips with envy that spring, when they heard that Van meant to plant quarter of an acre with peanuts and that Uncle Daniel was to put in an acre of that dainty. Van was to sell her peanuts to the confectioner.

But the greatest wonder was excited by Van's performances in her cellar. She entered into this cellar-work with doubting, and yet resolved to make it a success if care could do it. The cellar had been intended for a larger dwelling than the little brown house, and was dry and well ventilated and extended under the entire building. Van's first care was to mark off a strip four feet and a half wide and extending around the whole cellar. It was set off by a boarding two feet wide, and in this space, enclosed between the wall and boarding, she had load after load of rich earth mingled with straw and fertilizers thrown. She was fortunate in securing earth cheaply which was being removed from above a bed of brick clay which a city firm was about to work. The filling in with earth cost Van ten dollars, the boarding and straw five more. Some people said "Van Milbury must have money to throw away, the way she was going on with that cellar."

The work in the cellar was done in April when she returned from her visit to the city. Van and Myra, in their oldest gowns and shoes and thickest gloves, carefully levelled and smoothed the earth, and when all was ready, committed to it a quantity of little white stems which Van had brought from the city in boxes, and now laid lengthwise in the earth in her twilight, damp cellar-garden, where morning and afternoon sifted slantwise rays of sunlight. Even Uncle Daniel forebore to encourage, while he gallantly forebore to condemn, that enterprise. Van herself trembled for it. Money was so scarce, and fifteen dollars was such a sum for her; and besides there were the one and two-quart baskets which she had bought wholesale in the city.

“If the mushrooms fail,” said Myra, “you can use the baskets for your strawberries. I never saw finer bloom than on our eighth of an acre of strawberries.”

But the mushrooms did not fail. Nature kept her promises. People had told Van that this cellar-garden would make the air of the house bad and unhealthy, but they were all wrong. The open windows gave free current of air over the cellar-beds, and the swiftly-growing mushrooms used up the moisture. The straw kept the beds light, and in August Van

was rewarded for her toils by seeing the mould broken in every direction by the creamy cushions of her mushrooms, with their dainty fragrance and their rosy silken veils. A speedy and abundant crop kept Van busy each afternoon picking and packing mushrooms; then the baskets were piled in a barrow, Tommy trundled it to the station, and away went the baskets for their six hours' trip, to be in the city early in the morning. One hotel and one restaurant took all the mushrooms she could raise.

Another enterprise which was succeeding well was a large asparagus-bed which Van had started the previous summer, laying it off and preparing it with great care.

"It beats all what success Van Milbury has gardening out of books and papers," said her neighbors. But besides the books and papers, Van had a natural inherited genius for the work she had undertaken, and was always ready to ask advice out of the experience of Uncle Daniel and other farmers of her acquaintance.

Uncle Daniel had given his nieces a young cow for a Christmas present, and the younger cousins appeared early one spring day with a pair of fat, white, short-nosed, short-legged pigs, which were warranted "to squeal and eat like anything." The boys built a stout pen behind the barn, for Uncle Daniel's boys were taught

to use tools and keep barns, fences, gates, pens, in good repair. Van felt very prosperous when she heard the various sounds from her poultry-yard, the satisfied grunting of her pigs, the coo of her pigeons, and saw the mild face and contemplative eyes of her cow looking over the barnyard fence.

In the autumn Myra secured the school at Barley Centre, and Mrs. Milbury agreed to remain at home all winter and be content with what money she could make on the knitting-machine. At Christmas Myra came home, and Van went to the city to see about Miss Nancy's picture. She took with her fifty dollars to pay Mrs. Arden on the loan made her.

Van had succeeded in discovering the importance attached to Miss Nancy's picture. It was one said to have been purchased by Charles II. when in the Low Countries before he was invited to bring back to England the Stuart dynasty. The white horse—which appeared only as head and shoulders, Wouverman excelling in painting that part of a horse, but never being able to paint the whole animal with equal vigor and excellence—had struck the exiled Charles as resembling a favorite horse which had once carried his father. He bought the picture, took it to England when he became king, gave it to one of his favorites, and after a number of years

it had disappeared and was known as "the lost Wouverman."

How or when it had drifted into the hands of Mr. Dotter's grandfather, by fair means or foul, who could tell? At all events Mr. Dotter had left his landlady a fortune in the picture which she insisted upon calling "a dull homely thing, the like of which, except as a keepsake of poor Mr. Dotter, she didn't see how any one could want."

Van, after two weeks in the city and much interviewing of dealers, and Mr. Banbee, and the millionaire who was able to give a fancy price for a relic of the light-minded Stuart king, after the picture had been viewed and reviewed by experts and artists, and after she had made a stout fight for the highest figures she could obtain, took a bill of sale for Miss Nancy's signature whereby she divested herself of Mr. Dotter's souvenir for the handsome price of fifteen thousand dollars. Miss Nancy was so overcome by that piece of good fortune, after a life singularly devoid of fortunate incidents, that she fell ill and kept her bed for a fortnight, well nursed however by Delia. Van was obliged to go home and leave Miss Nancy overcome by riches.

"It's an awful shame, Miss Nancy, that you have to be sick in bed just here when you have

come into such a fortune," said Delia; "but it's true we have lovely things to eat!"

"Delia," said Miss Nancy with primness, "do n't you ever dare to call one of the Lord's ways an awful shame. Here I've been calling things 'too bad' and 'dreadful shames' and 'good luck' and 'bad luck,' and I just did n't know what I was talking about. You'd be surprised, Delia, to know how in this very room I've sat and repined against the Lord's dealings. When I think of it I am that ashamed I want to hide. But who can hide from God? 'If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me.' What can a poor sinner overwhelmed with shame for misdoings and long repinings do, Delia? Why, just get behind the Lord Jesus, so as to be lost in his righteousness, and that is what I am trying to do. And as for being sick here, the days pass like minutes while I am asking the dear Lord to help me to use my great fortune in his service."

Her great fortune! Blessed nourishing of poverty, she had—fifteen thousand dollars!

Miss Nancy, however, was not slow in recovering. She notified her lodgers that she meant

to close her house, she gave up the lease of dingy No. 8 to the landlord, and divided all her goods and all her clothing among the poor neighbors.

“I do n't want one thing I have ever had in Aspen Square,” said Miss Nancy, “but the family Bible with long s's that I've read so long, the sampler my mother worked at school, and the teaspoon my grandmother gave me when I was a baby. I'm not to say young, but I mean to start fresh and new.” She bought herself a new outfit, very simple and substantial, gave Mrs. Arden three hundred dollars to lay out in work among working-women in hard circumstances, sent Delia to live for a little time with Mrs. Linsdale, and then herself appeared at the little brown house, saying she “wanted to stay quiet with her dear girls for a while until she had time to think.”

Miss Nancy thought she should find plenty of interest in life watching the ventures which Van inaugurated.

“If it do n't seem like the old times when I was a girl!” cried Miss Nancy, after a day whereof the achievements were registered in lard and sausage, souse and head-cheese, with ample work left over in the outer kitchen to fill to-morrow and to-morrow. “We used to do all this kind of work in the big kitchen of our log-house.

And how father would praise mother's sausages! We began the day by candle-light, but it was never too dark nor too early nor too busy for family prayers. I can just see father now as he looked, sitting by the stand, the candle-light shining into his face as he bent over his book reading out a Psalm. Dear knows, I do wonder why I have wasted so much time fearing I'd get to the poorhouse, when there was the verse all the time about the seed of the righteous not begging bread."

"And all the time," said Myra, who was at home for her two weeks of midwinter vacation, "your old age was provided for in the white-horse picture."

"It beats all," said Miss Nancy to Uncle Daniel one day when she was making a visit at his home, "how Van seems to take to country life and work. What could have possessed her to think she wanted to go to the city?"

"She just didn't know what she wanted. And the most of women take to the needle or to the schoolroom when they have to earn a living; they don't know they can turn to the farm. It was a desperate mistake my brother Aaron made not to train Adam's daughters to run Adam's farm. It strikes me that if they had been taking right hold with him, and not been just like children doing nothing but amu-

sing themselves, he would have spoken to them about that security, and ten to one they would have advised him against it. Women seem to me mighty careful about such-like matters. And at just a word from one of them, Aaron would have refrained, for he always held that the farm belonged to Adam's daughters. Besides, if they'd learned to farm well, if Van, who takes to it in such a wonderful manner, had known that she could run the place, she might have leased it from the creditors, or some one would have bought it to rent to her."

"Do you think she could have done it?" asked Mr. Benjamin curiously. Mr. Benjamin was often at Uncle Daniel's. He thought Uncle Daniel knew more about good stock than any other man in the county.

"She do it! She could do anything!" cried Miss Nancy, and told how Van had sold her white-horse picture.

"I believe our Van could soon run the biggest farm in the whole country," said Uncle Daniel, "or Myra could, either one."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETURN OF THE AGE OF GOLD.

Now comes the age the Cumæan Sybil sung,
 Order from long disorder now hath sprung ;
 Astræa rules the world, the Golden Age returns,
 And for a heaven-blessed race the star of justice burns.

VIRGIL, Fourth Ecl.

“FARMERS,” said Uncle Daniel to Mr. Benjamin, “are going into politics, and they are going in to stay. We have neglected politics too long ; we’ve just run our farms and looked after the cows and the crops, and let other men run the country ; and now we mean to turn over a new leaf.”

“I hope, Daniel,” interposed Aunt Sara Ann anxiously, “that you wont neglect the cows and the crops all the same.”

“He has plenty of boys to look after *them*,” said farmer Benjamin ; “they can run the farm and *he* can run politics.”

“That wont do,” said Aunt Sara Ann ; “boys are apt to take after their fathers, and if Daniel neglects the farm he’s likely to see it neglected all around. Though the boys are good boys as one need wish to see.”

“Do n’t fret, Sara Ann,” said her husband ;

“I sha’ n’t neglect the farm. I’ve got my bread and butter out of it too many years for that, and besides I love it. What is to be done is to see that the farmers get a fair return for their work; they do n’t get it now and they get discouraged.”

“After all,” said Mr. Benjamin, “all the money comes out of the earth, and the miner and the farmer get it out. The rest of them manipulate the products, and manage it so that the miner and the farmer, who are the true producers, get very little, and the manufacturers get the much.”

“It’s time we levelled up a bit,” said the printer Milbury.”

“I’ve thought it over more than a little lately,” said Uncle Daniel, “and it’s time for a change, that’s clear. The rings and the brokers and the hoarders either get too big a share or keep too much out of circulation. There are too many corners, too many trusts and syndicates and combinations, too many big corporations, crowding down individuals, too high freight charges; we can’t get our wares to market.”

“For that matter,” said the printer, “that should be remedied by the railroads being owned by the Government, as they are in Italy, and used for the general advantage of the country and to pay expenses, and not to create millionaires.”

The printer, being the most literary person in the Milbury family, was accepted as authority, and his father replied to his oracle, "No doubt you're right. It strikes me that's so. There are too many middlemen also, and they want all there is to be got out of products. We farmers are a patient set of men; we've been busy, and when we were not busy it was because we were dead tired. We have just attended to the plough, and have let the politicians and the rest of the world run matters to suit themselves without regard to us. Now we mean to have our say in public affairs."

"That we will!" cried a sixteen-year-old Milbury, who felt more mature and important than he ever would again, no matter how long he lived. "We Grangers mean to knock 'em all flat!"

His father and Mr. Benjamin glanced covertly at each other and smiled; but Uncle Daniel was too wise a man to mortify the lad's self-assertion and budding manhood.

The Milbury family were keeping the Fourth of July by a private festival. Uncle Daniel had proposed it and all the others had heartily fallen in with the idea. Affairs were going better at last for Uncle Daniel; the mortgage was paid; money was standing to his account in the bank and not being borrowed from the bank; the

boys were coming on and giving more effective help.

Uncle Daniel's remarks might have suggested worse not better circumstances; but here were these boys, whom he wished to keep on the farm, and how should he strengthen their love of farming if not by ameliorating the condition of the farmer? He concluded to do what he could to make the farm pay better and to make farm-life cheery. He took another newspaper, subscribed to a magazine, bought one boy a violin and another a flute, and did not disdain to buy a new game or to inaugurate a family festival. In fact Uncle Daniel and Aunt Sara Ann, now that the gray began to touch their heads, had come to "piping times of peace;" and here they were out in their orchard, and though Virgil was unknown to them, they were in the mood of "*Tityre, tu recubans.*"

When Uncle Daniel had proposed to his nieces a domestic celebration for July 4th, the maids had promptly declared that they would have a fine dinner, and no one should prepare it but themselves and Hannah; grandma, Miss Nancy, mamma, and Aunt Sara Ann were to put on their best gowns and sit at ease. Moreover, the table should be spread in the orchard, easy-chairs should be carried thither, the boys should stretch out a canopy lest by any means

the sun should touch the tables, and there should be decorations of flags, bunting, festoons, and flowers. The boys received these suggestions with enthusiasm. Uncle Daniel invited Mr. Benjamin and two or three of his friends, and the girls retired into corners and discussed what viands should be prepared.

“We shall have ice-cream,” said Van.

“O Rachel Van Meter Milbury! You can't do it unless you buy or borrow a freezer!” cried Myra.

“Buy one! What extravagant notions you cultivate. Borrow? Not I; the Scripture is, ‘The borrower is servant to the lender,’ and I believe it. Uncle Daniel has plenty of ice; I shall take a three-quart long pail for a freezer, and put the cream in it, and use one of the big milking-pails for a tub, and you'll see I shall freeze it fine.”

“Let us have nothing hot but tea and coffee, and we will have roast chickens and boiled tongue and ham cold, nice salads, rice in moulds, pickles, jelly, tarts, cream-pies, cheeses, biscuits, cake, and ice-cream. Oh what a spread! Van, don't you wish we could invite all those poor girls that used to work for Uncle James?”

“Indeed I do, and all the rest of the shop-girls from the city. What a treat that lovely orchard would be to them!”

The dinner being planned, Van and Myra took a day to go to Uncle Daniel's and make their cake and pies, Miss Nancy and mamma Milbury undertaking to see to affairs in garden and poultry-yard at the little brown house. Grandma and Aunt Sara Ann were banished to the front porch, and provided with white aprons and knitting.

"Sit there," said Van, as she established them in two chairs, "and see if you cannot look like two nice little ladies, while Myra and I are kitchen maids."

Grandma and Aunt Sara Ann smiled at each other, as from the big kitchen came whiffs of delicious odors as from Araby the blest, and borne along with the currents of fragrance came Van's voice singing,

"Do not look at life's long sorrow,
See how short each moment's pain;
God will help thee for to-morrow,
Every day begin again."

"Dear children," said grandma, "they have come through a deal of trouble, but I reckon they have had some good to harvest out of it. I make account, Sara Ann, that in the next world, when sheaves are counted up, the most and the greatest will be from fields of sorrow and pain; joy very often, it appears to me, makes only light crops. Those girls were always nice

girls, but they are now worth twice over what they were before troubles came."

"I don't know but they are," said Aunt Sara Ann.

The finest city caterer could not have made of a dinner a more shining success than Myra and Van, aided by Uncle Daniel's six boys, made of their dinner.

When the girls arrived with their mother and Miss Nancy on the morning of the Fourth, the boys and Hannah had already spread a sightly table under the orchard trees, carried out seats, and laid down a rug for grandma's feet. The family and their guests were on the piazza when the maids arrived.

"You are late!" cried Joe.

"We had our domestic animals to feed, young man," said Van, "and a swarm of bees to provide for."

"A swarm of bees in July
Is not worth a fly."

"I intend mine shall be worth five dollars," said Van serenely.

"How nice your new dresses look!" said Aunt Sara Ann, turning her nieces round and round and admiring the new percale gowns. "And you made them all yourselves? I had no idea you could sew on machines so beautifully!"

"We got that out of Uncle James, if we got

nothing else," said Myra; "observe this tucking; isn't it nice?"

"Beautiful!"

"It is always well to get some good out of hard times," said grandma, admiring her gathered descendants.

"We used to quote your saying, you dear grandma," said Van: "'Well, well, if the Lord sees fit to send me to school to affliction, Satan shall not hinder me of learning the best lessons taught there.'"

"Did I say that?" said grandma. "Anyway it was true, if I did say it."

"You always say what is true," said her son Daniel. "You have said hundreds of things that would do us all good to read over, if we had written them in a book; but none of us Milburys are literary inclined."

"Do n't let us waste time here in the house," cried the boys; "let us go to the orchard."

They went to the orchard, but it is true that the boys were not entirely content with the course of affairs until the maids and the beaming Hannah had loaded the ample board with good things and dinner had begun. The dinner was a long one, for as they ate conversation divided time with feasting, and it was then that Uncle Daniel ventilated his views of the bucolic situation, and announced that he should take

the betterment of matters into his own hands and go into politics.

“I expect the people in the city thought themselves quite as badly off as the farmers, and perhaps that was really true, Miss Milbury,” said Mr. Benjamin to Van.

“Of the many poor it was very true. As to the rich I cannot say, for I did not meet any of them. Rich and poor in the city are much farther apart than rich and poor in the country,” replied Van.

“It was a case like that of Sydney Smith’s two kinds of sugar in a shop-window, twopenny and threepenny. ‘How they must hate one another, being so near together!’ said the wit. Was that it, Miss Milbury?”

“It seemed to me rather forgetting than hating,” said Van. “There are some who live to do all the good they can, and others to do all the evil, and some would be willing to do good to others, only they never see need, even if it is right in their path. I think though there is never such horrible poverty in the country as in the city. Country poor have food and fuel. I know the poor working-women of the cities are often short of both. I think the reason the working-women have so much poorer wages and longer hours than the men is that they don’t know how to combine; they can’t strike if they

have children crying for bread ; and then women work against each other so."

"I am truly sorry to hear that," said Mr. Benjamin. "How do they work against each other?"

"I mean this way: women with homes and enough to live on will take some kind of work just to buy luxuries or ornaments; and as they do not need to make a living by their work, they will take work very cheap, at such low rates as no one could live on, and that puts down the price of wages. We used to try to get crochet-work and knitting, and we found little of it and at low prices because a great many ladies took such work in at their own homes, just to make money for pleasure trips or Christmas presents, and so on. At the shop they told us of a young lady who worked nubias and zephyr shawls for two years to get money for a sealskin sacque. And there was another that every year earned enough by knitting infants' hoods and mittens to take her on a trip to the seaside. Sixty dollars she earned in this knitting each year, and did it cheaper than the ordinary price, so that they would prefer to give work to her. Presently the shopkeeper began to feel that he must have all his work at that rate, but it was a starvation rate to poor women."

"Mother does some knitting now for the

city," said Myra, "but it is only because she has to do it, until we get fairly a living from our other work. Then she is to stop and not compete with folks who have to buy all they eat."

"I read a story of a farmer's daughter," said Van, "who took some kind of factory work at home. She underbid the regular hands, and as she had better air, better light, better food, and so better health, than the women in the town, she could do more work, and that crowded down the price for the starving mothers of families. But all she wanted of her earnings was to buy a black lace dress."

"And we know of a young lady that took neckties to make," said Myra. "You see we tried to get the ties; we needed them dreadfully, for we were out of work; but all the ties the firm sold were made by this one person. She lived with a friend and had no board or washing to pay for, and she taught school and had a salary of four hundred dollars. She made the ties in the evenings and Saturdays and in vacations; and in a year she earned seventy-five dollars. She did it for the sake of getting a long gold chain for her watch. But some other girls wanted that work, at a fair price, for bread."

"You make out a strong case," said Mr. Benjamin.

"People should live and work on Bible prin-

ciples," said Aunt Sara Ann; "then the employers would not wish to grind down the workers to prices that they know they could not live on; they would remember that it is forbidden 'to oppress the hireling in his wages,' and women would help and not hinder each other; because the Bible rule is, 'Let every one seek not his own but another's good. Look not on our own things, but all on the things of others.' I am not as good at remembering exact words as Van is."

"But you've got the spirit, Sara Ann, you've got the spirit," said Uncle Daniel, eager to defend his wife.

"To hear those girls talk!" said grandma, in a whisper to her daughter-in-law. "Sara Ann, don't you notice what I said, how much more thoughtful and wise they are for their troubles?"

"Van," said the printer, "your work here shows that you are a born organizer. Why didn't you stay in the city and form a Union and draw a big salary? I notice that the officers of those organizations usually draw a salary that will enable them to live like the rich ones they attack about the wrongs of the poor ones!"

Van laughed. "The ones who should take these wrongs in hand and try to right them are the rich and the educated, who will work for love and justice's sake, and not ask to be sup-

ported by the poor while they tell how poor they are. To the Christian workers we must look for righted wrongs."

"They all want to make something out of what they do," said Joe, "except those that do the work for love of God and man."

"They'll make, but not here or now perhaps," said his brother. "I was struck with two lines in an editorial I was setting up the other day :

" 'Love soweth here with toil and tears,
But the harvest-time of love is there.' "

But now the dinner-table was in a devastated state that showed that the dessert course must be brought in. Hannah and Joe carried away the baked meats and other solids—at least the remnants thereof. The printer rose, took a little green branch of cedar, and using it as a crumb-brush, dusted off the cloth with skill. "It is that you may remember me liberally at dessert," he whispered to his cousins. Myra and Van went to the house, and presently returned, Myra carrying a server of spoons and saucers, Joe and Hannah bearing between them the improvised freezer, Van laden with a mammoth cake. Applause greeted the procession.

Van speedily dished out her ice-cream, and Myra and Hannah passed it around. As Van bent over the freezer and scooped out liberal

portions of the luscious compound, a sudden memory of that terrible morning when, fasting and despairing, she went to the Young Women's Christian Association, came to her. She fairly caught her breath—it seemed so terrible and so real again. But an oriole sang above her head, the breeze stirred through the apple boughs, plenty smiled all about her, the voices of family and friends sounded in her ears. She came back to her present with a sigh and a start and thanked God for the better days. She turned to the table: the printer had taken out his notebook and was reading to grandma:

“I have known one word hang star-like
O'er a dreary waste of years,
And it only shone the brighter
Looked at through a mist of tears,
While a weary wanderer gathered
Hope and heart on life's dark way
By its faithful promise shining
Clearer day by day.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FROM STORM TO SHINE.

“A gladness be their own
Unspeakable, and to the world unknown!
Such as from childhood’s morning-land of dreams,
Remembered, faintly gleams.”

MISS NANCY came out into the garden where Van, Mrs. Milbury, and Tommy, the boy, were at work. “I’ve been over to the village,” she said. “It beats all how I am learning to walk. I feel just as if I had gone back fifty years, when I get a sun-bonnet on my head and can walk along the roadsides. I remember how happy I felt when I could run off barefooted to school, along roadsides where the dandelions lay bright as so many twenty-dollar gold-pieces. We had a little schoolhouse painted red, and the seats and benches were blue. Dear me! What good times those were!”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Milbury, “and yet I don’t pine for the old times back. I’ve got where I’d rather go *on*. The parents and friends are nearer now, at the end of the journey, than they would be on the return. I often think of that verse Teddie used to sing—

“ ‘Nearer my Father’s home
Where the many mansions be,
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the jasper sea.’ ”

“That’s so,” said Miss Nancy, “and I reckon the time do n’t seem half so long to them that’s gone and got to heaven as it has to us, toiling and moiling here below. And I can tell you, if ever there was a grateful woman I’m one, that the dear Lord has brought me back to end my days where I began them—in the country. Oh I’m so contented! I just could n’t have asked anything better. It used to seem to me hot Sundays, when I’d sit in 8 Aspen Square breathing bad smells and hearing a continual row, that in all the Scripture the verse I could understand best was, ‘And David longed and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is beside the gate!’ I’m afraid I have longed more for a draught out of a bucket instead of a hydrant than for the water of life, and more for the country than for heaven!”

“That is the way we humans feel,” said Van, busy with her celery plants, for she had set up several thriving rows of celery. “The thing that is near looks so large to us, even though it is much less than what is far away; and it is so hard for us to realize what is always unseen.”

“Well, the Lord has had long patience with me, as a mother with a cross, petty child, and here I am in my old age comforted. ‘As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted,’ is n’t that fine?” said Miss Nancy. Miss Nancy moved up the celery row after Van, who had moved on in her work, and Mrs. Milbury took comfort for herself in looking at her older friend and thinking, “At even-time it shall be light.” And it is well when the sun sets clear!

“Van,” said Miss Nancy, when she reached the young woman, “I went to the postoffice at the village just now, and I got a letter from Mrs. Linsdale. She says Delia is such a good girl, so biddable, faithful, and truthful, that she likes to have her with the children. She is careful to do exactly what Mrs. Linsdale says, and that makes up for lack of experience. They are going to the seaside about the middle of June, and Mrs. Linsdale wants to take Delia there to keep her for the summer, and Delia likes the idea very much. She said Delia asked her to tell me that she saw Sadie, and she is still living in the country and doing well.”

“That’s good,” said Van. “I am glad Delia is contented, and living at Mrs. Linsdale’s will be the best thing she can do. I do not know of any place she could find about here.”

“Yes; I’m glad too. I always mean to look out for Delia, as far as I can, but just now I couldn’t see any place for her. I’m studying over a good many things. I’m slow to settle myself, for this move I make now will be the last of my life, and I’ve got to live and die by it.”

“Don’t hurry,” said Van; “you’re very well off as you are.”

“What I want for a while, Van, is to board here with you, and I’ll pay five dollars a week.”

“But, Miss Nancy, your board does n’t begin to be worth that! And think how much you do! Why you work in the house and in the garden nearly all the time.”

“That chance to potter round and do what I like is just what I’m paying for,” said Miss Nancy. “I would n’t be happy if I had to keep hands off and stay in my own room. I’d pine. Here I can do just what I like, and cook old-fashioned dishes such as my mother used to cook. You see, Van, I have the money to pay board, and I should feel powerful mean and dependent if I did n’t pay. I want you to let me have the room over the living-room, and I’ll pay five dollars a week, and you’ll let me work when I feel like it. After such a busy life as mine I could n’t sit down idle.”

"All right," said Van, "only it makes me feel sort of mean to take it when I know it is n't worth it. Why, after old Molly comes and does the washing, you do nearly all the ironing. It really is n't fair!"

"I always did feel pretty proud of my ironing; it is work I like. I thought we would n't say anything about the past three months, only I sent Mrs. Arden a check for forty dollars on your borrowed money and here's the receipt; and so almost half is paid off now."

"Miss Nancy," said Van, rising from her kneeling position by the celery, "I mean much more than 'thank you' to you; let us talk business. I'm thinking of hiring that acre next our garden. I want more room for fowls—I think I'd find them profitable; and more room for onions—onions are a very paying crop; and on top of my new hen-house I could build a little tower for pigeons—squabs and pigeons bring a good price in the market."

"By all means get the acre," said Miss Nancy; "I like to see how much you can do."

She wandered off and stood by the bee-hives. Van had ten bee-hives now and they brought her five dollars a year each, and she told Uncle Daniel that after the first three hives they had never seemed to cost her anything.

"Yes," said Uncle Daniel, "you are one of

the folks who can go among bees without being hurt or afraid, and you do n't leave your bees to freeze or starve of a winter. You reap as you sow, with bees as with other creatures and affairs. 'The bountiful eye shall be blessed,' and who gives good measure gets good measure; it's a sort of a law of the universe. Van, as I sat reading the Book yesterday, it struck me that as Proverbs had been called the 'Young Man's Book,' so it might be called the 'Farmer's Book' and the 'Business Man's Book.' I'll never forget what Aaron said to me when he was dying: 'Oh, Daniel, I wish I'd understood that the Bible was as good to run your business by as your soul by.'"

"Why can't I take counsel by the Book then for this next acre?" asked Van, laughing. "It says, 'She seeth a field and buyeth it.' In my case it would be 'hireth it.' If I hire that acre I can keep ducks and geese down on the brook that runs across the northeast side."

"It just sets me up to see what a strong, sensible, self-reliant woman our Van is," said farmer Daniel to Sara Ann; "she's been home from the city now two years and a little better, and a'n't her place a picter, and a'n't she a picter?"

"And she is just as much of a lady," said Aunt Sara Ann, "as she was when she was do-

ing nothing but help her mother with a little cake-making or preserving or sweeping up a sitting-room or ironing her muslins. I don't think anything could look more appropriate than Van in her stout nankeen dress fitting neat and easy, a big straw hat tied down, a pair of strong tidy boots on her feet, and leather gloves on her hands, busy among her bees or her poultry or her vegetables and fruit, or packing up her mushrooms."

Van, for her part, had ceased to consider whether all this were appropriate or not. She had this work to do, and she did it and prospered in it. The problem before her had been to make a living for herself and her mother, and she was making it. She followed out the precept, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

She did not weary of her work; like Cleopatra it had "ever new variety." In early spring lettuce, bunches of radishes and onions, bundles of asparagus went off to market, for Van had established a hot-bed, and moreover started boxes of plants in her bee-room and kitchen; then came strawberries and peas and beets; then the rush of summer garden-vegetables, and the mushrooms, and spring-chickens, while eggs began to be sent off in April, and fruit and fowls were despatched to the market in October

and November. In fact Van's poultry became one of the great sights of the neighborhood. Van said the boy Tommy was a magician, and enchanted her poultry-yard to do marvels. Van kept all manner of fowls, Cochins, Brahmas, Leg-horns, Spanish, Shanghais, and good old-fashioned barn-door birds. The entire family, Mrs. Milbury, Miss Nancy, Van, and Tommy, were wont to go to the yard to watch the evening feeding and going to roost. They were never tired of laughing at the pecking and crowding and change of mind and evident misunderstandings amid the feathered community at night, which changed to amicable clucking, crowing, scratching, calling, drinking, and sharing of grain in the morning. Peacocks, guineas, turkeys, ducks, geese—these last, Van said, were her most profitable birds, hardy, prolific, good mothers, their feathers always commanding a fair price. Van used to wonder why, when Adam and Eve had plenty of birds, flowers, and fruit in Eden, they had not been satisfied. But then she remembered the time had been when she was not satisfied herself.

Now she loved all these living things, even the two or three pigs fattening and grunting behind the barn. As for "Primrose," the cow which she had raised and petted from a calf to be a sleek, fat, gentle, cream-producing beast—

Miss Nancy denying that Primrose gave a drop less rich than cream—they all wondered why it happened that Primrose took only second prize, and not first prize, at the county fair, Mr. Benjamin's Bouncing Bet taking the first.

At that county fair Van had made a brave show, with peanuts, mushrooms, silk-worms, celery, and honey, products not general in her county.

Ah there was no question now about making a living. Van looked over her domain and remembered what Isaac, the gentle Oriental farmer, had said, "The smell of a field which God hath blessed."

Van had her debt nearly paid, and Mrs. Milbury had a new cashmere gown. Mrs. Arden came from the city and paid a three days' visit, and she and Uncle Daniel's family took wonderfully to each other, and late into the night she and grandma sat talking of the marvellous ways in which the Lord leads his people. No doubt this will be largely the theme for the redeemed in glory.

These months and years of daily rural toil were not years of mental decadence to Van Milbury. In the evenings, or during the noonday two hours of rest, from half-past eleven to half-past one, she read much. Mr. Lowell brought her books constantly, and it was to Van's advan-

tage that she had rather few books, valuable, read and re-read, than many weaker books carelessly skimmed and as carelessly forgotten.

It was so easy now to meditate during the morning on what had been read the previous evening, or during the afternoon on what had been read at noon.

When in the city she had gone home late from the Ready Made Emporium, or from the Fashionable Dress and Mantua Making, she had stumbled with sheer weariness, had been afraid of her shadow, her head had ached, she saw only the thousand lamps of the city, not the lamps of heaven. Now when she went out in the evening, to and from the church, or Uncle Daniel's, or to pace her garden walks, she could think—

“Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold ;
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims ;
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But, while this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close us in, we cannot hear it.”

“Happy is he who makes two blades of grass grow where but one grew before,” says Souvestre ; and that was not all idle and boorish talk of Tennyson's “Northern Farmer,” when he took comfort in, “I stubbed Thornaly Waste.” It is

worth doing indeed, to fill the waste places of the world, physical and moral, with beauty instead of burning.

Van and Myra, when they went to the city, would have felt that they were fortunate if they had found and kept places as clerks or seamstresses at six or seven dollars a week. This would have been larger than ordinary wages, and beyond their probabilities as having no experience. But, granted that Uncle James had been a helpful uncle, and by his means this fortune had come to them, what then?

Each night, after ten hours a day standing in a store, they might have climbed wearily to a boarding-house attic, or hall bedroom, which cost them four or five dollars a week. They might have lived there, year in and out, without any vacation, their wages stopped for every day of illness, almost too exhausted on Sabbath to go to church and appreciate the services, their constitutions failing from hastily-eaten breakfasts, and dinners taken often in haste, standing in the hot, close air of a store; their dispositions might have become dull and captious and morbid from having so little brightness in their lives and seeing so few who took any interest in their fates.

Instead of this, see Van and Myra in Myra's summer holiday, leaning in the cool of the July

evening on their garden gate. Their mother's flower-garden blazes with bloom about them; gladiolas lift up their green swords and vivid flame; the coreopsis burns in velvet and gold; the crimson cockscomb flaunts beside the splendor of the tiger-lily; the white rose leans towards the red rose and they mingle their perfume; the hawk-moth flies about the clematis and the honeysuckles. To the left lies the vegetable-garden, which has made them such good returns; behind the house are the strawberry-beds, the rows of currants and raspberries, that have filled for them so many baskets and brought them money to conclude paying their debt; everywhere sunflowers spread out their gorgeous shields. Behind the small fruit-acre, in the great poultry-yard, the fowls, and higher up the pigeons, are making an amazing fuss about getting to bed; going down the road, behold the donkey-cart conducted by the joyful Tommy, and loaded with baskets of mushrooms, the first of the season, early and high-priced. To the right another acre where the asparagus-bed now waves feathery plumes dotted with red berries; the long celery-trenches show solid lines of dark green above the well-banked earth; Miss Nancy paces up and down her favorite walk before the hives, and true to a legend of her childhood, in a low recitative "tells the

bees" the fortunes of the day. Mrs. Milbury sits under the vine-covered porch, knitting silk stockings for a baby-linen warehouse. Here was peace, plenty, industry, rest, hope, the daily life, the sweet mystifications and surprises of household love.

"I like the school very well, but I am not such an enthusiast in teaching as Teddie was," said Myra. "I find myself taking more interest in the farm and garden work near me than in enterprising new methods of instruction, though I hope I am more than an average teacher; I try to be. But what I would like best, Van, is to be able to live at home where mother is and do my work there. If we could afford a larger place which we could run to profit, so that both of us could be occupied upon it, I should like that. I always was a mother-girl. All the Wallace Cranshaws in creation could not have persuaded me as far from my mother as Nebraska! Not but what Teddie loves mother as much as I do. Were there ever nicer letters than she writes us every week? But she and I were made for a different life. The life I am made for is to stay with my mother as long as she lives, and I hope she will live till I am old enough to die too."

"Mother is so well and cheerful now," said Van.

"I hope Teddie will be able to come home next year at least," said Myra; "she has been gone two years, and we cannot go to see her. It would cost too much for three of us, and I cannot lose my winter school, and you are the busiest in the summer. Wallace is prospering so Teddie could easily come next summer."

"I think she will," said Van; "I am writing to her about it."

"What do you suppose Miss Nancy is telling the bees? And what do you suppose she means to do with her money? I don't think she is a woman to hoard her money."

"She seems so contented here, I think she nearly forgets that she has that money, except as she pays her little expenses, her board and buys her clothing. I don't see but what she can live right here with us as long as she lives; and really she has seemed to grow young again out here in the country. She has a pretty good time. She spends days with grandma and with her crony, Miss Prudy Steele; she goes to Mr. Lowell's for a day or two at a time, and the children call her 'Aunt Nancy.' She takes no end of comfort in the missionary society, the prayer-meeting, and her class in the Sunday-school. But I'll tell you, Myra, now I think of it, I'm going to take time for my Young Women's Christian Association work. When I think what

the Association did for us at that dreadful time, sending Mrs. Arden to us and giving us hope and courage, I feel as if I cannot do enough for it. If ever I get where I can, I shall give it a hundred dollars a year."

It was late in the afternoon of the Fourth of July, and Van and Myra were sitting alone in the window of the little brown house. Myra was finishing a dress which she was to wear at the coming Sunday-school picnic, and Van had just come in from inspecting the chickens, bees, cows, and sunflowers in her own little kingdom. They were talking of the old days and of the work that had come to them, and speculated freely, in girlish fashion, on what the future would bring them. They were to know sooner than they had anticipated, at least as far as the near future was concerned. Suddenly a sound of horses' hoofs and carriage wheels was heard outside, and Uncle Daniel, with beaming face, called from his seat, "Come, girls, quick! a Fourth of July picnic for you! It is not too late yet for us to celebrate the day and bring it to a close with a festive season." Soon they were seated in the carriage, and Uncle Daniel set the horses off at a round pace. On they drove, and after a circuit of a mile they came in sight of the spot dearest of all to them. There was the be-

loved old home, Poplar Rise, and the great gate was open where carriages entered, and promptly into the gate the horses turned.

But what in the world! The well-known portico, with its climbing roses and its honeysuckles, was crowded. There in the rocking-chair sat grandma in her state black silk, her white crêpe cap, and almost white hair. There sat mamma Milbury, just where she had sat six years before, when Aunt Harriet Proctor had complained to her that the "Milbury maids" knew so little that was really practical. There stood Miss Nancy, in a cap with a purple bow such as her soul delighted in. On the step of the porch stood Aunt Sara Ann in her best, crying what, from the looks of the rest, must be joyful tears. Hannah was visible and radiant in the hallway; as for boys, Uncle Daniel's six—who really looked like sixty, they made themselves so numerous darting here and there, decorated the steps, the gravel-path, and the lawn.

"Welcome home, Van and Myra, welcome home," said Miss Nancy as she came forward to meet the girls.

"Isn't this a grand surprise?" cried the boys. "Van what do you think of this?"

The girls, utterly bewildered, looked from one to another of the group for an explanation.

"Miss Nancy has bought Poplar Rise," said Mrs. Milbury.

"Yes, I've bought it," said the beaming Miss Nancy; "I've bought it for my girls Van and Myra; I always meant you should have Mr. Dotter's picture, or the price of it. Don't you remember the night I let it fall and broke the frame? Wasn't that a happy break! I've been figuring round to get this place since ever I moved out to live with you, but we only brought the folks to terms and signed the papers a week ago. That same day I made my will, leaving all I shall die possessed of to Van and Myra."

"Oh you best Miss Nancy!" cried Van.

"Your mother and grandmother are going to live here," said Miss Nancy. "Hannah has come back."

"And what will I do, pray tell?" cried Aunt Sara Ann. "One-half of the time is all any of you can have grandma!"

"Do you see how they are all disputing who shall have the most of grandma's company?" said Uncle Daniel. "Think how well it is to live so that when we are old we are honored and loved and *wanted*. The Scripture says, 'A hoary head is a crown of honor if it be found in the way of righteousness.' It is by living righteously that one gets old happily."

“Myra,” cried Van, “come on, let us go up to the garret!” Away they dashed, and Uncle Daniel informed the company that “Adam’s daughters were as much girls as ever they were!”

“Van! weren’t you surprised!” exclaimed Myra, when the sunny garret was reached and the window set wide open.

“I never was so surprised in my life,” said Van.

“To think that we knew nothing of it!” protested Myra; “and Miss Nancy has just told me that she has a buggy for us, and a thousand dollars have been spent in furnishing the house, and Mrs. Linsdale and Mrs. Arden bought the furniture. We are to live here right away. The bees and live stock from our little brown house are to be brought up here, and we are to look after that place and its produce until the lease is out next spring. Ben is to live here and help us run Poplar Rise farm; the three younger boys all take to farming and are enough to help Uncle Daniel. Ned and Joe have an offer to start a paper over in the village next spring; stock is being subscribed for it. Did you ever see anything so good and beautiful as our coming back to the old home, and mother and grandmother being settled at the old Milbury farm?”

“I hope father and Uncle Aaron know and

are glad about this in heaven," said Van with shining eyes.

"Don't you suppose they have enough to do up there, enough for all eternity, admiring the ways the Lord manages affairs and leads people?" said Myra. "One thing is sure, he has not forgotten Adam's daughters."





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