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ISAAC DRAQUE, THE BUCKEYE

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ISAAC DRAQUE

THE

BUCKEYE

By

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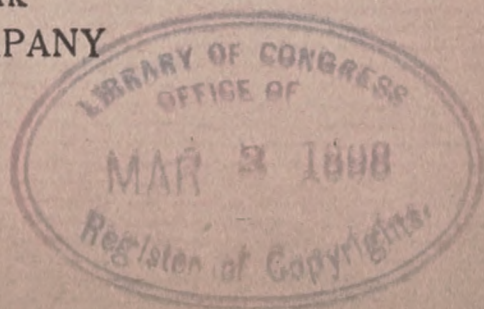
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CHICAGO — NEW YORK
W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

[1898].

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ISAAC DRAQUE, THE BUCKEYE.

CHAPTER I.

Early in the present century, the site and country surrounding a now flourishing city in the state of Ohio were covered with forest trees. Many were of giant proportion, and all, as if with friendly understanding, with interlocked and outspread branches prevented the sun's rays from penetrating to their roots, which, in summer, flourished best in cool, moist ground, and which also afforded them protection from the frosts of winter.

In the spring time, then as now, the forest wore the same soft green, the certain color of infancy in leaves and plants, which in the summer deepened into the dark, strong hue that betokens strength and prime. Autumn presented the same beautiful, gorgeous coloring, one tree differing so wonderfully from another, that in the spring were so nearly alike. Winter robed all with the same brown garment. The sap returned into the bosom of the earth. The trees are stripped of their leaves. The happy song birds have flown. The gentle winds and refreshing showers are gone, and no trace of what was is seen. May we be allowed to think how closely they resemble human lives that in infancy are so nearly the same; that age contrasts so distinctly, and as death makes all that is human again appear alike.

The beautiful snow flakes gracefully floated and fell, rested upon the bare, brown branches, and the burden of crystal whiteness inclined them to the earth with just a perceptible curve, while the hoar frost worked a hundred thousand fantastic designs in bars, and columns, and pyramids, and cones. There was the massive Corinthian pillar and the slender Gothic spire.

Along the banks of streams where the water was not still, were patterns as exquisite and delicate as were ever fashioned in lace; until beholding them in combination with the starry firmament forever moving on, and all the wonders nature is continually placing before us, one is led to question: Did man ever design or invent anything, but rather did he not at some time or other discover the design in a picture the Almighty placed before him.

Invention is but the putting together of several designs in order to make a perfect whole, such as none but the inventor before produced, which may imply.

The inventor goes abroad in this world of wonders a more careful observer in certain directions than another; understanding certain laws, he culls from the universal storehouse the designs best suited to his ideas and wants.

Often, before the story of Jesus' love was carried to the spot, the black storm cloud hung low over the great forest. The lightning spread its sheet-like brightness over a goodly portion of the immediate sky, or darted its fiery tongues in many directions from a common center; while peal after peal of thunder reverberated through its dark aisles.

The rain fell in gentle, soothing showers, or came with a whirlwind that uprooted trees and sent the swollen rivers madly plunging on. The water in

places swept huge bowlders and in others sped over beds of sand; now kept in by perpendicular banks, and again spreading without restraint. With restored calm, the sky was flecked with the white fleecy cloud, or the stratus piled tier after tier, that the sinking sun emblazoned with gold as he noiselessly passed out of sight, and left the wilds in more than midnight darkness, till the hours of gloom that succeed are again blotted out by the rising glow.

High above this spot of wild grandeur and design shone the same north star that guided the mariner as he crossed the heretofore pathless ocean, to open the gates of the New World to the overcrowded population of the Old. Here, in a land teeming with verdure, there had never been a dream of pasture fields or lowing kine; of golden heads of wheat, or beautiful undulating meadows; of trim cottage gardens, or magnificent city homes, nor any one who had heretofore deemed such things probable.

The fleet-footed deer were here in abundance, and the portly bear, while not scorning flesh when it could be conveniently procured, had fattened on the nuts that fell in showers from the many nut-bearing trees; while the lank-sided, carnivorous wolf, with a relish wholly for flesh, greedily sniffed the air that brought a scent from the direction in which it could be found. And here, in a wild state, lording over all as in primitive times, was man. He was of a race capable of great endurance, and fearless to the utmost degree, and looked with astonishment, not unmixed with suspicion, upon the creatures, so like himself, who came from other parts, evidently to share or take possession of the sheltering forests his people had so long been accustomed to look upon as their own.

Concerning the great Northwestern Territory of

which our new Buckeye state was a part, aside from its vastness, its forests, great lakes, and wild inhabitants, but little was known. While it was a part of the America that had been discovered more than three hundred years before, and struggled so hard for independence with the country that would fain be a mother to the whole world, in her own way, yet it was in its very infancy.

There were no facts before the settlers such as history points out. All that had happened since the creation was as completely a blank as is the land or inhabitants around the North Pole. One might peer into the forests and people them with figures and scenes, according to his own imagination. He might associate the ancestors of the red man with a time when the forests were not there, and not a voice of a living thing or an echo of the past would come to contradict his fancy. Did the flowers that sprung up everywhere bloom from time immemorial for the race about to depart forever? Who can tell?

Although parts of the southern portion of the state had been settled earlier, the dense forests toward the center and north were untouched; in them was never heard the sound of the woodman's ax until our little band took possession. The fathers of those about to locate in this interesting spot had crossed the ocean, coming from different parts of the Old World, leaving no baronial castles behind them. The forest before their children, how unlike the beaten turf those fathers left; with its ages of history hanging over it; with its thousand tales of woe; its strife and persecution; the bitter struggle for life; its exiles and death from famine.

They knew it was not without regret their fathers left their homes. Alone! was the feeling that took

possession of them as they cut off from land and gave themselves to the mercy of the wide ocean. Each had gladly bid farewell to the land of his fathers, which was not even a refuge to him, much less a home; but with filial affection all hearts turned to their fathers' graves. So much they loved was buried beneath the Old World sod. Like them, the savage, forced to find other shelter, loved his fathers' graves.

That sentiment, or that something in the heart of the wild man so akin to that in the heart of his civilized brother, and that is possessed by no mere animal, which impelled him to cross the forest, to revisit the mound where the bones and dust of his tribe were laid, must certainly command our admiration. In his savage breast there was no desire to plunder. He reverently laid the dead away with his bow and arrow, and all he valued, beside him, and looked beyond to the Happy Hunting Grounds, where he believed the spirits of those entombed had flown, and where the wherewith to satisfy all that remained unsatisfied in this life would be at his command.

Little do we know what inspiration he may have there received, or how the Great Spirit may have spoken to his soul of those vast hunting grounds in the Beyond. He had no religion; he did not know Jesus, but something certainly said to him: You are destined to live beyond the grave.

The aborigines did not willingly vacate their forest home in favor of the white man, but tried at various times to reinstate themselves, which gave the border settler much annoyance. But before our little band stepped in Mad Anthony had settled for the time all disputes in a very forcible way, and those on the border of the territory, still the home of the red man, had at present little to fear. Tecumseh, failing to

bring the people to terms, some years later left them undisputed possession of the soil they had bought of eastern speculators and that those speculators had bought of the government. So the wrong that was done the American Indian cannot be left at the door of our inoffensive home-hunters, who with willing hands went to work to make it all their own.

The settlers who were born and bred to the plow, came from some place in the East to what was then called the West. It was in reality, as well as to them, the far West. They were not heirs to vast possessions that by chance had passed out of their hands, but hardy sons of toil, whose brawny frames seemed strengthened by the felling of the forest trees around them; whose brains were developed realizing the vast prospects before them; and whose hearts became the warmer and more tender because of their privations.

The homes of the settlers were not pretentious; log cabins of one room, and as time wore on here and there a second built of boards, that served as a kitchen in summer and a shed in winter. The occupants of the cabins, for a great distance around, were like one great family. The forest fell before them with amazing rapidity, as they willingly lent each other the helping hand. As the logs were cleared away, and stumps rooted out, bare patches ready for cultivation began to show themselves everywhere, and the land before untilled yielded abundant harvest.

Some of the patches were soon covered with great sappy green bunches, that had been carefully hilled and hoed, and on them a most delicate little flower could be found, not in profusion but here and there just one tiny one, that but few would stop to call beautiful. The hills in a neighboring spot, carefully kept as well, were by nature more aspiring, and walked

right up in full view of solicitous eyes, bowing their tasseled heads and displaying their silken ears with every motion of the wind.

The clover attracted the honey bee, that, now poising over the blossom and again sipping its sweets, kept up a continual hum. The small boy's delight—the butterfly with mealy wings—was there, hovering over the clover blossom long enough to make the boy feel sure he had him under his hat at last; which he oftener raised in disappointment than to find his expected treasure beneath, but never tired, he kept chasing the gilded thing he so much coveted until the day was done.

Each neighbor knew how much ground the other had ready and was going to "break up in the spring," which fields were to be planted with certain crops, and in the fall how many bushels of wheat and oats the other had, and what they would be likely to sell for.

Little household arrangements were discussed freely from neighbor to neighbor, and the feeling that they were isolated from the great big world bound them together. On a frosty morning the ringing sound of the woodman's ax came from all sides and enlivened the scene, the sharp click having the peculiar sound denoting frost in the timber, in the air, and everywhere.

The blue smoke might be seen curling gracefully from the one chimney of each respective cabin; the back log being enormous, the volume sent forth in smoke bespoke the warmth and cheer within, and before the respective fires were rollicking groups of children, destined to play an important part in the history just begun. Some were chubby and some were lean, but with few exceptions there was the prevailing robust

glow of health and satisfaction. Being hungry, they ate corn cakes because they were good, and ate them in a manner that demonstrated to a certainty that "hunger is a good sauce."

The good man hustled about feeding sheep, pigs and cattle, often wading knee deep through snow banks. His return to the cabin was proclaimed by vigorous kicks at the threshold in an effort to disengage the snow-heels that had clung to his boots, while the children flew to the door in wild efforts to see who could open it first.

The good woman fed chickens and ducks, and at the woodpile stopped for the load that was to replenish the common fire, around which all were warmed, all visitors entertained. The one fire before which the family bread was baked in the tin oven, and whose huge crane swung out to receive pots and kettles in which the family provisions were cooked, stewed and boiled.

Homely, frugal, industrious, and thrifty, they fairly and squarely faced the world as they found it, and battled with the forests and elements long before civilization brought upon the spot the many devices that now make homes more comfortable and toil less severe.

The sounds that greet our ears today were unfamiliar sounds to them. There was no hammer, and bang, and push, but a lonely quiet that appeared to enter into and form a part of themselves.

On a winter evening the coming of a neighbor was heralded by the sound of crunching snow under his feet, and the growl of the lazy watch dog, comfortably stretched before the fire of burning logs. The people thought, and reasoned, and loved, much after the manner we do today, in a homelier way, probably, but none the less genuine.

CHAPTER II.

A good man and his wife, known to all the neighbors as Jabez and Peggy; to the minister, the schoolmaster and the young folks of the place as Mr. and Mrs. Ghent, were seated before the fire in one of the cabins, talking over the past and their prospects in the future, when the sound of crunching snow was heard, a growl from the dog, and then a rap at the door.

"Get up, Jabez, and let the neighbor in," said his wife, who was busily plying the needle in and out the stocking she was knitting for one of the children; eyeing alternately the stocking and the burning logs, seemingly thinking seriously about some unsettled question she was shaping in her mind, and at the same time watching the narrowing of the stocking that she might have it the correct size.

Jabez arose as directed, opened the door and grasped, with a hearty shake, the hand of the caller, who stepped to a seat saying:

"Well! Peggy at work and every one else resting?"

"Yes, John," replied Peggy, "it appears the work about this place is never done. They have a quilting over at Klomp's tonight, and the children all went; you know young folks must have their fun, and the helping them get ready put me back a little, so I thought I'd make up some tonight; however, I'll lay my work aside, for Jabez often tells me if I don't take a rest I'll never get one." Then, after counting the stitches and folding the stocking at the seam, she lowered her glasses so she could the better look over them;

quietly laid the stocking aside, folded her hands and looked at John Strand, prepared to give him all her attention.

"Gone to the quilting, eh?" said John, "I reckon they'll see my Winnie there; my old woman said she was thinking on it all week, and went off looking right smart."

"There'll be no end to the fun this winter. I hear there's to be another quilting at Mose Schivers, and a husking at Will Langons. Tobes' young orchard is bearing pretty well now; I hear they are to have a pearling, and Steve Mather has a span of colts he's going to break in sleigh riding; my girls are thinking of going sometimes, with Winnie's permit," said Peggy, with a knowing glance at John.

"Yes," said Jabez, complimenting the recent snow storm and hard frost. "The snow is deep enough to cover ruts, and hard enough to bear them all up, so they had better have it when they can cross the fields to the plank, and then hurrah! If they don't run into the stage coach all's well, a tumble in the snow drift wouldn't hurt them."

The Buckeye state was alive to improvement, and now possessed a stage coach road which was planked and extended from the lake on the north to the river on the south. The young folks, whose fathers were fortunate enough to have located near the road, enjoyed the luxury of sleigh riding to an extent the less fortunate youth, far removed in either direction, could not hope to indulge in, only upon such occasions as this, when the snow was, as Jabez said, "deep enough and hard enough to drive anywhere," as poor roads, often mere cow paths, were still the rule.

"Jabez, you didn't give John a chance to think of what I said about Steve and Winnie," said Peggy.

"John hasn't forgotten anything that was said, don't fear," replied Jabez.

"Many a worse man than Steve got a good wife," said John mechanically.

"That's true," put in Jabez. "You hit the right nail on the head as often as any one living; Steve is a good fellow, he worked hard for that rig, is proud of it and no blame to him, but if I'm not wrong he thinks a deal more of your Winnie."

"Well, mebbe he does," came slowly from John, who did not seem to enjoy the bantering. Peggy tried to change the subject, for to drop in on a neighbor of an evening meant a good, sociable time, with subjects all were heartily interested in for discussion. Jabez, slower than Peggy to see their old friend, did not altogether relish the conversation, and noticing he held his head in a half drooping sort of a way suddenly asked:

"Are you sick, John?"

"No, not sick," replied John, "but have often been what the doctors called sick when I didn't feel half as bad. When a man is sick, Jabez, he has a heap of medicine and kindly wishes from every one, which goes a long way toward bringing him about again; but when a man has a trouble that is not altogether plain to other people there's no help but bear it."

"I suppose that's true, John, but sit near the fire; it's getting very cold," said Jabez, vigorously pelting the crackling logs burning in the open fireplace.

What his mind did not understand his heart felt; he knew there was some trouble that gave his old friend a heartache, and his own throbbed too fast in sympathy to allow him to offer consolation in words; consequently the trying to make the room warmer, for John looked cold.

The few minutes' silence that succeeded seemed a chance for the old clock to tick louder and faster. A cricket that had found comfortable quarters in the chimney, sang out as merrily as if it was midsummer, and he stowed away in a hay rick. The dog turned over and looked around, as if wondering what could have happened his master, who was always so jolly when a neighbor came in. Jabez felt he would not be doing his duty as host did he not try to cheer his visitor, and saying something to Peggy nobody understood, turned to John, saying:

"There's a power of good in doctor's medicines sometimes, 'tis true, but in those troubles that medicine don't cure you have the whole world for company."

"That's certain," chimed in Peggy, "those letters we get from the East are not all sunshine, and they comfortably fixed, not having the half to contend with we have here."

"We'll pull through all right yet, John," said Jabez encouragingly; "when a man is satisfied with the step he has taken it doesn't take just all the comfortable things another man might crave to make him happy."

"That's it," said Peggy; "when we make up our minds to make the best of things as they come along we're pretty sure to rake in a little happiness, and then if a disappointment comes it's not as great as it is with those who had an idea from the first that everything was going to move smooth. We expected ups and downs when we started, and that's what we're getting, and no mistake about it, and still I can't say we are not happy." She looked at John, expecting him to agree with her exactly. John nodded his head in an affirmative way, but made no reply that would call forth either encouragement or consolation from the two so willing to give both.

All were again silent, and sat watching the burning logs as figure after figure of quaint or horrible shapes presented themselves, and then disappeared. There was nothing to break the stillness, either within or from without, save the tick, tick, of the family clock. The cricket did not condescend to utter another sound; not a wind rustled through the trees to put an end to the uncomfortable quiet, for the frost was busily at work; it loves the stillness of night; all nature understands its tastes, and hushed allows it to reign supreme. The faithful dog, unable to bear it longer, turned once more and looked around, evidently trying to rouse his master to a sense of duty, until tired holding his lazy head upright, he leisurely stretched his forelegs and planted his head between, facing his master, so he could keep a half open eye upon him. Still nothing brought a voice from the three seated before the fire. John Strand suddenly arose, bade his host and hostess "good-night," and left. They listened silently to the crunching snow, the sound growing fainter and fainter until lost, when Jabez broke the silence, saying:

"Peggy, the man is crazy, he took the path by the cow shed, which is a round about way home, and he can't be going to Joe Bleekman's, for he surely knows the river at that point is too deep and too rapid to be frozen over with a week's freezing, hard enough though it was." With a shrug he arose and looked out in the direction John had taken.

"Can you see him?" questioned Peggy with eagerness.

"No," said Jabez, "he must be in the shadow of the wood or turned his course completely."

"For the life of me, I can't think what can be coming over him; he used to be the jolliest man in the

country, satisfied with his own place and with everything. I noticed his hand trembled like as he made a second effort to get the door latch. I've been wondering if Winnie's going off could be troubling him," said Peggy.

"I think not," replied Jabez; "he seems to be well satisfied with Steve, and why shouldn't he. There's not a better or more industrious young fellow about. I wouldn't object to him for a son-in-law myself."

"Oh," said Peggy laughing, "our girls are younger than Winnie; we're in no hurry with them off, at least I'm not." After which remark Peggy put her spectacles upon precisely the right spot on her nose, turned her chair around for better light and took up her knitting. Peggy was a wideawake woman, who was never idle; she could always work and listen, or, if need be, talk about what she thought of things as fast as Jabez could, who, while she knitted the winter stockings, read the Bible for her benefit as well as his own. They had some other books which Jabez had well thumbed, and that meant Peggy knew as much about them as Jabez did. Jabez took a weekly paper, edited in his own state, and the occasion of its coming once a week was looked forward to with as much delight as if it was a little fortune. Jabez or one of the children tramped cheerfully to the office weekly on what they called paper day, and upon their return, if Jabez was not ready to swallow its contents, Peggy adjusted her spectacles with the remark, "I'm going to see what's going on in the world."

Left alone, Jabez and Peggy resumed their conversation upon topics concerning the times and their surroundings. They paid due attention to the spellings, quiltings and sleigh riding; not forgetting the young peoples' loves and engagements. Every one felt at

liberty to call upon every other one in the settlement for help, and such gatherings were called bees. If a cabin was to be built the neighbors were invited to help; the trees were felled, the logs rough hewn, piled up, a roof put upon them, and it became somebody's home. They husked corn and killed pigs after the same fashion. When the patched quilt was ready for quilting the young folks were especially delighted, as the work wound up with a frolic that might seem ridiculous to the pleasure loving young people of their ages today. After the quilt was taken out of the frame and carefully laid away, they ate the good things that had been provided. Then arrainging themselves in pairs around the walls of the cabin played "heavy, heavy hangs over your head," or "button, button, who's got the button."

The log school house, in which some of our illustrious statesmen were daily conning their lessons, stood not far from the cabin of Jabez, and was the scene of many a spelling match, the hero of which was looked upon as a very extraordinary person. Another house of similar proportion, not far away, was known as the meeting house. A little further down the road stood a house much like the last mentioned, save a rude wooden cross, innocent of paint, nailed firmly on the front gable, which marked the place of worship of the few among them who clung to the faith of ages. At the cross roads, not a stone's throw from the church, stood the post office. The warm hearted, who were so far removed from their friends, often called at the little office, eagerly expecting a letter from the East, which came slowly by way of canal, and stage coach. Naturally enough, such place would become the nucleus of a village. After awhile a little country store was opened, where groceries, pins, needles,

thread and many such necessaries were sold. A blacksmith was sorely needed, and he, too, found his way to the cross roads. A drug store became a necessity, the herbs that had been gathered and treasured by grandmothers did not come up to the idea of the rising American. So that, before the night in question, the cross roads had assumed the above mentioned proportion, with an additional attraction that Peggy, with all her interest concerning what might be going on in the world, had not yet discovered.

To some the spellings and quiltings and "dropping in on a neighbor of an evening" were evidently becoming dull, and John Strand was one who was fast forgetting his old friends and their harmless pastimes, yet he was universally liked, he had a heart as warm and a mind as willing to do his neighbor a good turn as any man in the settlement. He was now missed at nearly all their gatherings, and the wonder often went around "What could be coming over John."

Even "his Winnie," as he always lovingly spoke of her, failed to keep her father at home when the gathering was at his own cabin. Every one had his theory concerning the cause; some attributed it to loss of health, others to loss of mind, while but one or two in the whole community with certainty and in whisper spoke the cause.

It had been fully three days since John had called at the cabin of Jabez, and Peggy was hard at work rendering the lard after the "butchering," when she was startled by a "good-morning, Mrs. Ghent." She turned and saluted the young owner of the team that was the delight of the lovers of sleigh riding, who had just stepped in with Jabez. She scanned him carefully for a moment and asked:

"What's gone wrong, Steve?"

"John Strand has not been seen for three days, and Mrs. Strand asked me to call at the neighbors, maybe he is about some place."

"He's not been here these three days, but Jabez said last evening he is seen often of late with Hiram Blank. Mebbe you'd hear some news of him if you went over there."

Peggy looked at Jabez, astonished that he had not told Steve, the more so as he was her informer. But that Hiram Blank's was not just as correct a place for John Strand or any other man to spend his leisure hours as another neighbor's cabin might be, she did not for a moment imagine.

Steve thanked Peggy for the information, and started across the fields in the direction of Hibe's cabin. After his departure Peggy "tidied up a bit," put on shawl and bonnet and went to "John's," as the cabin was familiarly called. She found Mrs. Strand and Winnie in distress; she tried to cheer them and drive away dark forebodings, but when the day was nearly spent and Steve had not returned with any tidings, the thought came to Peggy that Jabez had better go in search. She returned to find Jabez in the cabin before her, and told him how John Strand had not been seen since the night he called there and acted so strangely.

Jabez may have taken the trouble to investigate concerning John's stange actions; however that may be, he shook his head and certainly knew a great deal more than Peggy told him.

"You'd better hurry, Jabez," said Peggy, "and see what can be done to bring cheer to those left in the dark."

"It's no use, Peggy, no use; Steve knows all about John's whereabouts, and I'm thinking he's the best one to break the news."

CHAPTER III.

The cross roads was fast becoming a place of unusual interest. The soft-handed stranger who had come to the thrifty settlement some months before was an enterprising sort of a man; his enterprise being the kind that adroitly managed to turn the labor of others into account for himself. He had taken a little spot that could not be called a farm and hardly a garden. It was evident he did not like hard work, and those who were born and bred to work were slow to understand how he managed to thrive and look so genteel. As his method of making a living was not plain, they invested him with an imaginary fortune stowed away in a convenient place, and, like the hereafter in this respect, that it was without end.

It was but natural to have respect for the fine stranger who toiled not and to have a desire to become closely acquainted with him; the more so as he sought and seemed equally well pleased with their acquaintance.

He was spoken of by all far and near as "the gentleman," and the good people laughingly remarked, "It's a poor place that can't afford one gentleman."

That the secret of his easy life and thrift stood in the corner of his cabin is certain, but in what shape not many had yet learned. Sociable, big-hearted, good-natured John Strand was the first to become initiated into the mystery of the newcomer's wonderful magnet, that gradually drew others and had the wonderful retaining power as well. Such being the case, neighbor Hibe's quarters were getting uncomfortably

small for the accommodation of his daily additional friends. He always made himself as companionable as possible, and those who called were prone to linger. Therefore, what was originally an eight by ten cabin assumed proportions somewhat larger; the addition being a room built to the front of the cabin and supposed to be roomy enough to accommodate his fast increasing friends without interfering with the household affairs.

Mrs. Blank could now general the family in private, and, when the occasion required, step to the front and help Hibe, she being admirably adapted to the purpose, whether by nature or by training is not quite certain. From the standpoint self, Hibe was a shrewd, big-headed man who kept himself fairly posted in all that would be likely to interest his patrons. He took an active part in everything going on, and became interested at once to a wonderful degree in whatever conversation might arise. Aside from the family, he was the chief mourner at every funeral, and, when the minister was disabled, he, being the only gentleman of leisure in the place, filled the position with as much ease as if he had been especially fitted for it. And altogether, he was an exceedingly handy man to have about. No wonder he drew from their homes both old and young; besides, his secret of retaining them was one no other man in the settlement had yet thought of.

Winter evenings were most prolific of discussion and amusements at Hibe's domicile, but all the year round brought patrons and hangers-on. John Strand spent so much time there he was beginning to be looked upon as a necessity about the place. On this particular evening farmer Draque strode leisurely toward the door; his face one great smile, his mouth

from ear to ear, showing a row of strong teeth, and the suspicion of another equally strong that, possessed by any other animal than the genus homo, would have appeared formidable; but instead, the sight had the effect of teeth showing all around, for upon seeing Draque each at once did the best he could toward a display in the same direction.

"I'll declare," said neighbor Draque, accosting John Strand, "if I didn't think I'd beat you here tonight."

"You'll leave home early, Draque, when you get here before John," said neighbor Klomp, and a hearty laugh from all around clearly confirmed the truth of what Klomp said.

"Well!" continued Klomp, "what are you doing down at your place these days, Draque?"

"Logging; as the weather is suitable thought I'd get that north lot cleared up a bit; can't get much of a crop off it yet for the logs."

"Don't you find it pretty slow work alone, Draque," said Klomp.

"I'd find it slow work alone, I'm sure, for I find it slow work with Ike's help," replied Draque.

"Oh!" exclaimed Klomp, "you've kept the boy from school. That's bad; the few months' schooling the youngsters have a chance of they ought to get."

"I think about as you do, myself," said Draque; "but schooling the boy 'ill not pile the logs, and I want that north lot cleared by spring. I'll keep him at it for a while till I get it in such shape that a day's hauling from the neighbors will clear it off, and then I'll let him go to school again."

Neighbor Klomp straightened up, and, turning a sharp look at Draque, said, "You're a good manager, Draque."

"Good managing," answered Draque, "is the road

to wealth, and, as I see it in fifty years from now, this will be something of a place."

"As we are comfortable here and the drinks are good, I see no harm in castle building," said John Strand.

"Not a bit," chimed in a dozen voices. "They who build castles as we are building them just now are as happy as they who live in them."

"We might as well build castles if it's to take fifty years to make a place out of this," said Klomp, with a significant nod. He then continued, "I think we'll not be much caring what sort of a place it is by that time."

"Well, I can't say that's exactly my spirit," said Draque. "I'd like to leave the place a little better than I found it."

Ike now appeared upon the scene—fifteen-year-old Ike—a handsome, manly fellow with dark hair, large brown eyes and large shapely hands the logs had not yet made an impression upon for the worse. His fine features were beaming with smiles as he picked his way through the crowd of elders to where a half dozen lads of his own age had gathered. The whole crowd turned admiring eyes upon Ike as he crossed the floor.

"It's a pity to keep that lad from school, Draque," said Klomp. "I'm not a learned man as schooling goes, but I've the sense to see he has a head on him that would grace a lord."

"You couldn't be as complimentary to his father, Klomp," said the man in the crowd who never ventured to say much in a joking way, but always felt pretty certain he was right when he did speak.

"They tell me I was a fine-looking fellow when I was a lad," said Draque, straightening up until he manifested to them he was of the same opinion himself,

"That was a long time ago, and those who said so are dead, so we don't stand in danger of quarreling, though we differ with them to a man," said Klomp, which remark brought an approving nod and a tremendous laugh from all around. The joke on Draque was enjoyed by the young fellows, who, giggling, looked at Ike. But Ike was not the boy who could heartily enter into a joke at his father's expense, and with a vacant air he looked out over the moon-lighted snow field, so bright that when he withdrew his gaze and looked around the room once more, he found it difficult to discern objects by the dim flicker of the tallow dip, though helped by the smoldering coals in the fireplace.

"Draque, how does it come we don't hear from you?" came a voice from the midst of the crowd. "Since I knew you I never saw the time till now that you couldn't laugh as loud as your neighbor at a good joke."

"It's strange, isn't it, Draque," said Klomp, looking at Draque, "that a man of sense can't laugh when the joke is on himself?" Then turning to his next neighbor, Klomp continued, "That accounts for the drawing down of the corners of Draque's mouth that gives him such an unnatural look. The joke is generally on another man, you understand, and Draque at the bottom of it."

Neighbor Draque thought it was now his turn to get even with somebody. He backed his chair into the corner, so as to get a good view of the whole crowd, and in his own peculiar way eyed them all around, then, with a comical smile, said:

"I'll wager no one dead or alive ever said as much for any of the rest of you."

Draque's remark, although as much to the point as

the preceding, did not create the same amount of mirth. However, Draque could stand it. He felt he was even with his neighbors, who a few moments before held high carnival over him. Ike, although he did not move a muscle, showed by the twinkle in his eye he was proud of his father's triumph. Although they, Draque included, were not handsome men according to the standard, they were far from being uninteresting as a study. Their features were roughened by toil and privation; the biting frosts of winter and the scorching summer sun are sure to leave impressions upon those who have to struggle through life for home, bread and butter.

But beneath the rough exterior were men of whom the state might well be proud. With them a trust was sacred. Not knowing luxury, they without exception renounced even common comforts to pay the last farthing.

The crowd now looked as if joking might not be the best pastime in the world and all were satisfied to quit. Draque shrugged his shoulders and looked around, not as badly beaten as they thought at first, and evidently had something more to say. It was also evident his neighbors did not care to hear what that something might be, and did not intend to give him an opportunity by speaking first. At length he remarked:

"I notice a joke has about the same effect upon a dozen men of sense when it's upon themselves that it has upon one. What say ye?" All of which brought no response.

They had now gotten thoroughly warmed. The elders all had their drinks, and were thinking about settling down in earnest at their usual entertainments—card-playing and general conversation about how

they were making things move at their respective places, with an occasional story to "liven" things up a little.

A wigwam left standing on John Strand's farm was the source of much trouble to him. Probably he was more conscientious, after all, than his neighbors, and the idea of an injustice being done to another race may have so weighed upon him that he did not feel he was rightful owner. Consequently his hanging on at Hibe's and not caring to work another man's farm, even though that man might be a red man. He was a business man according to his own way, and had the deed which guaranteed him ownership properly examined. Notwithstanding all that he was never lawyer enough to see clearly through the "first deed business," as he called it, and was a little uneasy as to how things might turn out.

He may have seen in his dreams the red man returning and taking possession of his wigwam, and, although he knew he would never interfere with him in the farming part of the business, he was a little uncertain as to how he would like him for a neighbor. The pointed flints with which the former occupant of the place had tipped his arrows, either for defense or to bring down the game, were lying about in profusion, and may have been suggestive of John's uneasiness.

He poured his woes into the willing ears of Hiram Blank, who was the right man to handle the subject, and soon over a friendly glass convinced John that from time immemorial there had been men who went a little astray on the side of conscience just as he was doing. It would be hard to tell whether the argument or the friendly glass went the farther toward convincing. That the latter was at least an important

factor in the case will satisfy at present, as John's scruples are not permanently laid at rest, but crop out on divers occasions, and are as often quieted after the same manner.

Hiram Blank was so logical in all his arguments with John concerning the wigwam and its former occupant, that plain neighbors Draque and Klomp did not get half an idea regarding the meaning of all that was being said and were aching for plain talk. Draque's hands were itching for a crowbar to handle the logs, for the north lot was expected to grow corn the next season, and if talking about logs did not remove them, it was at least a subject to his liking.

"I'll tell you," Draque began, looking at Klomp, "we'd better get some talking done before John has any more scruples to discuss. That off ox of mine can outpull any other ox in logging. If the other was only as good I mightn't have to ask you for yours. I'd like the loan of him for a day or two till we get the tops together, Ike and I."

"You can have him and welcome," said Klomp. "I haven't any work for him now. I'm not in as good shape as you are. I've a mighty lot of chopping to do before I can haul much. The logs I have down on my place are all too long for hauling. It's a pity we can't land them in Liverpool or some other Old World town. I tell you, if we could the money I'd pocket for them would make the place mine, and no further payments or contriving about it."

"Yes," said Draque, "we're making bonfires of timber they'd be mighty glad to lay their hands on over there. It's one of the inconveniences of life that we have the timber and they have the money, and, although we're willing enough on both sides to make the exchange, the exchange can't be made."

Klomp, with a vision of his fine oak and hickory going out in smoke, smiled a little sadly and said: "We might as well good-naturedly determine to be satisfied with the condition of things that's a fact, Draque."

John Strand was now extremely comfortable, and sat with his chair tilted back, the heels of his boots caught on the rounds and his chin buried in his chest, untroubled by scruples, and apparently regardless of everything transpiring around him. His neighbors sat bolt upright and eyed him with a pity akin to disgust. It did not occur to them that they had taken glass for glass with John the whole evening, and that from some other cause than too much, which they would never admit they had taken, he was in the unmanly condition they saw him. Even Mr. Blank had no excuse to offer, save the silver that jingled in his pockets, which the others had contributed with equal liberality, and had the independence to hold their heads up with more dignity about his promises.

The young fellows all the while were engaged in a game of euchre. With empty purses they could not indulge on a larger scale, as did their elders. But the odor of the toddy was agreeable, and withal time spent there so enjoyable they could be counted upon to return with every opportunity that offered. Draque was never the man to overdo things in the direction of pleasure, and late hours that would leave him unfit for an attack upon the north lot in the morning was very far from his way of managing at present. He arose, and reaching for his hat, said:

"Ike, we must be off."

"You're in a hurry, Draque," said Klomp; "you're as strong as the rest of us and could stand it an hour longer, it's not so late."

But when Draque was ready to do a thing he did it, and Ike, unheeding the entreaties of his companions for another game, was on his feet, with hat in hand ready. A drink before starting out in the cold was not contrary to Draque's idea, of the proper thing, and being too unselfish to warm himself with a good drink and let Ike walk by his side in the cold unwarmed, said:

"Come, Ike, I don't begrudge you anything that will do you good."

Ike, seemingly reluctant, walked half way across the room and stood still, but at his father's second call:

"Come, Ike, it's a bad night and you've a long stretch of a path to cover before you get home."

Ike, blushing scarlet to the roots of his hair, obeyed, and stepping forward drained the offered glass.

Neighbor Klomp appeared to feel it necessary on his part to offer an apology, considering he was not prompt like Draque in going home when it was time, and said:

"Draque has a bit farther to go than the rest of us, and if he attempts to cross the lots he'll find it hard pulling. The snow is deep yet in places; he'll need all he took to keep him warm till he get's there."

"That's a fine looking lad of his, in earnest," said the one in the crowd who did not try to talk much without being certain he was right, and who always gave for a reason "I'd rather listen," except upon his hobby, when, according to Draque and many others, "he always tried to get a word in edgeways, right or wrong." He did not often enter into the funny part of the conversation, a fact the neighbors all knew, consequently his joke on Draque was the more telling.

"He's ahead in all the spelling matches they have over at the school house," said Klomp.

"More's the pity for Draque to not let him have a

chance, and I hear we have a first rate teacher now—that fellow from the East,” said the silent man.

“Mark my word for it, that lad ’ill be heard from yet in spite of the schooling,” said Klomp.

A new arrival informed the crowd it was growing colder, said, “he thought the mercury must be near down to zero,” and continued, “after the cold spell we had when the thaw came was hoping we’d have open weather for awhile, but think it’s all up now; we’re in for a hard freeze.”

Then going as near the fire as he could get, he sat down, whereupon there was a general stir in the room, all endeavoring to get closer to the fire; the young fellows following in the rear.

One lad, distinguished from the others by the name of Frank Schiver, who did not know much about new fangled ideas, opened his eyes wide and straightened up as if ready for immediate action. Although he was wedged in the corner by a huge whisky barrel, he had as much horror as any boy living for being in the wrong place. He was now prepared for any emergency, whether fast running or standing his ground. If the elders agreed upon flight his heels would be among the first seen; but if they were to stand their ground he was there. In neither look nor attitude could be found coward. To be certain as to what course to pursue, he ventured to ask:

“Is zero a bad place for the mercury to be?”

“It’s a bad place, boy, a very bad place, sure enough, when a man is without an overcoat,” said Klomp, who looked around to see that more than half in the room were in the same plight he was in himself and continued:

“A fellow that hasn’t a coat had better be at home in bed this night.”

Close by the hearth fire the sympathetic shiver crept over all. The shiver was not unnoticed by Hiram Blank, who said:

“You’re comfortable here; at least I can make you so. I don’t mind firing up all night for friends, wood’s plenty.”

Hibe piled log after log upon the fire that was burning low. It was now pretty generally understood that those who came unprepared for the sudden change in temperature were in for the night. Among those who had overcoats some felt too comfortable to change their quarters; the others, buttoning their coats to their chins, left, not caring to risk whether the mercury would be at or below zero did they wait longer.

“Till morning; and how will we get home in the morning, Hibe?” asked Klomp. “Are you ready to predict fairer weather for that hour.”

“I’m really not a prophet,” said Hibe, smiling blandly; “but you’ll have daylight for it, anyway, and we’ve had such squalls as this before, and you all got home safe, eh?”

They all acknowledged Hibe’s last remark was truthful, and as they had been safe on other occasions why not on this.

The crackling logs were now sending forth a blaze that hugged and wrapped and then shot straight up, sending out a warmth that was exceedingly comfortable, and bid fair to settle all disputes that might arise contrary to the staying all night question. The mercury may not have fallen as low as the newcomer predicted; if so, it arose as suddenly as it fell, and when morning came a cold northeastern wind blew sleet and rain into the faces of those emerging from Hiram Blank’s.

The branches that the night before were bare were

now covered with ice. The long icicles pendant from tree and cornice seemingly intent upon reaching the ground—ground covered with snow and ice that would gladly hold them in beautiful position did they reach. The tramp in different directions to their respective homes was anything but pleasant, and the day, such as rendered out door work impossible. But they need not be idle; there were always odd jobs to be done about house and farm, the performance of which went pretty far toward distinguishing the respective men for thrift. Hiram Blank, having the room to himself, put on a back log, covered the fire, and going to a little wooden box set in the corner, counted his money and chuckling to himself, said:

“I’d have to pile many a log before I’d get as much together as that; besides, it’s too drudging a work for me, others may do it. I’ll keep on the good side of them and I’m fixed.”

Hibe had a conscience that was seldom disturbed, and why should it be; he was violating no law that he knew of. He was only shrewd enough to see that money might be gotten easily. He did not feel like putting a shoulder to the wheel so hard to turn, whose revolutions in less than a century were to make Ohio one of the most independent as well as the proudest little state that counts a star in the banner that waves so gracefully over all.

He choked whatever remorse might arise, saying:

“It’s only a little I got from each; they’ll not miss it.”

He had no storm to face as his patrons had, and retired with the injunction that Mrs. Blank “should keep her eye on the door,” which she did.

CHAPTER IV.

The neighbors in general were beginning to look upon Jabez as "old fogey." He did not enter into the amusements held forth at Hiram Blank's, and for some reason, which they could not tell, and did not care to discuss, never darkened his door, which was contrary to the neighborly feeling indulged in from the start, and which was not approved of by the community; the more so as he was not a recluse and called upon other neighbors. Draque came in for the evening call from Jabez, oftener than the average neighbor, because he "was handy," or, in other words, his next neighbor. Sometimes other neighbors, for old times' sake, remembered Jabez and Draque, and turned a cold shoulder on Hibe.

When an opinion was wanted upon any subject from Jabez he was invariably found, either at his own cabin or Draque's. Evenings and stormy days were the times given to such exchange of opinions. If Jabez was found at home he was seated in his straight backed easy chair, with book or paper in hand, or talking over family affairs, or whatever subject might happen to arise with Peggy, who sometimes sat at her table on the right knitting, and again with hands and feet at work at the little old country spinning wheel her own mother brought over, or whatever "trifling thing" she might find to do. Trifling thing being a name Peggy had for work that gave her a chance of listening to Jabez and the neighbors, and of putting a word in where she thought it belonged. Aside from being wideawake, the neighbors found Peggy a pretty deter-

mined woman, who, when she felt she was right, stood as firmly by her own views as any one.

The silent man who never talked for talk's sake, and who will be known from henceforth as Tobias Lenk, divided his leisure time pretty evenly between the cabins of Jabez and Hibe. From a political point of view Jabez came nearer agreeing with him than those he invariably met at Hibe's. It was a pleasure to go there sometimes and hear Jabez discuss articles in his weekly; but, however near their views might come to the blending point, they always closed their argument agreeing to disagree. Tobias Lenk who, in a familiar way was called Tobe, clearly saw that Jabez was a man who was ever ready to shoulder manfully all burdens that came unavoidably to his lot, but, like the average good man, he did not think it necessary to step outside a radius of five miles or of the county; the very outside limit being his own state. Also, in performing his own obligations, however hard, he was never the man to place burdens upon others, but if those burdens had been imposed prior to his time and outside his radius, of course that was something he had nothing to do with. He could not be considered responsible for the doings of the whole creation.

Young Isaac Draque often turned away from Hibe's and spent an evening with Jabez. There was something about Jabez he liked; he would sit by the hour and listen to him and Peggy and often Tobe talking over the state of things, both in the North and South. When a neighbor mentioned to Draque that Ike was more serious and steady than many other boys of his age, his reply invariably was, "Ike is given to thinking, is Ike."

Although Ike seldom expressed an opinion, never but when asked, and then blushing that he had an opin-

ion is certain; that right and wrong were clearly outlined in him, and that he would stand by the one and as vigorously oppose the other, any one who could see his thoughtful, determined face would readily admit. In the meantime, he piled logs when he must, and went to school when he could. But all the time ideas were being developed; he thought and thought and his healthy brain grew stronger and his big heart larger. Many a time, in the past summers, he sat on a rock with bare feet in the cool river, and thought about the big world and its fine people, of kings and queens, and courts and high life, that he had read about in books, and heard Jabez and Peggy talk about in their cabin. It was all before him, a picture. He had never seen a finer home than a cabin, nor any one more lovable than Jabez's daughter Meg, a little miss of thirteen, fair and joyous as the birds that, in early spring, made the woods resound with their songs. Again Ike stood by the pond thinking; surely no man ever hit the mark truer than Draque when he said, "Ike is given to thinking, is Ike." With neither master nor rule he was learning profound lessons from the great book of nature spread out before him. He stooped and picking up a pebble threw it into the water, and watched the spreading commotion as one circle circumscribed another, and thoughtfully awaiting the commotion to subside threw in another and another, always letting time enough intervene for the water in the pond to become still.

Sometimes he threw with greater, and sometimes with less, force, always observing the effect. At last he would pick up a stone larger than the former, and throw with all the force he could summon into the very center of the pond, and watch the rapidity with which one circle outcircled another until the whole

pond was in a furious state of commotion. Then, satisfied with his feat in that direction, having learned that he could stir the water from the center to the very brink, he would pocket his hands, turn his attention so something else, and stroll on.

He looked long and earnestly at the little acorn that the autumn before fell from such a height, and was sinking into the earth beneath his feet, and understood that were it left untouched, under proper influences, would be the progenitor of the oak that in the years to come would be tall as the one beneath which he stood.

But, as he surveyed the scene, he knew full well it was doomed, for the plow share would tear its tiny roots did it remain much longer. He picked it up and pulled it out of the cup in which it was still imbedded, turned it around and around boylike, and then looked at the big tree. The human mind is made to wonder and think and reason; to reach out as far as possible to the Creator in admiring His creation. And the thoughtful boy with few books in hand, and little time to learn their lessons often has great ideas that he may find difficult for a time to convey to others not being familiar with the rules according to which those he comes in contact with understand. The one who understands him thoroughly must learn as he learned—from nature.

Thus, roaming the fields and forests, Ike took in the starry heavens without book or guide. He knew little of the constellations, and their mythological names. The milky way spread out before him its countless millions of shining stars. Selecting those of greater magnitude he formed squares and triangles and parallelograms with which he was familiar as with the faces around his own fireside. The north star he

knew by name, and could locate; and he watched the great and little bear, as they chased each other around the North Pole.

To the astronomer it may seem a very vague, and unsatisfactory way of becoming familiar with the heavens, but without knowing the gods and goddesses of the old pagans, or being able to recognize them in the constellations; he was wrapped in sublime admiration of the true God, who scattered the stars in such profusion, guides their unerring course and gave a little atom upon this big earth the faculty of looking so far through boundless space, and of recognizing the Creator in His perfect handiwork.

It is true the boy's intelligence was not in accordance with the bookmakers' or professors' rule. He was aware of the fact that the stars were bright above him; that they were made by God and that God required his homage, which is prime intelligence. All the little accessories, such as naming and classifying it is so sweet to know, Ike was not learning.

But men who have done wonderful things for good have acquired the better part of their education in precisely the same manner. For Ike mother earth, clothed in her various garbs, was an open book. He breathed the delicious flower laden airs of spring, with thankful heart.

The storm that swept over forest and field gave him wonderful ideas of power. The great oak that towered above him, and the flower that bloomed in exquisite perfection at his feet were masters that had much to do in their silent way of teaching. Combined with this at his humble hearthstone the blessing of heaven was invoked upon their coarse food, and he was schooled in the sublime, the proof of which is right living and noble action.

Although villages were growing and colleges being built throughout the state, Ike had not yet been fortunate enough either to see the one or derive any advantage from the other. Draque thought, after much deliberation, he would give him a chance, and a better chance than the district school afforded; notwithstanding they all agreed the Yankee schoolmaster was a good one, well qualified to fill his place, and whose dialect fell with irresistible sweetness upon the ears of the Buckeye lasses.

The north lot was in good shape, and Draque "allowed Bill was creeping up and could take Ike's place for a spell, especially as the work now was not as heavy as logging." "I'll do the plowing myself," he continued, "and Bill can follow the harrow, while dropping corn into the hills and hoeing and picking potatoes is only fun for a lad with Bill's muscle."

So Ike was equipped for school. A college with still a name, and the most conspicuous article of equipment was an ax with which he was to earn his board by chopping cord wood before and after school hours for the good farmer who lived near the college and provided fire wood for the institution, and who thought he could make an honest penny by boarding such a fine, willing looking boy as Ike.

Once his mind made up Draque thought it useless to wait until the September term commenced. He thought it better for Ike "to be getting into the ways of the place," and he started him at once early in April, just fifteen years before the memorable twelfth, when the first shot fell upon Sumter. To say that Ike was industrious hardly does him justice; he worked with such a will at both books and cord wood, nor was he altogether alone in his hardships. Others were being educated under similar circumstances, and

they helped one another along with good cheer. Pleasure was not the word in those days; they sometimes had fun, which did not mean being continually comfortable, with a great many variations of the delightful added, according to the inclination or taste of the individual, as appears to be the meaning of the word pleasure today, but something that aroused the spirit and lifted it altogether above the everyday drudgery, and always let it down again so happy and ready to contend with whatever obstacle might be found in the way, with such a will and so full of hope.

Ike whacked away at the logs with a determination either to annihilate or bring all that was in them out. The latter he did to the complete satisfaction of the man who gave him in return shelter, food and the necessary fire and tallow candle to enable him to pursue his studies far into the night.

Ike finished his education at college in less than eighteen months, which does not mean he could learn no more there nor that he had gone through the course.

Draque was a man who liked to do things well when he went about doing them at all; but he thought, "Ike couldn't be expected to spend a lifetime there, and besides, he had been there long enough to lay up a good bit of learning." Draque believed in "going ahead and doing things up." Going to college with him was much like clearing the north lot—the sooner he got through the better.

It must not be thought, however, all that "learning" was to be thrown away and Ike brought back to clear other lots. Draque had determined, "let things jog along as they might on the farm," to not deprive Ike of further opportunity "to make the best out of himself." Bill was a "smart lad," and came up to Draque's

greatest expectations in filling Ike's place. So a lawyer was found by Draque who was willing to teach Ike "the law," in return for chores he expected him to do about the office—chores of all kinds, from lighting and keeping up fires and the office in order to writing by the hour and "learning the law" when an opportunity offered. Notwithstanding the drawbacks, Ike was not slow in the "law learning." The lawyer with whom he was studying said of him, "He is a young man able to take care of himself at anything, and one of the most promising traits I see in him is he takes in the situation at once, and I claim it is not every lawyer who can do that. A man may know the law like the sound of the dinner bell, and be as ready to grapple with it as with the meal spread before him, and still not be a success."

CHAPTER V.

Hiram Blank's patrons have again assembled. After the customary salutations and usual amount of small talk, all were quiet for a few moments, each one seemingly mapping out a plan for himself as to future proceedings.

While they were a look-after-your-own-affairs sort of people, they evidently did not ignore the truth that other people lived and had equal rights with themselves. That those people had no right to the cabins they themselves had built and the Sunday dinners they had provided, they would stoutly affirm; yet that they had particular rights in their own respective locations they as frankly admitted, and, as they understood it, this great machinery called Government was something that protected them in those rights.

The question now far from being ignored, if not uppermost in their minds, was the coming election, and which would be the better man to fill the presidential chair, although it would be some time yet, before said candidate would be named. A new question that bid fair to not amount to much, agitated the minds of a few, and those few were called fanatics.

Tobias Lenk was the one fanatic in this particular part of the state who had the question so much at heart that when an opportunity presented he made an effort to strike for the slave. The majority at Hibe's were very far from being interested in Tobe's "hobby," as it was called, and but for their high opinion of him in other respects would have dubbed him a crank.

The slave had been for long years securely chained, and the whole country had evidently accepted the conditions of master and slave without a thought as to the right or the wrong. A mere handful of men were beginning to agitate that the whole system was wrong, and men of sense were found everywhere denouncing those fanatics in most bitter terms. Wise men saw nothing wrong in the position, and ministers argued that from the beginning, or at least to a very remote time, there had been bond and free. Some took a pleasure in going back to the days of Abraham to prove to his wavering brother that there were master and slave because God had so ordained it, and looked upon any effort to redeem the slave as in direct opposition to God's will.

"Well," said Draque, who appeared to be the first to see the way before him, "we're here again, and the night bids fair to be a pleasant one. I think a moderate fire will be all we'll need tonight, and the weather's no excuse for loafers to stay all night—eh, Hibe?"

While surveying the assembled crowd Draque rubbed his hands briskly together to warm them well, or maybe habit was at the bottom of the rubbing, for he was often seen rubbing his hands as vigorously as now when there was hardly any frost in the air. He had so long handled the crowbar and had so often resorted to that means of warming that the motion had become as natural as the putting one foot before the other in walking.

Tobias Lenk saw his opportunity and said, "We're free men at least. There's no one to say we shall or we sha'n't. If we don't choose to go we can stay, and not expect a master after us to fetch us home, and like as not a flogging after we got there."

"I'll tell you, Tobe," said Klomp, "we'll just let

those fellows rest where they are. It's pleasant weather down there. Besides, their masters own them. They bought and paid for them, and we have no right to interfere. Those who are trying to make trouble among them will meet their fate yet, or I'm blind as an owl."

"That's sure," responded Hiram Blank. "What lawfully belongs to a man belongs to him, and those planters own the blacks just as you own your ox, Tobe, and I think you'd not be willing to give him up for the asking."

Good neighbor Klomp, who would not willingly do any man a wrong, agreed with Hibe "to a dot," as he expressed it, and continued jokingly, "I think we could find something to talk about nearer our homes and hearts than the blacks away down in the South, who have summer all the year 'round and are sure of shelter and grub, and haven't the ague chills creeping up and down their backs at work as we have."

"I've seen the sun shining pretty hot about here, and felt it, too," said Tobe, "and I think you all have. At such times even a chill is pleasant to look forward to. The dreadful monotony of all sun is tiresome to think about, with chains and a goad into the bargain."

"It's as I said, Tobe," said Klomp, looking around; "we can all find plenty to talk about more to our liking than the blacks, except yourself."

"Nothing down at your place to interest you, Tobe?" queried Hiram Blank. "Wonder you can eke a living out at that business."

Draque had been listening attentively to the conversation and again came to the rescue, saying, "We're a good-natured lot of fellows here, and being it's you, Tobe, we'll not fight." He laughed outright while saying, "As long as nobody agrees with you, it's hardly worth the while to wrangle with one man."

Tobe saw that at present he could not arouse his companions to either a practical or fighting view of his subject, and reluctantly acknowledged "he was interested at home and maybe in a way that would not interest them." He continued: "I raise pretty fair crops on my place now, and with the oxen and other cattle I find my barn too small, and have the timber almost ready for another. How would you like to come and give me a lift as soon as the weather opens up enough for it?"

"We've no disliking at all for such news, Tobe," said Klomp. "It's the kind that makes things move about here. We'll give you invitations enough to turn in and help before we're through. There's not a neighbor among us who hasn't a job he's expecting his neighbors to put his shoulder to."

"And a few outside jobs, I'm certain of," said Hiram Blank. "If my eyes don't deceive me there'll be a wedding in the neighborhood soon, and the young couple will stand in need of a house."

John Strand was being aroused from a semi-sleeping condition by a neighbor, who gently tickled his nose with the tip of a long blacksnake whip—a circumstance that added greatly to the mirth of the youth crowded into their accustomed corner, and from which corner such remarks as, "The Indians are after John again, look! They have him now," could be heard.

At last John, in a half-conscious way, sat eyeing his companions, when he was called upon to affirm the truth of what Hiram Blank said. With as much feeling as the most tender-hearted among them could command, John replied:

"She's all I have excepting the boys, and they're too small to be the company she is. It'll be the lonesome cabin without her. But if I had my picking I

couldn't find a better man than Steve; he's going ahead of us all, an ox team is too slow for him. There's no one about, young or old, that has a span of nags like Steve's, and his own earning, too." Then, as if trying to impress his audience that Steve was ahead of the times, he repeated, "The ox is too slow for him."

"Slow, but sure, if you only keep after him," said Klomp. "How do yours go, John?"

"They go when John goes, Klomp, and ask no questions," said good-natured Draque, who would like to help John out of trouble if he could.

Tobias Lenk again ventured to remark, "He thought some people inclined to be set in their ways, and to think certain things simply because it was the fashion, or that the right of those certain things had never been questioned. And the worst feature about it was they didn't seem willing to see any different way, even if others thought they could point that way out."

"I see what you're aiming at," said Draque, "and every one who has a peculiar way of doing or thinking acts much after the same manner. They wonder why other people think this way, and that way, and the other way, always supposing they themselves are right and every one else wrong—eh, Tobe?"

When Draque found he had full control of his breath, he continued: "Now let us come right down to the point, and suppose you are wrong and I am right, yet I let you alone and haven't a word to say about how I think this question or that question should be settled."

"That goes pretty far to prove you think, if you think at all about the matter, that it's possible I'm right, or I wouldn't give a fig for your friendship," said Tobe.

"Well," said Draque slowly, "when it comes down to little family affairs, that would'nt seem meddling in

me. I'd be plain enough. When I thought it was for your good, I'd say, Tobe, I'm afraid, if your willing to give your time and attention to matters that 'ill not plant the potatoes, or hoe the corn, or lay in the winter fire wood, you'll find the pot 'ill stop boiling at home, and your own family 'ill not have the best of fare."

"I do a pretty square day's work at home, Draque," said Tobe. "I'm not fearing it will come to that, but the great trouble with the people at large seems to be, when a man's own pot is full and boiling he's inclined to not look about to see the empty one at his elbow. I wouldn't like to be so selfish as to not pick a man up and give him a bite if I found him lying by my door."

"Oh!" exclaimed Draque; "if he was lying by your door, of course not. I'd pick that man up as soon as you would, Tobe, not caring whether he was black or white."

"But let the man a few rods off lie there," said Tobe, smiling.

"No, if I knew such a man was there I'd go after him as soon as any man living, and think nothing of it," said Draque.

"But if I multiply those few rods by hundreds, or thousands, you wouldn't even have a wish to help him," continued Tobe.

"I'll declare," said Draque, "you're not as fair by me as I was by you. I agreed to come down to the point, and instead of keeping to the point, as I thought you would, that's what I call getting away from it. You couldn't pick up a man that far away if you would."

"If he was lying on his back, as we described the man at your door, maybe not," said Tobe; "but that is not just his position. He's in a worse plight, and

considering the way he needs help, I think we might help him in less time and with less trouble."

In objecting to Tobe's plan of setting the slaves free Draque was serious, not dreaming such would ever be the case. He evidently thought the duty of saying something still rested upon him, the more so as he did not feel altogether sure Tobe had not the better of him in the preceding argument, and still more the very silence seemed to point to him as the one to break it. Shifting his chair so as to view his hearers better, he proceeded to give his reasons why they should not be free.

"I don't believe in bothering about the slaves because better men than we are put chains on them and believed they were in their place. Washington owned slaves and willed them to his relatives and their heirs forever, and I think none of us will set ourselves up alongside of Washington for knowing more than he did, or to say what he thought was right is wrong, after as much as he did for us and the whole country."

Ike was not with his young companions of former occasions, but had he been he would have agreed with his father exactly, for he had a very high regard for his father's way of thinking, and was prone to think as his father thought, that the "blacks" were where they belonged.

"Washington had his hands full, I can tell you," replied Tobe. "Besides, he didn't bring slavery here, and in his time there were other things to think about. They were all so deep in trouble they were glad to find their way out and be able to live, which was about all they could do. More than all that, the slave was nearer his master in those days and better treated."

"I reckon a slave is a slave," said Hiram Blank, "and how he could be nearer a master at one time

than another is something I think you'll find it hard to make clear."

"It's very clear to me, although I may not be able to make you see as I do," said Tobe. "Washington had at heart the good of his country and the liberty of his white brother; he spent his life planning and fighting for both. These are peaceable times. Both England and the Indians have agreed to give us a rest, and slaveholders have taken advantage of the rest. They don't need to bother about such things as they did in Washington's time; they have settled down to work for their own private interests. I tell you, Hibe, when a man just has his own interests to think about, and settles right down to money getting, then look out! He becomes selfish like, and the man who was his brother in trouble is nowhere alongside the dollar he intends to knock out. More than all that, one great man couldn't do everything good that was to be done; he did his share and left the rest with us. If we do our duty some other great man will turn up and do for the slave what Washington did for us. There is no use denying it, Hibe, people are beginning to wake up to the belief that one man has no right to own another man like an ox."

"Well," said Hibe, "it's my opinion there are very few waking up to the belief, and the day is a long way off when the nigger will be free. You mustn't think a few hotheads in the country are going to turn things upside down like that."

"Being this is earth, and not heaven," Tobe continued, "it is but reasonable to suppose there will always be suffering enough that can't be avoided. But I would be long sorry to add anything to my possessions that was wrung from the earth through the labor of a fellow man, who got nothing for his labor but

blows and enough to eat to enable him to keep at it. This is what I call fair. The man who toils to produce or fashion should have a better recompense than blows; he should be free to do as he pleases with what he earns by the sweat of his brow."

Draque looked at Hiram Blank and asked, "What do you say to that, Hibe? Tobe's letting his horse run away with him tonight."

"I say," replied Hibe, "that those same blacks wouldn't toil if they didn't have to; they're a lazy lot."

Tobe glanced at Hiram Blank's soft hands and then at his own, seamed and hard. He then looked around at the hands of those who were dropping their hard-earned pennies into Hibe's coffers and called attention to the fact "that it was labor that was enriching Hibe, and that labor not his own, as his hands were soft, and his head didn't look like the head of a man whose brain was overtaxed with work."

Klomp shook his head very hard and said: "It won't work, Tobe. I like fair play. If there's anything wrong about the way Hibe gets his money, you and I are guilty as he is."

Neighbor Draque seemed to overlook Klomp's remark, and with a hearty laugh, said:

"Hibe, you may as well own up. You must file in with the lazy lot who'll not work if they don't have to. How would you like the whip on you—eh?"

The laugh was general, much to Hiram Blank's discomfort. He manifested his disapprobation, and resented the fancied insult with a twitch of the muscles about the mouth that differed very much from the movements of the same muscles in the faces of his patrons. He had his own interests too much at stake to kick them all out, but if ever one of them presumed

to give him the same provocation John Strand had often given him, he would very soon show him he was not to be trifled with.

Klomp was not altogether satisfied with the turn things had taken and said:

"It's not just the square thing, Tobe, to say unpleasant things about the man who's roof shelters you so often."

"In trying to prove or disprove one thing by another where we see a similarity, we sometimes say things in an unguarded moment that it's hardly fair to hold one accountable for," said Tobe. "Hibe stated a case, and a similar one appeared before me unsought. I'm a little too hasty sometimes, I'll admit."

"Draque arose, looked first at one foot and then at the other, commenced straightening out the rim of his old hat, and other little maneuvers, all of which indicated he was about to depart.

"Draque is always off first," said Klomp, apparently satisfied with Tobe's apology. "I often thought I'd astonish him and the rest of you and the folks at home by starting out first some night myself." With a shrug he continued, "I haven't managed so far, but I'll do it yet." Then turning to John Strand, he asked:

"Did you ever think of astonishing your folks that way, John?"

John nodded his head, but made no reply; which was his accustomed way of settling troublesome questions which did not refer to the wigwam and the man who once occupied it.

Draque, not caring to become entangled in further conversation, stepped out. Tobe again made some remark that savored of slavery. Hibe, still boiling over with indignation to think he had been in any way,

even remotely and jokingly, compared with the slave, spoke out:

“Look at the money those slaveholders have put in the blacks. How are you going to get about that? You can't compel a man to sell his property if he don't want to, and you can't take it from him without paying him, I reckon. When I hear men prating about what's not possible I feel like bidding them good-night.”

“Like putting them out, why didn't you say, Hibe?” queried Klomp, who, seeing how wrathful Hibe was still, continued: “It wouldn't take Draque long to settle that question with you in a pleasant way. I'm sorry he's not here.”

“Draque is snoring by this time,” said Hibe, “so the question is far from being settled.”

“This same question reminds me of a crowbar, and an iron one at that,” said Klomp, addressing Tobe, at the same time settling himself more comfortably with a view to staying longer, “with one end here and the other down South. This is the cold end and the other the hot end. You know the heat and cold run along the bar. The half way place where the heat and cold blend is the most pleasant place to think on—eh, Tobe?”

“Either that or hands off,” replied Hiram Blank curtly, not giving Tobe time to reply.

Away down in his heart Tobias Lenk felt sick, for even he did not see how the problem was to be solved. But he felt more certain than ever he was right, and more determined than ever that while he had life he would never lose an opportunity that would tend in the least to bring that right about. He now felt his mission for the evening was completed at Hibe's. He had done for the cause all a solitary individual could do in the short time. He had agitated until others

began to think; others who, unlike him, had thought altogether about things nearer home, and would probably never have ventured so far away had they not been led or forced, in the mild sense of the word, to discuss or talk about topics in which they considered themselves not in the least concerned. Tobias Lenk understood that agitation, or expressing one's honest convictions, does in the moral world what motion does in the physical: brings about great changes for the better.

He now prepared to go, and, not wishing to be at enmity with those who opposed his views, remarked "that he would not like to be the cause of any ill will existing between himself and his friends, as all he had aimed at was to express to them his idea of right."

The apology was forthwith accepted, and all bade each other a friendly "good-night," and dispersed.

CHAPTER VI.

Jabez was responsible for intimating to the neighbors that railroads were coming in fashion. They had for some time enjoyed the luxury in the East. Those in the East worked well, and it was a certainty the part of Ohio known as theirs would possess one in the near future. Whether it would interfere with them or not, they did not know, but they supposed it would come pretty close. The question under discussion regarding it was, "If it runs through our midst, whose farm will it cut through, and who'll get a slice taken off his house, already small enough?"

Tobe, Jabez and Peggy had gotten thus far with the evening chat when the rat-tat-tat at the door caused a little stir. Jabez opened the door to welcome Draque, and Peggy busied herself putting a chair in a comfortable place. After Draque had rubbed his hands, smiled on them all around, and exchanged the "good-evening, neighbors," she proceeded to give him a lecture for not bringing Mrs. Draque, "who had never been to see her since she had gotten into her new house." All of which Draque took in perfect good humor and "allowed mother was so happy in her own new kitchen she couldn't be moved out."

Many were now the proud possessors of the frame addition called kitchen, so perfected that it could be used as such at all seasons, and Draque was one of that number. Others had new houses out and out, and invariably the old cabin stood a few rods away, a goodly reminder of past days.

Among those fortunate ones Jabez was numbered.

How he managed with his large family to get a little ahead of his near neighbors in the possession of this world's goods no one appeared to know. Draque worked every bit as hard, and was as good a manager, and Mrs. Draque was second to none in looking after household affairs. It must not be overlooked that tending the dairy, raising geese, ducks and chickens for both home consumption and a far away market came under the head of housekeeping.

Draque "allowed the staying at home all the time couldn't build a house for Jabez; besides that same was something Jabez didn't do, for he called on him often, and the other neighbors at times, barring Hibe."

In fact, the only fault Draque had to find with Jabez was—"He didn't treat Hibe square; he didn't like to see the spirit in a man that inclined him to set himself against a neighbor. Of course he wouldn't expect him to spend his evenings at Hibe's like the rest of them if he didn't want to, as he understood full well that tastes differed; but he'd like him to show his face there sometimes in order to manifest his goodwill to all men."

The general sentiment concerning the new railroad was: "The land is plenty, there's no stint, but the houses are few and far between, and if it wouldn't discommode the projectors of the great scheme much they would like them to run their road in a way that wouldn't interfere with them."

"We were talking about the railroad, Draque," said Jabez. "How would you like the big engines prancing through your place?"

"I wouldn't object to them capering through the corn field or even the potato patch, but I think mother would raise a row if they'd meddle with the kitchen," replied Draque.

"Anyway, it will be a sight to see," said Peggy, "and I think it will tend to stir us up a bit."

"We don't want any more stirring up than we're getting, Peggy," said Jabez. "Again, a man has attended to all that's to be done on a hundred acres, he doesn't care much for any further stirring."

"That's so, Jabez," said Tobe, "no one knows better than I do how a man has to keep at it. But I think we'll derive an advantage from the road that will tend to lighten our labor; we'll not have to haul our produce so far to market, and I think if we could push what we raise through to the East we'd mebbe get along better."

"We'll now have a chance to lay to and pile up cord wood, and if that doesn't stir a man up I don't know what will. What say you, Peggy?" said Draque.

"I know well enough the big engines we read about will consume a great deal, and it appears you're about to get what you've long wished for, you and Jabez, a market for timber," replied Peggy.

"Yes," said Draque thoughtfully, "although the price it will bring will be nothing compared to the Old World price we often talked about, we may be better satisfied with it than the smoke it's all going out in."

Draque, not having put the new and old house out of his mind, feeling uncomfortable probably when not visiting Jabez beside the old time fire place, turned to Jabez rather abruptly and said:

"I'll swear, Jabez, if I were you, I'd as soon have them riddle the new house as to lay hands on that old cabin."

"The north end is sinking a little," said Jabez, "and as I'm not trying to keep it in repair it will soon go down, but while there's a log of it standing I'll look at it with pleasure; it served us well for a long time."

Peggy, proud of the new house, cast a lingering look in the direction of the old pile, where so many happy, hopeful years were spent. Not a crack or crevice in the wall but was sacred to some memory of the past.

The cabin that called forth the remarks was almost hidden away by the early blooming lilac. The snow drop closely hugging the wall, and the honeysuckle clambering high up over the white drops filling the whole place with sweetness. And at a more remote distance, by cherry and peach tree, orchard and vine; all bowing perpetual thanks to Draque's north lot, that from early infancy till now let in upon them God's glorious sunshine.

Tobe shifted about in his chair, and endeavored to clear his throat with a short cough, whereupon Draque made the way clear by saying:

"When the railroad question is exhausted we'll hear from Tobe, according to his method of entertaining."

"I'll let you think, and talk as you please this time," said Tobe, "for I see you are all too happy to bother with vexed questions. When one man has a new house, and another a brand new kitchen, they'd like to enjoy them, and not have other men's woes piled in on them."

"There's a good deal of truth in that, Tobe," said Jabez, "but the average man has a soft spot in his heart after all, and when a neighbor drops in, who loves to dwell on the woes of the human family, he'll find everybody here ready to oblige him by listening. So go ahead, Tobe, but I'll just remark before you get started, 'Every good thing that was ever yet accomplished existed at first in the brain of one great man or another.' A woman sometimes comes out first; isn't that so, Peggy?"

Jabez went on laughing, now turning the conversation exclusively to Draque, "But, poor things; since the world began, they've always had to take the short end of the crowbar; which wouldn't suit you, Draque, especially if you were in a hurry."

"She's often expected to lift pretty heavy weights, too," too, said Draque.

"She is," said Jabez, "but the long end of the lever belongs to man; she must be satisfied to do the best she can with the short end."

"I think that's complimentary to the women," said Draque, quite seriously. "It shows that we men have a very high opinion of what women can do with little assistance."

"It shows that you men are selfish, that's what it shows," said Peggy, with a disdainful toss of her head, "and it's a lasting disgrace to men who have the making of laws to make them so completely in their own favor."

That Draque had something further to say complimentary to the women, Jabez had not a doubt, but not wishing to arouse Peggy to any greater extent than the present found her, said: "Hold up, Draque, this is not giving Tobe the hearing we promised him;" then turning to Tobe, Jabez said: "It's rather up-hill work, isn't it, Tobe, this trying to interest people in a subject they're not willing to be interested in, after the manner you would like?"

"Yes," broke in Peggy, who was still not quite composed, "and the whole people compared with the few are oftentimes like a flock of sheep, or a herd of cattle."

"You couldn't have said it better, Peggy," said Tobe, who faced Jabez and Draque, saying:

"I'm not comparing in any way but the one, re-

member, and what I'm trying to get at is this: both you and Draque might be willing to go the right way, but you don't exactly see the way—now that's your position, and this is mine, I can't call myself a leader, for there's no one following me, but I'm after them, speaking in reference to others, as well as yourselves."

"Yes," said Draque, "like the dog after the cows Peggy was talking about, nipping first one, and then the other, till he gets them all on the right path. If that's your plan, keep at it, Shep never fails to bring them all home, eh, Tobe?"

"I know," said Tobe, "the one who is following up has a great deal of nagging to get all started right, and it takes a good bit of nerve, and a will to keep at it, in the one who would accomplish that same. But I don't feel myself alone, many a one I talk with in those parts, while they don't acknowledge it, meet me half way."

"The neighbors wouldn't quarrel with you, Tobe," said Draque, laughing, "and that may have more to do with the half agreeing than you think."

"I feel I am right, anyway," said Tobe, "and that's a spur that's not going to let me stop right here."

"I'll declare," said Jabez, "you must feel the spur pretty keen when you feel you are just right, and all the rest of us wrong, for the fact of a man being this, or that, Tobe, doesn't always prove he thinks he is right and everyone else wrong. For instance, a man may join this, or that, church, which only goes to prove he has a preference for the one above the other, and you or I may never know the cause of that preference; nor will he think it necessary to bother much about letting us know. He'll not drop in to say he's right, and you are wrong, but he'll say both your religion and his are good. Brother Klomp reads his

Bible, and is a Methodist, our brother across the way reads his, and is a Presbyterian, and you read yours, Tobe, and don't exactly agree with either of them."

"Mebbe the man that reads his Bible oftenest is nearer right than the others," said Draque, "if that's how it stands, Jabez is away ahead of the rest of us."

"There isn't the same certainty about some things there is about others, that's sure," said Tobe, "but, leaving all that out of the question, there are some things that are positively right, and others as positively wrong, just as some things are true, and others false. They tell me those who are teachers, and away up in mathematics, say all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; and have proved again and again in measurement that the perpendicular is always equal to the base into the tangent of the angle at the base. All of which they can prove clearly to those that are used to their way of reasoning. According to their way of doing things, they will also show you that every part of the circumference of a circle is equal distance from the center. Now, that last is something a man of sense can look right at, and see for himself, yet, after seeing, and being convinced, he may not be able to prove it to his neighbor according to any rule under the sun. But what's true of the circle, doesn't need to be demonstrated to a man of sense by a professor."

Draque who stood somewhat in awe of the learned gentleman said: "No, don't bring in a professor, Tobe, he'd blind us with big words, and we'd altogether lose sight of what's plainly before us."

"I see what you're aiming at, Tobe," said Jabez, "you and Draque, and myself, don't need any other circle than a cart wheel set before us to see right through the last named truth of equal distance."

"Yes," said Tobe, "the armful of spokes I threw

there in the mud, not having further use for them, are not going to vary the hundredth part of an inch, eh, Draque?"

"They'll not vary a whit," said Draque, "and it seems folly to send the lads off to college to learn on fine blackboards what you could point out to them with your stick, in the mud—barring there's something in this, that every man can't point out as well as you can, Tobe."

"Nor everyone see for the pointing as well as you, Draque," said Tobe, glad to be able to show appreciation for the little ground gained. Draque's opinion of all the neighbors was at par with his opinion of himself, if not above, and he answered:

"There's not a man among the neighbors that couldn't see the truth of that same, once it was shown him, and mebbe have seen it for themselves often, but, like me, didn't stop to think."

"Plain people, like we are, reason something after this manner," said Tobe, "the same thing that is true of the muddy cart wheel, is true of all circles, whether great or small."

"We take it in with the eye without any reasoning about it," said Jabez, "and see it as plain as if some one had been explaining it to us for a lifetime."

"Yet, until your attention was called to the fact, mebbe, like Draque, you didn't think about it at all," said Tobe.

"I haven't much time nor the inclination to bother about such things at present, it's a fact," said Jabez.

Tobe continued: "Our good friend the crowbar is a thing the philosopher takes hold of and shows what it can do in proportion to the length, I believe; but, not knowing anything about the right length and figures according to philosophy, we can size up what it can do

as well as any one. I'd put you and Draque alongside of any of them to know the length of the crowbar you could best stir a big log with."

"Yes," said Draque, "and I'll wager that, long before the philosopher thought of the crowbar—or lever, is it you call it?—plain men like we are used it to remove obstructions. But I'll declare if I can see what all this talk has to do with the slavery question. Mebbe you're hammering at something else this time—eh, Tobe?"

"You forget," said Tobe, "that I was trying to show yourself and Jabez there is a positive certainty about things being right and wrong as well as true, and untrue, which can be plainly seen once one goes to the trouble to find out. I'm apt to get mixed up a bit in explaining, for I don't understand how to explain things as well as many another man. But I'll come to it yet; it's like this. It takes learned men to arrive at some truths, while other truths—like the circle and crowbar—are so plain that we can take them in with a glance. And just so with right and wrong. The wrong we can see like a flash and no reasoning about it is the kind plain men see through, and mebbe understand sooner than those who have to go through a process of reasoning before they come to the truth. Now, like you see the truth about the circle and crowbar, I see the wrong in slavery."

"If you see the wrong in slavery as plain as we see that all the spokes of the cart wheel are the same length, I don't blame you for sticking to it, Tobe," said Draque, laughing till his sides shook. "And, if you could set them all free tonight, Jabez and I will promise you that we'll not interfere." He grew serious a moment and said: "But when a man can't do it, Tobe, where's the use making himself uneasy about it?"

“He may hope,” said Tobe, “that in the course of time his neighbors will see as clear as himself that it should be done. It’s this way, Draque—what some people can’t see at a glance like the truth of the circle, they can see after repeated showing, and when that time comes they’ll wonder they hadn’t seen it before, it ’ill be all so clear.” Tobe continued: “Now, what I’m trying to do is to put a lever in your hands, a good long one, and show you it is right you should take hold. I’ll go around and invite this neighbor and that neighbor to help, much as we brought them around to put a hand to the ax and crowbar that cleared away the forest and left us the open fields. And the longer the lever, and the more help to take hold, the less trouble and time to clear away the logs—eh, Draque?”

“Yes,” echoed Draque, always alive to attending strictly to his own business, “provided you don’t have to cross into the next lot.”

“I understand you,” said Tobe. “You mean, after a certain length you’re likely to get a crowbar too long.”

“Yes,” said Draque, “that’s what I mean exactly.”

“Your experience is altogether with a certain kind of lever, Draque, and in that direction you’re a master; but there are other levers beside the wood and iron with which things may be turned over as completely. The lever that stands waiting for us to lay our hands upon now is the ballot, and I want you to take hold with me, Draque. You and Jabez, and remember I wouldn’t ask you to lay hold with me if my conscience didn’t loudly say to me, ‘You’re right, Tobe.’”

No word of reply came from his listeners. Jabez was evidently in doubt as to whether he should step outside his radius or not, and Draque, who was ever

ready to good naturedly say something, was mute. While the careless and uninterested must admit that Truth and Justice are very long as well as very lasting levers, and are often out of sight of the common observer, who has enough within the limits of his own small circle to occupy his mind; but when a man or two who happen to aim higher than the crowd sights them and takes hold, the course of things can be changed in a wonderful manner, and sometimes with apparently little effort on the part of those who began to agitate for the love of the Right they saw. For Truth and Justice are God's levers, and the man who takes hold with the right spirit is sure of God's help, and with that help is going to give wrong a tumble.

The selfsame watch dog that had long guarded the Ghent household turned beseeching eyes on his master for probably the hundredth time in his life. The sound of the ticking clock, to which the inmates of the same household had been oblivious for nearly two hours, came clear and distinct, and from the direction of Draque's home came the mournful too-hoo of the night-owl. All combined aroused Tobe and Draque to thinking of the homes to which they were individually pledged. They bade Jabez and Peggy "good-night," and together went out in the moonlight and starlight, on their way to that dearest of all spots—home.

CHAPTER VII.

Aside from the hardships incident to the times and their occupation, things moved smoothly with the settlers for some time. But one evening in early summer, when the clover was sweetest and the dark green robe of nature had not yet begun to show signs of decay—in its prime might be said of the forest's garb, as well as of the crops man was bringing from the fair young earth his toil had prepared for production—the news was told in every cabin “how little Amanda Draque was sick, not going to live, somebody said.”

Throughout the whole place attention was at once turned to the Draque homestead. It was evident every one was stricken, as well as those nearly concerned. Neighbor after neighbor hastened to the spot, and many a one ventured to express a hope that all would be well at last. Neighbor Draque and his wife watched the little one tossing upon her bed of fever, and hoped with the least encouragement given by their friends; but it was all no use. Notwithstanding care and sympathy, Amanda died. Her mother was disconsolate, and Draque, whose face till now always wore a smile, with his rough hands dashed away great tears that, in spite of his trying to be reconciled and “bear up before mother,” would force their way.

A new duty was now involved upon the neighbors—that of “laying out” a burying ground, which heretofore had not been thought a necessity by more remote neighbors, who had taken their dead to a distant place.

As Draque had been the first bereaved after a home burying ground had been decided upon, it was thought proper to mark off a part of his place for that purpose. In doing so they consulted his feelings and reasoned that "Draque would feel more as if he had Amanda at home than to have her buried in another man's ground."

They had kept death from them as long as possible, but it was now evident he was a guest for whom they must prepare, and, not wishing to place the whole burying spot upon Draque, after consultation decided that Jabez, whose farm joined, should give the half, which he did without complaint, for he said, "The whole spot is small and could be easily spared by any of us." All were willing to give, but did they come to a place where four lands joined, such place would be removed from wagon roads and inconvenient. The ground between Draque and Jabez was therefore settled upon, and, after Amanda was laid at rest, the line fence was torn down and the place enclosed.

After the funeral Draque was very subdued, for, although rough in manner, he was extremely sensitive, and his roughness was oftentimes the overflowing of the best intentions. But now so much of his heart was in the grave he spoke in a lower tone and offered his services in the most gentle manner. Heretofore, when he had been in the most rollicking and joyous moods all he loved best were comfortably enclosed between the walls and under the roof of his cabin. Now his heart must go out to a lonely spot where one of the fairest of the family circle was resting. A short time before he knew the spot only as a part of his cleared land, where the grass grew thickest and the songbird loved to dwell. In viewing it now he thought of the hereafter and the Father in heaven who took

from him his lovely child. He mourned Amanda so long it was feared "he never would be himself again." He was often seen dropping his crowbar, or rake, or whatever farming implement he might be using, and crossing the fields he would pensively stand viewing the little grave. At last he conquered, and to all outward appearance was the same whole-souled Draque.

Amanda's death was felt even at Hiram Blank's. When the neighbors returned for the first time after the funeral, their expressions were thoughtful and their tones low—exceeding low for such a place. Tonight neighbor Klomp looked around at his friends and said:

"We needn't expect to see Draque here tonight; he takes the death of that child very hard."

"Yes," said Hibe; "a man wouldn't think such trouble would stick so tight to him. He always takes everything that comes so well I didn't think anything could so upset him."

"He's never had any real trouble before, as I know of," said Klomp, "and I wouldn't wonder but this will lay him up altogether."

"It 'ill not lay him up only for a time," said Tobe. "He's not the kind that's going to sneak out of active service when trouble overtakes him. But with his heart sore for the one gone, he'll bravely push ahead for those that are left. It may be he'll not feel like dropping in here with the rest of us for a while, and in many other little ways like that it may tell on him, and I think that same is to his credit. But he'll not let the weeds grow in the cornfield or the rake rot in the meadow, and when the time comes he'll not leave the fallow unturned, you may depend upon that. He's a tender-hearted fellow, but brave enough to push ahead."

"I'd hope to see him out of his trouble and around soon," said Klomp, "for it seems the backbone has fallen out of this place without him."

"This place doesn't depend upon a solitary individual for backbone," said Hiram Blank. "However, I'm as anxious to see him out as any of you; he was among my first friends when I came here. I always liked him, and if I'd picture old times, Draque would have to be there—times when it was a little harder for me to be independent than it is now."

Hibe looked around upon his patrons and failed to see a smile, or cheery look, as upon all other occasions. It was evident he was in the same thoughtful state himself, and anything like old time jokes, and argument, absolutely out of the question.

When death breaks in upon those who are not daily familiar with its trappings; who for months in and out had not seen a corpse; to whom the coffin and hearse are unfamiliar sights; where there are no slabs or monuments, not even the little mound, to remind them where all must end, it produces an impression not likely to be understood by those who seem to think they know the meaning of all those things so well. Being too familiar deadens the effect, and makes death a thing of not too great importance. With such, burying the dead is a duty involved upon the living, which, in charity they perform, sometimes as thoughtlessly and matter of fact as they turn over the leaves of their account book, or leave their order at the grocers. It is often only to the bereaved that death has much significance.

Draque, now, more than ever, began to find comfort in the society of Jabez, whose nature was better suited to give soothing words of comfort than many another of his friends.

Neighbor Draque never doubted the existence of God, and the sublime destiny of man, but it was with these truths much the same as with the circle and the lever; he did not stop to think much about either, until he was overwhelmed, and there was no way out but to hopefully submit to the Wisdom that, for our greatest good, both gives and takes.

Faith, Hope and Charity now found a soil in his heart, the better cultivated for the harrowing of sorrow's teeth that had entered so deeply; just as the strong, sharp teeth of the harrow pulverizes and prepares the soil of the wheat-land. And he who had always been the plain, good neighbor, was evidently a better man, when at last resigned, he left Amanda in her grave, and stepped forth with unbounded confidence, and with a brighter hope than had ever shone upon his path before.

'Tis hope that lightens the heart, strengthens the arm, and removes the keenest pain; extends a ray of its light to the most lowly and destitute, and gives a glow of sunshine to all nature. Were it not for hope, what happiness would illumine our pathway here below? What enterprise would ever be undertaken, were it not for that cherished hope that animates to a greater or less extent, every living soul. Where is the dungeon that contains a criminal so abandoned that hope never enters his heart?

The grave, surrounded by all that, to the unthinking, would seem to discourage, is the scene of sublimest hope; where all that the occupant had been long familiar with is calmly put away, and the eyes closed, not in darkness, but to clearer vision. Draque was always hopeful. From the day he commenced the hard task of clearing his forest farm, the neighbors all knew he never gave up to discouragement. Through

all his life the darkest spot he had yet arrived at was the little grave, and, because it was so dark, it took him longer to see the light. But, after repeated visits to the grave, and heartrending struggles there, after prayer and Bible reading with Jabez, the light came that chased away all gloom, and shone around the whole enclosure, Draque said, "with enough left to fill his heart."

It was not till then the neighbors pronounced Draque "himself again." But, although himself, there was always after a something in him better than before that he was conscious of, though the neighbors might not happen to see. The impression made by the hard blow of death, although healed, had sunken too deeply to not leave its mark. Since Amanda's death, the neighbors had all "dropped in," with words of comfort. Jabez had called several times, for, upon his leaving, Draque had always asked him so imploringly to "drop in soon again," that he called as a consoler often. Draque had often said to Jabez, it would seem apologizingly, "that mother all along appeared to bear up better than he did."

Tonight he found in his heart a wish "to give Jabez a call." He must have thought about going through the day, for he ran the wagon into the shed, put forks and rakes away, and fastened the barn door more securely than was his wont, as he turned to the cabin for his evening meal. He did not forget that, should there come up a storm, all those little things could not be done, and he calling upon a neighbor. At the supper table, he said:

"Mother, how would you like to cross the lots with me tonight, to see Jabez?"

"I'd love to go and no mistake," said mother. "I haven't been to see Peggy in her new house yet. I

thought about going for long enough before Amanda took sick, but always found so many odds and ends to be done up about the house I never got started."

Without noticing what his wife said, Draque continued: "Awhile ago I thought I'd never find it in my heart again, to care about leaving the place, or to visit anyone. But I'm satisfied now that Amanda wouldn't be where she is, if it was in God's plan for her hair to grow gray." He fixed his eyes on Mrs. Draque and said: "You always faced trouble braver than I did, Mother; mebbe I've been unreasonable, but I couldn't see my way out sooner. God may have taken that way of bringing us nearer to Him, eh, mother? when we think Amanda's with Him."

Mother's tears for Amanda now fell thick and fast, and she who had often tried to console Draque, wept bitterly, feeling there was no longer occasion for her to hide her tears when "father was resigned." Draque turned from the supper table, and faced the west window. The clouds were piling mountains high, and the setting sun had burnished them with gold. Only a rim of the great orb was in view; he had seen it rise in a similar way in the morning when he was "about the chores;" he had bustled around lively all day, and with the setting sun his day's work was done. Although he had watched the sun rise and sink in the same way often, during those long years, it never had the same wonderful meaning for him before. He sat gazing intently, not on the setting sun that was now lost to view, but on the piling and rapidly shifting clouds, not noticing how Prince raised his ears, and held his head up a little, as if trying to catch a sound. Mother's eyes were dry, and she, too, with folded hands, sat looking out of the window, when one sharp, quick bow-wow from Prince startled both.

Draque turned toward the door, and Jabez, not waiting to rap the second time, nor for the ceremony of having the door opened, turned the knob and stepped in with Peggy, when they knew they were always welcome.

“Mother and I were thinking of going over to your place tonight,” said Draque, “but we’re both glad you saved us the trouble.”

“We thought you might be lonesome,” said Peggy, “and, although it looks like a storm, we ventured out, feeling certain we’d get here before the rain fell, and once here, we’re safe.”

“You forget that we’d like to get back tonight, Peggy,” said Jabez; “the children wouldn’t be just contented if we were storm-bound.”

“No fear of that,” said Draque, shaking his head; “those storms that come up quick are soonest over; they’re the kind that level the corn, and blow down trees, but we’re safe indoors, the old cabin has stood many a one.” Draque stopped, drew a long breath, and then said:

“We always gathered the children in when we saw the storm coming, mother and I—but now Amanda doesn’t come for the calling, and while I’m in the house with the rest of them, I see the trees bending down in the wind over there, and the lightning seems sharper there, and the thunder louder, but it can’t hurt her, I know, for I’ve left her with God, Jabez—satisfied as you told me awhile ago I would be at last.”

It was wholly out of Jabez’s power to say a word in reply. He who had always found it so easy to talk to Draque could not say a word; his mission was completed. He had long known Draque, and held him in high esteem, but he now realized he had a greater

soul than even he had thought, and with bowed head he sat, leaving him alone with his thoughts.

The shifting clouds had united in one compact mass, blacker than the darkest night, which the lightning at short intervals made resplendent for the moment, then, with the darkness, came the thunder, indescribably loud, with nothing intervening to break the current of sound. The tree-toad and katydid had hid themselves away. The hoot-owl was mute, and the coon had sought his nest in the hollow tree without a supper. Not a voice arose from the earth, not even the sound of a barking dog in the distance to take the attention in a small degree from the thunder of the breaking clouds. The big engine would not whistle past for hours, and no rumbling of coming wheels would break in upon the sublimity of the storm.

Jabez looked out the window through the darkness toward the north lot; but the north lot, with its logs, and virgin crop of corn, was a thing of the past—when the lightning came a meadow met his view. The long grass rising and falling as the wind swept over, might remind him of the waves of the ocean, minus the treachery of the latter, strewn with the bleached bones of so many, who, less successful than his father, put out for land from some overcrowded port, in vessels not storm-proof, and went down forever. Whatever the scene might suggest, he said nothing, but looked, and looked.

“Does Tobe ever call around at your place, Jabez?” asked Draque at last, in the old time way.

“He does,” replied Jabez, “he was there the night before last, wasn’t it, Peggy,” and, being assured it was, went on: “He’s been asking about you, and I wondered he hadn’t dropped in.”

“He was here twice, or three times, of late,” re-

plied Draque, "but it was early in the evening; mother said he appeared in a hurry and couldn't wait. I'm sorry I missed him every time. I had some odd jobs to do about the place. The fence was getting bad at the far end of the farm, between Klomp and me, and I thought I'd fix it up a bit before harvesting came in."

"He's a busy man now," said Jabez; "his conscience lays it upon him to put himself about a good deal more than the rest of us."

"I suppose," said Draque, "he still bothers himself about the black man."

"Yes," said Jabez, "he doesn't let up on it a minute, with all the discouragement there is about the question, he's at it harder than ever he was, and not a bit baffled."

"I'd wish him luck in everything he'd undertake," said Draque, "but I'm still as doubtful about the luck he's to have in that direction as ever I was."

"Well," said Jabez, "although I'm not as positive in my views opposing Tobe as I was some time ago, I'm afraid he'll have a long road to travel before he sees the end of it, if he ever does. But, I tell you, Draque, if a man has any selfishness in him, talking to Tobe awhile has a tendency to take it out of him. On this point I'm in with Tobe, and not without serious thinking: I believe every man should do the best he can to promote universal good."

"That's true," said Draque, "and the man who has had great trouble himself, and has been helped to bear it, ought to be the first to offer help to another, if he only knew how to go about it."

"Tobe's trying hard to teach us all how to do it," said Jabez, "and if he doesn't succeed I'm sure the fault will not be his."

Mother and Peggy had been enjoying a quiet chat

by themselves, when Peggy, aroused by the lateness of the hour, and the condition of the fields she had crossed awhile before with such perfect ease, now in places mud and in others long, wet grass, said:

“Jabez, I don’t see what we could have been thinking about, to have started out tonight with the prospect of a storm before us—anyway what I could have been thinking about. You can manage well enough with your boots on, but what am I to do?”

“I’ll loan you mine,” said Draque, jumping to his feet as if shot. “I have a pair lying about somewhere.”

“Yes,” said mother, hunting the boots while Draque sat down, “come whenever you can; don’t stay at home for a storm, I’ll find you a pair of boots.”

Equipped with boots, Peggy faced the inconveniences the late thunder storm left in its track; all the while thankful for the blessings that came hand in hand with the inconvenient. The air was balm laden, the coolness invigorating after the sultry day, her garden in its glory, and the tubs and barrels at the eaves filled with the freshest soft water, fresh from the clouds. She was certain there had been no mingling with any of the impurities of earth before it reached the tubs that held it, to be used at her will. The road home was too hard a pull for them to be able to devote much time to talk. So in silence they walked along, the one keeping pace with the other with the splash into a mud-hole, that, in spite of the looking and trying to steer clear, they were into before aware that one was near, well as they knew the road, and often as they had traveled it before. Not until they were safe at home did Jabez say: “I’m glad we went tonight, Peggy, I’ll feel better for a whole week, after having heard Draque ask for Tobe, and try to get up anything like his old interest in things.”

Peggy replied, with all the earnestness in her: "You couldn't feel better than I do about it, splashed and covered with mud as I am, for the venture."

Thus closed another day, well begun, in the Ghent household. The light was put out, and the stars that for ages kept watch over the abode of man, looked down unobstructed by intervening clouds.

CHAPTER VIII.

John Strand's purse completely empty, no credit at Hiram Blank's, and no one willing to loan him the necessary funds, were the only forces that now could be counted upon to restore his reason and make him at all resemble the neighbor who in better days dropped in upon his friends feeling they were glad to see him.

At such times he appeared to realize his misery and, the first torture over, tried to throw off the chains, which in the face of the trying he never seemed able to do. Probably it was because he had so little help. Every one thought it was something he ought to be able to do of himself. Tobe was all absorbed with the chains of the black slave and had the plan of his life work spread out before him, which was so overtaxing there was not a possibility of his ever seeing the enormous slavery that in its infancy was being fostered under his own eyes and with his full approbation.

When John was for the time thus crippled financially, the neighbors would remark—well-meaning enough, too—"They believed John was beginning to see his position, and if he didn't carry himself straight after all that"—whatever the "that" may have meant according to their ideas—"they'd take no more stock in him."

All of which we pardon them, as it was not fully demonstrated at the time, at least to them, that alcohol produces effects upon the human system over which the will has no control. Prisons were being erected throughout the state for those like John Strand who

could, but would not, go straight. Their massive doors were swung on hinges proportionately strong. The iron bars were solidly built into the wall, and every precaution taken to prevent the exit of those that—for the public good—it was deemed necessary to place behind them. Taxes were levied upon plain neighbors—Klomp, and Draque, and Tobe—for the erection and maintenance of said prisons. It is but fair to say Hiram Blank came in with his share of the tax, which, owing to his accumulated possessions, was pretty steep, and in consideration of which the state took him under her protection; making no distinction whatever between the men who, with brain and muscle cleared and dug, and built and developed, and the catch-penny who stowed himself away from the inclemency of the weather, with one eye on his stock in trade and the other on his neighbor's pocket.

The evil was now augmented to an enormous extent, for to become gentlemen became the desire of many, judging from the number who, through sheer admiration of Hiram Blank's soft hands and fat purse, took possession of rickety little tumble-down places to pose as Hibe had—not equal to the task of grappling with the forces nature had put in their way, and which, by the very law of self-elevation, every man must overcome or fall by the way in manly endeavor before he has won an honest man's place in the battle of life. This evening Klomp stepped into Hibe's with the usual smile upon his face, with which he always greeted a friend, and the remark:

“I'm like the pendulum of the clock on the shelf there, Hibe, always swinging back and forth.”

“That's right,” responded Hibe. “I like to see men keep stirring.”

“How does it come you're so quiet here tonight?”

said Klomp. "Those benches cut sorry figures with no one on them."

"It's early in the evening yet; besides, it's a busy time with the people, whether on farm or garden. I don't expect it to be as stirring as at other times," said Hibe.

After about fifteen minutes' quiet talk between Hibe and Klomp, Tobias Lenk appeared, whereupon Klomp started out with the remark:

"I'm afraid you've missed your mark tonight, Tobe. It's hardly worth your while to talk to empty benches."

"I weighed the matter before starting," said Tobe earnestly, "and concluded every one wouldn't be so tired that this place would be entirely empty. The weather is never so bad and the muscle of the place so done out but that you can count upon meeting a friend or two here. You see I'm right, my audience consists of Hibe and yourself. I sometimes feel like talking to just one or two, and am suited exactly."

Not giving Tobe further chance for remark, Klomp, though evidently a little "riled" about something, began jokingly: "Our fathers thought they'd feel lost in this country, with neither lord nor noble to doff to; but I think it's tip-top their children are doing—they'll soon be lords and nobles among ourselves. I tell you, the like of some of us to haul in the dollars that's going to purchase all requisites for such quality, is amazing—not that I'd care a whit for such myself; but it adds uncommon to the dignity of a place to have such fine people living in it." Looking straight at Tobe, Klomp continued: "Hibe there will soon be driving his coach-and-four, with his footman in the rear and all other necessary appendages, as big as any of them."

Hibe had an attractive way of doing things at times,

and gathered in the money for the drinks with an air that plainly said: "As long as you're fool enough to give me your money I'll be willing to take it." He voiced a little of his feeling, saying:

"It's the fashion where I came from, and you seem to be all happy on account of my introducing it here."

"So far we're all happy enough but John," said Klomp. "I called around there yesterday and he's pretty badly used up."

"It's his own fault," said Hibe indignantly. "When a man doesn't know when to stop it's time to kick him out."

"Don't be too hard, Hibe," said Klomp. "You never kicked him out with his pockets full, I've noticed. You have the little he got together in better days to your account, and he has what he took in exchange for it."

Klomp was a little wrathful over the manner Hibe had ejected John Strand the night before. He, with other neighbors, often blamed but never abused John. With his acquired faults, as they looked at it, they stood nobly by and never lost sight of the John who lived a neighbor among them, honest and good, and with whom they felled the forest side by side before Hiram Blank sought a home among them. Hibe, not wishing to provoke Klomp to saying anything further concerning John, said:

"The sooner we drop unpleasant subjects the better."

"I reckon you've a show now, Tobe," said Klomp. "Hibe may think your subject a more interesting one than the one we've just let up on."

"I don't give it up," said Tobe laughing, "but that I'll be able to make him see what the square thing is yet. He may be a stubborn sort of a man, but I don't stop for that."

“Aside from believing the black men are where they belong,” said Hibe, introducing the subject he knew was sure to come, “you couldn’t persuade me they could be purchased, and it’s not the amount of money it would take to buy them that staggers me; for I don’t think the owners would accept any amount, and for this reason: they would be hardly able to invest it in a manner that would be as lucrative. And with men that have a great deal, even more than with those that have a little, it’s the dollar that tells. Therefore, I concluded long ago that, right or wrong, no such thing as freeing the black man would ever be brought about.”

Tobe and Klomp bade Hiram Blank “good-night” earlier than usual. In spite of repeated efforts conversation flagged. Klomp remarked to Hibe, “As there wasn’t as much life there as Tobe liked, thought he was getting uneasy.” He then proposed to Tobe “that he would take him out for an airing,” to which proposition Tobe readily assented, and picking up their hats both started. Once outside Tobe said:

“Klomp, don’t you think it early in the evening to make for home? Suppose we drop in on Jabez and see what they’re about there.”

“All right,” said Klomp, “nobody ever found me anything but agreeable, especially when the thing proposed is just to my liking.”

Accordingly they wheeled around and stepped out briskly in the direction determined upon.

“I’ve often wondered,” said Klomp, coming to a halt suddenly, “if there could be such a thing as poetry in an old foggy like me. But, let it be what it may, the moon and stars up there, and the soft air on my bald head, has a wonderful effect after the sultry day, to say nothing of the voices of the little living things

that are talking in their own way all about us." He had bared his head during the remark, and both he and Tobe now stood contemplating the scene.

"I dare say," replied Tobe, "there are more poets than are ever heard from if feeling the Something one would love to describe just as he feels it, for the benefit of those who might have missed, is poetry. When a man looks upon a scene like this, and something is impelling him to proclaim it is all the gift of a Father in heaven, and that the black child may be as much to him as the white, what he says is poetry, Klomp, whether it rhymes or not."

"Mebbe it is," said Klomp, with a serious look on his pleasant countenance, at the same time placidly covering his bald head with his well worn hat; "but the kind that takes my ear has the jingle. However, let that be as it may, Tobe, if we want to see Mr. Ghent before his door is closed for the night, we'll have to move on." Both, intent upon reaching their destination, walked on without further comment upon scene or living thing.

"Well," commenced Klomp, upon the door being opened for them, "this is the place tonight minus the drinks, but Tobe and I can stand that."

Draque was among the guests at Mr. and Mrs. Ghent's who called an hour earlier than Klomp and Tobe. He eyed them with a quizzical glance and laughed outright as he said:

"I think there's a substantial reason for your standing it."

"I wouldn't wonder," said Jabez, looking up in surprise, "or they would have been here before."

"We tell no tales out of school, do we, Tobe? So it will be all thinking and wondering, and nothing sure about it," said Klomp.

Peggy was going through certain well-known performances with churn and dasher, scalding and pouring out water preparatory to filling the churn with cream, when Tobe asked, "Do you never get tired, Peggy?" to which she replied:

"I don't feel just as sprightly as when I began the day, but think I'll manage to put the churning past me. You see, Jabez is to have some help with the harvesting tomorrow. I couldn't well get at the churning sooner, and thought it too long to keep the cream over a day."

"We're in for keeping you company then," said Klomp. "Tobe and I didn't come this distance to turn right back. Tobe has been on nettles for some time because he hadn't a chance to talk sense, as he calls it. Here he is, with Draque, Jabez and myself, and not minding the time we'll let him have a chance. What say you, Peggy?"

"You're all welcome to stay, I'm sure, and you know it without asking," said Peggy.

"I believe you've half a mind to side with Tobe—eh, Peggy?" said Draque.

"I side with him entirely," said Peggy, "and did from the first."

"Oho! that's news to me, I thought Tobe was alone in those parts." After eyeing the churn as if he never saw one before, Draque continued:

"I have no objections to raise to the bettering of things as we go along, but I think with mother that some things are too bad to mend. We threw out an old pot this morning at our house that many a dinner was boiled in, and many a good one, too. I thought, mother would like to mend it and so would I, but after turning it over and looking at it twenty times, we both concluded it was too far gone. And I think,

Tobe, you'll have to do about the same thing with this ere slavery question."

"There's considerable metal in that old pot, Draque," said Tobe, "and I haven't a doubt if it was put in the right hands there would be a new one made out of it. He who keeps pounding away is going to fashion something, and that something will be much after the idea he has in his own mind."

"We can't be so certain of that," replied Draque, with a mischievous look. "For instance, if Peggy had the idea of making headcheese out of that churn of cream, I reckon she'd have to hammer a long time at it. I can see as well as another man how some things are fashioned after a man's ideas. I can put a field in shape for a crop as neat as any one, and many another thing about the place I fashion according to my own mind. But what I'm trying to get at is this, and you all know it as well as I do: There are some things men can't do, and however wrong those things may be, and however well we might like to bring a change about regarding them, we might just as well not bother. That's the stand I take regarding the slave in the South."

"I'm just with you," said Klomp. "I believe had slavery been nipped in the bud, or had a slave never been brought or sold in the country, it would have been a good thing; but now that it is where it is, I don't see that anything can be done to check it."

"I reckon Tobe sees himself," said Draque, laughing, "that it's a little harder to make black white than it is to make white black. I have twenty sheep over there and among them one black one. Mother, with a little logwood and copperas, could in a short time make the nineteen white fleeces black; but if I handed

in the black fleece for her to make white, she'd think I'd gone clean crazy."

"I see," said Tobe; "but you're dealing with black and white, while I'm dealing with right and wrong. My case may not be as impossible as you've tried to paint it, and no matter how distant the time may be when right will take the place of wrong, every fair-thinking man should be willing to push in that direction."

"That's true, Tobe," said Peggy encouragingly, still churning away, with now one hand on the dasher and then the other. "Don't be put down by them. No one can tell what persistent stirring up will do with a people."

"Peggy well knows motion is a wonderful creator of new things out of old, provided one has something to work upon," said Jabez, smiling and watching the motion of the dasher as Peggy banged away at the cream soon to be butter. "And this continual battering away at something, to produce something else, by determined, well-meaning people, is not all going for nothing. You're right, Peggy."

"Of this I'm certain," answered Peggy. "On all sides we notice those only are complete failures who are not determined enough to keep pushing."

"That's so," said Tobe. "This stepping around from place to place in order to keep a thing in motion, although the majority at first may laugh, will prove in the course of a few years the very thing that has brought about a complete change in the state of affairs."

"I think I can get an inkling into your meaning, Tobe," said Draque, not a bit inclined to be serious; "but I'm a homelier man and do things in a plainer way. What you mean to tell me by all that was said

is similar to this: The milk and cream Peggy has there in the churn would remain milk and cream and never be butter did she not set it in motion with the dasher."

"Yes," said Tobe, "and keep that motion up till she saw the hard butter."

"You're right about the cream never being butter without hard hammering," said Jabez; "but if Peggy left it there until the elements saw fit to work with it, it would soon be turned into swill, and we might throw it to the pigs. So you're a little off the track, Draque, when you said it would remain milk and cream."

"That's just the point," said Tobe. "The good God leaves many a thing in our hands for moulding into better things, but we must work with the opportunity and no lagging."

"I see," said Draque, still in a joking mood. "Twenty strokes of the dasher wouldn't do much good and mebbe two hundred wouldn't, that you or I could see; but Peggy 'ill keep at it until we're obliged to acknowledge that continued motion does a great deal. I have a high regard for Peggy and won't be outdone in speaking a good word for her." Draque laughed, certain that, if he was doing no good, he was not intending to do harm.

"Well," continued Tobe, addressing Draque, "as you oppose, and still admit, we may be allowed to imagine we have an intelligent South Sea Islander among us that knows nothing of the art of butter-making. He might laugh at Peggy's persistency and call her a freak of nature."

"Yes," said Draque, with a tremendous smile, "and if a whole community of them were at hand they might feel like putting the freak in a safe place where she would be sure to do no harm; for that same churning

process is anything but graceful, and, judging from the maneuvers, they might think the freak dangerous."

"Let Draque go ahead," said Peggy, as she carefully raised the churn lid to examine. "I'll not shock him much longer with ungraceful performances—the butter is here ready for the gathering. We've been friends too long to take offense at anything Draque might say. Besides, I believe he has the gift of seeing plainer what's under his eyes than the rest of you, that's all."

"He may have that gift, Peggy, but he doesn't care to look more than two rods ahead," said Tobe.

"That's because I can take in so much in those two rods that the rest of you don't appear to see," replied Draque. "I don't see the sense in ransacking the universe for an example to illustrate what motion will do when Peggy here at my elbow, with churn dash in hand, is as convincing an argument as you could find the world over. Besides, you all know it's complimentary to Peggy I'm intending to be."

"I know," retorted Peggy; "I've had a taste of your compliments before."

"Draque always had the way about him of killing two birds with the one stone," said Jabez, laughing. "I've known him since he was a lad, and have never known it to fail him."

Tobe sat for some seconds saying nothing, with fixed eyes yet looking at nothing in particular. At last he said, accompanying his words with a shake of the head:

"It doesn't do to be always joking, Draque. By rights there are some things too serious to admit of jokes, and it's a pity you fellows can't see it."

Something, either in the seriousness of Tobe's attitude or speech, produced a more serious effect upon

his listeners than had been hitherto effected. All the pathos of the earlier evening came back to Klomp, and he felt in his heart malice to no man, not even the black man.

Draque looked out at the moon sailing through the white clouds with which it was surrounded, and something touched his soul akin to peace after perfect resignation. He had felt the same touch before when he left the little grave saying, "Thy will be done."

Peggy, with ladle in hand, vigorously dove after the lumps of butter she was placing in the bowl preparatory to washing. Jabez could see the moon, too; he looked for a while in silence, then began:

"This continual change of place is a wonderful creator, it's a fact; but I notice things don't change as we would like to have them of themselves. For instance, a cabin never rose about here that we didn't have to build, and there's no butter made in this house that Peggy doesn't churn. I think with Tobe as we look out into space and see how one thing succeeds another, we see how God is doing things on a grand scale, precisely as we are doing things on the small. I think we must therefore conclude that we are placed here to keep up that motion that will tend to bring about the best results." Jabez hesitated a moment and then continued: "I felt that from the first regarding my own premises, but I'm willing enough now to acknowledge a man ought to step outside to give a lift when he can."

Treetoad, katydid, and cricket took up the refrain, and sounded their approbation with such delight that garden and fields were filled with the sound, when the three men, thinking of home and the harvesting, bade Jabez and Peggy "good-night," and hurriedly went their way.

CHAPTER IX.

Notwithstanding the drawbacks, Ike became an able lawyer. In seven years after leaving his home of logs he was as fairly upon his feet as any young man in the Buckeye state.

One would think his busy life and many hardships would leave him neither time nor inclination to indulge the tender passion. But all along the picture of Meg was before him. He never lost sight of the pleading blue eyes and winsome face. He never saw anything homely or commonplace about the cabin that was her home in childhood. To him it contrasted favorably with the new house so much more comfortable and imposing, and even with the fine houses he had seen of late. The days he had spent in the log school house where Meg was were the happiest of his life, and the evenings around the fireside cracking nuts and eating apples with Meg, and listening to Jabez and Peggy talking about what they had been reading in the papers and books, were more delightful than any he had since known.

Peggy took care her children "didn't grow up wild." What Meg lacked in accomplishments she had in sound sense. It is true her education was wholly restricted to the district school. She had an exquisite appreciation of the beautiful nature had spread in such lavish profusion around her, and through childhood had tripped along gathering wild flowers, with heart attuned to praise the Bounteous Giver, and the echo of her joyous voice came back to her from the hillside, as she sang His praise. The echo that came back, like

the sound sent forth, was not always in set words, but it was the outpouring of her happy soul none the less, in unison with and innocent as the birds that sent forth their songs of praise on all sides.

But childhood is swift passing, and girls grow up to step out from the happy homes of their girlhood. Meg was the oldest, and somewhere must she find a home, and a means of providing for herself—for the younger children were filling her place, and it would never do to sit idly down, depending upon her father for support. She felt, too, that she would like to lessen her parents' burdens if she could; she saw they were growing old. So she offered, and her services were accepted, as school teacher in a place that in those times was thought quite remote from home. There are some people on this big earth of ours, so good and lovable, that, upon knowing them, we feel at once we will be the happier in Heaven for having met them upon earth. When the sin, and misery, and care of life weighs us down, the remembering those angels is sweet recreation. If fancy adds touches to the already beautiful, what matter?

Meg was Ike's angel. He had often and often thought about her during his college days, and "law learning," and she was always the same winsome Meg. But now he was beginning to be more serious, because his seriousness was based on the knowledge of his ability to provide for her. He asked himself, "would she care about him as he thought she used to, and would he ask her to leave her country home and try her fortune with him in the big town." Care about him were words hardly large enough to satisfy the craving he felt. Had the child's and young girl's liking for him developed into anything like love in the woman, as he felt his early liking for her had so de-

veloped in him? A great thump of his heart told him it might not be.

He resolved to leave the office, and "the law" for an indefinite time in the hands of the lawyer, now his partner; who years before took him to carry and pile the back-logs on the office fire, lift the ashes, and numerous other things, in recompense for the knowledge of law he expected to impart to him, and journey to his home—the home he had visited several times since his first departure with ax upon his shoulder. But he never experienced such heart throbs upon any other occasion. When asked, "would his visit be long, or short," he simply replied, "it would depend," and yet he never fairly said to any of his questioners, upon what it would depend.

The railroad was not a "bee-line" from the town to his father's house, nor could he change cars conveniently where the road did not reach, and make it on another. The stage coach was his hope for several miles of the route—the well-known and well-worn stage coach, not unlike every other stage coach of the time, with the driver in his own right hand corner, and its pair of heavy horses stepping along at their accustomed gait. The coach pulled up alongside the platform when the train came in, and Ike stepped out at once for his destination. The passengers were not jostling and pushing to make room—of that there was plenty. He, and an elderly gentleman seated opposite, were the sole occupants of the coach. His companion was an exceedingly intelligent looking man, and Ike did not have to look the second time to be sure he was a stranger in that part of the state. He was of medium height, slightly inclined to the portly, and reminded Ike a little of his partner, for whom he had so much respect.

The coach pulled out of the little station, with its waiting room and half dozen houses. On and on, the wheels rattling over the plank road, and the woods on each side becoming more dense, as the road between the coach and the station was lengthening. The mournful too-hoo of the owl, along with the apparently early gathering twilight, called forth an intense feeling of loneliness in Ike, who already felt he was alone. His companion appeared to him a keen observer of the passing scene, as well as of the man in his presence. As they rode along he pointed out the grandeur of the massive, as well as the delicate beauty of the smallest of nature's productions, in which they were sometimes immersed—above, beneath, on all sides, luxuriant growth. In places the tree tops almost met. They towered so high on either side that the opening above seemed a speck, while the wild rose, and grape, vied with each other in climbing their brown trunks. The nearer roadside was thickly carpeted with grass, that the roadside cow, although numerous, had not kept in trim order. At times his companion eyed him with severe scrutiny, nervously tapping his foot on the floor of the coach, then, drawing a long breath, he would look out of the window—away off. Ike felt certain he was not looking at anything he could see, and, casting his eyes in the same direction, saw an opening, and the red rays of what appeared the setting sun, but he knew it was a delusion, caused by the forests, and one his companion might not be familiar with. It must yet be a full hour before sunset, as they would find when they came to a clearing. Besides, his companion's eyes were not raised so high—he was evidently gazing at a picture in his own mind.

“I understand you at last,” was Ike's soliloquy;

“what we keep from the outside world is the most absorbing part of our existence. You and I are friends, your picture cannot be more beautiful than mine. Talk to me now, if you will, and you will find me in sympathy with every feeling you possess.” The stranger turned his head, and, with a deliberate tap, tap, of his foot, sat looking awhile at his companion again, and then asked, “Are you interested in politics, young man?”

“Yes, somewhat,” was Ike’s slow reply. Although he had given politics some attention it was not the all absorbing question with him now.

“Did you ever vote for a president?” came the query.

“Yes, once,” was Ike’s short and deliberate answer.

His companion now seemed aroused to a state of intense interest as he put the question:

“On which side?”

“On the big side,” replied Ike, with a triumphant smile; then he assumed a look of disappointment, as he began to feel he did not understand his companion as well as he had thought. Their pictures were certainly different. Again his head was turned, and the man looked out of the window; his picture was very far away, but it was as absorbing as if it was before him.

The coach was now nearing Ike’s destination, and he prepared to step out, when his companion said:

“I’m sorry to have to travel the rest of my journey alone; I’ll be in your town on important business before long, and would like to feel that you are my friend.”

They grasped hands and there was something in the grasp that told each he might depend his life upon the other. Ike alighted, with traveling bag in hand, and

slowly sauntered along. He stopped to look after the stage coach; something probably told him his after life would have a great deal to do with its sole occupant. He listlessly rested his elbow on the stump of a broken tree, hummed a tune, whistled another, and possibly lived a part of his boyhood days while so doing; then as slowly resumed his journey, which now was short.

There was no great preparation being made for Ike, as he was not expected home, but the look of surprised gladness on every face amply repaid him for the lack of preparation. The surprise, hand shaking and hugging over, he began at once to inquire about the health of each, and satisfied all were well at home, extended his inquiries to the neighbors, asking for one, and then another, as the name might come into his mind, or the face before him. But, strange enough, he omitted the name of the very one he came in quest of. His motive for so doing no one may be presumed to know; it may be pardonable to suppose, however, that he preferred to hear the answer to that inquiry from her own lips, and maybe she would say, she was glad to see him in a way that would enable him to read his future. He might also have hoped Meg would be able to read in his eyes and manner his more than friendly interest in her. The stage coach, with its one passenger, did not reach its destination for about two hours after Ike last sighted it. Twilight had come and gone, shutting out the passing scene from the lone traveler, and gave him ample time to associate Ike with many a plan for the future, that had long been shaping in his mind, but which were now only beginning to be developed. His meditation ended with the conclusion: "He is a fine sensible fellow; no snobbery in him on account of his advantages, and I'll vouch for it, he is a man who will not turn his back on duty no matter how hard. If I

could get him to see the present existing evil I would have an ally that would be a tower of strength; from head to foot he is the picture of robust health, and such a mind inclined in the right direction, combined with the vigor of young manhood is as good as a thousand bayonets. The force of his superior intellect would turn the whole state into the right way of thinking."

As Ike soon learned, the only thing that broke the monotony of their quiet, plodding life at home, was the death of little Tim, Winnie's brother. He had always been a sickly child, and although in his fifteenth year, exceedingly small, and was known far and near as "little Tim."

"Mother," said Ike, "I think I'll go over to John Strand's; the neighbors will be calling, I suppose."

"Yes," said his mother, who was proud of "her boy," as she still called him, and anxious to let the neighbors see how handsome he was, "they have no stint of callers since he died, nor while he was sick, for that matter—it would be the poor care his mother could take of him without the neighbor's help."

Ike started on his way, and walked along half melancholy, half happy. Every sound brought up memories of other days; his unselfish nature could not glory in his own prospects without a lingering regret for the shadow that was falling upon his old home. His father, though still hale and hearty, was perceptibly changed, and deteriorating somewhat from the rugged man who always took the heavy end of the log in the same north lot he was now crossing on his way to John's. The katydid he had often tried to imitate in boyish delight held carnival alone, and from the neighboring pond, he had so often pelted with stones, and of which he felt himself master in every

way, came the doleful croke of the frog. The soughing wind through the few remaining trees of the cleared lot, said to him the end of all is death. He could not chase the echoes from his soul. He had heard the same before, and every sound was cheerful, a delightful mingling of peace and love. But now, the very time when his mission was love, such phantoms; was it a foreboding that his future must be dark?

However, his thoughts did not cause him to quicken his pace. He walked on as leisurely as if he had been contemplating the most delightful; he accepted all things with manliness—was too brave to shrink from the disagreeable because it was such. Besides, disagreeable could hardly be the word, for he felt a soul enlargement, a reaching out to something such as he had never before experienced.

He was now at John's cabin—the old falling down cabin. He stopped to look at the place. The end was sinking, he said under his breath. "But the north end always goes down first—the sun never gets at that bottom log." The chinks that had been put in years before to keep out the wind and storm, had fallen out in places, and gave the rain and snow a chance to go through.

"It's astonishing," said Ike, "how long those cabins will stand without a peg or a patch before they do tumble down."

But thoughts about the outside of the cabin vanished from his mind when once inside, not that the inside contrasted so favorably with the outside as at once to drive distress out of the door, but there in almost the center of the room lay "little Tim" in his coffin, and John lying on the floor beside it, drunk.

Winnie had married Steve and left some years be-

fore for a home even a little farther west, and had not yet arrived to comfort her worse than widow mother, who sat beside the coffin a picture of distress.

Ike, after looking thoughtfully at the child's face, heaved a deep sigh and spoke to the mother. Then looked at the figure on the floor, not with pity but indignation, and, stepping to a seat beside the wall, gave scope to his thoughts. There came not a thought that would tend to excuse a man who could so forget his duty to those depending upon him. In his big warm heart he could feel no such emotion as sympathy for John. He with other neighbors watched the night through. At early twilight he took his last look at the child in the coffin and left. The melancholy sounds of the evening before were hushed, and in their stead the joyous songs of birds. Every twig and branch of the great trees were quivering in the still morning with the weight of tiny songsters, as they hopped from branch to branch.

The morning lengthened and the sun began to appear—the rising sun that gladdens the heart of man as well as bird, and is typical of the resurrection, glorious after a night of gloom. The effect was irresistible, and Ike's heart again is light. He is conscious of no wrong doing, remorse is not gnawing; he is young, with bright prospects, and cannot wear sorrow as a garb—it is a generous impulse that comes as occasion demands. His contemplation with regard to the night before would now take form of a similar kind.

“The child is dead, his mother can take the better care of herself, and as for John, he ought to be kicked out of the place. He's a disgrace to the whole community.”

Upon his return home Ike was met at the door with a welcome smile from his mother. He had not for-

gotten all the little paraphernalia of country homes in the morning, and asked:

"Where is the milk bucket, mother?"

"Oh, we can milk without your help, Ike," said his father. "We've been long enough at it." Ike hesitated and looked around for the bucket.

"If for old times' sake he'd like to try his hand at it, give him the bucket, mother," said Draque.

Ike took the offered bucket from his mother, and, whistling a soulful air, walked to the barnyard. It was a time he was to have altogether to himself to think about Meg. As he singled out the cow he was to milk, and tried to balance himself upon the one-legged stool, low words of a love-song took the place of the air he had been whistling. At breakfast he learned without asking that Meg was away from home, which was an uncommon occurrence for any one to be out of the neighborhood; at least unless the few who were favored, as he had been, with the opportunity of receiving a higher education, with the privilege of chopping cordwood for their board.

The ice once broken, Ike could not let the opportunity slip of learning all he could about Meg, especially as he had no longer hope of seeing her and feeling he would rather hear the news from his own mother than to inquire of the neighbors, asked:

"Meg not home? Where is she?"

His mother told him the story of "how she had been teaching school at the other side of the county for some months; that she had been an uncommon smart girl, and the Yankee schoolmaster was so good she went right straight ahead, and now thought she was able to take care of herself, being as there were so many at home younger."

Ike at once determined upon how long he would

stay. He would spend a few sociable days at home and with the neighbors. He would write to Meg and let her know he was home, and how disappointed he was upon not finding her there. He would ask when she would be home, that his next visit might not be a disappointment, and probably he would say something more that would not concern the inquisitive, however well it might interest them.

CHAPTER X.

Jabez and Peggy, hearing Ike was at home, decided to call at neighbor Draque's, and the same evening found them rigged out in their best in honor of Ike, bobbing along together the best they could over the stubble, on their way to Draque's. To keep step was impossible.

The first greeting over, Peggy presumed "Ike had forgotten them since he'd been in the town."

Ike assured her "he had not forgotten them," but omitted telling her he had become more especially interested in them than in the days he and Meg cracked nuts before the fire Jabez always kept so cheerful.

"Ike's been milking, Jabez," said Draque, "and doing odd jobs about the place for his mother since he came home. I've a big notion to put him at it again, he does so well—eh, Ike?"

"I think as you are all getting along so well without me I'll decline the offer," said Ike.

"I thought that would be the way," said his mother. "When I was getting him ready for the college I felt I was giving him up for good." She turned around to hide an emotion the memory of her boy long parted with called forth.

"Well," said Peggy, "you hadn't to give him up as John's wife gave poor Tim, sick as long as he was, poor child! and not a comfort the neighbors didn't have to bring in."

"Comfort! You're talking," said Jabez. "Not a bite to eat the neighbors didn't have to bring in."

"Yes, it's the most distressing sight I've seen for

many a year," said Draque. "There's many another neighbor topples over sometimes, but none of them stays right at it like John. What's the more astonishing, he was as straight and well meaning a man as any of us when we came here, nigh forty years ago."

The scene of the night before was passing before Ike. He could control his indignation no longer and abruptly asked:

"Father, do you know what I'd do with that fellow if I had my way?"

"I don't, Ike. What would you do with him?" asked Draque.

"I'd put him in a pen and give him a chance to sober up, and if he didn't stay sober I'd keep him there."

"I know you're well meaning enough, Ike," said his father, "but you have no idea how well-liked a man John was before this came over him."

"I see how it is," said Ike. "When a man's neighbors are willing to take care of his family for him, he is willing to let them. That is, a man of John's stamp."

"I'll tell you, Jabez," said Draque, not noticing Ike's last remark, "it keeps a man picking up and hammering at something all the time to go ahead on a farm, and John got so far behind before he knew it that he could never get up the courage to strike out again."

Ike, still aching to give John Strand what he thought he deserved, said:

"Father seems anxious to cover all John's faults, but I could not say a word in that man's defense."

"One can't say for another what he doesn't feel for him, Ike. If you only felt a little of what I do for him, you'd find words that would walk straight out

of your mouth," said Draque, as he turned his eye upon Ike with a melancholy smile quite unusual.

Ike smiled and dropped the subject, feeling that with all his "college and law learning" he would have hard work to get ahead of his father, at least in this particular case.

The next morning was set for the funeral. It was well attended, there being no lack of willing hands and sympathetic hearts to lay "little Tim" in the resting place prepared. Mother, sister and brothers followed him to the grave. John was awakened and rode in the procession in a dazed sort of a way. He sat upright and looked reasonable. That he fully realized what was taking place nobody seemed to doubt, not even Ike with all his advantages; but it would take a while yet for him to be able to understand, as a sane man would, that Tim had left them. Hiram Blank appeared with promptness and expressed his sympathy. He could depend upon the townspeople and newcomers for patronage now, and probably was sorry his old friend and first customer was so reduced.

After a few days John's eyes were wider open, and it dawned upon him with awful reality that Tim was gone. He then piteously sobbed, for he had a tender love when "himself" for the little sufferer who often asked him with imploring eyes, without speaking a word, to let drink alone, and he understood the message; but all no use. The phantom of no hope for him—no, never—loomed up everywhere before him like a giant.

Ike spent one week at home, as he called the whole place, the neighbors as well as his own home. He hailed the stage coach at the same turn in the road he had stepped off at a week before. His town, as the people were wont to call it, was the largest of all

places called towns in those parts—indeed it had become a city of no mean proportion, but the settlers clung to the name town. Consequently he was not so nearly alone on his return trip, nor was the trip so eventful.

He looked at the scenery and thought a great deal about his companion of the former trip. He was more interested in him, although he was far away, than in those around him, and was looking forward with interest to the time he was to meet him on his errand of important business spoken of.

The stranger possessed some magnetic power that held Ike captive, and, although his seat was occupied by another, to him the whole coach was filled with the one presence, and that one the absent companion of the week before.

As the coach moved on the chipmunk ran the rail fence, as if trying to keep pace with it. He was such a speedy little runner he occasionally found time to stop and deliberately look at the big animal journeying the same way, and seemingly took a pride in outrunning his large traveling companion. The squirrel peeped from under cover and bounded out of sight to appear again at some other point not far distant. Upon his return Ike found his law partner, who was beginning to feel old, laid up with rheumatism and exceedingly glad to see his young worker return. Nor had Ike any regrets. He had long since realized that upon himself, with God's help, depended his future. He knew that with the great world he held about the same position as a man thrown overboard with no lifeboat at hand—he must strike out for himself. He had enjoyed his visit home as well as any one could have enjoyed a similar visit. Meg was not there and that meant disappointment, besides home and its surround-

ings struck him most forcibly with the truth all things are passing away—at least all things he was familiar with in youth, and he must prepare to face things that now are and are to be.

The cabin, and faces that were before him in childhood, and early boyhood, and that had then seemed to him permanent—were materially changed, and the feeling that a few short years at best would blot them out, completely tinged all with sadness. But, he reasoned, “it is so ordained,” and went to work a nobler man for the grief. It was not the God appointed thing to sit down with folded hands, and repine because the logs of which his cabin home was built were crumbling into dust, and the feet of those who toiled so hard to build it were nearing the grave. He read in his Bible, “If any man will not work, neither let him eat,” and he went to work with all the energy in him, which anyone to see him at it would have declared sufficient to equip three full grown men, giving each impetus enough to last him to the end of a long life.

In the course of time his rheumatic partner was forced to let him have full sway, and the law firm was beginning to be known as well by the name of the young lawyer, as by that of the one who had been the law oracle of the place for more than twenty years.

CHAPTER XI.

The young orchards were now so prolific that the thrifty housewife, with the help of children and neighbors, could not pare, quarter and dry the apples as they fell, and if she could, the demand was so small it would be next to a waste of time. Draque said, "The family was expected to have a taste for a little of something besides dried apples," although prepared in the then known variety of ways. He went on to say: "The hogs, to acquire solid fat, need something more solid than apples, which may answer in the beginning of the fattening process; later, corn must be fed."

Every variety of the apple will not keep through the winter; therefore to avoid waste, Draque persisted until he found a way out of the difficulty. The cider mill was erected, and the juice, sweet and palatable, taken from the apple, and placed upon the table, sparkling, and of which the rising generation freely partook.

The new cider, scarcely ten days old, begins to have an effect upon the nerves, and the whole man, something similar to the effect produced by beverages procured at Hibe's and other gentlemen of the place of similar calling. The effect upon the rising generation would certainly have been much better, had the cider been let stand till used as vinegar to pickle the unwholesome cucumber.

Jabez and Peggy were engaged "boiling down" some of the new made cider, when they were greeted by neighbor Draque with the remark:

“The boys are giving Mose Schiver a fine send off; the racket they are making with the horns and tin pans would deafen a man a quarter of a mile away.”

Peggy offered Draque a chair, and with a contemptuous toss of her head, said:

“I’ve been so worked up over that marriage all day that I couldn’t tend to the house.”

“Nonsense, woman,” replied Draque, “Who could blame him for marrying again. It’s been a cold place over there for some time sure enough, his wife in the grave and the children turning out bad—none of them cares for the old place or their father, or is likely to ever take interest in either. The widow is young and sprightly, and promises to make things stir, and the two children she has will liven the place up a bit. What say you, Jabez?”

That was a question Jabez appeared to require a little time to think about, and Peggy had ample chance to remark:

“More’s the pity; why didn’t the children turn out well? I think that same man will have something to answer for concerning the way the children turned out.”

“Yes,” said Jabez, this time entirely bent upon agreeing with Peggy, “he didn’t set them the right example, Draque, and his wife sick all the time, not able to put things right.”

Peggy began again, saying: “Well, the poor thing! She died at last. Schiver’s free now to take care of some other man’s children—hope he’ll do for them better than he did for his own; but I’m thinking he presumed a great deal when he presumed some other man’s children would turn out better than his own—that is, under his keeping.”

"The new wife, and her children, will get the home, you'll find, Draque," said Jabez.

"Yes," said Peggy, "and those children will have to step out in spite of the hard struggle their mother had to keep things together, and a hard struggle it was to the day of her death. But that's the way you men do things. You make laws to suit yourselves, and other people have to suffer the consequence."

Peggy, in her excitement, banged the boiler with the stick in an endeavor to stir the boiling cider, put a pan down in such a hurry she missed the table and sent it rattling over the floor, stepped on the dog's tail, and sent him on the run, howling.

"Hold on, Peggy," said Draque, "or we'll think you're in with the boys in the Schiver send off."

Jabez looked after the yelping dog, and joined Draque in a hilarious laugh, all of which made no impression whatever upon Peggy's indignant spirit. She continued: "I reckon if some people I know had a little say-so a great many things would be different."

"Let us alone, Peggy, we're waking up to the right," said Draque, still laughing. "But what would you have us do," he continued, "walk over to the meeting house and forbid the minister to marry them—then we'd be getting into hot water without getting the children out. Schiver would drive to the next meeting house, or meet a squire, mebbe, and then drive home again not caring to look at us; you know, we're peaceable fellows, and don't care to mix up in trouble like that."

"No," said Peggy, "but your voting, and voting; there's no end to the laws you are making, and I don't see much good coming of them all, right about here, when a man can turn his family out of the home they're reared in and bring a brand new one right

into their place. If they did not turn out just as well as expected, they had some right there, I think. Their mother worked as hard as Schiver did, and I stand by it, she had an equal right to the little they possessed, and on her death-bed ought to be able to will that to her children. Even though they were not as good as some other people's children, it's more after a mother's heart to leave them the little she worked hard for than to pass it over fee simple to another family.''

Peggy looked at her listeners in a way that said plainly, "I mean what I say," and continued:

"When you're voting, some of these times, let you make a law giving the mother the right to dispose of one half of the possessions as she chooses. If Schiver had died instead of his wife on his death-bed he could dispose of two thirds of the place in whatever manner he wanted, and all she'd have would be a life lease of the rest. It wouldn't go out of the family as it's going now.'"

She stopped and gave her listeners plenty of time for reply, but none coming, she began again:

"I'm not speaking for women that marry possessions as well as men—they're scarce about here; but I'm speaking for the woman that commenced life with a man that had nothing, like Schiver. Her path isn't likely to be any easier than his; she has to keep stirring as lively for what's gotten together, and ought to have her say-so about the half of it.'"

Peggy, probably disgusted with the idea of having to work so hard, and, maybe after all, for nothing, took the boiled cider off the fire, smoothed out her apron and sat down.

Both Jabez and Draque seemed to be thinking profoundly about something. Neither stirred, nor offered to give Peggy a "lift" with the cider.

"I'll declare, Peggy, if you can't hit hard," said Draque at last, and, looking around at Jabez in a comical way, he said: "I think it takes a woman to get at a woman's ideas of how she'd like to be treated."

The arrival of the new Mrs. Schiver had thoroughly aroused Peggy; she felt in honor bound to vindicate the woman in her grave, and replied:

"As far as I can see you men don't care to inquire what a woman's ideas may be; the laws are all made regardless of that, which mightn't matter much, if we didn't have to come under them."

"Upon my word, Peggy," said Draque, "I never thought Schiver's wife wouldn't be willing to die, and let him do as he pleased with the farm."

"When you begin to make fun about matters that so much of our happiness or misery depends on, you needn't talk to me," said Peggy, as she drew from beneath the table the stocking basket, opened out and commenced running her hand into one stocking and then another, to see how many had the heels and toes out, and then remarked:

"I suppose I'll have to see that the stockings are mended, whether I'm dealt fairly by or not."

"That's touching me pretty sore, Peggy," said Jabez. "Don't you think I'd do the fair thing by you."

"Yes," said Peggy, with returning good nature; "I think you would, but I can't be so satisfied with the way I'm treated as to not have a word to say for those that have not been treated well."

Jabez made use of the fingers of his right hand as a sort of curry comb, and sat for a while thoughtfully rubbing the scant locks back from his bald forehead, and at last remarked:

"I'm afraid it's the way with the majority in many

cases, as well as the one Tobe is trying to show up. The man whose pot is boiling well doesn't bother his head about the man whose pot is not boiling at all."

"That's it," replied Draque; "they call it minding other people's business like, and that is something a man of sense doesn't care to do."

"I don't know about that," said Peggy, "but you seem to take yourselves into consideration fairly enough. There's no law passed that's going to interfere with your well being, as far as you can see, without your approval or disapproval, at least, and what's farther than you can see isn't likely to trouble you."

"No," said Draque, laughing, "but we stand in danger of meeting such eye-openers as you are, all along, Peggy, and then the trouble begins that we never dreamed of when we thought we were making good laws. Don't accuse me of ever having a hand in the making of a law I didn't think a good one. I wouldn't maliciously injure anyone in any way."

Draque shook his head and shrugged his shoulders at the idea. He said:

"Of Tobe trying to shove the evil of slavery on his shoulders, as if he had a hand in it at all, and now Peggy talking as if the possessions of the late Mrs. Schiver, now lost to her children, was something for which both Jabez and himself must be blamed."

"No," said Peggy, "I'm not resting the whole blame on your shoulders, Draque, but only your share of it. I know it's in your power to raise your voice in the right, and what I blame you for is, that you don't do it."

"And that one voice in the right, as you say, wouldn't do much good, Peggy, as long as everyone else was in favor of the wrong," said Draque. "There's no one in the neighborhood more willing to

oblige than I'd be, and if I could I'd settle the Schiver place on the children this minute. I'll own up I do think it a shame to take it from them now that I come to think about it."

"Well," said Peggy, "until some more of you make up your minds, like Tobe, to strike out for what's right, in spite of what everybody else thinks, and does, not much will be done toward bettering the condition of things here any more than in the South."

"It's too bad Tobe isn't here tonight, Peggy, so you'd have help," said Jabez. "You see, I don't like to disagree with Draque altogether. It would hardly be the square thing for both to set our faces against him in our own house. Besides, if Draque didn't know how good-natured you could be after a heap of scolding, I'm afraid we'd both have to call on neighbor Draque before he'd ever darken our door again after this night."

"Draque's a man that can get badly tangled and worsted and not lose his temper. Peggy knows that well," said Draque. "I'll be back the first chance I get, and, if I thought you were at all uneasy about my coming, I'd leave the corn unhusked to make the call. You can't tell me anything about Peggy's good nature that we haven't felt at our house both in sickness and health, and it 'ill be a long day before Draque or any of his family will take offense at anything Peggy says, knowing as we do that everything she does is well meant."

Peggy forgot all her sorrow for others' woes for the moment, and smiled as pleasantly as ever she did in her life while saying:

"In spite of everything, Draque couldn't be anything but complimentary if he tried."

"I think after that I'll face toward home," said

Draque. "But I'll declare, Peggy, if Schiver knew how he was hauled over the coals tonight, he'd not sleep a wink for a week."

"Not Schiver alone but all the rest of us, Draque. Peggy didn't seem to blame Schiver as much for marrying and turning his children out of doors as the rest of us for letting him," said Jabez, with a mischievous smile.

"We'll not trouble Peggy to go over the old ground again Jabez," said Draque, "and I think the least said that would intimate we would the better."

Peggy's fury for the occasion was evidently spent, she presently rolled up one stocking after another and threw them into the big basket at her feet, now and then taking time to look over her glasses at Draque and Jabez, who were standing by the table. Draque about to say "good-night" and Jabez turning over and looking at his hat, deep crowned and broad brimmed, evidently designed, above all things else, as a protection from the sun, preparatory to handing it to him for his departure. The dog stole cautiously across the room, keeping a respectful distance from Peggy and her work-basket. The sight of the poor fellow, with his tail tucked between his hind legs, as if trying to keep it out of reach of Peggy's feet, was too much for fun-loving neighbor Draque, who, chuckling with laughter forced back, said, as he took his hat from Jabez, "I'll get out of Peggy's way, Jabez, and you take care of the dog."

Peggy raised her eyes as Draque spoke and caught a glimpse of the household pet before he reached his destination, and could not help noticing the "I'm-whipped" air with which he took his accustomed place, evidently determined, no matter what happened, to never stir out of it again, and for the first time since

the new Mrs. Schiver arrived laughed outright. Draque looked at the dog as he demurely settled himself, and said:

“He’s only a dog, but he makes good resolutions like the rest of us, that’s plain. You’ll not catch him out of his place another time when Peggy’s boiling down cider, depend upon it, Jabez.”

“I hope you’ll be as good in keeping resolutions,” said Peggy; “but a trip across the fields home will take all the good resolutions out of you, Draque.”

“I’ll make up my mind to settle down and stay there if it does,” replied Draque, “especially if any more of our neighbors take it into their heads to follow Schiver’s example.”

“I believe it wouldn’t be safe to come back and face Peggy if such a thing happened, unless you’d voted a time or two in favor of a law that would put a stop to such,” cautioned Jabez.

“You folks are entirely too funny when the question is important enough to affect another’s well being,” said Peggy. “Men of sense, as you call yourselves, ought to be above jibing when you see it rests altogether with you to make wrongs right. Even the dog there has more dignity; he was out of his place a while ago, and realized it.”

“It took a mighty hard pinch to make him realize it,” said Draque, more in a laughing mood than ever.

Peggy paid no attention whatever to Draque’s last remark, but said:

“You tell me you realize certain things, and yet don’t take your place as he does.” She heaved a sigh and continued: “If men like Tobe didn’t rise up now and then I don’t know what would become of the world.”

“Tobe hasn’t done much yet, Peggy,” said Draque.

“He’s been a good many years hammering at the slave question, and I can’t see that he’s any further on than when he began. That’s what discourages the half of us. We’re willing enough to step to the front every time, but when the evil is so great that we can do nothing that will down it, we make up our minds we might better be doing little things about the place than racking our brains and spending our time with matters that’s going to be about the same in spite of us.”

“I think Tobe has done a little something so far if you dont,” said Peggy. “He’s roused up a good many to see things about as he sees them.”

“Yes,” said Jabez, with a certainty that would bring conviction to a score of unbelievers were they listening, “what Tobe saw fifteen years ago, and only Tobe in those parts, many a one sees today through his showing.”

“But we’re not as good talkers as Tobe, Jabez and I, and wouldn’t be able to stick to a thing as he does, Peggy. So I think we’ll have to ask you to overlook our faults in that direction,” said Draque.

“You can’t tell me,” said Peggy, “that the person lives that has something to say and isn’t able to say it; that is, provided he’s not a dummy. And I think you could say many a thing as much to the point as many another thing I see published nowadays, if you only had a will to try it.”

Draque was evidently in no mood to see things as Peggy saw them, and said:

“I’ve been a long time starting for home, Jabez, but I’ll make a move now that ’ill tell, for there’s a heap of work waiting for me to turn out, and I must be at it early in the morning.” He shifted his position again and said, “I thought long ago that when we

got the trees all felled and the logs cleared away there'd be no more rushing, but I'll declare there's more to keep a man moving now than ever."

Jabez handed him the hat he stood reaching for and which he had picked up the second time. With the kindest feelings "good-night" was exchanged, and Draque stepped out beneath a canopy that would expand the soul of any thinking creature—moon, and stars, and shifting clouds. The moon full and apparently sailing through the dark clouds, whose borders were transformed into whiteness as the moon passed through. Draque mused as he walked on:

"No two nights are just the same. I've often walked this path before, at about the same hour, with the same moon and stars above. I can't say the same clouds, and mebbe that's why it all looks so different to-night. But surely the whole is grand, and the man that can see such a sight needn't care for the beautiful things made by man's hands. That's why we're as contented in our cabins, as others are in palaces. The fine things they bring about them take the mind and the eye from what's higher."

Draque's hand was now on the latch of his own door, which he opened and stepped in to a rest as refreshing as ever came to the luxuriously housed.

CHAPTER XII.

The adage, "True love never runs smooth," did not appear to have been written for either Ike or Meg, in as far as family objections might be concerned. Neither had the aversion of a to-be mother-in-law to overcome. Peggy felt certain "there could not be found a better match for Meg than Ike, nor one she would rather see step in her door as son-in-law," and Ike's mother always had a word of praise for the girl she said "everybody liked."

But in other ways their path was somewhat crooked. In the days of spelling matches, quilting, and pearing bees, letter writing was hardly the fashion, at least to the extent it became afterward. A letter was not often expected except from the East, and even those were not so anxiously awaited as in years before, when the hearts of the settlers were yet alive to everything transpiring in their old home.

Ike had an aversion to coming down to the point in a letter. If he could only see Meg he would understand her better than through a dozen letters, and she could take him precisely for what he was worth. True love does not need a long array of words, beautifully put, to convey just what it means. Ike would depend more upon a single look and an eloquent hand-grasp, that went like an arrow to the heart, than he would upon a written volume. There had been no way out of the difficulty, however, but a letter, and, since his appeal to Meg upon his return to town, it is not possible to guess at the number or as to whether few or many passed between them.

Meg wrote Ike "she was employed for the winter. As the distance was considerable, and the road at that season of the year not the best, she would not be home before the next spring," which settled all hope in Ike of meeting her sooner at her father's house. There were no gentlemen of leisure in the profession, especially when a senior partner felt indisposed and demanded the junior's presence. Although the senior had decided to retire, some complicated matter required a little time for settlement. Therefore there was not a shadow of hope for Ike that he would be able to take a trip across the state before the time alluded to, and it is probable, if not certain, that in the meantime many a letter followed the particular one that made Meg's heart beat considerably faster, and that she read a score of times and always found interesting.

The possibilities of the young school teacher were without limitation. With no social lines to debar her from becoming even mistress of the White House, she could build castles at will and people them with the fairest and most chivalrous of human beings.

Meg's letter from Ike offered her such an opportunity, even though he may not have proposed. There was certainly a suspicion about it which led her to think such might be the case, at least so a third party might think, and left her the whole winter to build castles accordingly.

Every one knew Ike was fast rising, and none knew it better than Meg. But it was not the rising Ike that held her captive—it was the Ike of the past, the handsome, manly fellow that even the uninterested would turn to look upon the second time.

In many a spelling match she and Ike had held their own, and were the targets of many a beaming

eye possessed by those who had been spelled down and were anxiously awaiting results which would determine whether Ike or Meg had "spelled the school down."

Meg had all along been thoroughly interested in her school and in each particular pupil. Tow heads and blue eyes received as much attention from her as ever, and no one could have guessed, from any difference shown to the little ones, that her vision of perfection was the possessor of eyes and hair that were very brown. Other little things aside from love and teaching aroused in Meg what might have been otherwise dormant faculties, and gave her an opportunity of exercising them—not directly, but as a channel through which relief found way. In the part of the state she had found an opening as teacher there was a crop failure, caused by late frosts that destroyed the wheat just as it was about to ripen and burned the young tassels of the corn. Later, and consequently poorer neighbors, whose barns were not filled, would have suffered considerably had they not received help. But no one in those parts had yet arrived at the point where their means was a sufficient guarantee to raise them a peg above their neighbors; consequently all demands for relief were promptly met.

The most self-sacrificing people are not usually found among those who have the most means and leisure. Conscious that, as far as they themselves are concerned, there is no necessity for acting, they sit down, and the law of gravitation, or some other law equally forcible, holds them there. They are not inclined to act. But such people existed only in far away places where Meg's grandmother had come from, and, where she heard so much about the separating line that divided classes, and where her own grand-

mother, and in fact the grandmothers or great-grandmothers of all Americans were, alas! on the dark side of the dividing line.

One morning an hour or two after Ike entered his office, a letter of unusual interest occupied his attention. Was it or was it not from Meg? He read and re-read as if intent upon committing every word to memory. After reading a sentence or two he would stop and look at the chair opposite as closely as if expecting to find the next sentence in the legs, or to discern in its straight back the meaning of what he had already read. An observer at a single glance might decipher the heading—"Boston, November 8th, 1852." The writer went on to state that "Notwithstanding their unselfish and hard work they, as Ike well knew, had been defeated, but the defeat had only made them the more resolute as to future action in the same direction, and knowing Ike's ability begged of him to still cooperate, being quite certain some near future would see their plans fully executed." It was evident Ike and his stage-coach companion had long since come to an understanding. Ike was aware of the results of the election previous to receiving the letter. He had gracefully accepted the defeat, and resolved that the next campaign would prove he had not been idle in the Buckeye state. And the boy who from the cradle was "given to thinking," and who had now been many years a man, thought harder than ever. Before the next election drew near he was prepared to do in the town what Tobe had long been doing in the country. He was prepared to agitate, and he laid his views so forcibly before the whole people, in such a plain, straightforward manner, that he brought conviction to the minds and secured the votes of many who like

Draque, were willing to go the right way once they saw it.

The winter was now drawing to a close. The icicles that formed every night on the eaves of Ike's office every forenoon at an early hour disappeared. Even the sturdy icicle in the shady corner was unable to hold his own longer, and melted away in the warm atmosphere without a ray of the sun ever falling upon it. Ike watched them melting with a glad heart. We find him today seated in his office listening attentively to a man who is not his client. The man is elderly, gray, very intelligent-looking, and a stranger in town—not so complete a stranger, however, that a few did not remember having seen him once or twice before. What passed between them was not meant for other ears, at least for the present. The stranger's stay was prolonged. For several days he was seen about town, and always directing his steps either to or from the lawyer's office. When he was about to leave Ike was seen stepping with him to the station, and the two, in confidential conversation, stood for some minutes before the train pulled out.

To the ordinary mortal there was nothing in that spring to make it in any way different from every other spring. The robin's whistle could be heard from all directions, as in other years at the same season. Other early birds, that had been witnessing Southern scenes, the neighbors said, returned with such rapidity and in such numbers one might be pardoned for doubting they came so far, when they were not actually seen in flocks on the wing. No one was able to tell when they arrived, or from what direction they entered the place; but, like the house fly, with sun and spring they were on hand, and unlike the puny insect always most welcome. The wild goose and pigeon blackened

the sky at intervals upon their arrival or departure, while the little songster slipped in and dropped out without warning as to when or how.

The bleating lamb was heard in the outskirts of the town, where Ike often strolled for recreation, and was a pleasant sound to his ear, as memory carried him back to home scenes, pasture fields, and the north lot, where so much of his brain and muscle were developed.

He often acknowledged that the planning and managing necessary to do away with the obstructions on that lot, and watching with an intelligent eye the cause and effect of so many things springing up about him, upon the very spot where he and his father had laid low and turned into ashes the monster crop of centuries' growth, did as much toward developing his brain as the professors in the college did. A sweeter recollection stole upon him even there. The memory of when his steps brought him to the fireside where Jabez and Peggy often read and where Meg was sure to be.

But a man deeply in love must always be an extraordinary mortal, perhaps only in a visionary way. The wonderful and beautiful properties all nature presents, he sees more clearly than the man with no love in his soul, or perchance the man with love and many cares combined. Overwhelming care is often the friction that causes the love wheel to clog, or at best helps it to move slowly, and sometimes transforms what was once the recipient of love into a burden to be borne only by those giants of physical and mental strength; and by another class, strong and weak alike, who have been taught from the cradle there is no way out but endure until death. The weaker invariably shrink, especially those who have the faculty of foreseeing certain results they are conscious they have not the

power to turn aside. The mediocre, who have not the searching power to calculate with such clearness, with the dim future before them, plod on and on until the earth is filled and refilled with woes multiplied.

But not a thought of such a possibility ever enters the mind of the lover; he never for a moment dreams that anything will ever mar the beautiful ideal before him—never stops to think that may be he himself will be the destructive power that will cause the whole love structure to collapse. He may not be the willful destructive agent, that meditates and plans an evil act, but an observer may sometimes calculate in particular cases with as much certainty as the astronomer calculates an eclipse or the distance between the earth and certain heavenly bodies.

Ike, with all his penetrating powers, saw nothing in the future dire or dark. All was bright as the rising sun, with not a cloud in the horizon. Happiness and ease with him were not synonymous words. He was accustomed to being obliged to remove obstacles everywhere. And was not Meg? Had either ever lived an hour for ease alone? He would never tire making the future as successful as the past, and with such resolutions turned from the contemplation of the exquisite to his daily toil. Perfect people are rarely found, however high they aim. There is some spot vulnerable, like the heel of the god. But that there was such a spot in Ike no one was able to discover. That he was a true friend, a perfect gentleman, and a gallant lover could not be more truly said of the lord to manor born, than of the man who looked at roof higher than castle or tower built by some proud ancestor, and counted the lights in the story dome not to be quenched but at the command of the Heavenly Father.

At the first intimation that Meg had returned, Ike prepared for another visit home. It was the same old road, not any perceptible difference as to increased traffic. It was earlier in the season, and consequently not the variety of thrifty life by the roadside. The grass was in its infancy, and like the softest velvet. The trees all the same fresh, tempting green, with the exceptional shower of pink and white blossoms covering the peach and cherry. The same stage-coach, with the same pair of heavy horses. And the same driver in the right-hand corner of the seat held the reins as in times before. There were two men in the coach when Ike seated himself, and the same two when he vacated; but no sympathy existed between them. On several occasions Ike tried to talk, but they had nothing at heart that interested him, and he was too completely engrossed with home affairs to be his best in politics. Besides, his companions were too far away from his ideas, and so unreasonably stubborn in resenting every view not their own, that it would take at least the next four years to bring them about, if brought at all.

Conversation was a complete failure. The two men saw no life or beauty in anything around them; they had started from one place and were going to another, and that was the end to it. Ike was glad to learn both places were outside his native state. He looked at the corner where the traveling companion of the time before was seated, and saw him in spirit. He was even there, a more real companion than the two clothed in flesh. The two men, entire strangers, who had met for the first time less than one year before in the commonplace stage-coach, now lived in the closest bonds of friendship. Now they both had the same object in view, the emancipation of the

slave, and both had vowed to do their utmost in that direction.

Even on the eve of meeting Meg, Ike's thoughts rambled sometimes to the slave. The stage-coach came to a standstill on the same spot he put his foot the time previous. He alighted without the handshaking, and promised friendship of months before. The driver pulled the reins, and the coach horses assumed their usual gait. There was nothing in the coach to claim Ike's attention—he stepped on without turning to look back. The rotten stump that obstructed his path, and that he had rested his elbow upon the time before while taking a wondering, last look at the receding coach, carrying away so much he had in the short time learned to love and respect, was no temptation for a similar rest. He made the slightest perceptible halt as he approached, and hit a protruding root a kick that made a dozen pieces of it, and sent them flying in as many directions, but evidently without noticing anything in particular, walked on.

This time, Ike's reception at home eclipsed all others, if one may be allowed to judge from the cheerful, happy man seen for a whole week at, and around, the old homestead. His father, mother, and everybody, were glad to see him; Meg was glad, and he was particularly glad himself. Arrangements that had been under headway, were completed, and a quiet wedding took place that very week at the minister's house—that, while bordering on the new city, was not a stone's throw from a patch of dense woodland, in precisely the same state the red man left it, wanting only the deer and wolf and Indian to complete the wild picture.

The cows of the neighboring field loved its dense foliage, and rippling streams; and the different sounds

of the tinkling bells were undoubtedly a source of cultivation of a certain kind, to the boy who listened, endeavoring to ascertain in what direction he must proceed to find their brindle.

Ike took in the woods at a glance, the timber of which he knew every tree—and also knew about the amount of muscle it would take to completely metamorphose them in various ways, such as rail fence, cord wood, fire wood, and the remaining debris into ashes. In the drive from one big town to another the coach drew up at every little hamlet on the route that could boast a postoffice. Aside from those, there were no particular stopping places, but as the occasional passenger might demand. Ike was the only passenger who, in that driver's day, came to his destination so abruptly, and emerged so suddenly from some obscure spot outside the town proper.

This morning, as the coach approached, the driver recognized at first sight the handsome passenger of a few days before, and halted. According to arrangements then made, the coach was to stop at a certain time, in a certain place, on the following morning.

The eve of Ike's second departure was the marking of a very important event in the Draque household, as it was in the home of Meg. His first departure being the time he left with an ax—equipped to contend with the oak, beech, hard maple, and sometimes to find its way into a sassafras knot that required both iron hand and will, in one so young, to extricate it. His mother said: "It seemed to her now, even more than ever, that she was parting with him for good." But she felt she could part with him more freely now that he was a strong man, well equipped for taking care of himself, and, although, very dear to her still, he was not the boy who years before left her—so helpless,

she thought—and feeling that in his youth and inexperience he might be imposed upon, and his strength overtaxed. But now she was sure no one was more competent to take care of himself than Ike, and his second going out in his strength, left, along with the void in her heart, a joy.

Previous to their departure, Ike and Meg wandered through the groves and tangled pathways of her father's farm, so well known to both, Meg the while gathering and arranging wild flowers into a bouquet.

"I would not object to you thinking me a rough, outspoken fellow, Meg," said Ike—"that is, if we may be allowed to compare human lives with wild nature, for the most delicate flower might bloom in a most uncultivated heart."

Without saying a word, Meg looked her astonishment. Ike leaned against a monstrous oak, and, surveying the scene as far as the dense growth would permit, said:

"Of the whole stretch of woodland that surrounds us, Meg, this is the most wild and rugged part, and look. He reached out, and picked a single tiny forget-me-not from among a cluster of its kind, all nestling in the softest moss growing close to a huge boulder.

"A person who did not know the place," he said, "would never think of coming here for such a beauty as that."

"No," said Meg, "one would naturally associate a place like this with storms, and tempests—certainly with nothing so delicate. As you said, those who did not know the place, but I know it as well as you do, yet I never saw a forget-me-not here before."

"Providential, then," said Ike, "it must have bloomed for my sake," and offering it to Meg, asked, "Will you keep it for my sake?"

Meg accepted, and answered with a single "Yes." She did not attempt to add the little beauty to the bunch in her hand, and lose it among the larger flowers, but fastened it above her heart with the tenderest care. In after years, a dried forget-me-not told how well she kept her promise.

No two ever started upon the journey of life together better liked, and with better wishes from all who knew them, than Ike and Meg. On the appointed morning, at an early hour, farewells were exchanged, and Meg, with a light heart, left forever all the wild and lovely scenes of her girlhood, and entered upon her new life in the city home provided her by Ike.

"The transplanting," as Draque humorously called the transfer, and then went on to say, "How Ike had been transplanted himself, and understood the care, and cultivation of such plants," proved a healthful and happy one, all friends said, judging from the beautiful home and smiling countenance of Mrs. Draque, junior, that greeted them upon their occasional visits to the city.

CHAPTER XIII.

All those long years Tobe had kept the political stone a rolling among the country people. He stepped in upon the neighbors at their gatherings on all occasions, and was good-naturedly called the thunder-cloud—an attempt at ridicule on account of his black subject, the slave. Jabez was no longer counted a good Whig; he entertained what he thought reasonable doubts for a long time, and at last went over. Tobe's first disciple.

Tobe was spending a friendly evening with Jabez. It being one of the evenings Draque had nothing to do, he took it into his head to spend a while there, too. Draque was a good Democrat, and, from the time he cast his first vote, never "went back on the party."

This evening, Tobe had a paper, which he was reading to Jabez, and the two were commenting upon how the slaves were being treated by some masters. The paper, he said, "was edited in the East by a man named Garrison." Draque sat quietly listening while Tobe slowly and feelingly read sentence after sentence of an account of a recent slave sale. Something made Draque feel a little uneasy. He did not seem to as boldly stand out for his party as he had on other occasions. After Tobe had read the article, and laid the paper down, Jabez asked:

"What do you think about that, Draque?"

Slower than usual, and with less determination, he answered:

"Pretty much as I've thought all along. You fellows that have questions so far from home so much at

heart may rattle away at them. Besides, I'd like to know what you Whigs are going to do about it; when you can show me that you can do more than the Democrats, it 'ill be time enough to talk."

"We're not Whigs, Draque," said Jabez, "we've associated ourselves with a new party, and a new name. We are Abolitionists, and we want your support. We're bound to free the slaves. Could any man with a heart listen to what Tobe has just read, and not feel sympathy for a race so oppressed?"

Draque looked at Jabez and then at Tobe, with a startled look—not a bit of the old time comical about it; a look so strange that the two men saw simultaneously, and interpreted: "Had it been Tobe that said that I'd not be a bit surprised, but it's Jabez."

"Well," said Draque, and he drawled the word out as if it came from his toes, "When it comes to the question, must a man be a slave, or must he not, I for one would say he must not, but I think, Jabez, that's a question you or I'll never get a chance to answer in a direct way, and until such time as I think I can see we can, I'll be a Democrat."

"We're thankful for even such an acknowledgment, Draque," said Tobe. "I know many a man feels the same about it." Turning to Jabez, Tobe said: "We're really stronger today, Jabez, than we have dared to hope."

"Yes," replied Jabez with a great deal of meaning in the word "yes,"—"after that admission of Draque, I think we can say we are."

Tobe again took the paper, and, glancing over it, his eye fell upon something he had not read for his friends, and which he now proceeded to read. It was a further account of a sale, where children were sold from their parents, and separated so completely, one

would never know when death overtook the other, or where their bones were laid. Draque could see Amanda's little grave so snugly kept, with roses and sweet pinks blooming upon it in their season. In his mind he began to reason: "He's a black man and a slave; he may not feel a wrong as keenly as I would." But it would not do. In spite of his efforts an Old World picture met his view, where the nobility and gentry did not seem to think the poor and downtrodden had nerves quite as sensitive as theirs, and treated them accordingly. He remembered, too, that some of those poor and oppressed were his kith and kin, and in silence listened to Tobe's remark, as he laid the paper down the second time:

"It's wonderful the assurance with which some people can wrap their cloaks about themselves and come to the conclusion other people were made to stand what it would be impossible for them to endure."

The remark was not directed to Draque, but was simply an expression of what Tobe felt toward the whole people who could rest satisfied under existing evils. For the first time in his life Draque was unable to find words to reply, which was another surprise to his friends. He slowly looked around, quietly took a plug of tobacco from his trousers' pocket, a large jack-knife from another, and holding the plug so that what he cut off would drop into his half open hand, commenced cutting off piece after piece; then as slowly replacing plug and knife from where he had taken them, proceeded to powder the tobacco between his hands. That being done he dove down to the bottom of a great pocket in his frock coat, and drew out a well used pipe, which he as slowly filled and then as deliberately put finger and thumb into his vest pocket and brought forth a match. After lighting his pipe

and taking a few whiffs to see that it was in good working order, he looked away some place, as is the wont of one in deep thought. We will surmise it was toward the South. But from the window where he sat, and only a couple of fields distant, in the daylight could be plainly seen a little grave with its pretty stone, which may have shut out all other sights. Draque could see that grave as well in the dark as in the light, and if his vision carried him no farther, the whole world would be ready to forgive him. But this time those who understood him well felt certain it did.

For several minutes the two Abolitionists were dumb as Draque. The whack-whack of the industrious Peggy's churn handle as it made its way to the bottom of the great stone churn could be heard outside, for she had prepared her cream and was churning away.

Peggy generally reasoned well and said: "If I don't bring the butter tonight I'll have fewer strokes to make in the morning."

Jabez was the first to break the silence with the remark:

"It appears, with all our meeting houses and Bible classes, we're losing sight of the Great Law Giver that said: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' When a people greedy for gain didn't take time to consider whether the black men were people or cattle, and, now that it's gone so far, don't seem to care."

Draque still "held his tongue," an expression he often made use of when he wanted to show that the man who held his peace was sometimes the gainer. Both Tobe and Jabez felt uneasy because of the unusual gloom that had settled upon Draque. To arouse

him Tobe proceeded to give him a little information concerning Ike, and said:

"Ike is with us, Draque, and you might as well own up you're with us, too."

Draque shook his head and replied:

"I know all about Ike's going over. I know, too, Ike wouldn't do anything he thought was wrong. He's at liberty to go whatever way he pleases, but, if I don't see a thing as he sees it, it's plain I'm to keep on the old track."

"I remember the time, Draque," said Jabez, "when everybody laughed at Tobe and his hobby, as we called it, myself as well as the rest; but men of learning as well as men of sense are siding with him now. Why, man! Tobe was thought to be a little 'off the track' a few years ago, but we tolerated him and listened to him because he was a neighbor we liked. But now, when men like Ike, who are above the average in intelligence, are siding with him, we must come to the conclusion his hobby is something more than a craze."

Draque straightened up at the first sound of Ike's praise, feeling too much could not be said in his favor, but said nothing. Jabez continued:

"Besides, Ike expects to derive no special advantage from it, and I think we must call him a philanthropist, Draque. If there was a big salary or the prospect of one in the end, people mightn't be so willing to flock around him."

"I don't object," said Draque, "to any praise you may give Ike. No one knows better than I do how deserving he is of all he gets."

After which remark it was evident the men had come to the end of the slave topic for the evening. Jabez, realizing Draque had become unusually serious,

and not inclined to talk, his next thought was to arouse in him something of the old self, and said:

"I think, Tobe, we'll turn to and entertain Draque in a way that will better suit him."

"You haven't gone far off the track in suiting me even now," interposed Draque, without a movement of any part of his body but the particular muscles needed to articulate the words.

"Yes, very willingly," replied Tobe. "It's nearing election time, but a man can talk something else occasionally and still be earnest." He folded the much prized Eastern paper and put it carefully into his pocket, gave his pocket one or two vigorous slaps to be certain it had reached the bottom, and sat back in his chair with the air of a man who had gained his point, and, consequently, satisfied to branch out in any other direction required by his host.

"Peggy, isn't there some cider in the house?" asked Jabez, as Peggy appeared at the door with bright eyes and flushed face, caused by her combat with the churn dasher. Peggy answered in the affirmative, and, while she bustled about getting cider and glasses ready, Draque shook off the cloud that hung over him, clapped his hands, and sang:

" 'Hurrah! hurrah! for Harrison and Tyler,
A neat log cabin, and a barrel of hard cider.' "

"Aren't you on the wrong side, Draque, and away behind the times?" asked Jabez, laughing.

"I'm not thinking about the times or one side or the other, neighbors," replied Draque; "we've laid that subject on the shelf." As he looked at Tobe with his usual broad smile again at his command, he continued: "We're going to taste the cider Jabez doesn't keep for his own use but to accommodate the like of us."

“I can take a little cider once in a while, though I’m not fond of it,” said Jabez. “It’s the other stuff I never touch—the kind that takes a man’s money from him. I’d be in the log cabin yet if I did like the rest of you.”

“It does worse for some than leave them without money, but that has nothing to do with us,” said Tobe.

“That’s true,” said Draque, “and, if I’d not seen it with my own eyes, I’d never think it could do such bad work. There’s John Strand, and a better neighbor a man never had—gone to the dogs entirely. Poor fellow! and not John alone, but his whole family dragged down with him. It would be better for the boys that are left, mother says, if they were laid alongside of little Tim. As for his wife, she was well trained, she’ll not wind up in prison; and, while the graveyard may be a peaceful place for her to look at, with the help the neighbors give her to keep soul and body together, there’s a prospect of her dying of old age.”

“Yes,” said Peggy, “there’s a prospect of her dragging through many a miserable day yet before she finds rest.” Peggy heaved a deep sigh and continued: “I’ve thought all along that to start out with John was too sociable. He called at Hibe’s too often when he was sure he’d meet his friends, and get a taste of what he thought he’d as good a right to take as the rest of you.”

“I’ve always stood out against drinking myself,” said Jabez, straightening himself up in a manner that indicated they had now touched upon a subject he had convictions concerning, even before Tobe had reasoned him into the seeing how wrong it was to hold a brother in bondage, body and soul; while what Peggy had said served as a spur. “I believe it’s a poison never

intended for man to take according to his own pleasure." He peered through the darkness into John Strand's wretched hovel, and said firmly: "There ought to be a law that says 'thou shall not,' even as the law that prohibits a man taking a five-dollar bill from his neighbor." He did not ask his friends what they thought about it; that they were not with him he knew. But he was too positive in his belief to care.

"I've never seen the day, Jabez," said Tobe, "that Draque and myself couldn't take a good swig, and then stop. I'm not prepared to say, and I think you're not either, that drinking in that way will do a man harm." After a few moments' thought, he continued: "I don't believe in or encourage drunkenness. I say let a man take a little every day if he likes, but when I say that I'm not telling him to get drunk."

"Well," said Peggy, for the first time in her life differing with Tobe, "the advice appears to me about as sensible as a similar advice would be—eat a little arsenic every day, but let it have no bad effect upon the system."

"Or," said Draque, laughing and with an eye upon the ridiculous, "tell a person to make a glutton of himself, but to be sure not get sick at the stomach."

After the laugh subsided, Jabez thoughtfully continued:

"Alcohol is bound to effect every one that takes it. Not all in the same way, that's true—it 'ill go into one man's knees and his feet 'ill not carry him; he'll topple right over into the gutter. The same amount 'ill go straight to another man's head, and make a blamed fool out of him."

"Like the mercury," said Draque. "It sometimes goes up and sometimes down. I suppose that depends upon whether the man is warm or cold-blooded."

“You’ve got me now, Draque,” said Jabez; “I can’t say what it depends on any more than I can say why it is that one man of a family dies of one disease and another man of the same family of a disease altogether different. A third man might take the same amount, and, as far as you or I could see, do him no harm for the present—a positive good he will tell you it does him. Boys, it may take a long time to knock a man like that off his pins, but I’ve seen such men go down in a pile at last. Besides, he’s the dangerous man in every community. We’re not likely to have much respect for the man that makes a blamed fool of himself, or the one that sprawls in the gutter. Nobody’s inclined to follow their example, but the man that claims he’s alcohol proof and is trying to prove it to the world day by day, is likely to have a great many admirers, and the outcome of it all is, a very great many of those admirers will be forced to accept charity at the hands of the government, in the shape of striped suits and three meals a day for an indefinite period.”

Draque and Tobe looked at Jabez as if he had gone “clean crazy.” They had never heard such a tirade from him before, and that it was applicable to themselves was certain; but neither moved a peg from the old position regarding the non-alcohol question Jabez so vigorously championed. But there was nothing in that to cause the least wonder, for with the majority conviction does not spring into being at once, but creeps, like the vine on the wall, so slowly that it is hardly noticed from day to day. But as the season draws to a close it covers the whole wall.

Jabez took advantage of their surprise and continued: “There are a good many degrees of drunkenness, like different shades of the same color, and oftentimes the man you see walking straight is a very

drunken man, ready to deal a death blow to the first one that crosses his path or provokes his anger. They are called criminals, I know, and punished accordingly, and I tell you, friends, there's not a family in the land that hasn't had some member or other such a criminal, at some time past or present."

Still taking advantage of the silence, Jabez said: "You had a brother in the East, Tobe, that was not thought just as good a man as you were and it all came from the different effect what he drank had on him. I knew him, and he was gone then, too, when I'd swear he didn't drink a drop more in the day than you did."

At mention of his brother, long dead in disgrace, the muscles of Tobe's mouth twitched visibly. Jabez noticed the emotion, and, repenting, said:

"You know, Tobe, I had no intention of wounding your feelings."

Tobe seemed ashamed of the weakness that betrayed to Jabez he still had a feeling of brotherly love for the dead man who had so disgraced the family that every member had resolved to wipe his image and memory from their hearts forever, and replied quickly:

"I know, I know."

Jabez was not inclined to drop his subject, which he resolved to handle without being so personal, for there was still a twinge in his heart on account of the pain he saw he had given Tobe. He said:

"Certain we can say it, it is drink that fills our prisons, and makes slaves of our brothers, and yet we are inclined to look at it all in as matter-of-fact a way as if nothing could be done to prevent it. I hear a great deal about temperance, but I don't think they've got at it quite. The people who advocate that temper-

ance is a good thing are far astray. It's the moderate drinker, the temperate man, if you will, that sets the bad example. One temperate man does more in the line of leading others astray, than a dozen hard drinkers, and the wider he is known, and the more responsible his position, the greater enemy he is of his race."

Tobe looked in astonishment, and said:

"You're putting it a little too strong, Jabez. Our minister will talk of the love of Jesus over a cup of wine, and I never heard any man say yet, that his example tended to lead astray."

Tobe then turned away from Jabez, and directed his question to Peggy, as if expecting her to judge of the merit or demerit of social drinking, and evidently expecting a reply favoring his views—for conscientious Tobe could see no wrong in doing as the blessed Savior did.

"They drank wine in our Savior's time, and will anyone say today that a little social drinking is a bad example."

Jabez, not waiting for Peggy to reply, said:

"You know that there were bond and free in our Savior's time, Tobe, and yet you can say, and with truth, that slavery is wrong." Tobe made no reply.

Peggy was now prepared to say what she thought, and spoke accordingly:

"They ate bread in our Savior's time, Tobe, and we're very certain the bread of today is an entirely different article; they may have had leaven bread in those days, 'tis true, but the mills wern't in operation, and the flour must have been different, and we can count upon it as certain too, that the wine was a different article. You see, there were no brewers and bottlers in those days, that we have any account of—the process they put the juice through nowadays does the mischief."

Peggy continued: "I think, myself, a little juice squeezed from the grape a day or two before it was needed must be sweet, and harmless—but the stuff that boils up before it's corked has the poison in it."

"I told you long ago, Tobe," said Jabez, "that no one knew better than Peggy how the hammering and working up of one thing turned that thing into something else."

Jabez, still having his own idea before him, said:

"The whole flock look upon the minister as a man a little above the ordinary mortal, Tobe, and if he sips, I hold it he sets a bad example. Now I tell you the young that grow up under the influence of such a minister are apt to look upon drinking as a virtue, without a possibility of its being a vice, and the kinder and better and more gentle he is, the greater mischief he's working among the flock, as all will listen to his teaching, and possibly try to follow his example. While the minister that's not just so good, and lovable, but has a 'do it or I'll make you,' or 'do it or go to hell,' sort of way about him, may be counted upon as having to preach to empty benches, and consequently should he advocate moderate drinking by word, or example, he might do it with less woeful effects."

"You're putting Draque to sleep, Jabez, with your long talk," said Peggy, as she looked across the table at the quiet figure and bowed head of neighbor Draque.

"No," said Draque, "but he's set me thinking. If what Jabez says is true, I've done as much as any man living to bring John Strand where he is. I was going to say more than any other man, but I can't go ahead of Tobe there. Right at home is where you can open my eyes best. I can't see things away off as plain as many another. Mother often told me, when I was starting for Hibe's, that I could spend an even-

ing in many another place as pleasant, if I only thought so, and have more in my pocket in the morning, but I never liked to be niggardly about a little, and didn't stop at that—but when Jabez tells me so plain that I did John a wrong, and mebbe many another man, I'm ready to stop right here."

"I'm glad to hear it, Draque. Now your wife can lay by the money that's in your pocket in the morning for a new house," said Peggy, brim full of smiles. Jabez looked at Peggy's radiant face, and exclaimed:

"You appear to be as happy over it as if it was your own money you were counting, Peggy."

"Tobe and I have been about even in the laying up business," said Draque, "while Tobe went way ahead of me in trying to make the black man as free, and happy as ourselves. Now I'll do what I long blamed you for doing, Jabez, I'll never darken that door again."

Draque pointed in the direction of the imposing structure—the outgrowth of the miserable little hut that some years before looked as if a half dozen stalworth men could readily shoulder and walk off with.

"I never put a brick in the wall," said Jabez, his eye following the direction of Draque's finger, "and I never left anything undone in my life I'm as proud of."

Tobe arose, which was a signal for departure. Draque was upon his feet that minute, saying:

"You're not going alone, are you, Tobe?"

"I believe the custom in those parts is for all that are going the same way to start at once," replied Tobe.

"So here goes," said Draque, as the two stepped out the door together, wishing the family good-night. When they were well on their way Draque said, as his memory carried him back to wilder times: "The walk across the fields after night always does me good."

They were now keeping along a fence that separated two farms. As they looked across the fence at the great shocks of corn Draque continued: "I never saw anything as thick as the trees on that north lot; in places a man could hardly push between them; it took many a hard knock to get them out of there, I can tell you."

CHAPTER XIV.

About a fortnight after Tobe and Draque had met at Jabez's, a number of neighbors were assembled there again. The conversation was varied, and their opinions as varied. In small matters no two were supposed to think just alike, as no two would see precisely the same small object upon casting a first glance over a landscape. The eye of one might rest upon a tuft of grass, and the other upon the clover, while a third happening along and looking a little higher would see the insect hovering over both, which was altogether lost to the other two. That both tuft of grass and clover blossom graced the landscape were facts the third may not have wished to deny, but the insect that might sting and destroy both the former did not see till shown.

But with important things, as with larger objects, it was supposed to be different—such were believed to be not altogether out of sight of all reasonable well meaning men. If a castle, on a cataract, was on a bee line from the window opening on the landscape, they would not escape the notice of the three men supposed to be surveying the scene. Here the trouble would not be that they did not see at all, but that they did not see in the same light, and in such cases it is a little more difficult to show. The one who brought the strongest argument to bear upon his views might hope to be able to convince his neighbor to a certain extent, and that certain extent means that reasonable men are supposed to acknowledge a mistake when convinced they have made one, and to act accordingly. Such be-

ing the mutual understanding, the men drifted for awhile from one thing to another, not any very especial interest being shown in anything until Klomp asked suddenly, as if a bright idea struck him:

“Do you know what I believe?”

“No,” came the response in a deep musical tone from the neighbor so near, he may have felt the question directed to himself when, in fact, Klomp had no one in particular in view, while all looked the “no” that but one spoke.

“I believe every man has his moods, and when the spell is on him he backs out of good resolutions in spite of himself,” said Klomp.

“Oh, is that all,” asked Draque, evidently as disappointed as he was aroused by the first remark of Klomp.

“It may be a good deal,” replied Klomp, with a very wise look at Tobe. “I’ve missed you of late at a place not far from here, and when I see you back again what I’ve said about moods ’ill be verified.”

Klomp again looked at Tobe, and both men smiled. The smile was of the positive kind, no inquiry about it.

“You don’t ask me if the spell is likely to come over me,” said Draque, “but you plainly say it will.” Then, after a moment’s pause, he continued: “You’ll find yourselves the worst fooled men that ever lived, Draque doesn’t make up his mind to a thing in a hurry, but when he does it’s made to stay.”

“I believe you Draque,” replied Klomp, in a tone that manifested the belief in his former opinion shaken, “not saying that I ever disbelieved you, but I didn’t think till now that you ever changed your mind to any other than the mind you first started out with.”

“I don’t often do the like, it’s true,” replied Draque, “but, as I said before, when I do it’s done.”

"Hibe's to have a special blow out some of those nights, wouldn't that be an inducement," asked one of Hibe's patrons, who showed himself particularly interested in his welfare. While asking the question he turned his eyes upon Draque.

Jabez tossed his head with the air of a man who understands things and said:

"You'll find him as set in his ways as Tobe has found him all along, depend on that."

"Yes, and more so," said Draque. "If it 'ill be any satisfaction for them to know it, I've said I'll never darken that door again, and I'll never go back on my word—never."

"What's Hibe done to you, Draque?" asked Klomp.

"Nothing in particular," replied Draque. "Mother said all along that he was keeping me in the cabin, but if I felt like staying there it was nobody's business but my own. But I've my eyes opened to it at last. He's robbed all of you as well as myself, and many in worse ways, and the most deplorable cases are those fellows you have the least sympathy for. The whole thing looms up before me—a big wrong, and I'm not in it."

"I'm sorry to see a man give up old social customs so easily," said Tobe. "No matter how we disagreed upon other points, we never objected to drinking 'good luck' before."

"The trouble is, your eyes are set to look at things too far off, Tobe," said Draque, "and mebbe after all it isn't your fault. Jabez was reading the other night about telescopes, and if I can carry it straight they've made some to look at near stars and others to look at stars farther off. They're gotten up too, I believe, something on the principle of the human eye, and I'll put it this way," continued Draque, chuckling with

laughter, "your telescope is a far-sighter and mine takes in what you've shot past without noticing."

They were a company of men who enjoyed a joke, and particularly a joke on Tobe, who, while a great many did not believe or agree with him, they could not help considering him something of an oracle. That he and Jabez read more books and papers and were better posted in general outside of farming than the other neighbors, they were all willing to admit. They had no recollection of Draque ever before posing as teacher to Tobe, consequently the cheering for Draque was loud and prolonged. Peggy laughed heartily, and took time to raise her eyes often from the patch-quilt she was finishing with great painstaking for Meg. The quilt being made of alternate red and blue stars on a white background, quilted in the most approved manner, every stitch small and even, such as was the pride of the most fastidious housewife. After the merriment had subsided Klomp said:

"I think Tobe is willing to drift in another direction."

"Tobe doesn't believe in drifting," said Jabez. "He pulls out against the tide oftener than he goes with it."

Eyes of different colors and penetration were cast upon Tobe, and his silence spoke approval of Jabez's estimation of him. Whenever conversation flagged and interest in everything and all subjects was lost, Peggy came to the rescue. She had put the last stitch in the binding of the quilt, and, arising, gave it two or three vigorous shakes in order to disentangle all loose threads that might have lodged on the surface, and then, spreading it out in full view, asked:

"How do you like the new quilt?"

"It's a beauty," answered Draque, stepping across

the floor to take a corner of the quilt in his hands; "but I'm thinking you've missed it. You should have left the blue stars out and put the red ones on a sky-blue background." He looked at the quilt from two or three different angles and said: "It strikes me, too, the red stars are a little too red; a half dozen such red ones as you've got there would be enough. White ones, Peggy, on a sky-blue background, and you'd have hit it nearer."

"Then we wouldn't have to look so high, Draque," said Jabez, laughing; "we'd have the stars in all their glory right here with us."

"As I couldn't make the picture complete without the moon," said Peggy, "I think I did well to make it just as I did, and not burden my conscience with doing anything that would tend to hinder you folks looking upward."

"That's so," said Draque. "While you make things spin around lively here about the house, I think you'd have something to do to set the stars in motion on that same quilt. It's the continuously going around part that takes my eye entirely. So, beauty and all as it is, we'll still turn our eyes to the sky you took your pattern from."

A neighbor who sat in a dark corner lost for a moment the vision of God everywhere seen in His handiwork, and said:

"There are men today that claim they can prove by science that one thing grew out of another somehow, and no need of a creator. They claim, too, they know a deal more than the common herd, and that's where they get ahead of us. They dig into the earth for their knowledge, and bring up things, and prove such and such, and we can't contradict them. They claim the people that lived before them accepted every non-

sense, and they're coming right down to business and intend to root this nonsense all out."

The speaker's right-hand man looked at Tobe, evidently expecting him to clear away the difficulty. Neither were men who believed in the infidels' theory completely, but were of the class willing to suppose such might be fact. They were not as capable of being anything in particular of themselves as some other men, but of the kind who are never wholly on one side or the other. Good-natured, well-meaning men they were, too. Tobe realized he was expected to speak and said:

"We don't have to dig as deep down as those fellows to prove there is a God."

"No," responded Klomp, not addressing Tobe but the two Tobe had spoken to. "Without digging down so deep there's plenty on top to satisfy plain people like we are on that point."

Tobe turned again to the two who had appealed to him for explanation, and said:

"You needn't be afraid of the man that comes to the front once in a while, and, because he finds layers of rock and such like in the earth, says, and probably with truth, it took hundreds of thousands of years to deposit just so, throws the Bible aside and says there is no God. For, of all the men on earth that have new ideas, he's going to have the fewest followers."

Draque had by this time come to conclusions of his own. He had not moved what some might call his stubborn head either to the right or left during the short conversation that followed his last speech about the star quilt. He turned his keen eyes upon the two men who seemed to waver in their belief and said:

"I'll wager the man that bobs up at various times and in various places and calls himself an infidel is

bound to be a curiosity." He shifted his position in order to get a square look at neighbor Klomp, who sat a little back of him to the left, and said: "He reminds me of that bay horse of yours, Klomp." Then turning back to his old place, as he did so taking in the whole company and at the same time grabbing at the knees of his trousers with such telling effect that when he felt satisfied with his position about two inches of the legs of his heavy cowhide boots were displayed unto the beholders, he continued: "He's a fine-looking animal, stands near sixteen hands high; he's a good worker, and so gentle about the place that any of the children can handle him. To look at him you wouldn't think there was anything in his make-up different from any other horse. Outside the farm he carries himself well and jogs along at a nice gait until he comes to a boulder or a turn in the road, or something his horseship doesn't understand, where he stops, shies about for a while, and then kicks clean over the traces. You might drive all the horses in the neighborhood up to that very boulder and not one among them would see anything in it that would make him feel like cutting the same antics."

"He thinks he's come to the end of the road, does he, Draque?" asked Peggy.

"Either that," replied Draque, "or he's come to the conclusion that, end or no end, it's as far as he's going. But the road is ahead all the same, and the bay is compelled to move on after the rumpus. If you happen by neighbor Klomp's the next day, you'll find him in the pasture with his fetlocks cut and bleeding, and he's what I call a crippled horse."

"I've noticed," thoughtfully observed Klomp, "that it's the man that's always burrowing in the ground that says 'There is no God.' Don't let him scare you.

Our burrowing animals are all little fellows; they have neither the proportion nor the capabilities of animals that stay on top. They don't stop in the sunlight long enough to get much inspiration from it. Cunning, mischievous little things they are, too; they scatter the dirt everywhere and make a great fuss. You can hardly put a thing away so secure that some of them don't help themselves to it. The best morsel you might provide for your family they'll not scruple to paw over and spoil. As I said, they are mischievous, cunning little things, and, have wonderful sagacity for their size, and like them, the men of burrowing disposition are the tear-down and destroy kind. At least, some of them. When it comes to the progress that makes the best people on earth what they are today, they're not in it."

Jabez was sitting near the window, and the conversation had sent his eyes wandering through the starry fields. He dropped them to the earth evidently to rest a while after his starry flight, then, turning his shoulder to the pane through which he had been looking, said:

"Neighbors, right here in our homes and cornfields we can see in many ways how one thing is evolved out of another; but we know that, in order to bring those changes about, there must be an intelligent man or woman at the helm. In the homes we have made we have sheltered ourselves beneath the trees from the midday sun or turned to our cabins while it was sinking. We went forth in the morning with the rising of the same, and crossed from one neighbor's house to another in the moonlight or with thousands of bright twinkling stars above. All the while we watched the seasons as they came and went, the motion of the earth and heavenly bodies bringing the one out of the other."

Here he stopped, seemingly having either come to the end of what he had to say or being bewildered with the speed of the monster travelers that brought the seasons with them, and turned to the window again, to wander from star to star. Principal among all the bright ones shone Lyra, with a history dating back thousands of years. The celestial Lyra upon which Orpheus played when wild beasts were charmed, mountains came to the concert, and rivers stopped to listen to the heavenly sounds. Hell bowed unto the sweet strains of the musician, and granted his request, though conditional. Cygnus, with outspread wings, flew down the Milky Way, its conspicuous stars forming the sublime emblem of man's redemption—whether the transformed musician, always near his loved harp—or Neptune's son so changed—the theme of the poets of the far off days. Closer to the Pole, earth's nearer neighbor, fiery Arcturus came rolling on—Arcturus mentioned in Job. Jabez may not have bothered himself about going back so far, but there were the stars, and he as privileged to look upon them as were those of old. Lyra, with its countless millions of bright companions, moving on now as then, governed by laws that fixed and propelled them in their course, consequently by Intelligence back of those laws as certain as that the movements about his house and farm were governed by the combined wills of Peggy and himself, he turned again to his neighbors and said:

“We've watched the gigantic wheels of that ponderous machinery as they turned round and round, and we're not apt to become infidels when we feel in the marrow of our bones that there must be a Sublime Intelligence at the bottom of that stupendous motion, when it requires working intelligence to so arrange

and adjust the little wheels of the ticker on the shelf so that they'll turn around for twenty-four hours, or to bring the bit of butter that motion of the dasher evolves out of the milk and cream."

For some moments not a word was spoken. The floor claimed the attention of all. Each was digesting according to his capacity what had been said. The man in the dark corner arose, walked to the window where Jabez sat and looked out upon the stars that had claimed his attention, and then probably as he thought of a prayer his mother taught him when his young heart believed and trusted, dashed from his eye a tear that came in spite of efforts to restrain it, and quietly stepped back to his seat.

Women's tears are common and not to be wondered at; if they could be collected they would deluge the world. But Peggy, like all women, felt distressed when she saw a tear in a man's eye—it looked so out of place. Jabez read and thought a great deal, and was good, but he was not an emotional man. It was Draque's tears for little Amanda that first bound her so completely to the family, but tears shed over the open grave are always pardonable tears, they display no weakness. Peggy would have had a higher admiration for her neighbor did he manfully acknowledge he felt, as he certainly did feel, that in the face of all scientific researches God is still the Creator. But with the unthinking the tear may find favor on high, though they fail to manifest their faith in other ways. Draque was the first to raise his eyes and voice. He said, as he shoved his chair back and looked at his wavering neighbors:

"Whatever else they may convince a man of in those parts they'll never convince a man among us there's no God."

There was no opposition. He had voiced the faith of all. Peggy neatly folded and smoothed out the star quilt, the dumb instigator of all their reasoning, the bit of white and colored cotton that had raised their thoughts to higher things, and with proud dignity stepped to the next room, and laid it away in waiting for the morning stage-coach that would see the gift on the way to Meg. While Peggy was thus "laying by" the quilt, Klomp's pleasant voice was heard, saying:

"That new horse rake of yours, Jabez, is as fine as it is rare in those parts."

"Yes," replied Jabez, "the man that thought of giving all the work to the horses and saving our bones, now that we're getting old, was a pretty clever fellow."

"You'll be getting one next, Draque," asked Klomp.

"Don't be tormenting me that way," replied Draque, "when I haven't the money laid by that would buy it."

"You should have commenced saving sooner, Draque," said Tobe, still feeling regretful that they had taken their last "good luck" together.

"Don't twit me about what I should have done," said Draque. "At any rate, I've commenced sooner than you, and I'm very thankful it's no worse with me than it is."

Klomp had been considering the merits of the horse rake and said:

"They're wonderful fellows, and no mistake, that can get up a thing like that."

"Yes," replied Jabez, thoughtfully, "they get away with all of us managing."

And capital managers those inventors are. They manage to take designs from the work of the Master, such as no other can, and therein consists the secret of

their managing. The inventor looks at God's creation and longs to grasp and imitate; he constructs a telescope that refracts light, and his model is the human eye; he places it upon a pivot to facilitate its movements from one heavenly body to another, as the head is placed upon the spinal column. The hinge and ball and socket joints used in machinery are found in animal bodies, and so on in the material world are instances almost without limitation from which the inventor has taken his model.

But at the head of all inventors stands the Phœnician. He is alone in this wonderful world, alive with his great ideas. His soul grasping for a medium through which he could impart to his fellows an idea of the something he felt working within himself. Neither lever, nor shepherd's crook, nor any of the devices with which he was familiar would answer his purpose; what he must invent must be something that will have neither bulk nor position—implements that the mind must work with and the soul express what it feels. Think what can be done with the twenty-six invented, insignificant looking little letters, the idea of which first stirred the mind of Cadmus in his now forsaken home. With them poets and historians and scientists, by arranging and rearranging, now placing this first and then last, have piled volume after volume upon library shelves. The great variety of knowledge the student sets about to acquire is conveyed to him through the medium of those small characters. Those little characters are the means by which we catch, and hold captive, one passing idea after another, and without which so many bright visions, veritable gifts of God, would be lost.

Those letters are not like iron and brass and solid land; they have no permanent place, like tools in the

mechanic's chest, but are simple characters fixed in the mind, and out of which the poet must draw the beautiful ideal. The back ground of paper upon which he writes, and the pen and ink with which the characters are imprinted, bear no more resemblance to the idea expressed than does the oak, an expression of strength and grace, bear to the ground upon which it grows. The swinging of the woodman's ax may level the oak and convert it into something else—while the elements that entered into its life and growth in different proportions will produce other life, it may be the cowslip or something as weak and lovely, just as the different arrangement of letters from words that give different ideas. All those expressions of beauty and love; those sublime expressions of God we behold springing up everywhere, on all sides, above and below are brought about by the different arrangement of a few elements by the Almighty Will. And those elements into which scientists have resolved everything are plainly God's letters, with which he fashions marvelously through boundless space. He arranges and rearranges according to His own sweet will, and sends His message on the wings of the whirlwind either to build or to destroy.

While all inventions bear a close resemblance to something created by God, those little characters have a close resemblance to the elements, out of which the visible world and everything in it is built; they are the elements out of which the intellectual world must draw; they deal not so much with matter, but with mind.

CHAPTER XV.

In the dull, general routine of everyday life, progress appears to be a word of not much meaning. Matters, while being pushed in the desired direction, oftentimes to lookers on and also to those actually engaged in the pushing, appear to move so slowly, there might be reason to doubt they moved at all. It is only when the worker stands for a moment and looks back that he sees the great change the little by little has brought about. And such is particularly the case with those grand workers, who have left time and dollars and cents out of sight; who look at the eternal and deal with the good, the beautiful and the right; who use the material in which they find themselves immersed as a means and not the end.

Like the century living oak their work develops slowly, but surely, while the progress of those whose center is self, like the yearly plant springs up, develops, bears fruit and dies in twelve short months.

Although the party with the name Abolitionist was of short duration, their principles became more universal, and while the word Republican did not sound as if it had much interest in the slave, it possessed all the elements of the former party, with such a blotting out name and did not grate as harshly upon ears not in favor of the word abolish.

Jabez and Tobe, Ike and his stage-coach companion stepped out under the new name Republican with every anti-slavery feeling as strong as ever. Draque jogged along an unwielding, conscientious Democrat, with many stanch friends on both sides. He had the same worshipful degree of administration for his eldest son,

Ike, but could never be persuaded by Ike's conduct to turn his back upon the party he had so long before become one of, nor did Ike, by words, try to induce, his reverence for his father was such as would not permit open disagreement.

From the present date they had three years to work and watch and wait before they could hope to place a chief executive officer of their choice in the chair. They plodded on day after day, much the same as they had been doing for years before. Ike was never forgetful of the slave he first learned to pity through the medium of the persuasive power of his stage-coach companion, and for the emancipation of whom he afterward pledged his life long help. As the years rolled by and the time drew near, when the strength of the party would be tested, the excitement was becoming of unusual character. It seemed they never before had voted when so much was at stake. Former elections were mere mechanical processes to be gone through compared with this. Many men who had heretofore slumbered were aroused to what was plainly a sense of duty, imperative duty, and hence the enthusiasm.

Another defeat by a small majority, but not at all daunted they moved right straight on. The returns showed that while defeated they were steadily gaining.

The anti-slavery feeling was now very strong, and nowhere was it stronger than among the very people who, twenty years before, did not care to meddle with a question, the outgrowth of which would have no direct bearing upon their respective homes.

The question that had been uppermost with the great bulk of Republicans, the non-introduction of slavery into free states and territories, shortly after the election was settled with deadly effect.

The Supreme Court of the United States decided that a slave in law is not a person, but a thing, and Congress has no right to prevent the owner conveying a thing from one state to another or to a territory. It was the decision that with the help of the Republican party at last severed the chains that had so long clanked such weird, discordant, hell born sounds to ears attuned to justice.

Tobe is looking several years older than when last we saw him; with a slow, tired and weary step he crossed the field on the well trod path to his friend's house; his pockets filled with papers containing the decision and preamble as to how it was brought about.

Jabez looked at the man who first advanced, no slavery ideas among them, and who after his life long work seemed so disappointed, and said cheerily:

"It's not all up with us yet, Tobe; we can afford to wait a little longer; we're young enough yet to see the end."

"Yes," said Peggy encouragingly, "we still hope the end is not as far off as some think it is."

The "big engine" was no longer a thing of curiosity, but sped through what were once corn fields and potato patches unnoticed. They were accustomed to the rumbling of the wheels and the shrill whistle of the iron monster, and often did not even raise their eyes as the train went past. But tonight Jabez turned from Tobe before the word of cheer had scarcely fallen from his lips and listened, as the peculiar, distressed sound of the whistle fell again and again upon their ears, and asked:

"What can it mean, Peggy?"

"I can't say indeed, Jabez," replied Peggy. "I've never heard the like of it before. No train ever pulls up to whistle like that at the crossing."

“Well,” said Tobe, as he looked in the direction of the sound, “that’s uncommon, sure enough; they whistle as they near the crossing and have done with it. I never heard such a prolonged racket before. There’s something up, that’s certain,” continued Tobe, as he picked up his hat, and stepped toward the door.

“It’s not at the crossing, either,” said Peggy, as she listened more intently; “and it’s at that I wonder. The train’s on its way through the fields far this side of the crossing.”

“It’s coming ahead, anyway,” said Jabez, as he stopped to listen again. “I think, Tobe, it would be a good idea to walk over there and see what this all means.”

“That’s just where I thought of making for,” replied Tobe, as he displayed the hat he had half hidden by his side.

Jabez lifted his hat from the peg that was always empty when not holding the familiar hat each member of the family hastened to put in place when found out of that place by them. Simultaneously the two men put their hats upon their heads. Once outside they walked briskly toward their destination—the place from whence the startling sounds came. The train was out of sight and hearing.

“There’s no stopping that for anything,” said Jabez.

The spot could not be mistaken. As they neared it they saw the forms of other neighbors hurrying about in great excitement. The first neighbor recognized was Klomp, trembling and with a bushel basket that was evidently going to play a conspicuous part in something they were about to do. Jabez called out:

“What’s the matter there, Klomp?”

Klomp shook his head and replied: “A man has been

ground to pieces." Still looking at them he continued: "He's scattered along the road nigh ten rods. Draque's bringing a wagon on, but I could think of no other way of picking up the pieces than in this basket." He looked half undecided at the basket he held in his hands and continued:

"There's no telling who the man is—fell off the train, I suppose."

Just then he stooped and picked up a mangled arm. Across the track and between the ties lay a head with the torn, bleeding neck in the gravel—erect, as if the will that was once there had made a last effort to rise, and worse than ague chills crept over the three men as they looked at the ghastly find. They stared at each other, as if in the stare they meant to ask the question, "Which of us will pick it up?"

They were religious, God-fearing men, unaccustomed to bloody scenes, men who in boyhood were taught and through life manifested their belief in the magnificent possibilities of the human soul. Jabez crossed the track and reverently took the head in his hands with the inborn feeling of every true man—"He may be a stranger, but he is none the less a brother." Evidently wishing to show regard for the will of the man so violently torn away, he carefully stood the head in the basket, in the position he had found it on the track, and while doing so the flickering light from the lantern revealed to him a face he well knew. His first sorrowful exclamation was:

"It's no stranger, friends."

The other two came closer to the basket to recognize the long familiar face of John Strand.

"We needn't ask how it happened," said Jabez. "He was on his way from Hibe's, and, whether he fell and couldn't get up or was knocked down, doesn't

matter much now," he continued regretfully, "but we'll lay him away the best we can."

Without further words the three proceeded to gather up the remains. Draque was now at hand with the wagon and they placed on some fresh clean straw the trunk and other fragments, and beside them the basket with the head upright as when found.

There were no mourners awaiting John in the cabin that barely stood. The bottom log at the north end had crumbled entirely away, the second, in a falling condition, still retained solidity enough at the ends to support the cross logs in a very tottering way. Now that the last inmate was gone, it was ready to topple over with the first strong wind. That it had not done so long before was the wonder of all around.

We are allowed to imagine that maybe the angels hovered near the place, and many a prayer poured forth from a Christian heart stayed the elements longer than it would seem reasonable from a purely natural standpoint. John's wife had spent distressful years there, in tears and not forgetful of prayer. Peggy had said, "It couldn't blow down while she lived," and Peggy had a wonderful trust in Supernatural Power intervening sometimes, even in those little things where reason points to certain effects which must necessarily be brought about by certain causes. She had noticed during her life many strange things that could not be accounted for satisfactorily even to the inquiring mind; events that some people would be pleased to call Providential and others miraculous. Peggy had for some time stoutly asserted that the standing of John's cabin was Providential. The over-sensitive woman, who had been sheltered in the cabin and existed upon the neighbors' charity, gradually pined away, the victim of no bodily disease. Little Tim was dead. The other boys

had left for different parts to battle for themselves. Winnie was in her Western home, and could neither come to her mother nor induce her to come to her, so she died as she lived, daily wrestling with what the world called intemperance.

The papers telling of the defeat that had made Tobe feel so dismal previous to the coming of the train, and which he meant to read with Jabez, hoping by so doing to find some opening through which his weary heart might see the shining mark, "no slave," and still hope on, yet untouched, filled his pockets to the clumsy extent that, when he offered help in the unprecedented task before him, he found them in his way.

John's funeral was unceremonious to a barren degree. The minister thought, as John had kept away from him so long, it was but courtesy for him to remain at home. Hiram Blank, for some reason or other, did not care about attending the funeral. Pardon is freely given to all who are charitable enough to think he had an attack of rheumatism or gout, and not that he never inconvenienced himself in any way when there was no prospect either near or remote of his ever taking in more of the shining beauties he received in exchange for what he sold.

Jabez, Tobe, Draque and Klomp saw that John was placed as comfortable-looking as possible in the coffin they provided for him. They moved slowly away from the home they remembered as being once a cheerful and happy one—alas! so long ago—and faced the graveyard, the gift of Jabez and Draque, now not with a solitary grave but well filled. Every one in the community had, since Draque's trial in leaving Amanda there alone with the winds and the storms, moved with sorrowful heart to the spot and left some dear one in the field, with the earth but a few times broken by

the plowshare since the Creator fashioned it. Those passing the lonely corps pulled into the fence and, with uncovered heads, stood until the last had passed. In death no one offered less respect to the unfortunate in that way than to his more prosperous and respected brother in life.

The absence of kith and kin was painfully noticeable beside the grave. No tears from a bereaved family or sobs from broken hearts. The sobs, the cabin walls might echo in the crash as the fatal wind hurried through. Tears had been shed over a long period of twenty years, and now the fountain was dry. The skeleton lying deep under ground beside the open grave now ready for John had shed the last tear, and as her life ebbed out thought of the Savior.

The coffin was lowered into the grave. Draque took in the situation and was the first to speak. He said:

“Neighbors, I can’t see a friend thrown into the grave like an animal. I think it would be well for you, Jabez, for you are well used to it, to offer a prayer.”

Jabez bowed his head and asked God to bless and take under His special care the members of the family so far away and yet in ignorance of the fate that had befallen their father.

The work of undertaker, grave-digger and minister, which John’s few faithful friends, who stood by him and unselfishly performed, being over, they fitted in and slapped with the backs of the shovels the last green sod into place, and looked again at the grave to be sure there was nothing left undone that would tend to make the new grave as trim-looking as others that were recently made. Feeling certain all was done, they quietly laid their shovels down, and, turning to where their coats were hanging on a near fence

that inclosed Draque's burying place, with all the quiet dignity the occasion required, and filled with emotions as ennobling as ever spring up in the unselfish human heart, save one supreme emotion—the love of God—slowly put them on.

Tobe, apparently unconscious of what he was doing, moved perhaps by the force of habit, laid his hand on his coat in the region of a pocket, still filled with the three-days'-old papers, that carried to his heart such bitter disappointment.

CHAPTER XVI.

We can never surmise in what way comfort will come. The one channel of escape open to Tobe from thoughts of the stripes and degradation of the brother in bondage was the vivid picture of the terrible fate of their old and lifelong friend. And yet he saw not with Jabez that responsibility might not rest wholly with John, but that even he had fostered the black demon that was not, like slavery, restricted to one locality, with the dreadful prospect of a possible spreading, but was already throughout the length and breadth of the land well rooted, and sadder still, with so few really good men at all alarmed or in any way opposed to it.

They shouldered their shovels and walked away, each man to his home. Upon his arrival home Draque's heart was lifted out of the melancholy region it had throbbled in for the few days previous at meeting Ike, who had learned from his mother that Draque was performing the last act of kindness he ever could perform for poor John Strand.

Ike's sympathies were not with John, nor could he now forgive him for being principal in the scene that long before caused such feelings of disgust for the man to arise in him beside the coffin of little Tim.

Draque greeted Ike, and, after inquiries concerning himself and family were answered, he proceeded to repeat the story he had gone through so often in his mind in the past few days. Ike manifested a little impatience at the recital, but withal respectfully listened until Draque had told to the end the oft-repeated

truth. Involuntarily Ike's bowed head was raised; he fixed his eyes upon a picture on the wall, as if trying to divert his attention in some way from the subject his father had so much at heart, but said nothing. An observer might notice the expression of his handsome face was that of neither sorrow nor pity, but quiet indignation that followed John to the grave with the feeling—"He ought to have been buried long ago, and buried deep."

For a few moments Draque thought some very melancholy thoughts and Ike continued in his very indignant reverie. A painful silence was something Draque never could endure, at least in his own family. He looked directly at Ike and said:

"The poor fellow will never bother us any more." He stopped choked with emotion, then continued, "that is, if we can ever cast from our minds the last trouble he was."

The picture on the wall had been carefully studied, Ike turned his head to look at his father and said carelessly:

"The world is the better for being rid of him." After a moment's pause he continued with a little more earnestness in his manner: "I was never able to understand how you could let your sympathy for that man so completely run away with you, father."

As Ike had come unexpected, his mother had been bustling about during the conversation with his father preparing to give him a little reception "above the common." She had laid out the best table cover, and was brushing up and putting things in order to perfection. As she happened to look at Draque, she detected a sad expression he never wore in Ike's presence, and said to him in the best of spirits:

"Don't take others trouble too much to heart, fa-

ther, being it's all over, and you can do no more for him, let it drop." Then turning to the table she said:

"If you'd help me put in a leaf in the table here, I'd like it."

"Yes," said Draque, rising to give the desired help, and laughing to satisfy those he knew would be pleased to see the old good humor return, "we must manage to give Ike elbow room for the little time he's to be with us."

"If it's for me you are going to all that trouble, retorted Ike, I would be better pleased to see you both with your hands folded."

"He's trying to persuade us, mother," said Draque, "that he can crowd himself into a corner like he could when he was a lad here with us, but there's an old man about he can't fool a bit more than he could then."

Whether the remark brought to Ike's recollection any little tricks he had tried to play upon his father in the days spoken of or not, no one was made the wiser; he smiled and bit his lip as he arose, and moved his chair to a more convenient place.

The convenient place was close to a small table, upon which he laid a flask he had just taken out of his satchel; he helped himself to glasses and proceeded to fill for his father and himself. When Draque saw what he was about he interrupted him saying: "You needn't fill for me, Ike."

Ike laid the glass upon the table in such a hurry the rattle echoed his surprise, half frightened his mother and caused Draque to look steadily at Ike, who was yet bent upon scrutinizing him.

"What's the matter with you, Ike," asked his father.

"That's just the question I was going to ask you, father, but you are ahead of me," replied Ike.

"Well, the matter with me is just this," said Draque, "I've given it up altogether, and am sorry I ever begun."

Ike, still longing to drink a cheery glass with his father, said:

"I remember it was the stuff, father, on a cold or a damp day, with a log to turn over three or four times your size."

He looked at his father, and seeing no relax movement that would indicate his willingness to touch the glass in waiting, continued:

"It answered the purpose exceedingly well, too, on a hot day when the sun, for a few hours, wilted the weeds and crops alike. I've seen the time, father, when everything appeared to be drooping but yourself. The cattle had not ambition enough left in them to feed any longer, but sheltered themselves under the trees by the pond." Ike picked up the glass, and while holding it between his eyes and the light, said:

"It helped you push ahead at such times don't you think, father?"

"I'll be candid, Ike," replied Draque, with all the earnestness of the man Ike so well understood. "I believe the pushing was much like the stone rolling down hill; it kept a man going, but in the end to find it was the wrong way. Jabez kept going about as well as I did, and to a better advantage; if he didn't push as steady he made better use of the resting places; he's ahead of me today, and with less help from the boys than I had."

"We can't expect, father, that all will prosper alike; that is impossible," said Ike, in a tone full of consolation. "Your children come home as light hearted and

happy to visit you in the cabin as his do to visit what you call their more comfortable home. All the pleasant recollections of my home life are here. I'd feel like a stranger in another house did you have one."

"There are other things," said Draque, thoughtfully, "as well as being still in the cabin, and mebbe more so that set me thinking, and taught me a lesson. As I'm getting old, Ike, I'm taking the time to look about me a little, and I see the sad winding up of so many that the love of drink grew on in spite of themselves. John's not the only one whose story would make any man's heart bleed."

"I see precisely the trouble, father," said the again indignant Ike, but in the most gentle manner. "You are so tender hearted you let the life and miserable ending of that wretched scapegrace take the comforts out of your own."

"Father was always steadfast, Ike," said his mother. "I spent many a day trying to make him save his times and not be throwing them in to Hibe, but he wouldn't listen till of late; he said he'd never stop a thing till he felt he was wrong. The feeling came to him at last, and I'm thankful."

Ike looked at his mother, and laughing said: "So you have started a home treasury have you, mother?"

"I've seen the time often when I'd like to have a little more in it than I had," said his mother with a proud smile, "and one of those times was when you were going to the college. I'd like to have had enough in it to see you go without your ax."

"Oh, well, mother," said Ike, "those were dark days, surely, but they are over, and it's possible I'm the better for having been obliged to swing the ax. A man must develop muscle, as well as brain. A vigorous mind in a frail body is the exception. And

in a world where there is so much to be done and so many helpless, I prefer the method of development that will yield return in both ways; say, for instance, a brawny arm, and a cord of wood or a pile of corn—to the senseless way of striking out with dumb bells, with the half harvest—muscle alone. So don't worry, mother, about the dimes father spent and you did not have for that purpose. You may be thankful I didn't have a chance to develop any of the lazy inclinations that may have been in me."

"You'd have a hard task before you, Ike, to convince me such inclinations were ever in you," said his father, who during Ike's talk with his mother alternately rested his eyes upon Ike, and the glass still filled, Ike was toying with in his strong right hand. "But I tell you again I've learned a lesson. The stuff you have there does mighty bad work."

"You have learned the lesson too late, father," was Ike's jovial reply, as he raised the glass to his lips, and drained to the last drop. There was a charm about his manner that would tempt any young man to imitate, but his father was never to be tempted in that way again. He said to Ike as he arose:

"As you took the trouble to fill a glass for me I'll see that it's emptied." He took the glass, and walked to the door, looked around and turned back saying:

"I'll not throw it on the grass for fear it'll kill it." He then made his way to the back door, saying as he went, "I'll find a bare spot where the grass doesn't grow."

He returned with the empty glass and laid it down beside Ike's. Ike looked at his father, and laughed aloud; the laugh had the real old time boyish ring in it that went to the heart of both parents alike. He said to his mother:

"Father always had the reputation among the neighbors of saying and doing queer things, but I never could see a ridiculous thing he ever did till now. It is all right though, father," he continued, "I respect your opinions as much as ever."

He hesitated, and after a few indescribable movements that could not be called nervous, but were based on his longing to still obey what he knew to be his father's wish, and a dislike to giving up what he considered not merely a comfort, but a real necessity, said:

"But I cut loose so long ago you don't expect me to do as you do, father."

"You're your own boss, Ike, but nonetheless, I wouldn't like to see harm come to you for that reason," replied his father.

"You are completely carried away, father, because some you had the misfortune to call friends ran the thing into the ground. You need never be afraid one of your family has so little determination that he is going to be unmanned in any such way," said Ike, as he tightened the cork in the flask and laid it away in his satchel.

Draque spoke not a word, but watched until Ike had turned the key and made all secure for the return trip, when he said:

"I'm sorry I hadn't something more pleasant to talk about in the last hour, but sit to the table, Ike, until mother and I see how it is with the elbow room."

Ike took the offered place, and Draque said, after taking a survey of Ike and then looking at mother: "I hope he'll have as plenty of everything else."

"I always managed to have enough on the table," retorted Mrs. Draque, apparently not complimented by the remark.

“In the face of father’s savings bank down at Hibe’s you did will, didn’t you, mother,” asked Ike with a mischievous smile.

“Yes, and I had a little account there for you once, and that’s what I’m most ashamed of,” retorted Draque.

“Oh, well, father,” replied Ike in his most fascinating way, “you soon taught me to settle my own accounts, and that is something you have reason to be proud of.”

Ike had a quick mathematical mind that did not jar in the least with its other fine qualities. Without opening his lips he subtracted his father’s account at Hibe’s from an account he settled elsewhere, and contemplating the round figures over and above, shrugged his shoulders as he asked himself the question:

“What would mother think of that?”

He still continued soliloquizing in a mathematical way, but turned the figures into an account of an entirely different nature. Such colossal figures as these loomed up before him.

“There are four millions of people in bondage in our free country for whose liberty I can cast but one vote, and father will knock that vote out.” He looked at the opposite corner of the table and continued his reverie:

“How strange it is that a sensible man like father can let the death of such a wretch as John Strand take the pleasure out of his life. I felt years ago as I feel now—that fellow ought to be shoved somewhere out of sight.” His thoughts ran on as he arose. “But father has as few faults as any man living, and with pleasure I respect his whims.”

“Are you off, Ike?” asked Draque, as Ike, after leaving the table, remained standing.

"I will be, very shortly," replied Ike, looking at his mother's time piece on the mantle and then at his own, to be certain there could be no mistake. "I was not thinking about making this call when I left home, but found I could stop off awhile, and reach the place I had in view in time for a trial at which I am expected to be present."

As Ike replaced his own time piece, he looked again at the old clock, whose loud ticking was among his earliest recollections of sound. It had outlived many a cricket that had joined with it in concert in the evenings of past years.

Some sad spell touched his heart, such a spell as is likely to come to any one, even in most happy moments—a spell one never can trace to a particular cause, as the self-same cause may have been often contemplated before with no such effect. In his soul Ike experienced a struggle, but why he could not tell. No sad memories hung over that home, only that he had gone out from it forever.

Draque seemingly understood Ike's feelings and said:

"It has measured off a good portion of our lives, Ike, yours and mine. If the little thing keeps on a few years longer it will have done all it can do for mother and me. When I was like you, if I thought about it at all they would have been but gloomy thoughts, but since Amanda was carried out I often see my place, and it has led me to think about what's beyond."

Ike looked at his mother, and with a cheerful smile said:

"It's all over, that sting, whatever it meant; maybe father can tell." He reached forth his hand, said "good-bye" to both and left.

CHAPTER XVII.

The following three years were years of hard and earnest work for Ike. He was overcrowded with his professional work, yet with energy enough left to devote much time to his life object that in shining characters appeared to his stout heart everywhere. The bright sunlight could not lessen their luster, and the somber shades of evening brought them out with such distinctness that the midnight hour often struck before Ike was able to close an eye on account of their all absorbing brightness. The characters arranged read: Freedom for the slave.

As he drove his spirited horse from town, along country roads leading to smaller towns, as he often did, either to excite sympathy for the slaves in the masses, or to raise his voice for a candidate of the parties' choice, he turned over and over in his mind such reflections as these:

“How many there are who spoil their lives bothering about and worrying over little things, and are afraid to attack a great evil, simply because that evil is well rooted—and worse, bids fair to become universal. When the situation is placed before them, they investigate rather timidly, imploringly look at the big slaveholder, and calculate the dollars it must take to keep the big wheel of his machinery going; then, they deferentially step back, and politely bowing say: ‘How do you do, Mr. Slaveholder.’ They are overpowered with figures they think it impossible to contend with successfully. They take into consideration the uncertain influence of the individual with pockets compara-

tively empty, and are willing at the same time to both acknowledge the evil and drop their hands powerless by their sides. Notwithstanding all such obstacles our party is making wonderful strides. The human heart throbs in sympathy, every pulsation must necessarily bring us nearer the Creator's idea. But those to whom the light is given must work. Motion is the universal condition of all good. The stagnant water breeds disease. The unused muscle becomes flabby. The frost that finds its way into everything not sheltered against it; the rain that comes in torrents; the penetrating rays of the sun, and the wind that sweeps over valley and hill are motive powers that render the earth habitable."

Ike reached for his whip, not to strike the horse, but to crack it a few times in the air, as if a more stirring movement of some kind on his part would hasten the desired result he so clearly foresaw.

The horse started out at even a livelier gait. If it were possible for horse flesh to interpret a master's thoughts, Ike's horse was surely an expert, for he bounded on with the same intent, which was to reach town as soon as possible. Ike continued his reverie as he sped on.

"The shackles are bound to fall from the slave. Our people cannot live on so regardless of justice. Right is certain to poll a majority at last."

As he journeyed on he could not help observing the changes that had taken place in the last few years. A part of the road over which he traveled was the old stage-coach road he was so familiar with when a boy; it was then in its young days and every plank was sound. The toll gates at almost regular intervals along the way were the equipped money banks where the traveler dropped his pence for the repair of said

road, and when a plank was broken or out of place it was thrown out or made solid as the occasion required. But now the toll gates were tumbling down affairs, with no one near to collect the toll. Other and better highways were in operation, and what was once the road was no longer the state's boast. Ike steered clear of the broken planks, and could see between watching the road ahead that thrifty homes and gardens had everywhere taken the places of the towering trees that had shaded the roadside, and gave such wild, picturesqueness to the scene that everywhere met the eye of the young Ohio traveler of stage-coach fame. He heaved a farewell sigh for the little squirrel and chip munk that, like the aborigines, had been compelled to go farther back to find the shelter nature provided them in the forest trees. The roadside cow was getting scarce; the land everywhere was mine and thine, and no freedom allowed trespassers. Poor Brindle and Spot and Black and White had to restrict themselves to their owners' pastures.

Ike turned to the left upon another road that would bring him through the heart of the town, and direct to the court house square, where he expected to address an unusually large audience, the occasion of such being attendance at the county fair. He was expected, and mounted a platform built for his accommodation in the public square, where, in the open air, he had ample opportunity of testing his lung power to its fullest capacity. The enthusiasm that glowed in the faces of his hearers; the hurrahing and waving of hats proved he was fast getting around to the big side again, which side he had never had the pleasure of being on, since his memorable stage-coach ride, when his heart told him he could never again conscientiously vote according to his father's wishes.

The words he uttered that day have dropped forever from memory, but the impression made upon the people can never be forgotten. The following spring a candidate was to be named, and whoever that candidate might be fully two-thirds of Ike's hearers resolved that their votes would be cast with him.

Tobe, Draque and other neighbors gathered their harvest in as of late, which means that machinery now helped in many ways, where, in their earlier experience, they were obliged to depend upon their own two hands and the neighbors' help. Peggy had discarded the stone churn with the dasher, and had in its place a crank, which she took great pleasure in showing to all who called. Tobe came around this evening at early dusk, and found Jabez and Peggy leisurely reading.

"Oh, ho, Peggy, has it come to this that you have nothing to do; you who are above all others so industrious?" questioned Tobe.

"It doesn't take me as long to churn, and in many other ways I find things easier than when first I laid eyes upon you," replied Peggy very pleasantly.

"We're all getting old, and it would be a bad outlook if we had to work as hard as we had in those times," said Tobe.

Jabez was deeply engrossed with the news, and had merely lifted his head to salute Tobe upon his arrival, and again riveted both eyes and attention upon the paragraph before him, which he finished with the last remark of Tobe sounding in his ears; he laid down the paper, lifted the glasses from his nose, and, holding them between the finger and thumb of his left hand, looked at Tobe and said:

"I should say we are getting old, Tobe, and if we miss the mark this time, we'll be likely to miss the

votes of some of the old settlers, when the time comes round again.”

“We’re not going to miss it,” said Tobe. “I never saw livelier times nor more encouraging signs in all directions in favor of anything that was about to happen. All along I felt that slavery should be done away with, but now something tells me it will.”

Jabez turned over the paper he had been reading, and not without considerable pride in his countenance, looked from it the second time at Tobe, saying:

“I see Ike is out stumping.”

“Yes,” replied Tobe, “and better still, he’s not out for nothing. The people that flock to hear him can’t be called a handful, and it’s plain to be seen, too, that the bulk of them, either do already or are preparing to think as he does.”

“It often appeared to me strange,” said Peggy, as she manipulated the rocker with unusual energy, “that he can impress other people so wonderfully and can do nothing with his own father.”

“The Draques are the toughest timber in the country,” returned Tobe in a very spirited manner. “No man can do anything with Draque when he’s made up his mind that no man shall.”

“I believe with all that,” replied Jabez, “that there’s not a man among us more conscientious. And I think, too, Ike doesn’t bother him—they are a strange family that way and very considerate. I believe Ike would drop the whole campaign, much as he has it at heart, before he’d hurt his father’s feelings.”

“After all,” continued Jabez, after some moments’ meditation, “there’s nothing unreasonable about Draque; he never interfered with Ike’s convictions, and is as proud of his fine speaking, I dare say, as I am.”

"I know that's all true," replied Tobe, "but I get a little nettled sometimes when people won't and can't be made see that a great injustice is being done to others."

"I never heard Draque say it wasn't an injustice, Tobe," said Peggy, vindicating Meg's father-in-law, "but he stands by it; he can't see any good he can do or the Republican party either, and from that standpoint he's inclined not to meddle."

"The Republican party 'ill soon show him what it can do," replied Tobe, as he exhibited all the animation of his most enthusiastic moments.

Draque was being ushered in during Tobe's remark, and while he did not catch the words, he was not slow in noticing he was the possessor of some very animating thoughts, and said:

"You're getting spry for an old man, Tobe."

"The joke's on you though, Draque," said Jabez, and both he and Tobe joined in a good old-fashioned laugh.

"I'll wager they're sorry jokes you crack on a man when he's not about to hear them," replied Draque.

"Don't mind them, Draque," said Peggy, handing him a chair; "they're not likely to crack many jokes on you now that you're here."

Draque took the chair and said in answer to an inquiring look from Peggy:

"It's just as it always was, Peggy, the men do all the visiting about here. I thought this was a pleasant evening for mother to come over, but she had hold of a paper that had something Ike said in it, and I couldn't bring her."

"She likes a good talker, Draque," said Jabez, "and I don't blame her for staying with the paper and sending you off alone." The two men, Jabez and Tobe, laughed outright.

"I'd like to know what's up," queried Draque, turning to look at Peggy. "The old men about here are trying to wipe out a score of years at a lick. I wouldn't blame them, either, if they were widowers, but I see you're living Peggy, and I haven't heard of a funeral at Tobe's."

The autumn and winter wore away, and the time was at hand when both parties were about to appoint their candidate. Ike paid another visit home, with the double object of seeing his parents and recuperating for a few days among what were always to him the invigorating breezes about the farm, previous to his journey to Chicago to attend the Republican national convention, which was to be held there. For the time he threw all care away, and thoughtfully listened to and watched the bullfrogs as they croaked and leaped into the pond, that when a boy he had contemplated and measured in many ways. The fields resumed their old familiarity as he stopped to look at some landmarks and draw the map of what was once around them. His father had recently gotten into a modest looking frame house, and Ike, with hands in pockets, leisurely stepped about the old cabin, saying as he investigated: "If it were not for the way father kept it chinked and mortared, there wouldn't be one log of it left upon another."

He turned his back upon the cabin, and faced the west, where, in the distance, stood a tree, now as much like the thing it was when he first looked at it as ever. He said:

"All things have not changed, I see. That tree sends its three principal branches out precisely as it used to. I often watched it when I had nothing else to do, and traced the face of an old woman in the branch that leans to the south. The dame looks as

natural as ever. There's her high forehead, a little too high, and her long nose, and pointed chin a little too prominent, and her neck somewhat scrawny for beauty. Her eyes are set back too far in her head, but look as if there might have been design even there. The sun shines in her face all day, and a shady place has been given them. After all, she's a happy looking old thing, nodding and bowing away as complacently as when she saluted me upon our first acquaintance."

His thoughts turned a little from the picturesque to the utility aspect of the tree, and he continued: "I can't imagine why father left it standing there—it's too high, and not much of a shade, and would make capital rails. Probably he saw the pleasant looking old woman's face as well as I and spared it in consequence."

Ike smiled at his own thoughts as he turned from cabin and tree, and sauntered leisurely into the house, whistling an air that was both new and popular in the days when his father's was the only home he knew. In the best of spirits he proclaimed his visit at an end and turned his steps toward Chicago, with his thoughts centered on the convention where Abraham Lincoln, on the third ballot, by a decided vote, was placed before the country—the candidate of the Republican party.

Ike returned, and with renewed enthusiasm again settled down to hard work. In his native state no former campaign was ever carried on with such untiring determination for success, nor the outcome looked forward to with such palpitating hearts.

The November election proclaimed Abraham Lincoln President of the United States. Every free state in the Union except one acknowledged him their choice.

Draque was willing to admit it all, and did so as good-naturedly as he would assent that his neighbor had a better crop of corn than himself—when it was as plain to be seen such was the case.

Tobe, wild with delight, said to him as the two met at Jabez's:

“I told you twenty-five years ago, Draque, that we'd have it our way at last. The majority of people in this country are capable of distinguishing right from wrong. I always said all they needed was to be shown.”

He slapped Draque on the shoulder with the familiarity of an old friend. Draque turned his honest eyes upon him and said:

“I can't see much you have to be elated over, being as you worked so hard for the abolition of slavery—seeing the slave is not free.”

“That's all very true,” replied Tobe, seriously; “but there's no denying it, the slave has a friend in the President, which is more than could ever be said before.”

“Well,” said Draque, laughing, “they tell me your President can size up a pile of wood, or the timber he'd like for a good rail fence, as well as Ike can, and I don't know but I like him the better for it. It takes a man that knows what hard work is to be able to set the right value upon labor, whether slave or free.”

“You're right,” replied Jabez. “From any standpoint you may take it the knowledge of a practical man is away ahead of the theorist. I imagine Judge Douglass, the man you took such pride in voting for, Draque, while he may be a good man in many ways, hasn't the deep knowledge of human woes like the man who in tender years was thrown upon his own resources and so bravely and honorably made his way

to where he is today—at the head of the nation. Could any one but the man who sets the right value upon labor say—‘I agree, with Mr. Douglass, the negro is not my equal in many respects. Certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowments; but in the right to eat the bread without the leave of any one else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglass, and the equal of every living man?’”

Draque made no reply, and, after a few seconds' pause, Jabez continued:

“ ’Tis true the slave is not free, but it's just as Tobe said—he has a friend where he never had one before.”

Draque glanced rapidly from one to the other, his eyes at last resting upon Tobe, and replied:

“I see the majority is satisfied, and I'm not the one to complain. I'll not kick as you did all along, Tobe, when the big side was against you.”

“I felt I had something to kick about, and you don't—there's the difference,” answered Tobe. He slowly shook his head as he looked at Draque and said: “I wouldn't like to be in the way of your heels, Draque, any more than Ike's, if you were roused up to see it was your duty to act in a determined manner pending a political campaign.”

At mention of Ike pride glowed in every feature of the old man's face. He looked at his heavy boots, turned the heels up, and was satisfied they were well nailed, then said:

“It wouldn't be well for you to have come in their way twenty-five or thirty years ago, but you'll not have much to fear from now on. The boots are about the same size and as well nailed, but a good deal of what was once in them is gone.”

A shadow flitted over each face, and a few seconds were spent, each communing with his own thoughts. Jabez spoke consolingly:

“When it comes to that, Draque, we’re all on the same string. It wouldn’t take as much of the strength once in your boots to take us all off our feet.”

“Yes,” replied Draque, in his most subdued manner. “It’s a wonderful pleasant way God has dealt with us. Little by little he has been taking our lives back until now we haven’t much to lose.”

“We’re nearing the end,” said Tobe, addressing Jabez; “but while the plank is yet under our feet we must work, that justice may at last be shown to the oppressed. It’s not many years we have left to gather round our neighbors’ hearths, and the souging and moaning of the wind outside makes the thought more melancholy; but we’ll end as we begun—clamoring for Right.”

The fireside melted away from Peggy and vanished in smoke. That the fire had burned there for long years did not make it any more permanent now that she felt it must some day burn for others. Her hand found its way into her pocket for the handkerchief that was needed for eyes dimmed with tears, which she quietly dried, and among those present not one was prepared to face the last more bravely and resigned and full of trust than she.

Draque’s smileless face was evidence he felt rather melancholy as he silently calculated how fast their lives were ebbing out. He turned up the sole of his boot the second time, as the enigma of life, noiselessly and without pain passing away from him, confronted him about the same as it had sages of all times.

Jabez had been thinking too, and said, as he came out of the reverie he had been indulging in:

“We’ll talk about younger days, Draque. It’s sometimes not good to dwell too long upon a subject after a man gets an inkling into the meaning you wish to give him, and, above all others, age is the subject that makes a man feel good for nothing. If you stop too long on that and give him a chance to think his thoughts, the outlook, if not gloomy, is enervating. It makes him shaky at the knees and tottering in his gait. It will better answer the purpose to go back over the past and talk about what a man has done and what he has left undone. Nothing rouses a true man up like the thinking about what he should and has not done, and the time he will likely have at his command to do it. When such thoughts come he can sometimes put more force in his acts than he could when he was conscious of the great vitality that was in him. All that was ever really good in Draque is there yet,” continued Jabez, as he gave him a sound slap on the shoulder, “regardless of the plumpness of face and limb and the strength and vigor that went with them.”

“I’m not the man that’s afraid of old age,” replied Draque; “but it’s that same and death that lets thoughts unspeakable in upon us. They’re not cowardly thoughts either, but we’re face to face with the fact that there’s something Beyond for us soon, and when that thought comes it becomes a man to be serious.”

Draque removed the pipe from his mouth that had vacillated several times between mouth and hand in the last ten minutes. He packed the tobacco a little tighter with the first finger of his right hand repeatedly, and leisurely he pressed the weed; but the spark had long been dead in the pipe, that while in his mouth he had forgotten to smoke,

"I believe you're right on that point, Draque," said Tobe. "Now we have the logging and clearing away all done, something tells us that was our part to be performed in the Great Plan."

Tobe stopped for a moment to contemplate their part of the plan, aside from the slavery question, then said:

"When the beech and hickory switched in the wind and stood proud and erect high over our heads, we knew the path that lay for some distance before us. Now we watch the cattle grazing in the pastures, and field after field ready for the plow, and know we must soon pass them over to other hands."

To them the clock sounded, each second measured off with greater distinctness than ever before. The variety of sounds peculiar to the rural homes of the Buckeyes came from garden and field around. A shrill crow from a chanticleer sounded in the direction of Draque's cosy home, and was answered from another barnyard that might be on a bee-line east of where they sat. Peggy started at the sound and said:

"It's not often we hear the roosters crow before midnight." She had glanced at the clock while speaking and knew it was far from that hour.

"A change in the weather sometimes sets them acrowing, so I've heard folks say," said Draque. "But the weather often changes when they don't crow before midnight, and I'm not just certain about the cause of the crowing."

"It means no harm any way, Peggy. None of us will die any the sooner for it," said Jabez, as his heretofore serious face beamed full of smiles. "I've often heard them break out at the wrong time, and after all things went on as usual."

"This time," said Tobe, his face also losing all trace

of serious or melancholy lines, "it means that it's time you and I, Draque, were making for home. We might have kept on all night with our age and wrinkles, if we were not warned in some way it was time to start."

"It's later than we often stop out. When it's earlier we should be making the time for going, for our old joints are stiff and we can't hop over the furrows as we used to," said Draque, not yet brought to the smiling point by the pleasantry of his neighbors.

"When some men leave their youth behind them they leave it all of a sudden, like Draque," said Jabez, as his smile rounded up in an audible laugh.

"That's true," replied Tobe, "and I think it would not be a bad idea for him to try and taper off, like you."

"When a man doesn't see anything to laugh at, if he's sensible he doesn't laugh," answered Draque, slowly rising. When fairly upon his feet he turned to Peggy, saying: "I'll act upon Tobe's advice and bid you 'good-night,' and if he doesn't hustle I'll leave him behind yet, with all his youthful pranks."

"When people get together they must talk, Draque," said Peggy, "and it's just as well not to mind their nonsense sometimes."

"When it doesn't suit me, Peggy, you may be sure I'll not. Something has to move me the one way or the other before I'll budge, not meaning any harm to any one by my stubbornness, either."

Tobe looked as cheery as a man could when he left Jabez's that night. He had proved to his neighbors, some years before, he was not the silent, solitary man they had thought him, but before he manifested such a happy disposition he had many another man's shoulders as heavily laden with the slavery burden as his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Draque cast his last vote in eighteen hundred and sixty, and was tranquil over the returns that marked his defeat and his son's triumph.

He was interested in home affairs as if everything was going on in the great country around him as usual, with the prospect of the same management in high places as heretofore.

He piled the corn in the cribs and put the stalks in a convenient place for fodder. He had the winter's fire wood hauled home and what would not fit in the shed left near the kitchen door. The horses and cows were stabled. The young cattle found shelter in the straw stacks and the poultry were comfortably settled in the house built for them at the east end of the barn. In the cellar bins were filled with apples and potatoes. The turnip barrels were full, and great heads of cabbage pulled, "with roots and all," had a corner set apart for them.

The snow fell early, and gave promise of an old time winter. Preparations were made to make the best of it, and get all the hauling possible done with the sleds. Nothing happened that would tend to lead a man among them to believe anything out of the ordinary course was about to transpire.

Spring opened, and the bright days found all hands preparing for the work it brings. Klomp thought he would let a certain meadow into pasture, and being short of rails commenced tearing down the fence that separated it from an old pasture field in order to put a fence around the fallow that would be left open when

the meadow was gone. Jabez had some general tidying up to do, and the fences on his place needed a rail here and there to make them perfect. He could be seen driving around with a load of rails, throwing out and replacing the broken or rotten that still remained in position, but would be likely to need his attention soon were he to pass them untouched on this occasion.

Draque was cleaning up the barn yard, and enriching the ground about to be plowed for corn and potatoes, when the news came like a blight that South Carolina had seceded. Fort Sumter had been fired.

Tobias Lenk, while overseeing and overhauling things about home, still kept his eye open to the doings of the world outside his home and neighborhood. It was he who caught the first sound of the bombarding. Their papers came but once a week; daily news had to be sought, and who better equal to the task than Tobe.

This morning he had returned from town livid with excitement, and dropping the reins crossed the field to the right and communicated the news to Jabez. Jabez, dumb with horror, leaned back against the load of rails and folded his arms tightly across his chest. The two men conversing earnestly could see Draque in the distance taking time to look at them occasionally as he straightened up, evidently for a rest after the throwing in this and that direction several shovelfuls of the load he was scattering over the soil. Jabez drew out his right hand that had been till now tightly held by his left arm, and looking in the direction of Draque beckoned, catching his eye. Draque understood the movement, and driving his horses to the fence, hitched them to a bar post and proceeded to join his neighbors. When he had arrived within hearing, Tobe, unable to wait longer, called out:

"It's bad news we have this morning, Draque."

The few little words gave speed to Draque's feet. He bounded over the clods with something of the fleetness of youth in eagerness to hear the news, whatever it might be. Upon nearing them he halted, and a little out of breath accosted them with:

"Well, I hope it's not so bad, but that it might be worse."

"It's just this," replied Tobe, as Draque came to a standstill, "South Carolina has seceded with a prospect of other states following her example."

Draque's sunken eyes, once large and brown, opened to their utmost, as speechless he looked upon his friends, probably wondering whether after all they, Tobe and Jabez, were not in a measure responsible for it, but not a word of reproof or "I thought so," fell from his lips, for Ike was before him even then, and willingly he vowed to shoulder his share of the responsibility, come what might. He shook his head and said: "It's come to a bad pass, I fear, when one little state defies the authority of the Union." And pondering awhile over what it was not yet possible to realize, he continued:

"The majority shall rule; that's understood. I never saw things just as you did neighbors, but I'm always willing to abide by laws, when a majority of good men make them for the public good."

"Those are the kind of laws that are forever coming to the top," replied Tobe, as with clenched fist he struck the open palm of his left hand. "They are often slow, and a generation sometimes may come and go before the workers who have good will to all men find their hopes realized. But depend upon it, a lot of schemers who have their pockets and the private interests of their friends in view can't long hide their

motives from the God-fearing, right loving, common people of this country, and they mean majority always."

"I don't know much that we can do about it," said Draque, casting an inquiring glance at Tobe and then at Jabez. After having studied the matter over for some time, with eyes riveted on the ground, he continued: "We'll know a little more in the course of a few weeks I'm willing to wager."

"Yes," replied Jabez, "at present I don't see anything we can do about it."

He laid particular stress upon the word we, and with telling effect. Draque said as he stepped slowly on:

"When we can't see any good we can do, we'd better keep at work where we know some good 'ill come of it. That off horse of mine is a little frisky; he's been stabled pretty close all winter and well fed; he's not inclined to stand still long. I intend to keep him stirring pretty lively this spring until I take some of it out of him."

Draque resumed both his natural gait and coolness, and leaving them took up the day's work where he had left off. The two men left alone remained in thoughtful silence for awhile, when Jabez said:

"Bad as the news is, Tobe, I don't know what better we can do than follow Draque's example. Untilled fields 'ill not pay the taxes nor support the president we helped put in the chair. What say you?"

"That's so," responded Tobe. "I believe it's not well to borrow trouble. The outcome may not be so bad. The beginning and end may be in the first shock, after all."

"We'll be allowed to think so at any rate," said Jabez, "till something turns up to show us it's not a fact."

Jabez had been standing during the whole talk, with his back against the load of rails; he turned around, shoved a lose rail into place, reached for the reins, pulled a little on one, and then the other to arouse the horses to a sense of what was expected of them. Tobe kicked a few times at a tuft of clover that flourished on a spot higher than those surrounding it, and both were ready to put through the day much as they would have done had the news from the seceding state not reached them. Still, as they worked on, a sense of uneasiness hung over them that was altogether unusual. That the south wind sweeping over those parts at that season, so warm and genial and welcome after the blustering winds of March, carried with it any dread omens concerning what might be, none of the actors of that day are left to tell. That the picture of parting with sons and brothers in order to recruit for the bloody battlefield appeared before them is left for us to surmise, for Tobe breathed not a fear to Draque nor Draque to Jabez. Not much was accomplished that day, however. The broken morning was succeeded by a shower in the afternoon that sent all hands in doors. The life renewing April shower, more intent upon doing good than showers of other seasons. It came straight down, not a breeze distracted or turned its course, bent upon going to the roots of all growing things, and with the help of the sun revived the life that was in them, and everywhere transformed the barren looking brown into beautiful green.

Many days had not elapsed before it was apparent the beginning and end were not in the first shock. Other states had really seceded, and their attitude meant war.

Republican and Democrat alike took in the situation, and side by side marched to the front. Draque

argued, "that if their sons must go it was better for those to go that had no families to support," and Bill, who was some years Ike's junior, with George, Meg's youngest brother, responded to the first call to arms, and bravely started for the scene.

But no argument could lessen the blow to mother who had Bill about the home all those years. Were it to college he was going with his ax upon his shoulder, as Ike had gone out years before, how happy she would be. After his departure, she eagerly watched for his letters, which he never omitted when he could write. For several days she had waited in feverish expectation. Morning after morning she could be seen at the corner of the house, on tip-toe, with hand protecting her eyes from the sun, looking for the messenger she had authorized to bring Bill's letter, but no letter came, for at the roll call one morning after a bloody battle Bill was not there.

A comrade marked his grave and sent the sad message to Draque, who at once started to recover the dead body of his slaughtered boy, which he brought home, and laid beside Amanda. No one ever knew if his breaking heart for once judged Ike harshly for giving his whole energy to the cause that brought death to his father's door. Perhaps the feeling that it would not be long before he himself would be laid at rest was a balm. But nothing could comfort mother, who bore up so bravely when Amanda died. She could not interest herself about the house as she used to, and when it came meal time she did not eat; she pined away in sorrow, and sunk into the grave a few short months after Bill was so cruelly killed.

Ike saw the grave close over Bill and mother, and feeling he was needed at the front to fill his brother's place proved himself truly in earnest in what he had

so long advocated. He bade wife and children and father "good-bye," and enlisted in the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Ohio Volunteers.

Through the remainder of the long Civil war he did noble service and unflinchingly led those under his command, and not until Lee surrendered did he lay down his arms. He returned unscathed save the wound in his heart for his dead mother and bullet-riddled brother, which was deeper made when in the old home once more he wept with his father over the silent graves. Draque had been living with Ike's family since mother's death, and upon his return was in their midst. Meg welcomed Ike back with unbounded delight, and the elder children were wild with joy, but two younger ones looked upon him with distrust. They were suspicious of his movements; having heard so much of the great war and the soldiers they seemed to think him hardly safe. They probably saw battlefields and wounded men, and poor dead Uncle Bill. Ike looked thoughtfully at them, and for the space of a few seconds was speechless. His work among the people striving to make the majority see the right was done. The soldier's hard life was over. The slave was free. Had he counted upon the victory without the cost? He took in his arms the youngest of the suspicious children and the most vindictive—little brown-eyed Ruth—and said:

"You don't know me, I see, but you are not afraid of me, are you?"

He had not yet discarded his uniform, and Ruth opened her big eyes wider, and, looking at the brass buttons, struggled to get free, which she did, and, planting her feet firmly on the floor and her back against the wall, looked defiance. Ike looked around at the other children and said:

"I'm forgotten, I see."

"Oh, we know you, papa, we know you," answered the oldest, speaking for herself and a handsome brother by her side; "but Ruth doesn't remember you. She'll talk by and by."

Ike tried to win her affection by an offer of candy, but all pleading with her to accept was useless. He finally took the paper, and, going to where she propped the wall with her back, tried to place it in her hand, but, her will not weakened, she clenched her chubby fists behind her back and stood immovable. Ike then placed the paper on the chair close beside her and walked away. She looked around, seemingly to inquire if every one had taken it for granted she had accepted the offered candy, and from some intuition or other understood. Once satisfied on that point, she deliberately hit the paper a blow that sent it across the room, and again as deliberately folded her hands behind her back and eyed the strange man who wanted to be so kind to her as unyieldingly as before, at which her grandfather laughed, clapped his hands, and said:

"Some of the Draque grit—eh, Ike?"

A companion in arms who came along with Ike en route to his own home said:

"You think you have a beautiful girl there, Ike?"

Ike again arose, and, crossing the room, put his hand under Ruth's well-formed chin and raised her head to an angle that did not suit her, a movement she stoutly resented, and said:

"Well, I'm not so certain about the beautiful, but I think she has a strong face, and if we can manage to put her on the right track I believe she'll stay there."

Grandfather Draque, pitying the little child, who

alone was undoubtedly undergoing a severe ordeal, took the chair upon which the offered candy had been placed, and, seating himself by the little girl, took her in his arms. She nestled her brown curls close to his cheek with such a pleased, thankful look in her big eyes that the old man clasped her closely to his heart and said:

“She’s no sugar-plum girl. Her old grandfather could have told you that.”

Then, holding her at arm’s length, and looking squarely at the little face that always beamed in smiles for him, he said proudly:

“She wouldn’t be a Draque if she could be either bought or sold.”

Ike made no further attempt to win the affection or confidence of his little daughter. She was left undisturbed, and prattled away on her grandfather’s knee, stroked and pulled his whiskers, and at times was forgetful of every other presence. When she had the hair smoothed over the bald spot and the whiskers twisted to suit her, she would cast a wondering look in the direction of the uniform and the brass buttons which was as full of distrust as before.

Tobe was on hand after Ike’s arrival home, before an hour had passed. While he had little errands about the town, his principal object was to welcome and have a talk with Ike. Ike and his companion talked on; their conversation consisted chiefly in answering the numerous questions concerning the war put to them by Tobe. There were many horrible tales Ike could tell, but he shrank from the telling, and it was only when questioned closely that his short and effective replies gave his hearers an idea of some of the appalling sights of the battlefield. That the black stain of slavery, which had hung over the country, had been

wiped out, was inspiration to Tobe. His thankfulness knew no bounds. Draque, with few questions to ask, sat caressing his grandchild. He had been sitting with his chin resting upon her head. He raised his head a little and said:

“Your boy died when he was like this one, didn’t he, Tobe?”

Tobe looked at the child and replied:

“He was about her size, I think.”

The silence that ensued was overpowering. Ike had no lazy watch dog stretched on the hearth to court attention. There was not a cricket in the chimney corner, and the clock did not tick loud like the old-fashioned one in his father’s house. The report of a gun in the hands of some joyous celebrators sounded in their ears. It startled the little one and she asked her grandfather in a voice just loud enough to be heard by all:

“Is that the way they shot when they killed Uncle Bill?”

The old man did not answer. Meg dried the tears shed for Ike’s brother. Tobe looked straight ahead, but saw nothing. Ike sat like a statue, his convictions as strong as ever. The slave should be free. Not a voice of self-reproach welled up in his heart. No such dreadful reproof as “You are your brother’s slayer” sounded in his ears. Early in life he realized his beloved country had a blot on her otherwise fair face, and from that day he lived to take the stain away. That dreadful realities he or no other man could foresee had taken place was not a cause sufficient to shake his convictions regarding justice. But enough had transpired to subdue all joy for the time around the family hearth.

In the quiet Ruth had fallen asleep, and the breath-

ing of innocence was as yet the only sound to be heard. That all were miserable in the stillness can hardly be said; uncomfortable may be a better word. Each had entered into himself, and his own thoughts lifted him above the need of stir or conversation. Thoughts, somber and gloomy and hopeful, stalked before them like living things, until at last resignation settled down upon them with a peace so real it must have come from heaven. In the Beyond Draque saw mother and Amanda and Bill, and he counted upon being so near the line that separates—satisfied could be plainly seen in his countenance. With a cheerful look he lifted the little head that had slipped from his shoulder lower and lower until chin and dimpled cheek were buried beneath his arm, and said, as he laid her in Ike's arms:

“Ruth is tired of us all.”

Ruth slept peacefully on, not knowing that the man with brass buttons tucked her carefully in her bed, and placed on her pouting lips the first kiss since he left so many months before for the war. He spread on his open palm the little hand that dealt his coaxing offer such a blow, smiled as he gently placed it by her side, and left her alone.

Ike realized he was a citizen just as he was before his bloody experience; and also in his own house a host, that hospitality must be taken up where he had left off, and carried on in about the same manner he had been accustomed to deal it out before a breath of Civil war swept over the land. He had the wine poured freely for those who cared to indulge, and never experienced a scruple as to the right or the wrong of the custom. When a young boy he had learned from his father in many ways that it was the proper thing, just as eating, and going to school, and attending Sun-

day-school, and numerous other things were right. Since those days what reason had he to believe it was wrong? To Ike—intelligent, far-seeing, and justice loving—no valid reason appeared. He offered the sparkling cup to Tobe and his soldier friend, which without hesitation both accepted, and in a masterly manner he drained his own. But knowing that for years his father persistently refused when solicited to drain the cup—a characteristic of his father which he respected but still considered a whim—he did not offer. Ike's silent and convincing argument concerning the whim was:

“Has father not taken considerable in his time, and what harm came of it?” He felt positive the whim was based upon John Strand's terrible misfortune, which he also demonstrated to his own satisfaction was unreasonable, as “John was never the man his father was.”

Tobias Lenk, understanding Draque's peculiarities, said nothing; but the soldier turned a questioning look toward Ike when he saw he had offered none to his father. Ike anticipated the question, and said, with all the quiet dignity of his manner:

“Father is conscientiously opposed to drinking.”

A surprised expression came over the soldier's face, for it was an uncommon thing to find a man with just such convictions. Oh, wonderful development wrought in time! Thirty years before the men who saw anything wrong in bondage were as scarce.

Several times the glasses were filled and drained. The sedate soldier so lately returned from scenes most horrible became hilarious. Tobe was hardly the logical man people had thought him. The conversation lost the serious, sensible tone which characterized it a few hours earlier. Draque remained alone with the mem-

ory of what had passed before them a short time previous. He looked at the intelligent, handsome, and high-spirited Ike with a soul full of pride and admiration, and said in his own mind:

“He’s too young to stoop under the burdens of life yet. When I was like him I was as fond of the jovial hour as any one.”

The sun was sinking behind clouds that near the horizon were emblazoned and bespoke a wealth of gold as refreshing to the heart as those nearer the zenith were black and full of dark forebodings. How wonderfully light and darkness play with a sensitive nature. Brightness dispels all gloom, and a glance at a black cloud has a portentous meaning that shuts with a bang the door of a happy heart, and leaves in gloom black as the cloud itself the being who is its possessor.

Such an effect had this particular sunset upon Meg. A black cloud that hung low, for one so far from the horizon, shut out every other sight. It had an ominous meaning to her in every way, but particularly in this—that it was so very near.

She had discernment enough to see, even clearer than Draque saw, Ike had gone a little farther than ever they had seen him go before.

Draque called Tobe’s attention to the setting sun and remarked:

“If I were in your boots, I’d think it time to be moving toward home. Crossing the fields tonight, Tobe, won’t take you home.” He continued after a moment’s thought: “We’ll not see those days any more, you and I.”

“Father,” said Ike, “we would like to have Tobe stay where he is tonight. He has no particular business home or anywhere else. His mission is fulfilled, now that the slave is free.”

“They’ll be expecting me home,” replied Tobe, “and I never liked to disappoint them there. My horse is a pretty good traveler, and I’ll find him waiting when the train pulls in.”

Tobe shook the hands of the soldiers with a grasp that said plainer than words, “Well done,” and his handshake with Draque said as plainly, “We were friends in youth and through life, and today no one feels the loss of Bill more than I do but yourself. He was under my eye from a child, and but a line fence separates your place and mine.”

Draque understood the message and bowed assent.

CHAPTER XIX.

Among all the prosperous of the locality, Hiram Blank had been the most prosperous. In prosperity he had so far outstripped his early patrons that a line must be drawn to separate the self-made aristocrat from the common people. The fire had long since burned out in the old cabin, and he did not stoop to such things as rekindling. He had abandoned the selling of drinks over the counter, had gone to the big city, and was, some time before the war broke out, extensively engaged in manufacturing and wholesaling, which are large words and everywhere mean a great deal. His house was a fine structure and its belongings not to be winked at. He and his brothers in the liquor traffic—the modern slaveholders—had gotten about the same hold upon the political economy of the country the more ancient class of that name had earlier in the century.

Mrs. Blank had rolled down her sleeves and was a lady after the extravagant type, florid-faced, and in every way suggestive of the indulging in all the good things of life. The oldest son—Hiram—a counterpart of his father in every way, minus the brains and backbone, which deformity may be accounted for in the hard knocks of the former before he hit upon the key to the golden gate, and the perfect liberty that key afforded the latter to indulge in the luxurious according to inclination. Poor fellow! he was comfortably tucked away in an inebriate asylum not feeling all the woes his condition implies when borne by common people reduced to such extremities by King Alcohol. Before

the close of the war Hiram's second son was drafted, but with a lordly mien he counted out six hundred dollars to a substitute and remained at home. He was his father's business manager and prop, as he tottered down the hill of life. Mrs. Blank was a charitable soul, and always gave liberally when solicited. Hiram from habit stepped to the front as heretofore, with this only difference: his personal services were offered more discriminately; he did not lower himself in any such way as doing small things for nobodys; he headed the list of big subscriptions, and drove important persons about to visit prisons and reform schools.

All blame must not be laid at Hiram's door, however. That he is one of a class unable to describe a circle outside of self may not be wholly his fault. The right is his to impose upon the helpless, and he exercises that right to the fullest extent. He heads the great list of those who, with the bread and butter of the pauper, have built a breastwork that apparently defies all efforts of the man who, in Christian charity, tries to tear it down.

The man who is able to describe circle after circle until he embraces the whole world in Christian brotherhood finds that breastwork more formidable than the forest with its wild men and beasts. It is everywhere intersected with little rivulets that pour a constant revenue into the coffers of the grandest country upon earth. At the Capitol is situated the pivot upon which the breastwork must be swung out; there is the life of the whole structure and the point where the blow must be given that will render the black demon vulnerable.

The damming or turning the course of sluggish little rivulets will not drain or make healthy the malarial

swamp. • That intoxicating drinks are extensively manufactured implies they are to be extensively sold and consumed. That the goddess of Justice seated at the Capitol complacently bows to the manufacturer and wholesaler of today, as she did to the slaveholder of the past, is whose fault?

It is not the fault of the President, for the right one is not there; not of congressmen and senators, for the power is not theirs; they are all tools in the hands of the people, the hired rail-splitters, veritable log turners, cart wheels and crow bars, that work for the master, according to the master's will. The master is today the same as thirty-five years ago—the majority.

That Hiram Blank is a correct representative of the great army of men who have chosen his avocation as the best method of living and enriching themselves is not to be presumed. When the best country on the face of the earth implied that it was right, just as that country implied slavery was right, by giving them the privilege, they were not the men to question that right. They simply saw the money in it and looked no further.

Jabez, with slavery off his hands, and both he and Draque with the infirmities of age staring them in the face, must not be expected to cope very successfully with the saloonkeeper when the army of men returned from the war, every man a drinking man, without a scruple to contend with further than "don't drink to get drunk," for other scruples assumed no proportion but in very isolated cases. Revolting and blood-curdling scenes were becoming of frequent occurrence, and the numerous jails and prisons built by fathers who had no intention of raising criminals to languish behind the bars were being rapidly filled, and those placed behind said bars had been, with excep-

tional cases, law-abiding youths previous to the long war. It was thought by many the soldiers' indolent life, when not on the march or engaged in actual battle, was responsible for the numerous misdeeds of which there was a marked scarcity during the war in localities untouched by the tramp of soldiers' feet. They had a great deal to talk about, those heroes, when they came together, and the saloon and country tavern were accommodating places where they could lounge at leisure, and exchange experiences by the hour, lost to present responsibility, the memory of such responsibility drowned in the fatal glass.

The booming of cannon, the sound of fife and drum, and all the paraphernalia of war possess a wonderful charm for the growing boy. He is naturally a hero worshiper. He forgets home and friends, and steps in time with fife and drum. He eagerly and with beating heart takes in all the details given by the stern soldier who is so brave and manly. He cannot go to the war and distinguish himself as the soldier did; he feels regretful the opportunity was not his; he has but one opportunity left to be in any way like the man he so much admires, and that is to take a drink like him. Thus, in the short space of half a century, three generations were schooled in the art of drinking.

Ike had his law office again open, and resumed the place he had so filled with himself before the war. Did he consider his lifework accomplished, or had the hardships of long marches and battlefields left him unfit for further action? Although the passerby and those who called could see the lawyer in his old place, it was plain the great soul that all who ever met him felt he possessed was somewhat dwarfed. His talk with clients did not have the ring of former days. The boys in blue, with whom he had been in such long

companionship, had some magnetic power over Ike, whose unflinching will nothing had ever swerved either to the right or left from the path where duty called. One night, about six months after, Tobe had spent an afternoon with Ike and family, Meg went to the window for the hundredth time and looked in the direction of a street leading to a public hall that had been used as a lecture hall, and where Ike had often held an audience spellbound. Tonight it was not a lecture that called Ike out, but a reunion of soldiers, some still about the city, many others coming from their homes, scattered everywhere throughout the state. The average unmarried soldier had not yet in earnest taken up life where he had left off as a citizen; he required a breathing space between work with such distinct contrast as what he had been doing and what he must do when what was left of the soldier's pay was gone. Ike did not expect to be later than midnight, if so late, but Meg watched the stars one by one go down, with greater anxiety than she had ever watched before. A few nights earlier in the week, in another part of the city not quite so aristocratic, there had been a melee that resulted in a few bruised heads and some lock-ups, but of course that had nothing to do with this evening or with Ike's friends.

The last star was dim and its twilight ushered in another day, when Meg saw a figure in the distance. She watched, and upon closer approach she was certain it was Ike. She hurried downstairs to inquire "What could be the matter?"

"Matter? There's nothing the matter," replied Ike. "The soldiers are all off this morning, and we decided to make a night of it, that is all."

He noticed the tired, worried look on Meg's face and said:

"I hope you have not been up all night, Meg?"

Draque, not knowing whether Ike was in or out, had slept the night through as peacefully as the little one who had not learned to love the soldier, but looked upon him with as much distrust as ever. At the breakfast table Ruth was a little sulky, and would not touch her breakfast because the man she was determined to have nothing to do with helped her. She looked alternately at her plate and across the table at the man she thought had no right there, and sat otherwise motionless. Grandfather Draque's place was beside Ruth. He looked down at the untouched breakfast and said:

"Why doesn't my little girl eat her breakfast?"

Ruth looked at him with the whole answer in her eyes as she glanced rapidly from Ike to the plate, and then rested them on her grandfather's face.

"I'll see that Ruth's helped," said Draque, and smiling at the child he continued: "I've been a good while cutting your meat for you, haven't I, Ruth?"

He took her knife and fork, cut and turned over what had already been prepared for her, and said: "There, Ruth."

Ruth shrugged her shoulders with satisfaction, picked up her fork, and went to work. She was a hearty child, and, now that she was satisfied, paid more attention to her breakfast than to the stranger. Draque looked down at the plate almost empty and said:

"That's a good breakfast, isn't it, Ruth?"

With fork raised to her mouth she turned to her grandfather a look of affirmation, and hurriedly took the morsel it contained. At the same time her laugh rang out clear and joyous. Ike looked at her with a twinkle in his eye, and said:

"I see you can laugh, Ruth."

That moment she pitched her head to one side, and a frown took the place of all the smiles she had for her grandfather. Draque laughed heartily and said:

“You can't buy her, Ike. After a while, if she sees you behave yourself, and are worthy of her notice, she'll be as good a friend as you could have.”

Draque returned thanks, as had been his custom in Ike's absence, since mother and Bill had been laid to rest, and he had come to live under Ike's roof. He took Ruth by the hand as they left the dining room, and upon reaching the sitting room all sat down for a few moments' talk.

This morning there was not much energy in any one but Draque and the little girl, who danced about her grandfather, braided and unbraided his fingers, and who at last tired of that sport left him for her dolls and toys. Ruth's mother had not much to say, the loss of a night's rest, with the anxiety that attended it, left her rather spiritless.

Ike moved listlessly about the room for awhile, and said, as he looked at the clock:

“Don't you think it is about time I was going to the office, father?”

“You've been your own boss long enough to not ask, Ike, but I tell you when I was your age it wouldn't be this time I'd be thinking of taking hold of a day's work,” said Draque.

“I've seen the time myself, father, when I worked late and early, and enjoyed it,” replied Ike.

“Mebbe you're like me, Ike, your work's all done,” said Draque slowly, as his mind wandered back to the farm with the timber all cut, the fences made, the empty house with no one left him to provide for, and nothing there for him to do.

“It is certain,” replied Ike, “that for many years

there was a great strain upon me; now that the object for which I worked so hard is accomplished, it may be as you say, father, my work is done."

"Your family is young yet, Ike," said Draque, seemingly changing his opinion regarding Ike's work; "it wouldn't be right to forget them because you're satisfied other men's families will be better taken care of."

Ike looked at his father and replied: "Don't think I have an idea of neglecting them. I am independent, and expect to take care of them without tying myself down quite as closely as I felt compelled to do some years ago."

Ike turned to a closet, opened the door and helped himself to bottle and glass. He took what he called a good drink, and as he carefully recorked the bottle said to his father and Meg, "I'll be off now."

Both watched him out of sight. The pretty dwelling on the corner of the street at right angles with their own hid him completely from view. Draque shook his head, and said in a voice tremulous with regret:

"I'm sorry he ever saw me take a drink, and repent that I ever offered one to him, but when I started at it who'd be able to imagine a tithe of the bad work it's been steadily doing from that day to this."

Draque sat quiet for a long time trying to unravel the intricate pattern of the carpet under his feet; it was one of those mixed patterns where it is hard to find a beginning, and harder to find an end. Several times he fixed his eyes upon a starting point, which he steadily followed up and down and across, still unable to come to the point where the line extended no farther. Discouraged with the pattern, he raised his eyes to Meg and said:

"It was your father, Meg, that put me on the right track."

Meg's weary eyes brightened at the mention of her father. She said in her sweetest accents:

"I'm expecting father in today; mother sent word yesterday he would be here today, but I was so much occupied with other things I forgot to mention it to you. He has not been in the city for a long time, not since Ike came home; he is troubled with aches he calls rheumatism, and thinks he can make himself more comfortable at home than any place else. He told me, when last I was home to see them, that nothing but a beautiful day could coax him away from home."

"Old age is likely to have aches of some kind, Meg," said Draque, "and it might as well be rheumatism as something else. Many a time, years ago, I felt stiffened like a spavined horse after splitting rails or turning over logs in the slush, but it would all wear off after a few days, and I've lived to learn there's worse aches than those settled in the bones."

Meg never complained. She did not rehearse her woes, whether late or of long standing, but turned her head and looked at the corner where Ike was hidden from sight some time before, and was conscious of a remnant of an ache that had been severe before the morning sun roused the birds, set the lambs afrisking on her father's farm, and cleared away some of the shadows that were deepening about her heart as well. Draque and Meg were now looking out upon the yard. The shadow of the house had shortened very perceptibly since Ike stepped out and left the two alone. Memories flitted before them as unlike as their experiences were unlike. Yet strange, in both, those memories produced about the same sad heart throbs.

Draque had slept soundly the night before, but he was not blind to the fact that Ike's was not the same happy home it used to be. He turned his keen eye on Meg, and went deeper down into her troubled soul than she had thought any one could, and resolved to dwell no longer on the near past—the disagreeable passing, for the long past he knew was for Meg laden with most pleasant memories, and said:

“I wouldn't grieve overmuch about little things, Meg, Ike's been carried away so long by the smell of powder and such like that every stray shot he hears fired sets him agoing. When the soldiers get out of town, and the country is quieted down a little, he'll be the same old Ike again, never fear.”

Meg's reply was embodied in a quiver of the lip and in two shining tears that trembled for awhile in the corners of her eyes, and slowly rolled down her cheeks, dropping into the folds of her dark morning dress, where they were lost in oblivion. She was certain Ike's father did not see just two tears, and not wishing to show any weakness, her right hand rested quietly on her lap regardless of the handkerchief in the pocket beneath.

“Your father 'ill be apt to come in on the ten thirty train, eh, Meg?” asked Draque, as he walked to a door opening on the porch.

“I think he will,” replied Meg, who hesitating a moment continued: “I have no reason for expecting him at that hour, only that when he has anything of the kind in view he always goes about it early as possible.”

“That's me,” said Draque laughing, as he stepped outside on the porch. “I always believed in an early start at anything.”

CHAPTER XX.

Meg, finding herself alone, turned to the table beside her, looked at the cover of a book or two, and listlessly took up the morning paper, while Draque paraded the porch—forward and back, forward and back, the sound not unlike that of soldiers on parade.

Neither heard the rattle of wheels that came to a standstill at the end of the walk, leading to the house. Draque, in his forward march, had his back turned to the entrance, and did not see Jabez until he was beside him on the porch.

“I’ll declare; you’re pretty lively for a man crippled with rheumatism,” exclaimed Draque, as he hastily turned and grasped the extended hand of his old friend. He continued: “I was at the far end of the porch this minute, and you were nowhere to be seen.”

The commotion brought Meg to the door, and with a brightness in her eyes and countenance Draque had not seen for some weeks past, she welcomed her father. The children were all at school, except Ruth, who felt pretty well acquainted with grandfather Ghent, and walked across the room to offer him her chubby hand. Jabez took her in his arms; she made no effort to get away, but held her little head upright. She did not nestle her curls to his cheek, or bestow much affection upon the grandfather who came to see them so seldom. Jabez held her for awhile during some general conversation, and then stood her beside him on the floor. She turned a side look at Jabez, and knew she was free. With a bound she landed on

Draque's knee, cuddled her head down between her shoulders, caught hold of the two old hands that were around her and looked over the elevated shoulder at the other grandfather misfortune had not thrown out of his own home and placed under the same roof with her, as the grandfather she had learned to love so well.

Draque sat mute as the child on his knee, while Jabez and Meg appropriated the time to themselves and were making the best of it asking and answering questions, with minds so occupied as to shut out for the time all opportunity to Draque were he inclined to talk. He evidently had not been paying much attention to what they were saying, for he interrupted them with:

"How does my old place look this morning, Jabez. All the line fences in repair?"

"I think they are," answered Jabez, startled by the suddenness of the question. "I know the line fence between your place and mine is perfect, and I haven't heard any of the neighbors complain."

"I think that's a pretty good fellow I let the place to," said Draque. He ended the sentence with a very rising inflection, and cast a searching look at Jabez.

"I think he knows his business as well as the rest of us," replied Jabez.

"I suppose Tobe calls around as often as ever," queried Draque.

"Well, no; not exactly," replied Jabez, "he's been laid up with some trouble these two weeks; the effects of a hard cold, they tell me. He's doctoring himself up a little and trying to take better care of himself."

"I'll wager he's a doctor that 'ill give himself plenty if it's the kind he likes," replied Draque, with a significant nod.

"It's the kind he likes he's taking," said Jabez, with

greater coolness than he was wont to exhibit when he felt obliged to talk about the stuff he had been warring against, by example at least, during his whole life.

Meg well knew her father's aversion to the bottle; she had the same dislike herself, and had learned to dislike it from both father and mother, and was on nettles when Ike appeared. She knew, too, that Ike was conscious of the chasm existing between himself and her father on the drink question—the two whose hearts when slavery was mentioned beat as one.

“It used to be that Ike had proper regard for others convictions. From boyhood he had especial esteem and admiration for father's ways and views of things in general, but he's so changed of late,” soliloquized Meg, as Ike stepped into the room looking even more handsome and distinguished than ever, “there can be no accounting for what he might do.”

Critics may be severe, Meg, when they place at your door a long list of qualities expectant of you, and of which they may prove you wanting, but your perfect trust in Ike is gone. The beautiful house you live in, and that was a true home, is but a tottering thing. The books and pictures and everything with which love garnished it are skeletons of the past; ghouls that everywhere wear threatening countenances and have forever driven away your peace.

Jabez saw no change in Ike as he grasped his hand. The grasp was returned with the same truth that made his stage-coach companion feel he could depend his life upon him. His nature was the same thing of steel, and this one of the real moments when Ike was altogether himself.

He had been very busy that morning, exceedingly interested as well as busy, for a mortgage on Tobias Lenk's personal property was about to be foreclosed,

and Ike would as soon part with his own gear as see Tobe dealt by unjustly. He had a letter from Tobe stating the case; it read that said property ought to cover the mortgage three or four times over, but disposed of according to law at a public sale barely what would cover the mortgage would be realized, all of which Ike knew to be a fact. Consequently he relinquished personal comforts that morning to find a way out of the trouble for Tobe.

After greeting Jabez in his most cordial manner Ike proceeded to inform the two men of the perplexities of the morning.

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Draque. "After a life time he ought to be nigh out of such trouble now. I remember as well when he took that place and made his first payment on it as I do when I took my own. He and John Strand decided on the piece of woods they'd take the same day. Poor John was something ahead of Tobe then, for he had more money to pay down."

Looking very intently at Ike, Draque continued: "Mebbe you wouldn't think it, Ike, but it's a different lot of people he has to hold his own with now. They'll not be picking him up and hiding his faults like we would years ago; the craze is now to kick a poor, unfortunate out of the way, and the faster they land them behind bars the more good they think they're doing."

"I heard nothing about it," said Jabez, looking up for the first time since he saluted Ike, "and that's queer, too, for I always knew how Tobe stood about as well as I knew how I stood myself, at least I thought I did." Then turning to Draque he continued:

"As you've mentioned John Strand, I'm reminded of a time when his ways became mysterious, and the reminder is unpleasant."

"I hope nothing will harm him," said Draque. At the same time he worked himself around on his chair, got both feet into position ready for a start, should a shrill whistle or any other sort of sound warn him, he might be of some service to Tobe or any person in distress. The uneasiness of his father amused Ike, and his laugh sounded through the room the whole-soul thing it was. There was controlling power in his brown eyes, and upon close inspection his brown locks betrayed the charming loveliness of first gray hairs. Draque felt with pride, and not for the first time, that Ike was a superior person, and bowed his head in acquiescence when Ike said:

"Nothing will harm him, father; why should there. He's a little behind, that's all; embarrassed some people call it, but I like your way of telling things better. He's a little behind; he will be on his feet all right again, soon."

"You've not lived as long as your father and I have, Ike," said Jabez. "When a man's not on his feet at his age he's not likely to be ever on them."

Ike looked quietly at Jabez and said:

"I think you are inclined to borrow trouble as well as father. When I said Tobe would soon be on his feet I simply made use of a metaphor; a little trouble like this is not going to take the feet from under him."

"It's not a bright outlook for him, to say the least, Ike," answered Jabez.

"Well," replied Ike, who stopped to give the subject a moment's serious thought. "It is unfortunate, I'll admit."

Meg had dinner served later than usual; she was not so precisely on time as was her custom. Her movements were sluggish in many respects today. The brightness that had come over her upon her fa-

ther's arrival had disappeared, and the expression she now wore was one of deep melancholy that contrasted unfavorably with the cheery look on Ike's face, so much so her father could not help noticing it. He asked in a nervous manner, denoting he felt he had left her out of consideration too long. "What ails you, Meg?"

"Nothing," answered Meg, at the same time turning her face toward him with a surprised look.

"I'm not wanting to discourage you, Meg," said Jabez, "but I never saw you looking so like a ghost."

Meg made no reply. This time she would allow no quiver of the lip or forbidden tear to tell the tale of shadows that haunted her, whether fancied or real. She was not alone in picturing woes, and had gone farther with her picture than Draque, who was very uneasy as to the outcome of certain changes plain to be seen, but he had never seen Ike completely metamorphosed, as Meg had seen him. His worst state, when under his father's eye, was that condition which is best told by a phrase used across the water by those wishing to describe the article that develops the savage in a man as, 'alf and 'alf.

Ike was getting nervous; he tapped the floor with his foot in a manner that might bring up recollections of younger days, with dark forests and lonely paths where the air was laden with the perfume of wild flowers. And possibly in the midst might appear the stranger with whom he shared the stage-coach, for there was something in the restless tap, tap, that might recall just such time. But if such was before him, he was conscious he was a dreamer, toying with the pictures of what had passed away. It is the same old and oft-told tale of life and death. Ike knew the

grass was growing over the stranger's grave in the East; he did not live to know that Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States.

All sat in expectation of dinner being announced, while the restless tap, unlike that of the stranger with whom Ike soon learned to speak soul to soul, in that it produced a deadened sound on the carpeted floor, was kept up at irregular intervals.

But his will is trembling like an aspen leaf, with no certainty for himself or any one else which side will be uppermost in the next moment. He would like to appear before Jabez in as bright a light as he knew he did, when a boy he dropped in evenings to crack nuts and listen to him and Peggy talk and read, and afterward when he became a champion of the Republican party, and still later the soldier who did not return from battle fields without laurels won. But there is an indescribable something wrong. He is not master of the mind he possesses. He feels he has not the same control over all the powers that go with and determine the capacity of that wonder working machine—the human mold—and yet he is unable to place the cause. He would will to endure, and do and be the same, but he is conscious of great friction somewhere that in spite of him retards the movements of the otherwise still tolerably well equipped machine.

Ike had restricted himself to probably one drink that day; whether he had indulged earlier in the morning, before his father and Meg were witnesses, no one but himself knew. The effects produced by being so long without the accustomed stimulant were becoming exceedingly unpleasant. Along every nerve he felt a drawing, crawling sensation. At one time it seemed that a something attached to each particular nerve pulled uniformly. Again, the feeling was as if

something at the other end turned a screw that contracted all just a little.

Much as he wished to please Jabez it was impossible.

Such torture he would not endure when two-thirds of a glass of brandy would like magic remove for the time every unpleasant feeling. The dinner bell was sounding in his ear. He arose hurriedly, opened the same closet door, filled his glass, and drank.

He is still the perfect gentleman, and, to all appearance, as well able as either Jabez or his father to say—and stand by it—“I’ll never take another drop of spirituous or malt liquor in my life.”

Neither Draque nor Meg remonstrated with that determined man. They had done so often enough to know the result, but Jabez pointed his finger toward the closet in a menacing way and said:

“You’d better let that alone, boy.”

Ike smiled pleasantly, but made no allusion to the bottle which the man whose friendship he so highly prized emphatically denounced.

The family were seating themselves around the table, and Jabez felt it was not the time to reprimand Ike by placing before him any of his ideas concerning the downward course of all he ever knew who kept at it until it became a necessity.

Ruth was in her place beside grandfather Draque and required his attention. The conversation became trivial, Jabez asking the children childish questions, and with satisfaction listening to their answers. All along, since Ike was a boy, Draque took great pride in clever children, and now Ruth was his ideal. Upon the first lull that came from children’s prattle he took occasion to stroke her curls and say:

“Ruth ’ill catch up to them all yet—won’t you, Ruth?”

Ruth was as certain as her grandfather that all he said was true, and in a clear voice rang out the emphatic "Yes."

"Take care, Ruth," said Ike, who laughed at her across the table.

Ruth squirmed around in her chair, trying to turn her back as fully upon him as possible, which, much to her discomfiture, caused general laughter.

Draque put his hand on her shoulder and said:

"Never mind, Ruth. I'll wager you'll hold your own with any of them."

CHAPTER XXI.

Why should not Ruth "hold her own with any of them" when, to all appearance, every advantage that would enable her to do so was on her side? She was growing up under the shadow of steeples, with the clear tones of bells sounding in her ears, daily calling either to worship in the house of God or duty in the school room. She had no pulling through snow drifts, where, at the end of the pull, in an eighteen by twenty cabin, she must be initiated into the mysteries of mathematics, the English language, and the words without end they found in the dictionary, after becoming familiar with every thing in the speller. She was surrounded by all the great helps to develop the intellectual.

One morning early in September, when Meg was preparing her for her first day at school, her eyes brightened with delight and her little tongue ran loose reciting all she was going to do, while she looked often at grandfather Draque, who stood looking down at her, holding his hands behind his back and showing well preserved teeth, to be certain he had no word of correction and that she was telling it all straight. She started on her way to school satisfied with herself and everybody, and with grandfather's last words sounding in her ears:

"Ruth's the best girl in the county."

She tripped gaily along, hop, skip and jump, now taking time to breathe and again racing, until she came upon an apparition as she neared the school house that took all the lovable out of her nature.

The September sun was hot, and poured his hottest rays on the side of the street she chose, which, with the exertion on her part, had painted her face scarlet. The apparition called to her in a rather displeased voice:

“Ruth, stop running.”

Ruth turned her eyes full upon the owner of the voice, sidled along for a while on the very edge of the curbstone, in danger of toppling into the gutter, and then started on the run harder than ever.

Ike bit his lip as he proceeded quietly on his journey, at the same time revolving in his mind several methods by which he might bring Ruth into subjection.

He did not usually leave the office at that hour, but months had proved that Tobias Lenk was not as easily placed upon his feet as he had anticipated, and before proceeding further he decided to have a talk with his father, who answered his first question, saying:

“I’m no lawyer, Ike, but it doesn’t take a lawyer to see plainly many a thing happening about here and what’s bound to come of it.”

Ike made no reply, but was exceedingly nervous and very restless. He paced up and down the floor in a dilemma out of which he saw no way, as he had always when the question under consideration was slavery.

Draque sat watching his movements, as independent in his own way of thinking as ever, and said at last:

“Tobe hasn’t much longer to live, Ike, and any way you can fix it for him that ’ill give him the least trouble the better. He put his foot in it, that’s certain, for, if all I’ve heard be true, the farm isn’t any more his than the cattle.”

Draque shook his head slowly as he said, more to himself than to Ike:

“But Tobe ’ill not need it long, and it’s well for

his wife she doesn't promise to outlive him a great while. Who'd ever have thought, when he was so earnest in his endeavor to help the negro in the South, that things would ever come to such a pass with himself?"

At mention of the South Ike instantly stopped his promenade, wheeled around facing his father, and with much emphasis asked:

"Are you sure his farm is mortgaged for all it is worth?"

"I won't say it's mortgaged for all it's worth, Ike," replied Draque, "but it's mortgaged for all he'll ever get for it."

Ike had not changed his position while his father answered his question, and he still stood as if immovable while he propounded the second:

"Did Tobe tell you his circumstances?"

"He didn't," answered Draque, "nor did he tell anybody that I know of. Jabez told me all about it, however he found it out, and he's not likely to tell a thing he doesn't know."

Ike moved a chair nearby closer to his father's side and, seating himself, continued:

"The man who is about to foreclose the mortgage on the farm is doing so, as you understand, through his attorney. I have not learned who he is. If he is a friend or a man of honor he might be persuaded to drop the case under existing circumstances; that is, until Tobe either dies or gets better."

"That same wouldn't be asking him to make any sacrifice, I know, but the man that holds the mortgage, Ike, doesn't care much for anything or anybody outside of his own house but dollars and what they'll buy," replied his father.

Ike straightened up, and in astonishment asked:

“Do you know who he is, father?”

“I’ve known him about as long as I’ve known you, Ike, and at one time knew him well,” answered Draque, evidently not intent upon giving his name at once, “and, like many another man, came nigh knowing him to my sorrow; but with God’s help, through the kindness of a friend, I was brought to see what wiser heads are not able to see to this day.”

Ike was not the sort of a man who would insist upon drawing unwilling information, much as he would like it, out of his old father. He knew pretty well all the men his father had known for the length of time he mentioned, and sat for some moments as completely out on the farm as if he was there bodily, going from one neighbor’s house to another trying to settle upon the neighbor who had Tobe so completely at his mercy. Draque sat with his head bowed low, and made no further attempt to make the way any clearer for Ike. If Ike came to any conclusion as to who the man might be, he did not place the name before his father with the hope that he might sanction it by an affirmation. It was evident the conversation on that subject could be carried no further, and Ike said pleasantly as he arose:

“I think I’ll have to tell Meg I will not be home to dinner. This unfortunate business must be wound up, and much time for other demands will not be at my disposal until I see it to the end.”

Ike left the room to find Meg, but returned shortly to the tempting closet that always held in store for him, and often for an indefinite length, a substitute for all life’s necessaries. Although Draque had not raised his head he was alive to the fact that Ike—not exactly in defiance of his wishes and Meg’s entreaties, but in the face of them nevertheless—was taking what

long ago he would call in a thoughtless, jocose manner, "a good swig." As he sat there, too, he thought of how mother talked to him about spending money that could be turned to better use right at home, and, instead of becoming more erect, his head was inclined to drop lower, until Ike had replaced everything in the closet save half the contents of one bottle, and quickly shut the door. It was no surprise, but the click caused Draque to start involuntarily, and he said as Ike was about to step out:

"I hope you'll have luck."

Ike was busy thinking how much his father might contribute toward that luck if he were only so inclined, but respectfully said, "I hope so," and was gone.

They saw nothing more of Ike for a couple of days, but were not uneasy on that account, for a note was sent to the house that evening, saying "important business was taking him out of town." As Meg read for Draque he said:

"He's taken a run to the old home, I'll wager. Tobe's in trouble and very sick. Ike has his case and thought that was the surest way to get at the bottom of it. He'll stop at your place tonight, Meg." In a changed tone he continued: "I wouldn't care if I was dropping in on Jabez myself tonight."

"It will be very late when he reaches there," said Meg, as she looked at Ike's untouched plate.

"Don't be afraid he'll go hungry, Meg," said Draque, laughing. "Wherever he goes he's capable of attending to that."

"I have no such fear," replied Meg.

"It doesn't take so long to go that distance as it used to, Meg," said Draque, always loving to dwell upon the past, and in a serious manner continued, now for the benefit of the children, who anticipated what

was coming and were all attention, for the fields grandfather talked about were like fairyland to them: "I remember the time when it wouldn't do to start that distance without making considerable preparation." He patted Ike's handsome boy—who had gotten as close to him as possible to hear the story—on the head, and went on: "In the first place, a man would have to wait for a moonlight night or he'd be liable to run plumb into a big tree, and that shortly after twilight."

"I don't think papa ever stopped to think whether the moon was shining or not," rang out the voice at his elbow. Draque continued:

"You'd have to have a few extra provisions in your pocket, too, boy, for fear you'd get off the track, and swing around a day or two later than you expected. It wouldn't do to leave the gun behind either, not that you'd be in danger of being popped by the Indians, but a man would be liable to meet many a thing in the woods that lay between here and there that he'd not feel comfortable in the presence of if he hadn't his gun beside him."

The children, now thoroughly aroused by the recital, opened their eyes in astonishment, and still in expectation.

"A boy wouldn't have to stretch his imagination very far," continued Draque, "to imagine he saw a great bear skulking about in his tracks."

"I don't believe I'd like to live in woods like that," said the wondering boy.

"I don't blame you much for that same," said Draque, "but when your grandfather came here there wasn't much choice."

Ruth was beside grandfather and, too tired to listen longer, had laid her head on the arm of his chair and

was sound asleep. Draque lifted the curls out of her eyes, and said, as he looked at Meg, laughing:

“Ruth doesn’t care much for bears or anything else when she can get her head close to me.”

“Ruth certainly thinks you are capable of protecting her from every harm,” replied Meg.

While the family were thus entertaining themselves at home Ike set foot on the old ground. Memories as pleasant as follow in the footsteps of the average good man who has God and conscience uppermost in his walk through life gathered around him. But he could not detach the sad happenings in the onward progress for better things. A melancholy hangs over the departure of a man’s first loves in nature, which the sight of early surroundings at once calls forth, when upon the scene once more where appeared to him his first bright visions and where he dreamed his youthful dreams. There is not such bewitching melody in the songbird’s note. Every sound coming to his soul is laden with voices telling him he is going down the hill; that the tragedy, not necessarily at hand, still is nearing. It was a beautiful night, and Ike comfortably perched himself on the top of a rail fence in a convenient corner, where the top rail had slipped a little out of place and rested upon a lower, as if for nothing but to offer him accommodation, and kept watch for a while with the night owl, that in a tree not a half mile away, in all the variations possible for his throat, screeched the long familiar too-hoo into his attentive ear.

He had not intended to see Tobe that night and consequently was in no hurry. His father’s house was in complete darkness, and that darkness full of meaning. He looked often at a light in Jabez’s cosy sitting room, and, while he was not anxious to reach that

point sooner than necessary, he did not intend to let the light be long extinguished before he called for admission at the hospitable door.

A man of mature years and much experience would never perch himself on a rail fence like a love lorn lad or an unsettled wanderer, unless upon the spot where his young soul opened into conscious being and was charmed with all the natural beauties in which it was immersed. Such was Ike's position. The stars were exceedingly bright for the season, and he traced the triangles and forms so well known to him when a boy, and of which he now knew considerable aside from their position and brightness, and the other and principal knowledge, that they are the work of a Heavenly Father, and that he, a little mite on the rail fence, was of more real worth than the largest and brightest among them; for out of consideration for his well being Jesus lived and died.

Upon such occasions thoughts that come to the soul for contemplation are overwhelming. Besides the silent voice, nature poured in from all sides sweet familiar sounds. Ike sat and looked and listened; forgot the light in the window and Jabez's house.

A rat or some small night wanderer attracted the attention of Jabez's dog, that, true to his protective instinct, startled all within hearing who were not deaf or completely in the embrace of Morpheus. Ike raised himself from the half reclining position he had assumed, with elbow resting on the top rail, and chin and cheek buried in his hand, at once saw there was no light, and thought of the lateness of the hour.

"They are all asleep, I'm sure," said Ike half aloud, as he sprang from the fence and stepped quickly toward the house.

The dog met him half way with terrific bow-wows.

He was a large animal and had a voice in proportion to his size; but when he came upon Ike he was willing to renew acquaintance and stand upon friendly terms. He playfully leaped around him in wild delight, and in cooler moments ran ahead, turned around, faced him, laid his head on the ground between his fore legs, and in expectation waited for the figure he had so often seen about the place, and that his master treated with such consideration.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," was Ike's salutation, after going from the front to a side door, rapping first gently and then with considerable vigor, as he was obliged to do before he had any of the family aroused.

"We don't find any fault with being disturbed," said Jabez, with more than a father-in-law's best feelings in the grasp of the extended hand; for Jabez expressed his solicitude for Meg and the children.

"There is nothing wrong at home," said Ike, interpreting the shake combined with the anxious look on Jabez's face. "The wrong is all at this end of the road. I came in on the last train, and, as you have done away with the stage-coach, I didn't think it worth while to call out a livery horse for the short distance."

"The train!" ejaculated Jabez, in astonishment. "That's in three hours ago. I hope an old timer like you didn't lose your path."

"Not a bit of danger of it," responded Ike, with a ringing laugh just as of old; "but I found a comfortable place on the rail fence over there and took a look at your orchard, wheat field, potato patch, and things in general."

"I hope you haven't been three hours at it, Ike," said Jabez, stepping about to find a place on the table for the light he held in his hand, at the same time turning a chair around for Ike.

"I must have been captivated by the surroundings," replied Ike, "for I had no idea regarding the length of my musings until Bounce brought me to my senses, and the only regret I have is that I was obliged to disturb you."

"I hope you'll never have more occasion to be sorry for anything," said Jabez. "For I'll declare my pleasure is greater than your sorrow. As long as you come with no bad news I'll light you to your room rejoicing, and we'll talk tomorrow."

"The business I am on is not the most delightful, but it does not concern the family," replied Ike, as he took the offered lamp from Jabez, and both retired.

Bounce barked away at something real or imaginary, which, combined with the excitement of meeting, chased sleep from the two men until the night was well spent, but early morning found both astir, and as composed as if Ike had come direct from the train, and not devoted hours to meditation.

After a pleasant morning chat with Jabez and Peggy, Ike explained his unexpected appearance, and spoke of his business with Tobe.

"It's all up with Tobe," said Jabez; "he's in no way to talk business with any one; the neighbors are watching with him in turn. You may as well stay with us as go there, unless it's to look at him for the last time."

What Jabez had to say threw Ike into a deep study for some moments. He said in answer to Jabez's look of inquiry:

"I would like to see Tobe alive."

Peggy looked after Ike until the orchard hid him from view, and then set about attending to her household as energetically as she had done in her younger days, when it would be a very lively tune she could

not keep time with handling the churn dasher. Jabez noticed her agile movements and said:

"It brightens one up a bit to see Ike, doesn't it Peggy?"

"Yes," said Peggy laughing. "The sight of him this morning has made me feel twenty years younger."

"There's a good deal of old Draque about him," said Jabez meditatively. "It takes more than a breeze to turn him out of his course, right or wrong."

Peggy straightened, and looking squarely over her glasses at Jabez said:

"He's the kind of a man we all like, after all, with back bone of his own. You and Tobe and Draque had many a tilt in the past concerning things you felt compelled to look at in different ways."

"We had," said Jabez, as he watched her as closely as she had been scanning him, "and Draque is coming out ahead of us do I hear you say?"

"Well, not exactly," drawled Peggy. "At least not ahead of you, but we both saw the day when we'd have given more for Tobe's chances than for Draque's."

"I know it," said Jabez, "but, for all that, it's just because Ike's so much like his father that I tremble for his family."

"It's hard to believe, Jabez, it really is," said Peggy, while tears chased each other down her cheeks, as she thought of Meg and the children, "when a few years ago we couldn't see a fault we could find in Ike."

Both sat for some time thinking seriously, with eyes fixed on nothing in particular, and yet to an observer appearing as if sight was the particular sense they were making use of. Jabez raised his head, and said in a slow, solemn manner, denoting conviction back of every word:

“Peggy, John Strand and Tobias Lenk are both gone the same way—that the engine knocked the breath out of John some years sooner than Tobe went down doesn’t make him any more a wreck from the same cause. Sensible as Tobe was, and intent on doing good, he could never be made see how he was destroying himself.”

Jabez could not well control feelings of indignation that were prone to rise when he faced the home problem so few were inclined to handle roughly, and that was devastating more homes, destroying more souls, and degrading a greater majority by far than the chains that had clanked in the South and aroused Tobe’s sympathy for those compelled to wear them, and filled him with undying determination to work until they were broken. Jabez laid his hand on the table hard, and said in a louder and even more earnest tone than he had spoken his last honest thoughts to Peggy. “It’s just as I always said, Peggy, every one that takes the stuff is bound to go down sooner or later.”

“It’s strange,” said Peggy, “but we never can account for the reasons people will have for thinking one way or the other. That the minister took a drink, and that they drank in olden times always seemed to Tobe substantial reasons why he should drink.”

“And yet,” said Jabez, with a rather sarcastic twitch of the lips, “that Abraham had slaves, and that the custom was prevalent in olden times never had any weight in his way of thinking about slavery.”

He repented of the unfriendly feeling that for a single moment took possession of him as he was forced to associate Tobe with the great army he considered enemies of the human kind. He was willing to acknowledge it was an oversight in Tobe for which it was hard to account—with his good sense on the

one side and facts so conclusive on the other. Peggy shoved a paper to one side, saying:

"It tires me to look over the papers and read of the crimes committed nowadays. I often think we were farther advanced in civilization when we weren't counted so intelligent."

"If the knowing a lot of facts and not living up to anything in particular isn't high intelligence, there are a great many that can't make much boast, judging from newspaper accounts; that's a fact, Peggy," said Jabez, "but if I had my way I'd deal differently with half the criminals so-called."

At this point their conversation was stopped. Ike did not see Tobe alive; he had died an hour earlier. Klomp had been watching and was beside the dead when Ike arrived. Neither spoke while Ike looked upon all that remained of Tobias Lenk; he had learned to face the inevitable more calmly than when little Tim's upturned face filled him with both pity and reproach. Klomp had received some orders about the funeral, and was about to leave. Ike had no further business there, and left with Klomp. It was their appearance at Jabez's that cut the conversation between Peggy and himself short.

"There's no need saying he's gone," said Jabez, as the two entered. "I see it in your faces, but I knew it wouldn't be long when I left there last night. I told you, Klomp, he'd never want me back again."

Klomp inclined his head a little in assent, and dropped into the nearest chair. Thoughts of death occupied the minds of all to the exclusion of all other thoughts for a much longer time than was usual for silence to prevail. Jabez spoke first and said:

"Peggy and I were talking of the great school Tobe belonged to just as you came in."

Ike looked at him somewhat surprised and asked: "What school is that?"

"The school of both grown and growing that never hear a word of opposition, or a lesson concerning the deadly effects of the drug they are every day tampering with, as well as those that hear and don't heed," said Jabez.

During Ike's whole practice he had considerable reputation as a criminal lawyer, and since his return from the war many had not forgotten how it was thought and said, "his eloquence had undoubtedly swayed juries." It is certain his own strong, honest convictions were often so artlessly and marvelously conveyed to others that he helped them reach a point without which help it would be impossible to arrive, but no one could say he ever helped a man act contrary to what his conscience told him was right.

Notwithstanding all he had accomplished, his last client he had tried hard to save from the gallows without success. After taking breath Jabez continued, addressing his remarks this time particularly to Ike: "That poor fellow that was strangled to death the other day for chopping his mother's head off was as free of malice as either you or I."

"I believe it," said Ike, with enthusiasm glowing in his eyes and agitating his whole frame, "but that is one of the points it is hard to get at with accuracy—why a man temporarily insane from alcohol and one temporarily insane from some other cause should not be handled differently."

Ike sighed as the appalling picture came vividly before him, and he felt how powerless had been his efforts to save and said:

"Public opinion has everything to do with the manner in which both are dealt by, that is certain."

“And public opinion is sometimes off the track you used to think, Ike,” said Jabez, looking harder than ever at Ike. “I never read more distressing accounts of injustice in slavery’s palmiest days, and horrible, it’s true, some of them were, than we read every little while of things happening right at home, but it’s as Draque always said to Tobe,” continued Jabez, looking across the room at Klomp, and then back to Ike, “we can’t see because things are too close to the eye.”

“The majority are inclined to take a more thorough view of things at a comfortable distance, you think,” replied Ike thoughtfully.

“That’s the way it would appear to me,” said Jabez, “when I compare things at home and abroad.”

“But this is a different question altogether from the one you have reference to,” said Ike.

“I’ll admit it’s a different question entirely,” answered Jabez; “it couldn’t well be the same, but that doesn’t hinder it being settled in the same way.”

“By the ballot,” suggested Peggy, “but deliver us from the war.”

Ike wandered to the South, and was satisfied when he saw the black man free, with not all the advantages of his white brother, it is true, yet upon his own feet, a responsible agent, no longer an article of merchandise. He was just starting upon the path the ancestors of the American white man entered upon centuries ago, and must depend upon himself for his own, and the future destiny of his children, which, leaving all circumstances out of consideration, is an ennobling position.

Klomp, who had been quiet during the conversation between Jabez and Ike, laughed and said:

“When a man doesn’t see the way out of trouble

that's too close by his door, it's kindness in his neighbor to show him."

"That's the kindness I've been trying to show my neighbors," said Jabez laughing, "but so far have been showing the blind. It's plain many a man goes on thinking the wrong path's the right until he comes to the end, and there's no get out of it, and no man is more headstrong in going his own way than men of the great school that come to the end of the road, like John Strand, and Tobe and the man choked the other day."

"We can do nothing short of acknowledging they've had many helps to lead them in a particular way that's bad," said Peggy, as her thoughts wandered back to Hiram Blank's cabin where the young and unsuspecting crowded between barrels that held destruction for them to give their father's plenty of room.

"It's worse than that," said Jabez; "like the gladiators of old, they've been trained for the diversion, and may be the revenue."

After a moment's pause he continued: "There's a dollar and cent trouble at the bottom of it, sure as you live, just as there was with the slave question that's been solved to your satisfaction and mine, and all we need is younger and stronger men than Draque and myself to take up the fight." Jabez turned to Ike smiling and said:

"If we could only find a couple of sympathizers in our cause with the earnestness and the push Tobe and yourself had in slavery times, there'd be an end to the crimes and wholesale strangling in less than twenty years. I would never see it, it's true, but I'd die knowing the day was near."

Ike's willing tongue could convert no heartfelt emotions into speech. The sun of his enthusiasm had set.

While Jabez had resolved to enlist Ike's sympathies in the cause he still had doubts, doubts based upon substantial reasons; those reasons he expressed earlier in the day, when he said to Peggy, "There's a good deal of old Draque about him."

He consequently set about making himself a more congenial companion during the remainder of Ike's short stay, questioned him more particularly about home matters, and knowing Ruth's dislike for him asked:

"How is it with Ruth, does she take to you any better of late?"

"Not a bit," replied Ike, in a better humor than when she defied him on the street, and smiling as he spoke said: "She cannot be brought to see that I have any right about the house, and to attempt to interfere with any of her plans is cause sufficient to arouse a spirit of rebellion in her best moments."

"A while ago I thought the little tot would get over that, but now I've half a mind to think she never will," said Peggy.

"Ike 'ill have to conduct himself very gentlemanly if he ever wins Ruth's confidence, that's sure, after she's held out this long," said Jabez, as he looked at Peggy laughing.

"Oh, it's not impossible," said Peggy, encouragingly to Ike, "but you'll have to win her over from her own standpoint of the right, whatever that may be. You'll have to study her disposition and tastes, and make yourself agreeable from her way of thinking, it's pretty evident."

Ike laughed aloud as he replied:

"I think I understand her disposition and tastes. She's disposed to be happy when I am not to be seen, and has a taste for everything enjoyable when I am left out."

Klomp, who had been all attention during the conversation concerning Ruth, said:

"It's not often you come across a child that kindness 'ill not win."

"Father calls those the sugar-plum kind," replied Ike, and continued: "Ruth certainly will not accept any kindness from me."

"She's a very affectionate little thing for all that," said Peggy.

"There's one person she'd die for," said Jabez, "and that's her grandfather Draque. I stand no show at all when he's around. I think, too, the child has Bill in view, though she may not remember him," continued Jabez, as he looked closely at Ike, probably thinking Ike might not have thought of such. "She wasn't deaf to her grandfather's sorrow, young as she was. She knows, too, the soldiers killed him, and I don't believe she'll ever forget your uniform and brass buttons, Ike."

"That may be her reason for disliking you," said Peggy, "and, if it is, she'll get over it when she gets to have sense."

"It is sometimes really amusing," said Ike, "to see how disdainfully she can treat me."

"The Draques always go it whole hog in everything they undertake," said Klomp, with great earnestness, which remark abruptly turned the conversation.

Whether the three thus addressed thought it a joke or were pleased to hear the truth, must be wholly conjecture. None attempted to affirm or deny the assertion. Klomp, rising, said:

"I'll have to leave you, Ike. I've some little things to attend to about the funeral. I suppose you'll not wait till it's over?"

"I cannot," said Ike; "you delay the funeral so

long. I would like to be home tonight, but must be by tomorrow."

"We have a way of our own of doing things in the country, and don't hustle the dead away to get them out of sight, but bury them because we must," said Klomp, as he bade all good-morning and left.

The next day Ike wandered through the field and woodland, and called upon the tenant living in his father's house. The faces and forms before him there were visionary—the real ones he saw not. Bill was coming from the stable, as when last he saw him, and his mother had risen out of the easy-chair to see that things were made pleasant for Ike. He caught his breath as he was about to say: "Don't put yourself to trouble for me, mother." He hastily said something to the tenant's wife and soon was wandering aimlessly around. The fire that had animated him when there before now burned low, and the smoldering embers he did not care to coax back to life. He returned to the house and spent the remainder of his stay quietly with familiar books, some of which he and Meg had looked over together when children, and from them he had gotten his first ideas of the great big world.

The farm must go—there was no way out of it—and unless Mrs. Tobias Lenk had a bank account of her own, she had a poor outlook for daily bread. There was nothing Ike could do for her there—then why stay longer? A couple of hours' talk with Jabez and Peggy and he would be ready to leave on the evening train. The smoke from the locomotive curled over the passenger coaches as the train neared the big city facing a stiff breeze. Once in town, Ike was in no particular hurry home. His nerves had been subject to considerable friction, and a rest and something to brace him up were the much-desired things under

present circumstances. Several hours later he reached home unmistakably under the weather from the effects of no dinner and some drink.

CHAPTER XXII.

Neighbor Klomp's only child—a son—had in early years been sent to college, where he remained until the faculty saw fit to pronounce his education finished, and he now held a professorship in a famous college in the Buckeye state. He had not taken an active part like Ike in the War of the Rebellion, yet, like Ike and his own father, had gone over to the no-slavery side. He had voted for Abraham Lincoln, and probably had said many things that would give the few he came in contact with daily the idea that the Republican was the man needed; but further than that he was passive both prior to and during the great struggle.

It is reasonable to suppose he was a man God intended for other work. We find him now, as his position gave him considerable influence, the most promising worker in the Prohibition field for a radius of many miles.

All through life he and Ike had been warm friends, although circumstances kept them apart, and they could never be called companions. Their good feelings were based entirely upon early recollections, for after Draque decided that Ike should go to college and Klomp had set about giving his boy a thorough education, they had been thrown in each other's company but a very few times. They were independent thinkers of different types, the one standing by conscientious convictions as firmly as the other.

All the worry and anxiety Jabez was undergoing on account of Ike and his family could not be seen in his placid old face. He had heard and seen enough

to be convinced it was high time something should be done to pick Ike out of the current that was carrying him along. He would like to be able to place all in Ike's position on safe ground, but that was a wholesale question he was unable to handle.

After Ike left, Jabez had very little to say to Peggy concerning the thoughts that were uppermost in his mind. He did not seek relief in asking sympathy. He undertook doing his headwork this time entirely alone, which was an unusual way, and he found it hard; but in all their life no serious disagreeable question under consideration came so near home, and Jabez resolved to spare Peggy the pain and do all he could without arousing her suspicion that he thought there was such dire need of something being done for Ike.

Peggy had not seen and heard as much as Jabez, but still was pretty shrewd in dissecting the little she had heard; and Jabez must have thought her something of a mind-reader when she echoed his own thoughts as she adjusted her glasses just so, possibly to avoid suspicion of any doubts that might be harrowing her mind, when she said to Jabez:

"I've been thinking that if somebody with determination enough took Ike in hand he might be persuaded to let drink alone."

"That if is well put, Peggy," replied Jabez, as he changed his position of right knee resting on the left to left resting on the right.

"I know if is always in the way," said Peggy; "but some people have the knack of rooting out ifs where others can't."

"I'd give a good deal this minute to know where to lay my hand on the man able to root out the if that's bothering you and me," answered Jabez.

"It mightn't be as hard a thing as you think, Jabez, once you go about it," said Peggy.

Jabez shook his head slowly as he replied:

"My mind has undergone considerable change since John Strand first set me thinking. You see, Peggy, the farther we get on the more tangled the problems we have to solve. It's not like the question of slavery we've just got through with, as Ike coolly said to me a while ago, where master and slave were two distinct persons. This is a question, Peggy, where master and slave are one—today master and tomorrow slave; tangled completely, and a marvel to the cool, calculating man, who, as an observer of facts, sees master on top one day and slave the next. There are few, if any, I think, that understand the mix or deal justly by the man that appears to them single and yet is plural. The master makes up his mind today he'll rid himself of the slave, but the slave has a voice and vows he'll stay. He takes possession of the nerves and blood vessels, and makes it so uncomfortable for the master that he generally has his way, and no third party can force them apart. That's the fix we're in, Peggy. Ike can scatter his possessions to the winds, as the slave may say, or hand them all over to Hiram Blank or the like of him, just as Tobe did, and we daren't lift a finger to oppose him, but must watch Meg and the children turned out on the street."

"Don't make it so bad as that, Jabez," said Peggy, shuddering yet hopeful. "We sometimes read of a strong-minded man here and there reclaimed."

"We do," replied Jabez, "and we read of a few Christians in heathen countries delivering themselves up to torture for Christ's sake; but when we look at the bulk of Christians we find they're very exceptional ones who'd undergo such torture. It's one thing,

Peggy, to look up to and admire a man that's hero enough to endure anything, and another to be willing to walk in his tracks yourself. It's my opinion Ike's on a hard road to get off or he wouldn't keep it."

Peggy's sobs dulled every other sound, as she saw her own Meg and her children out on the street—a picture premature, but probable. Often on other occasions the silent tears had trickled down her cheeks, but she as often dashed them away. Through her whole life she had faced facts as facts, and submitted to the inevitable; but something told her this was a fact that should not be so faced, and in her very helplessness she wept aloud.

Jabez listened to the sobbing without saying a word. Sometimes when a man's feelings are most intense he is least able to find words to express them. He is surprised by new emotions as a child is surprised by first sights, and, half dazed, he feels that no words he could select—no matter how arranged—could express to another the half he wishes. But such a state gradually wears away, and the man, like a piece of malleable metal, is the better after every such blow of the hammer. After witnessing Peggy's uncontrolled grief, Jabez's resolution to do something was stronger than before. He looked at Peggy and said soothingly:

"I don't know just what plan to take, Peggy, but after the funeral we'll devise some means to try to bring about what you say."

"We mustn't forget the funeral, that's true," said Peggy, rising. "Tobe's wife sent for the black dress and bonnet. I must be looking them up for her."

"What black dress and bonnet have you?" asked Jabez in surprise.

"I have the dress and bonnet Mrs. Draque wore for Bill. I thought you knew it," answered Peggy.

“Draque left some things with me to take care of when he was packing away, and they’re among the things I promised to take particular care of; but I know Draque would loan them, and I’ll do so.”

“They’re none the worse for the wear, for the poor soul didn’t wear them long,” said Jabez as Peggy vanished from his sight in search of the mourning articles.

At Tobe’s arrangements for the funeral had been progressing. Klomp assumed the responsibility of attending to all the little necessities—in other words, he took upon himself the duties of undertaker and maybe more. He had the grave-digger at work, the pall-bearers named and notified; he helped decide upon the time for the funeral, called upon the minister to ask his service, and had consolation in his words for Mrs. Tobias Lenk.

Peggy had found, shaken out and wrapped both dress and bonnet, and had them ready for Jabez to carry to Tobe’s, as he proposed doing, for he was going there. Klomp was in the barn looking at the old buggy that was left as Jabez was passing on his way to the house. Jabez halted at the half-open door and looked in, when Klomp said:

“I’m thinking this old buggy isn’t fit to carry Tobe’s wife to the funeral. I think I’ll have to look to some of the neighbors for another.”

Jabez stepped in and took a survey of the buggy, saying:

“They might as well take that with the rest.”

“It’s not worth hauling away or it wouldn’t be here, you may be sure,” replied Klomp.

Jabez rested his elbow on the rickety buggy and looked around. There was not enough left on the place to pay the doctor’s bill and funeral expenses,

although the last named were to be very small. The farm belonged to Hiram Blank, and Mrs. Lenk was a charity subject in as full a sense as John Strand's wife was some years before, with this only difference—Tobe was gone; he would never hang around drunk and helpless, to torment, as John had done. After all, the epidemic with him took a more respectable turn. As the public viewed it, the disgrace lay in the inability to stand straight or walk. Whatever else proceeded from drink was looked upon with a certain degree of astonishment, but never with the same degree of disapprobation by the mass of intelligent lookers on. They never stopped to ask themselves the question—Was the man whose life was taken from him in some horrible way necessarily a more wicked man than this? But when frenzy is reached and another horror chronicled, the work of a madman, all are ready to denounce; never satisfied until he is stretched out lifeless.

Jabez stood aloof from the masses, for it could be truly said he was not one of them. They were all at some point along the very road John Strand and Tobias Lenk had traveled. There were many—and some of the many well up in years, too—who boasted they had never felt the certain paroxysms known as drunkenness, though they had taken a drink off and on all their lives. But that they should be held responsible for leaving themselves liable Jabez more fully believed than that the poor unfortunate already crazed should be handled like a beast and led to the slaughter.

Jabez's rest was prolonged and Klomp was getting uneasy. He must be looking after a suitable buggy. He moved a little from where he was standing in the direction of the door, when Jabez aroused and said, more excitedly than was his habit:

“I don't believe the slaveholders' guilt as great as

ours, Klomp; no, not even when he used the lash, when we stand mutely around witnesses of such dreadful happenings as that last week in our own county. I'll tell you," he continued, without an answer from Klomp, "I believe voters responsible for the head chopped off and the strangulation that followed."

Klomp admitted the case under consideration, as well as numerous other cases, were deplorable. He said to Jabez as the two walked to the house together:

"I'm not in the habit of keeping the stuff about the house as Tobe was, nor do I care for it particularly of late years, but still I never object to taking a drink occasionally, and, when I think custom demands it, I bring it in the house about the same as I did when Hibe first put on the back-logs for the accommodation of Tobe and Draque and myself, as well as many another man. But since Draque fell off I never troubled Hibe or any one much, for the want of suitable company."

Here Klomp threw back his head and said:

"I never saw the day, Jabez—that you well know—I wasn't solid on my feet, and that's the correct way to look at it, I think."

"I'm not so sure it is," answered Jabez. "Tobe was always pretty solid on his feet until very lately, at least there weren't many among us who'd like to say to his face he wasn't." Looking earnestly at Klomp, Jabez continued: "I look at it something after this manner, Klomp. It mightn't take but one bullet to kill one man, while two or three lodged in another mightn't kill him at all. It's just as certain, too, that death was in every one of the bullets, only, for some reason unaccountable to you and me, the three bullets failed to hit the mark. The one that carries the three bullets lives, but that doesn't prove he isn't more

to be pitied than the one that lost his life in the start; he's a sufferer, and he'll be brought down at last."

They had nearly reached the house, and Jabez slackened his steps as he continued:

"I feel pretty well convinced, too, as every one must that thinks about it seriously, that the last mentioned man isn't surgeon enough to extract the bullets himself."

"That may all be," replied Klomp, "but what are you going to do about it?"

"No small number of men is going to do much about it," said Jabez, "when their best friends on every side can see their neighbors picked off and feel satisfied with the work of the bullets as long as they can walk straight carrying them themselves."

Klomp acquiesced to what Jabez said without due consideration; he may not have felt the remark suited him. If he did he was too much engrossed with present duty to feel inclined to argue his case. Through his instrumentality the hour for the funeral had been set at 2 o'clock the next afternoon, and he said to Jabez as he parted with him at the door of Tobe's late home:

"It would take some lively stepping around, being as I have to hunt a buggy for the accommodation of Tobe's wife, as I hadn't counted on that in the morning."

Jabez deposited the mourning garments on a table and stepped to the bed where lay the remains of the man he had watched with so short a time before. The vigilant worker and true friend of the slave; the man that, had he lived a fortnight longer, would be thrown out of the home and from beside the hearth where he had spent so many hours, through many years, revolv-

ing in his mind methods by which he might help the oppressed, who enjoyed not the happy freedom he possessed.

After some minutes' silent contemplation beside the dead, Jabez left. Peggy was never known to wear mourning, but she possessed a black dress she wore to funerals. Jabez found her scrupulously brushing and turning over the folds, and humming a not altogether melancholy air. She did not see him until he accosted her with:

"Well, Peggy, these lives of ours are pretty well balanced between pain and pleasure, aren't they?"

Peggy started, remembering the mood she was in earlier in the day, and laughed as she said:

"Yes. Since I was a little one I never saw the time smiles and tears weren't playing hide-and-go-seek with me."

"When one is just on the balance and coolly speculating, it's hard to say which one feels the happier after, smiles or tears, isn't it, Peggy?" asked Jabez.

"If it's something like a broken limb that causes the tears you're happy after it's healed; but if the pain comes from some outside cause you're not happy while that cause exists, whether you laugh or cry, that's certain," said Peggy, settling upon recollections of the morning.

After a round of fifteen minutes' silence Jabez said:

"I'm an old man and it's pretty late in the day for me to attempt such a thing, but I'm going to give what strength I have left to the cause that's such an infant beside its opponent. I've known for some time that Jacob Klomp has been laughed at as a Prohibitionist—now he has to be a man, that stands on his feet square, like he does, with the whole country hooting at him. He's under hotter fire than ever Tobe was

more than thirty years ago when he cropped out among us a solitary Abolitionist. Klomp said nothing about it in the last few days, but before Tobe got so low he told me he was looking for him to spend a few days with them in the course of a few weeks. I'd like to bring him and Ike together. If there's anything in determination or persuasion—as you think there may be—Ike would have the benefit of it, for he'd have to face his equal there."

"He may be a match for him now, but I doubt if he would have been ten or twelve years ago," said Peggy, looking back with pride to the time they could find no fault in Ike.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Mrs. Tobias Lenk had been sent to the county poor farm. The beautiful yellow and russet leaves had fallen from the trees and made a cushion under the feet of the nut-gatherer, who was compelled to turn them over and over in search of the nuts; while sometimes an enthusiastic lover of the beautiful, forgetful of the nuts, emerged from the wood laden with some of the most beautiful of the autumn leaves.

This evening the sun had almost set. The lone, leafless tree that stood in Draque's cleared lot, and which upon a certain occasion in the springtime so gracefully bowed unto Ike, displayed nothing but bright clouds between its bare, stiff branches. The air was getting too chilly for longer search, when a woman with a basket filled, and a little girl avaricious enough to take more than she could well carry, came along a beaten path toward Jabez's house. The woman walked leisurely, but the child—overloaded—every few moments dropped some of the leaves, which she always stopped to pick up and add to the great bunch as she ran along—for run she must to make up for the time lost, if she wished to be near her mother.

To the beholder, the child was the personification of perfect health and high spirits; her curls flying in the wind and the pupils of her brown eyes large, owing to the exercise and happy emotions. She bounded into the house before her mother, threw the leaves upon a table, and said in a triumphant manner, as she looked at her grandmother:

“See there!”

"They're very pretty, Ruth," said her grandmother, who turned to Jabez, saying: "She's just like her mother that way, though she doesn't look like her a bit; always wild over flowers and such things she picked in the woods."

"What are you going to do with them, Ruth?" asked Jabez.

"Give them to grandfather," came the quick reply.

"Well, you might as well hand them over now," said Jabez coolly, well knowing they would not be left with him.

Ruth looked at him surprised and a little abashed said:

"They're for grandfather Draque."

"Do you give him all the pretty things you get, Ruth?" asked Peggy.

"Most all," replied Ruth, as she commenced bringing the scattered leaves closer together, as if she feared she might not be able to place them where she wished. Ruth's mother had entered and stood by the table. Upon being refused the leaves, Jabez smiled as he looked at Meg, who said:

"Won't you give grandfather Ghent some of the leaves, Ruth?"

Ruth had her arms around the pile, and her cheek resting on the top; she straightened slowly, looked alternately from her grandfather to the beauties, coyly selected a few, and placed them in his hand.

"I have a great deal to thank you for when it comes to giving away what you intended for grandfather Draque, haven't I, Ruth?" asked Jabez.

Ruth put her hand under the pile and tossed the leaves, saying:

"I've lots left, see?"

"You're right, Ruth. If you hadn't lots left I wouldn't get these, would I?"

Ruth's answer was a positive shake of the head. Meg laid her basket away with care and said to her mother:

"When I get into the woods I forget all the years that have passed since I left them. Books are musty and erudition a second-hand thing beside the sweet freshness of God's messages conveyed to the soul through such charming messengers as these."

She picked up a handful of Ruth's bright leaves, and gradually dropped one after another, so she could revel in the beauty of each particular leaf as it fell.

"They're like your mother and me, Meg, in their old age," said Jabez.

"We snatched them from the grave," answered Meg, "and are going to embalm them."

"When one has a will to so snatch human flowers it's a pity it's not so easily done," said Jabez, with a sigh.

Meg understood all meant by the remark, and the thrust went far deeper than Jabez intended it should, for he had no intention of giving pain. The light faded from her eyes, her face blanched a moment and then tears came in torrents.

"It's no use, Meg, it's no use," said Jabez consolingly.

He then rested his head on the high back of his chair, looked at something far beyond his farthest line fence and talked to himself.

"When we read accounts of children taken from their parents and sold to different masters, and many other similar cruelties, we were affected very perceptibly here in the north, and not without good reason. The day is coming for the emancipation of the drunkard's family, but I fear it's too far off to save you from torture, Meg. For our immediate families we realized too late the nature of the plague that, while we were

helping others, was settling down upon ourselves. It's not like pestilence or cholera or black death that in time spends itself, but it's come to stay—to be cultivated and propagated, and just such method as wiped out the curse of slavery is going to wipe out this, and no other. Those that are able to realize the horror and its cure must work with desperation. I'm not likely to see it to the end, but there are plenty as capable of bringing it about as Tobe and Ike and men of their stamp were to handle what they undertook, once they're found out and put in motion."

During the silence Meg had dropped into a chair by the table, and aimlessly assorted and piled Ruth's leaves, while Ruth, too tired for further exertion, sat mutely looking at her mother, her eyelids so heavy that in spite of efforts to keep them open they would sometimes cover her big eyes and her head would go down with a jerk.

Jabez aroused and said to Peggy as she came in to seat herself for a short rest:

"If we don't have supper here soon, Peggy, a little girl we both know 'ill not be able to eat. Isn't that so, Ruth?"

"I'm pretty tired," answered Ruth, as she straightened her little figure, erected her pretty chin, and flashed light from her brown eyes—eyes that, with chin and whole contour, told the determined creature she was.

"Too tired to eat?" asked Jabez.

"Not that tired," answered Ruth, this time rubbing vigorously at her eyes as if she thought the whole trouble lay there.

When seated at the table Jabez said to Meg:

"Your mother tells me Ike's not coming after you and Ruth as we expected, and I'm sorry for that."

"No," answered Meg. "He feels he cannot leave home now under the circumstances."

"Ike was always very generous in responding to solicitous invitations, and I'll have to think he had good reason for not accepting mine," said Jabez, looking at Meg.

Meg's smile had ceased to be the truly whole soul thing it was in former years, and with one of those smiles so unsuited to her face she answered her father:

"He surely thinks he has. Jacob Klomp is to lecture in the city tomorrow evening, and Ike has been appointed one of a committee to meet him. On account of old friendship he did not like to refuse."

Jabez, with a brighter look in his countenance, said: "That alters the case completely. It's been a long time since Klomp told me first he expected Jake at the house. What's long promised comes at last. He said the last time we talked about it he'd be down tomorrow night. But this engagement I hadn't heard of, or Klomp either; he'll be a day or so late on account of it, that's all, and I haven't a doubt but that Ike 'ill come with him when he finds he's coming. You'll do well to wait and see, Meg."

"It reminds me of the time Ike was full of engagements himself," said Peggy, "and the way he could talk when he got roused up, and how the people held their breath listening to him. I wonder if Jacob Klomp or anybody today could compare with him in those days?"

Jabez arrested Peggy's further progress in speculating as to whether or not such person existed, saying with a laugh twenty years younger than himself:

"There are no times like the old times, Peggy; no days like the days when we were young."

"It may be we have not so much to be enthusiastic

over," said Meg. "I've often heard Ike say the cause he championed would give voice to the dumb, if they could be brought to see the injustice as clearly as he saw it."

"Child," said Jabez, shaking his head, "all the good to be done in the world is not done yet, you may be sure."

"There's a greater question yet to be settled that will as surely call eloquence out of obscure places as well as high. There are louder and more piteous cries daily ascending to the throne from prostrate prayerful sufferers than ever came from slave lips, and I believe the great God is not deaf to it all, but listens. When the time comes means will be at hand to destroy the reptile that has been so long a pet, and that is poisoning life in countless homes throughout the land to-day."

"Yes, when the time comes," said Peggy seriously.

"The time will come when it's brought about by the earnest work of intelligent voters, just as the time came for the slave," said Jabez. He hesitated a moment and continued: "Undoubtedly, it 'ill take time to concentrate the minds of the people on that point. They need constant nagging by earnest workers, precisely as such nagging was necessary to convince them the black man was a person and not a thing."

Meg had left the table to tuck tired, sleepy Ruth away after Jabez's first sentence in reply to her remark that there might be no cause at present to arouse enthusiasm. Her remark called forth all he had to say, but he was satisfied Peggy alone constituted his audience before he gave vent to feelings that might again wound Meg.

"Any way," said Peggy, while she threw the thread over the needle with the forefinger of her right hand

so swiftly that the outlines of the fingers were lost, and her whole hand looked much like her own old worn out butter ladle swinging back and forth, "while I'd very much like it, I don't believe Jacob Klomp will cause the stir in that town Ike did. I'll have to see it to be convinced."

"You may not see it," answered Jabez, "any more than myself, but the stir is bound to be made by Jacob Klomp or somebody. We concluded long ago, Peggy, at Tobe's instigation, that truth and justice were levers sufficient to move anything when taken hold of by the right hands. They're levers, too, that never lose in strength and value, although they may be long abused."

Meg stepped into the room, and as she looked at her mother's fingers flying and the growth of the stocking in her hand said:

"You are as speedy a knitter as ever, mother."

Peggy was proud of the compliment, but Jabez gave her no chance to reply; he turned to Meg saying:

"In every respect it's the proper thing to improve with time."

"You carry it a little too far, Jabez," said Peggy, "when you make no allowance for worn out machinery. My fingers are not quite as supple as they used to be, though I go ahead with pretty good speed yet."

The three chatted away pleasantly the remainder of the evening. Meg decided to prolong her visit, thinking with her father Ike might accompany Jacob Klomp. The hoar frost worked busily all night; he came to kill, and morning showed how accurate had been his calculations. After his disappearance every thing left unprotected drooped in the morning sun. Meg stood by the window looking at the beds of flow-

ers and thought of the wonderful workings of nature—how a few weeks before the dew drops glistened on those leaves at that time in the morning, and dropped to the roots at a touch of the hand or the gentle sweep of the wind, leaving the moist leaves fresh and beautiful, but now, when sun dried, they would be crisp and burned and dead.

Ike broke his engagement as one of the committee, and Jacob Klomp mounted the platform not having the satisfaction of greeting his old friend. Reproach was not thought of by any one, for something certainly happened that prevented punctual, thoroughgoing Isaac Draque from keeping his engagement. Despite the absence of the distinguished committee man, Jacob looked over a well filled house, and spoke to an attentive audience. That he was not as vehement and convincing in his oration as another many of his hearers remembered was owing, perhaps, to the subject, which was not one that would naturally call forth the greatest effort the speaker might be capable of, at least so thought the great intelligent body before him. He was instructive and entertaining, and left his hearers impressed with the feeling that a great deal lay slumbering back of all they were able to understand—not in the discourse, for that was pointed and plain, but in the man.

He did not aspire to public speaking, and said it was a strange coincidence that placed him before them that night. He talked fluently on cause and effect, and from the eruption of volcanoes—the little spider's web woven in the corner, and its effect upon the feet of the unfortunate fly that became entangled—to alcohol and its effect upon the nerves, and the whole man, he was master of the situation and perfectly at ease.

The speaker left the next morning for his father's

home, without seeing Ike or learning the cause of his non-appearance. Probably no one could tell the exact cause, but Ike's despairing old father, who had opened the door for him early in the evening and guided his tottering footsteps to the bed, where he lay for hours unconscious of engagement, and not caring whether the world longer looked upon him as a responsible agent or not. But the awakening was pitiable, a spectacle more fully a cause to arouse sympathy in friend or foe than the helpless condition of a short time before. All the manliness of his nature welled up in remorse. At his father's recital of what had passed, he clutched nervously at the counterpane and bit his quivering lip.

Can it be possible, Ike, that you are as helpless as all others suffering from the same malady, that your wondrous strong mental and physical self has not some latent power, that at your will is yet equal to the calamity and able to rise above it?

Ike stepped a few feet from the bed and threw himself into a chair. The man who sat before his father looked the same as he had looked often before when that father felt he was so strong. Draque thought Ike's gray hairs were not numerous enough to prove the man was incapacitated for even greater things than he had yet achieved. Those heavy, blurred eyes a few days would bring back to their natural beauty. Draque looked at Ike and said in tones full of beseeching love:

"You surely 'ill not throw yourself away like John Strand or go down into the grave leaving those after you paupers like Tobe, will you, Ike?"

Ike drew a long breath, but made no reply. He looked out the window to avoid his father's scrutinizing glance—not the free agent he was when a lad of fifteen he blushing drank his first drink in Hibe's old cabin

at his father's command. Something outside claimed his attention for an unusual length of time; he neither answered Draque nor turned his head. Draque, as much to break the silence and draw Ike out as from any other motive, said:

I'm glad Meg's not here this time, Ike; she's had too much to bear of late, and is breaking down under it. How long will it be, Ike—how long."

"Ike's hand fell heavily by his side; he dropped his eyes, and yet not a word. He is calculating how long the ocean steamer without propelling power to carry it farther will flounder and toss in mid-ocean, surely a doomed thing, with all its cargo of human life, if left to itself for re-enforcements it does not possess. It may be run into and demolished soon by a steamer fully equipped like John Strand was run down by the engine, or not meeting such fate drift hopelessly until it is at last swallowed by the great ocean, like Tobe went down while all he had possessed was gathered in to swell the possessions of Hiram Blank.

Ike could not remain with such reflections long; they would drive him mad. He arose and prepared to go through the routine of another day.

There was nothing upon the breakfast table tempting enough to induce him to eat; he sat ill at ease, talking to his father and sipping a cup of coffee Draque called delicious, but which was plainly disagreeable to him.

He left the house and ambled down the street to his office, his gait sufficient to say to a close observer "much, if not all, of the original Ike has been taken out of that man." Ike felt it himself, and asked "by what?" and the answer came to him like a blast of the simoon.

"Public opinion says by my own fault, and public

opinion may be right; but I have not the power to decide."

Upon entering his office and taking his accustomed place he saw nothing to be done, definitely and clearly, as he once saw. The chair opposite him assumed twice its size and appeared unsteady on its feet; it sometimes went so far that if it had a head on it he would be willing to swear it was a man ready to deal him a deathblow. The walls closed in upon him, and expanded capriciously; without resolution he surveyed all, and in desperation took his hat, and went out. He had not far to go to find the brace that had become to him a necessity, and that, while giving momentary motive power, treacherously slips another brick of solid foundation from under the feet, making every good himself or friends might hope for still more remote.

After the brace he worried through a part of the day at what the world calls attending to business, all the time fighting with the desperation of a hero with an invisible enemy, indescribable even to himself. The shades of night fell on no sadder spectacle than grief-stricken Meg when she learned that Jacob Klomp had arrived alone, and knew, without being told, the cause that prevented Ike. The prowling, destructive old coon in her father's cornfield shrieked in her ears. She and Ike had many a time sat in the shadow of her father's house and listened when the sound was far from unpleasant. But now all nature, animate and inanimate, seemed to unite in making her a most miserable creature. She let fall the bunch of ripe grapes she had just gathered, and went into the house to seek a quiet place where she could think undisturbed, and where mutely she sat until an hour later, when Jabez came "poking" around, as Peggy was prone to

call his wanderings, with lamp in hand. He startled her, saying:

“I thought it was a ghost I heard up here, Meg, that kept that old rocker creaking a little. You’d better come down out of the cold, and spend what’s left of the evening around the fire with the rest of us.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jacob Klomp learned upon his first meeting with Jabez that the old man and the young man may have ideas akin. The fact of Jabez having trudged the earth some five and twenty years before Jacob was born did not prevent the two men meeting at this period upon the same plane. Jacob's good old father, whose thoughts had been centered upon Jacob's education, even when he hoed and piled away the corn, was not as near the right in that son's estimation as Jabez, who bowed his head in assent when Jacob said:

“You nor I nor nobody can do good with any hope for permanence while the liquor traffic is the thing it is.”

Jacob had breakfasted with his parents and talked for an hour or more about little things that did not come to them the night before, after which he left the house to look around. He walked slowly, and looked attentively in this and that direction. He stopped to pick and spread on his hand a single golden-rod, and looked at the clusters that lined the fence corners for a rod or more. He watched the lone grass snake, the last of the season, in haste and fright glide out of sight, and listened to the water in the creek as it journeyed on, singing over the mossy stones the self-same song it sang for him twenty years before, and finally reached Jabez's house in time to sit down with them to dinner.

“We don't stand on ceremony here,” said Jabez,

his face a perfect picture of hospitality. "The invitation is just out."

Jacob knew how true it was, for he had heard Peggy's voice coming from some unseen spot laden with the invitation Jabez had the honor of extending, and which was accepted. As Peggy presented herself, Jabez said:

"It's been many a day since we've had the honor of having the son of our next neighbor dine with us."

"That's true," replied Peggy, "and it makes the occasion all the more delightful."

Some of the neighbors had said: "Jabez could measure a man in fifteen minutes as well as many another man could in that many hours." His countenance showed the measuring of the man before him was quite satisfactory. In his most pleasant way he said:

"You must like to poke around the fields as well as Ike. I've noticed you've been coming this way all morning."

"I think Ike is no exception. All country boys are lovers of nature. The fields and flowers and creek have been trying to get ahead of each other telling me stories of what passed since I played among them."

"And wonderful stories they can tell to any one that feels like stopping to listen," said Jabez.

"I do not see how any one familiar with the place for any length of time could tear himself away from the stories—many of them are so much a part of our own history," said Jacob.

"That's a fact," answered Jabez, "and for the majority those histories are oftener sad than otherwise."

"Progress is the word," said Jacob, "and a man must be satisfied with the tales the few remaining trees and landmarks tell him, along with the void that must necessarily be in his heart when thinking of

friends that have been swept away as well as landmarks. Although the thick forests and silent dells were holier places to me, I bow to the decree that has swept them so nearly away." He looked directly at Jabez and said: "It is hard to realize that a little more than half a century ago there was not room for a log cabin anywhere about here until a dozen trees or more were chopped down and taken out of the way."

"Not only here," retorted Jabez, "but many a mile around the condition of things was about the same. I remember well when that great city of yours hadn't above two dozen houses in it, and them not much to look at."

Jacob sat for a few seconds quietly contemplating the picture Jabez placed before him, and contrasting the few houses not much to look at with some of the handsome ones under his eye. The contrast was certainly pleasing, and it is quite probable one contrast placed before his mind another, though the second was unpleasant. He looked up quickly and said:

"Father tells me Tobe's life had a sad ending."

"It's true," answered Jabez; "but the saddest part is the future of the county pauper."

"I passed the poor farm on my way down, and had I known Mrs. Lenk was there I would have stopped to see her," said Jacob.

"You didn't come in on the train then?" asked Jabez.

"Only part of the way," said Jacob. "I thought I would enjoy a ride over the old road and a friend drove me that way."

"It's been a long time since I was over that road; how does it look?" asked Jabez.

"It is completely changed, and some say the condition is improved, but the grandeur you were familiar with is forever lost," said Jacob.

The county poor farm, where Mrs. Tobias Lenk found shelter, occupied a not unpleasant situation in the midst of thrift and destitution, although destitution in farming precincts has never just the same meaning it has in large towns and cities. The farmer is reduced until all is gone, always being the equal of more fortunate neighbors, and when the last plank is taken from under him he is simply transplanted from friendship's garden to the barren desert of food and raiment. But the city poor man on his road to the pauper home has no friends. He is an individual people with means and the much-boasted education, to all appearance, look upon as one not going the same road, with the same end in view, never thinking that at the end of the road it is possible the pauper may find rest in Abraham's bosom, as in the parable. The east line of the farm extended some distance along the road Ike and his stage-coach companion traveled when Ike was so penetrated by the presence and words of the uncommon man before him that he stepped out of the coach a greater person than the Ike who entered it. For, whatever is force sufficient to arouse man to strive for greater things in the realm of truth and justice and love, where God is king, than he ever before thought of, leaves him greater than it found him.

It does not matter much whether he catch such inspiration from the spirit still in the flesh or through the medium of those characters called letters, which handled dexterously embody such power. But pity was a word Ike never cared to hear when linked with himself. In his heart he loved the word, but it must invariably be for others, and in no way associated with self. He never claimed to not be a suitable subject, and probably the consciousness that such was a

fact he felt too proud to acknowledge made the despised word seem venomous when spoken ever so softly by a friend. It invariably brought the glow of indignation to his cheek, that flashed for a moment and left an ashen hue the more pitiable to behold.

Jabez knew well Ike would not listen to pity, and how to get about telling Jacob to not undertake the battle with such armor was somewhat perplexing. There was no telling how lengthy a dialogue it would take to say what might be said in a few words. He said, more as if asking a question than repeating something he already knew:

“You didn’t get to see Ike when you were in town?”

“No,” replied Jacob, “but I think I will make it a point to see him on my return.”

“Do,” said Peggy. “Both he and Meg will be glad to have you stop a while with them. Meg left us only a few hours ago. I’m sorry she’s not here.”

It was still plain Jabez had a difficult task. He helped his guest to a dish beside him, looked at Peggy as if he would like to be prompted, and laughed as he said:

“I’ve stayed at home pretty close of late and have had no opposition from Peggy, and you know without a little opposition things become monotonous. When one can push their views no farther ahead than the other, you see how a thing is bound to come to a standstill.”

“Then you expect to find in me an opponent?” asked Jacob.

“I’m not looking for an opponent,” said Jabez, with a shake of his head, “but I’ll expect you to push what we wish so much farther ahead than Peggy and myself are able that it ’ill be a pleasure to follow you.”

“Is that how affairs stand?” asked Jacob, looking up

astonished. He continued: "I would be sorry to disappoint you, but I depend upon the sense of you old settlers as much, if not more, than you depend upon education; so that, if you think you are not able to hit the mark, in attempting it, I am inclined to tremble."

"I'll not go far from the mark," answered Jabez, as he laughed aloud, "but the trouble is I'm not able to hit hard enough to do any good." Here he looked at Peggy and said: "I don't know what's the matter, Peggy, but I'm longer getting at the point than it usually takes me."

Peggy made no reply, but bowed her head. Then Jabez went on addressing himself to Jacob.

"As you know, Ike's been in the habit of taking a drink all along, I believe, since he was a boy, but of late he is carried completely away by times, and the future of his family is the source of constant worry to Peggy and myself, fearing he might wind up like Tobe. Some time ago I promised Peggy I'd ask you to talk to him, for she's hopeful you might be able to persuade him when another couldn't."

"Pardon me," said Jacob, "I believe it is something persuasion has nothing to do with. It would have been a far easier task to persuade each individual slaveholder to liberate his slaves, which would have been a method less acute reasoners than Ike would be able to see the fallacy of at once."

"We believe that," said the hopeful Peggy, "but still while you couldn't hope to persuade them as a class, you might meet with one or two that would be so alive to justice that they would liberate those they held in bondage at the instigation of another."

"You are right," replied Jacob, "such exceptions might have been possible."

"That admission will give you room to hope, won't

it, Peggy," asked Jabez, who, for her sake, appeared more hopeful in this case than he really was. He then turned to Jacob and said:

"Your idea is Prohibit, I know, and you and I are one on that point."

"Yes," said Jacob, at the same time taking in the whole world at a glance. "For me, Prohibit has the same sacred meaning Abolish had for Ike. It stands pre-eminently alone."

"You'll have to be very cautious about being sorry for Ike or his family," said Jabez; "it seems to be about the only thing that ruffles his temper."

"That and Ruth's persistent dislike for him," said Peggy.

"Too much talk about what Ike says doesn't concern other people doesn't take well with him," said Jabez. "His own have tried so hard to persuade that he appears to not care about hearing anything on the subject. At all events, you're not likely to arouse the same enthusiasm we've been long accustomed to when other subjects were touched upon. But don't be discouraged with a bluff."

"What might be thought impudence in another man Ike will not consider such in me, I think, if I am able to show him any similarity between his mission and mine," replied Jacob.

"You're going back soon, are you?" asked Peggy, interest in Ike permeating her whole frame even to her finger tips.

"Not so soon," replied Jacob slowly. "I expect to stay much longer than I first intended. I have several reasons for so doing that appeared to me since I came. The first is I will hardly ever have another opportunity of spending any length of time in the old home with my parents. The voices I heard told me

so as I walked across the fields this morning. Of course, I knew it all along in a vague sort of a way, but the voices I heard made me feel it. Besides, my parents are anxious I should stay, which anxiety I never felt more inclined to indulge. It will be a benefit to my health as well, although I do not feel any of the infirmities of age. And it will give me a chance to listen in lonely haunts to voices that came to my soul from afar, when I was but a boy, and that I always loved to hear, for the same are there still, and I should be better able to appreciate."

Peggy did not show her disappointment, but disappointed she was, for hours seemed days, and days weeks, when nothing was being done to save Ike. Now that her only hope rested in the superior persuasive power of Jacob Klomp, she did not care to see that hope delayed a moment.

She arose, and was followed to the family sitting room by Jabez and their guest, who, as he looked out the window over old scenes, was more inclined to think than talk. Neither host nor hostess disturbed his reverie, but seated themselves to think. They were filled with thoughts as puzzling as ever they labored to clear away, when in younger days they planned and worked and hoped by being industrious and frugal to be able to realize in their old age the peace that comes with plenty without a care. Jacob's thoughts must have wandered from the fields, dear as he loved them, and become absorbed in something else. He turned abruptly from the window, saying as he crossed the room: "You said something about Ruth disliking Ike. How does that come?"

"Oh, it's a trait peculiar to the Draques," said Jabez smiling. "From old to young there's a spirit of determination in them; they see for themselves the

way they are going, and to head them off requires a good deal of strategy."

"But with all that Draque bowed to the teetotaler," said Peggy.

"He did," answered Jabez, "and turned his back on old chums that another man might find hard to part with, although we were never able to make a Republican out of him."

"It is certain," said Jacob, "the Republican has done his work, and we are thankful he was able to do it. It is such men as Draque the country is looking forward to now. The Prohibitionist will be a greater emancipator than the Republican."

"Draque is as far from a Prohibitionist as he is from a Republican," said Jabez. "Although he has no notion of robbing himself or coming to any bad end, he thinks it's all right other men should be allowed to do as they please that way."

"Still, his example is better than his neighbors," replied Jacob.

"You hardly answered Jacob's question about Ruth," said Peggy.

"I didn't," answered Jabez, "but he's a pretty clever fellow that sticks to the point always, isn't he, Jacob?"

"He certainly is," said Jacob, "and such men are few, as well as clever."

"I never met a man that kept the one thing before him like Tobe did, when he was laboring to convince the people about here that slavery was wrong," said Jabez.

"What's coming over you, Jabez," asked Peggy. "I think I'll have to answer the question that was asked of you."

Jabez looked at her and answered with the single word, "Do." Peggy turned to Jacob saying:

“It’s strange, but Ruth has a dislike for Ike he’s not able to induce her to overcome. He hasn’t been able to do her a kindness, for she’ll not accept it, and while she’s all smiles and pleasant words for others she’s nothing but snarls for him.”

“That is strange,” said Jacob, “but what did Ike do to incur her ladyship’s displeasure.”

“All the reason we’ve been able to find for it is he wore a uniform with brass buttons and carried a gun that killed people,” said Jabez.

“Ruth was too young to know much about the war, was she not?” asked Jacob.

“She wasn’t too young to know that hearts were broken at home, and tears were shed every day for them that went to come back no more, for her little intellect first began to grow witnessing such,” said Jabez.

“Yes,” said Peggy, “and Ike stepped in on her so abruptly with his uniform and all that she’s never gotten over it, at least that’s what we think.”

“It may have shocked her,” replied Jacob.

“It was enough to shock a child; yes, enough,” answered Jabez, in an extremely serious way, at the same time slowly shaking his head.

CHAPTER XXV.

While matters were being thus discussed at the farm Ike was holding high carnival at home over crushed expectations. The extra depression being caused by his inability to introduce Jacob Klomp upon the night already mentioned, combined with the consequent feeling of his real inability to do anything. The latter posed so persistently and constantly before him that to drive away the phantom he deliberately, and with the same freedom his free fellow man possessed, as the average observer would surmise, continued to drink with greater recklessness than upon the ill-starred day.

He had arisen from one of his stupid sleeps more wild than ever for the stimulant that quiets and lulls—that deadens all woe. He dragged himself more dead than alive down the stairs, where all he coveted was bottled in the closet of the once cheerful sitting room. He made two or three unavailing attempts upon the door, which at last opened, and with shaking frame and more unsteady hand took from the shelf a bottle and dropped into a chair.

The bottle was tightly corked, and his attempts to uncork were for some time unsuccessful.

At last, with a desperate jerk the cork came, and his elbow hit the window back of him with such force that the sound was heard through a good part of the house. The noise inside attracted the attention of Ruth, who was playing and taking in the beauties of the landscape from a commanding position on the porch. She put her curly head inside to see what had

happened. Ike had let fall the cork and screw, and was feeling too comfortable to relinquish his position. He called to her and said:

“Ruth, pick up the cork.”

She looked at him and the cork, and with a toss of her head said:

“I won’t.”

“You do things about as you please around here I know,” stammered Ike, “but I’ll see that you do as I tell you hereafter.”

Ruth stood looking at him fearless and defiant, never offering to obey, and certainly having no such intention. Ike, after another gulp at the bottle, said:

“Now, Miss Saucebox, I’d like to know if you are going to conduct yourself more like a little lady. Come and pick up that cork for me.”

She elevated her chin to an angle that meant a great deal, but said not a word as she stepped back to her bench on the porch regardless of what was expected of her, and shook up grandfather’s leaves.

This so enraged Ike that he arose, and with energy he could not command a moment before rushed to the porch.

Ruth stood her ground, not caring for Ike and fearing no harm, for she knew nothing but gentleness of treatment. Innocent little thing, she looked at him with an air Ike, in his frenzy, interpreted: “I dare you to touch me.”

He picked her up and struck her right and left and, not looking where, gave her a toss that sent her over the rail of the porch and walked back saying:

“I think you will do as I tell you next time.”

Her screams brought grandfather Draque to her assistance; he picked her up, fondled her and patted her head. He carried her into the house to her mother,

whose eyes had been swollen for days, and who appeared to have not another tear to shed. She took Ruth in her arms, and seating herself in a rocker, rocked back and forth to quiet the child, and soothingly said:

“You will soon be better, Ruth, and then you must keep out of papa’s way,” which was the first reminder poor Ruth had gotten that it was unsafe to be near him.

Ruth cried herself asleep, and weary Meg laid her down. Draque was the most downcast man in the great city that night; between watching Ike and Ruth, who was very restless, he hardly closed an eye.

Long before daybreak Ike was on the alert, looking for the stuff that for a few hours more would drown sorrow—do away with all ideas of responsibility and render senseless the Godlike faculties that make man so superior to all created animals.

Draque followed the handsome, talented and eloquent Ike, who was once not only his pride, but the pride of the Republican party, begging him to try and suffer the dreadful something no one but a brother sufferer can picture, and that no one has ever been able to satisfactorily describe and throw the glass aside.

Ike’s respect for his father was never obliterated, and after long entreaties and gradual tapering off or, as Jacob Klomp would strongly assert, after the paroxysm had run its course, Ike was restored to his senses, forlorn and broken hearted as usual.

Draque was often heard say, speaking more to himself than another:

“Whether the fault is yours or mine, Ike, it’s hard to tell.”

About a day or so after Jacob’s visit, Peggy began

to feel uneasy concerning his lengthy stay at home, and how long it might be before he would call upon Ike. She resolved to bring Meg right back provided she could persuade Ike to accompany her, feeling it would be a more speedy way of bringing him and Jacob together. She said to Jabez when talking over the matter:

“The quietness of the place gives one a chance to think, Ike might find a wish in his heart to return to the dear old life when solicited amid scenes that brought back so many recollections of the happy past.”

Consequently the invitation went its way that very day. Ike was now drinking sparingly and was very sick. He thought a run to the country would do him good, and accepted the invitation. But Meg was unable to go. Ruth was exceedingly irritable and cried a great deal.

After Ike left for the country Draque and Meg consulted, and decided to call a doctor. Just what was wrong with Ruth neither her mother nor grandfather learned from the doctor that day. That there was something the matter with her back, which made it necessary for him to call again and again, was the one thing of which they were certain, and also that the trouble bid fair to claim her as an invalid for weeks to come. She had never been a sufferer, and the newness of sleepless, suffering nights made it extremely hard for uncultivated patience.

Draque had a way about him of making another feel what he felt himself, and since Amanda died he never failed to do his best to lead the suffering one to God, where he found his peace in the promise of a better land where Amanda was sure to be.

When the pain came hard Ruth listened to grandfather Draque tell of the thorns that crowned the

Savior, and the nails that held him to the Cross, and the tears that came to her brown eyes were half in sympathy for Jesus' suffering.

Ike was ill at ease during his journey, and upon arriving at the little station near the farm he proceeded at once to get a conveyance to take him to his destination. Today there was neither romance nor poetry in companions, drive or scenery. Ike knew he was miserable, too miserable to care to know anything more. The commanding, proud bearing Ike of former years crouched slovenly against the side of the carriage and hung his heavy head. No pulsation of his sluggish heart was able to send the blood current through the arteries and veins as it should flow. The driver drew in the horses at Jabez's gate. The suddenness of the stop shocked and aroused Ike; he looked around in an uncertain way, and then understood he was at the end of his journey. He opened wide as he could his blood shot eyes and alighted. Peggy said to Jabez:

"It will never do to let Jacob Klomp know Ike's here till he feels better."

"You're right," answered Jabez, looking very demurely. "It 'ill do no good; he'll be in better trim after twenty-four hours or so, and whether he sees Jacob or not he's better here than at home under the circumstances."

Whether Jacob Klomp lounged under the trees in his father's orchard or watched the sun set from the back porch, while the ever shifting, piling clouds changed into varied forms and figures, where were the fiery red with doleful dark borders, and higher, paler clouds, until near the zenith they melted into the softest tints of pink and white, he was always the same quiet, soulful observer. A man fully convinced that man is a worker in God's design, certain that

God's creation is still going on, and that he a part of animate creation was made to carry out some of that design, however small. He felt himself the possessor of superior intelligence. Such faculties as he possessed he knew many another man to be equally endowed with by nature, yet circumstances favored him in a way that tended to bring out the best that was in him; therefore why should not more be expected of him.

He sat in such reflective mood, with chair tilted back, and both feet on the rail that surrounded the porch looking at the small part yet to be seen of the orb that gives day to the earth, his heart glorifying the great Creator, when his sublime meditation was disturbed by his father's footstep on the porch, and a voice near his side saying:

"Jake, I believe Ike Draque is over at Jabez's."

"Is he," was the quick response.

"I'm thinking he is, although it's not like him to stay shut up this long when he comes," replied Klomp.

"He is probably tired and enjoys solitude well enough to keep out of sight for a while. I would not like to break his reverie if it was anything like as delightful as mine was a while ago," said Jacob.

"I suppose that's a hint for me to get out of the way," said his father, stepping back.

"It is nothing of the kind," answered Jacob, "but I thought you might have an intention of asking me to help you disturb Ike, and if you had no urgent reason why I should accept I would feel like declining."

"I don't know whether he's there or not," said Klomp, in an altered tone.

"You must have some reason for thinking he is there, father," said Jacob, looking up.

"We-ll," answered Klomp, then stopped until the

sound of the prolonged well died out. "I saw a carriage stop there early in the day, and I haven't seen Jabez about the place today, although he left what he was at yesterday unfinished, and I thought that would carry me out in thinking he'd some one there, and who would it be but Ike."

Klomp took some time to think the matter over and continued: "We'll have them all over here if he is. It seems we're always going to Jabez's house, and they are never coming here."

"Just as you say, father," quietly replied Jacob.

A mosquito took it upon himself to chase Jacob from the porch. The latter fought nobly for a while, slapping right and left, with one hand and the other—now aiming a blow at his nose, and again leveling a good one on his cheek, but the determined little mosquito was victorious, and Jacob ingloriously fled. And so it always is, you determined little thing; you can send on a stampede a creature a hundred thousand times your size, and without knowing what you did, sing on.

Just so; a little man in an obscure corner of the globe, with sufficient determination, can make a great stir for the better among his fellow men if he only will, and the extent over which his power may be felt far surpasseth in proportion the difference between man and his little assailant.

You have been chased from the porch by a mosquito, Jacob, but you are the prime mover of a force that is going to banish alcohol from the festive board throughout this broad country that will turn the source of revenue into another channel, and place the long misused drug in its proper place. That place being the druggist's shelf, from which it must be served in small quantities, only by prescription, and where its twin brother opium, with its horde of near relatives that

mean death when handled without thorough knowledge of their nature, are placed, and where they surely belong. Klomp stepped into the room where Jacob sat in darkness and said:

“Those blamed mosquitoes take all the comfort out of the evenings here for a man, don't they Jake?”

“They do,” said Jacob laughing, “and take some of the determination out of him, too. I had intended to watch the shifting clouds while there was one to be seen, but a single mosquito more venturesome than the score of others I heard singing compelled me to turn my back upon the scene.”

“Your mother doesn't care about much light in the house, it brings them in so bad,” said Klomp, “but I'll turn it on a bit for you.”

“Don't do it,” responded Jacob. “I have been inside long enough to accustom my eyes to the place. I do not care to see anything in particular. I'm thinking; I can see the moon from where I sit; it is climbing fast, and is an incentive to carry one's thoughts with it up and up.”

Klomp left the lamp untouched; he opened and banged doors in search of something he evidently did not often look for, which he knew was some place, and yet was not certain where that place might be. He left the room, and Jacob heard the same bang and slap in the next room, when he called to his father and asked:

“Have you lost something?”

“I haven't just lost it Jake,” came the reply, “but still I can't find it.”

Jacob picked up the little lamp and turned the light on full, at the same going to help his father.

“Your late,” shouted Klomp, as he saw the light coming, and with satisfaction in every feature of his

honest face, upon being able to treat Jake so handsomely, he held a bottle of fine old stuff in his hand, and said to Jacob, who still stood in the doorway:

“Come in and we’ll have some.”

“Why, father,” said Jacob, “I thought you knew I looked upon it as poison. While I don’t like to refuse any kind offer of yours, I cannot bring myself to take the dose even at your hands.”

“Then I’ll not offer it,” said Klomp, putting the bottle down untouched, “but I didn’t know you’d gone as far as that, Jake.”

“I have gone so far that I am sure, as a poison, it has no equal, and consequently should not be used according to individual discretion,” replied Jacob.

“If the doctor said you might take a dram it would be all right, wouldn’t it, Jake,” asked Klomp with a mischievous twitch in the corner of his mouth.

“If a conscientious doctor prescribed a little, much after the manner he would prescribe opium, it would,” replied the serious Jacob.

Jacob took his place by the window, and looked at the moon. Klomp found a soft place for the bottle in a drawer with the table linen, and said, as he closed the drawer:

“The next time I look for it I may have to hunt longer than this time; I’ve put it away so secure.”

Jacob could not help smiling at his father’s remark, which pleased Klomp, who laughed heartily and said:

“We’re a strange quartette, Jake.”

“I am not sure I know what you mean, father,” said Jacob.

“Well,” said Klomp, still laughing, “I have in my mind Draque and myself, and you and Ike. You ought to be Draque’s son and Ike mine.”

“Do you really think you would like the quartette better if we were thus placed,” asked Jacob.

“Indeed I’d not,” promptly answered Klomp, “although I’ve seen the time when Isaac Draque was second to no man in the country.”

“And this change may be laid entirely at the door of the poison you would have me take a while ago,” said Jacob.

“Whatever I do for myself in the future,” replied Klomp, “I’ll never go to the trouble of hiding away for you a bottle of the very best I could lay my hands on, you may depend on that.’

CHAPTER XXVI.

The next day there was quite a stir in Klomp's kitchen. Before the sun had well risen, Klomp went to the far field, to let the sheep in on a pasture the cows had eaten pretty bare, but still afforded enough for sheep to grow the best wool in the state. Jabez was looking about at things, too, but, like Klomp, not in for a day's work, as Klomp saw at a glance as he ran his eye over the Sunday suit.

"You don't look as if you'd do the potato bug much harm today, Jabez," said Klomp.

"It's rather late to try to do him any harm," replied Jabez, "for all the harm he could do us he's done. It's only a crazy man that talks potato bug in husking time."

"I know it," said Klomp, laughing, "but it was the first thing that came to my head, and I let you have it, for I see you're in your good suit as well as myself."

"I am," answered Jabez. "Ike came up yesterday, and I thought I could afford to drop farming for a few days, and entertain him."

"I said to Jake last night I thought he was here," said Klomp, slapping his hands, "and more than that I said I'd have you all at the house if he was. I don't know how it happens that you haven't been over much lately, but we'll look for you this evening—you and Peggy and Ike."

"Very well," said Jabez, "I don't see any reason why we can't go. As long as we're in our Sunday clothes we might as well be at a neighbor's house as our own."

“That’s a fact,” said Klomp, “though I never looked at it that way till now.”

The two men were never hurriedly separated when they happened to come across each other in the fields. They generally had very important items to exchange concerning farm management and home affairs, but did not restrict themselves exclusively to those subjects. Such gossipy news, as that Napoleon III. was a prisoner, and the foundation of the French empire in all probability upset, was talked over with as much enthusiasm and sound sense, as Gotham’s highly favored sons of fortune could in their best moments command. They had no desire to control the money market, but when any question of vital importance was placed before them, political or otherwise, they came to the front with as much hard sense as is usually parceled in two individual men. But the exchanging of ideas at such length, regardless of the time it took, was what raised the racket in Klomp’s kitchen. The men had been engaged in a hand-to-hand debate concerning the plausibility and possibility of killing the liquor traffic, at least in their own state. Both men were thoroughly aroused, and were also men of leisure, for at least that day. They took no note of time, and until the sun was near the meridian they argued pro and con. Jabez’s platform was:

“It cannot be brought about by temperance exhortations and state laws. We must elect a prohibition president.”

Klomp suddenly broke down in the debate, and asked, “Did you have your breakfast, Jabez?”

“No,” answered Jabez, looking around for his shadow.

Klomp shook his head and said, “It’s not to be seen,

and we'd better make tracks, or we'll lose our dinner as well."

"When old men like we are, Klomp, forget to go in to our meals, there's something bound to happen," answered Jabez.

"At all events, it shows some of us are as much interested as ever we were about things that may or may not happen," said Klomp, as he turned his steps toward the house.

Before sitting down to dinner, Klomp informed those in the cooking department they might expect company that evening, and, for all he knew, they might stay for tea, and ended with the injunction, "It was best to be prepared."

"Why, Ezekial," said Mrs. Klomp, "if you'd only been in a couple of hours sooner I might have gotten a good meal."

"Those that are coming will find no fault with the meal," replied Klomp. "It's Peggy and Jabez and Ike."

"Ike!" ejaculated Mrs. Klomp. "Indeed, I don't know of anybody you could bring in I'd put myself more about for."

"Don't worry," said Klomp, "he'll take just what you have to offer Jabez and Peggy."

"I know that very well," replied Mrs. Klomp, "but for all that you might have given me notice he was coming. I hate to be taken so on the short when I'm to get a meal for folks from the city."

"I don't see how it can be helped now," said Klomp, very demurely, "but I'll promise you if he don't conduct himself as well as Jake at the table, I'll fire him."

"I'm not at all in the humor for fun," said Mrs. Klomp. "It's not that I wouldn't like to have him here for tea, but you should let me know as soon as you heard he was coming."

"I know it's me you're mad at," was Klomp's cool and provoking reply.

Jacob was placed in a dilemma, he hardly knew whether to smile or look grave. As all emotions of the human heart necessarily exhibit themselves, whether the observer is acute enough to notice the exhibition or not, his face assumed a peculiar expression which his father did not quite understand, and, thinking he might be anxious to settle the difficulty, asked

"Do you see any way out of it, Jake?"

"I really see no better way than the one you have suggested," replied Jacob.

"That's it," said Klomp, looking at Mrs. Klomp. "He gets enough to eat at home—it's not altogether for the meal we're bringing him here, but for a good sociable time, being Jake's at home."

Mrs. Klomp was now more willing to view the coming event philosophically, and, in the best humor, served dinner. That evening, when all had come together around Klomp's hearth, Ike was at his best—at the very outside limit of what best would ever mean for him again. But he was crippled—just as a man with hand or foot cut off is a cripple. He was sick, just as a man with disease lurking in his vitals is sick. The fat accumulating about the heart of the phlegmatic good feeder, that will choke him off some bright day when all the world seems fair, can with less difficulty be torn away from that great pump, that once stopped is stilled forever, than can you be restored to your pristine health, your unintentional destroyer of self. Sadder than all others is your case. You are a sufferer without sympathy. All the little testimonials of kindness humanity bestows upon their fellowman in suffering, and distress is denied you. If in one of those paroxysms you overstep the bounds of propri-

ety, and violate the law, that at such times you know nothing about, you are a criminal, doomed to penal servitude, or the halter, and you are not blind to the fact. You realize more fully that you are in bondage than the black man realized he was a slave, and you know as well, too, that some force outside the individual enslaved must break that bondage.

The meeting between the two who were playmates in boyhood was very cordial. In conversation, they drifted at length from one topic to another, until finally prohibition was their theme; but it was too one-sided to take. Ike was as innocent of any intent upon him being planned by Jabez and Peggy, as Jacob was anxious to avoid any remark that would tend to lead to a suspicion of such intention. Therefore, trivial things clothed with enchanting memories were valued above par. Sheep-washing, that came as regularly once a year as Christmas came, brought back recollections of boyish fun so vividly that dignity was thrown to the wind by both lawyer and professor, at Ike's recital of how the old sheep butted Jake into the river.

"You wouldn't think, when he got on his feet, that day, making wry faces," said Klomp, who was hardly able to straighten his face long enough to articulate a word, "that he'd ever be able to take care of himself as well as he does today, would you Ike?"

"You put him on his feet pretty squarely, Klomp," said Jabez, who laughed with the rest, and was still laughing. "We'll have to give you credit for that, though it isn't every man that stands as well after he gets there. I doubt if he'd stand as square if you kept him by your side."

"Oh, I know," said Klomp; "you're afraid of the bottle he was too far from home to get. The dip the old sheep gave him made a cold-water man out of

him, and I think that's something you'll be pleased to know."

"I've known it for some time," replied Jabez, "and, as you say, it's been a pleasure to know it."

The thrust, though aimless, hit a mark. Ike sat in silence, and bit his lip; all of which Jacob saw, though his eyes were resting on other objects. He looked at the men who were tendering their praise to him in so peculiar a way, and said: "Don't make me blush at the sound of praise I never won. Though I have stood on my feet, as you say, it looks as if I have been more selfish than many others. I never risked my life to help other men on their feet, like the man at my side."

"As Tobe said long ago to Draque, 'One good man can't do all the good that's to be done in the world.' Your time is coming—when the prohibition fight is over history will write your name that of a hero second to none," said Jabez.

At this point Klomp had something to say in favor of his drink ideas. All jokes were laid aside, and whisky or no whisky became the sole topic. The conversation was sharp and pointed, and if a picture outside the world of words can be given, the quick, sharp flashes exchanged may be compared to the swift changing aurora borealis. But it was confined to the three. Ike took no part, but sat thinking and motionless, except a light tap of his foot on the floor, that showed him ill at ease. After the lengthy word war was over, Jacob turned to Ike, saying:

"I did not think to ask you how long you are going to stay."

"I don't exactly know," replied Ike—"hadn't any definite time in view when I came."

"As my place is satisfactorily filled, I decided, after

coming, to stay longer than I had intended, and I'll expect to meet you often during my stay," said Jacob. Then, looking around at his father and Jabez, he said: "Three or four or five may carry on a very pleasant and spirited conversation, but it is never the heartfelt, confidential article it is when between but two."

The tea, served upon such short notice, had been a decided success, according to Mrs. Klomp's own version of the affair. Alternately, she had laughed heartily over the jokes, and held her breath in horror over what seemed to her an almost come-to-blow difference of opinion, concerning one of the most vital questions of the age.

The next morning, at the western boundary of his father's farm—where the river sings its deathless song, with variations to suit the water mark; sometimes tempestuous in its haste, and again in slow, melancholy cadence, like the breath of one whose life is almost spent—Ike met Jacob Klomp. The morning was not like the previous morning when Jabez and Klomp met, which was mild enough. No one can account for Ohio weather, a little before, or about Indian summer time. A frost had come from somewhere, and the air was fresh, with nothing in it that dulls, or enervates—but that bracing kind that makes a man feel equal to any task. It was the sort of a morning that makes exercise necessary for comfort, to one out of doors.

While two days before the sun was hot enough to allow Jacob the luxury of stretching himself on an army blanket under a fine old apple tree—not that the tree afforded him shelter, for the leaves were nearly gone; but just because it was one of the most comfortable spots he had known, when the tree was budding into prime as well as himself.

The two stood for some time looking over the water

of the dreamy river, where they had fished, and waded, and played, and plunged, and then started on to look at other scenes of long-forgotten sports. After a ramble for a couple of hours, they reached the house, as fast friends as when they tore out of the hollow logs, and appropriated to their own use the nuts the industrious little squirrel had gathered and put there for himself. Jacob pulled an easy chair to the window, where the sun now came in hot, and offered it to Ike. He then helped himself to another, and, after looking around upon the small part of the earth he could see, said:

“When great things are projected, we too often look upon ourselves as irresponsible agents,” and we meant mankind. “That is the reason some men never realize they are here on very important business. I am not at all blasphemous when I say some men leave everything to God.”

“You think, then,” asked Ike, “that God does not rule the earth as some men preach and the majority of enlightened men believe?”

“Far from it,” replied Jacob, “but I think if God intended to place us always, we would be made without ideas of our own—to be put this way or that—something like the men on the checkerboard, to stay where they are placed until moved to an advantage by the player.”

“I imagine, notwithstanding all that, you cannot say the Great Player is not moving us just as He will,” said Ike.

“I have not a doubt, Ike, you felt He was moving you when you were tireless in your efforts to emancipate the slave, and with you I believe not a bird falls without His permission. To enter minutely into details belongs more to the theologian than to us I be-

lieve. Still, without being irreverent, I might put it in a way that would be expressive," said Jacob, who continued as he looked out over tree and field, "God's great plan, to us so incomprehensible, we have reason to believe is not yet complete, but is in the Artist's hands. We are the hod-carriers and bricklayers—even artists on a small scale—placed here just as a master places a servant in his house, not to be carried from one room to another, but to open our eyes, and look around, and see for ourselves what is to be done that will tend to make the living condition of that house better. By and by, in God's own time, the guide lines that so mar its beauty now will all be erased. Maybe when we cross the shore, and maybe not until the last day will we see the perfect picture, and until it is perfected there will be work for all. We are scavengers intended to keep as near the beautiful ideal as possible. The better nature of every man compels him to work for the best as he journeys on, but he must stop and listen to the voice of that nature. When I listen to that voice, Ike, it tells me nothing so mars the beauty of that picture like the liquor traffic. In fact, it is the nucleus of nearly all the disorders we have to contend with today."

"I think it deforms the beauty of the ideal habitation very materially," replied Ike; "but as that habitation is not to be hoped for this side of the grave, your theory is mere speculation."

"You are wrong, Ike," said Jacob, with much earnestness. "When a great evil has been done away with, there is no reason why even a greater should not. Don't you think it possible the Government that pronounced the colored man a thing—and afterward pronounced him a free man and a citizen—may not

yet be brought to see that it is still astray in its method of government?"

"It is a pretty hard matter to bring a person to see what they have no inclination to see, and much harder to change the existing condition of governments, though both have been done," replied Ike.

"Yes," answered Jacob, "both have been done, and will be done again. Through history we learn this and that complete change has been brought about by such and such circumstances, and to say that God has no future circumstances in store would be madness."

"I know well," said Ike, contemplatively, "that prisons and poorhouses, as well as the big end of all crimes called capital, are the natural outgrowth of the system you so wish to see annihilated."

"And can you, while admitting this without the least scruple, put such stress upon the word you in addressing me?" asked Jacob, as he looked in the unflinching eye before him.

After some moments' reflection, Ike replied:

"While I am not prepared to say it cannot be done, there is nothing in me that points to the way in which it can. You see the revenue from this source is one of the country's principal life—arteries—and the tendency is to keep that artery intact."

"I know it is a sad truth that revenue is the enchanted word, and with individuals the tendency too often is to place it even before honor and justice, and worse, the tendency is not yet full-fledged that measures a man by the dollar, just as the shop-keeper measures cloth by the yard, but we can hope it is not going to take many years to remove that tendency; and when the people no longer place revenue before justice, the Government will be the perfect thing those people make it."

Ike smiled as he said: "While I might not vehemently oppose your plan, as I have no exceedingly strong convictions one way or the other, I am afraid I'll not be able to add any touches to the picture you spoke of that will help to beautify it."

"But you certainly do not think that if you troubled yourself to give due consideration, you might not be able to put in some very effective touches to the picture? You know as well as I the victims of alcohol are legion. In your profession the opportunities afforded you to know that such is fact must have been greater than the help given me to know it."

Ike smiled sadly as he said: "I am not denying, and have never tried to refute a word of what you have laid down as fact, but it appears to me one of the ills of life. A curse laid at our door that we are not able to remove."

"That's what it is, and where it is," replied Jacob, "but that we are not able to remove it, is where you are wrong. In this country, Ike, as you know, it is the people who do great things. I am as certain as that I live, agitation will bring the great majority to see Prohibition is what the country needs. Let us go back to our imperfect and unsightly picture, and look at the helpless misery of the thousands upon thousands enslaved. In our daily walks through life we meet them everywhere, in high places and in low. The son of the wealthy is helped along on the wrong road, often by parents, until every vestige of the noble mind disappears, and he is a driveling idiot. The poor man in the face of misery and starvation for himself and children, gives his last cent for the drug that quiets for a time the agony that drug has produced, that nothing else will alleviate, and that he feels he cannot endure."

Ike dropped his head. He is feeling some of the torture that was being portrayed; but what Jacob said called forth no response.

Jacob began again, and every tone of his well modulated voice was like a sword attached to words that were cutting into Ike's heart as he proceeded to say: "Toward every other class of sufferers we have a tendency to be charitable. Hospitals are built, nurses are trained and doctors procured. The man who partakes of food in such quantities and of such quality as ruins his stomach is a dyspeptic, and is tenderly and humanely cared for, and so ad infinitum. He who becomes a sufferer from alcohol alone is a criminal and is treated as such. The jail or the workhouse is his abode until the paroxysm is over, and then he is turned loose, with possibly the admonition to do better in the future." He paused a moment, drew a deep sigh, and continued: "There is no greater inconsistency, and no question today of greater importance to men and voters everywhere than the liquor question."

Ike's breath was not coming freely; while struggling to repress the choking sensation, he managed to say: "I have no doubt you are right, but public opinion is almost as a unit arrayed against you."

"And so was public opinion as solidly arrayed against the emancipation of the slave," said Jacob. "When Tobias Lenk first uttered his heartfelt sentiments on that question to the people in this part of the state, not one stepped out boldly and said I am with you." With his mind's eye he looked at the farm once Tobe's, and said:

"Like the slave-holders, they are pretty big-headed men who are engaged in the liquor traffic. They look straight ahead at the almighty dollar they are going to

lay their hands on if they can, regardless of consequences. To them it does not matter much if two or three members of the family succumb to the effects of their article of merchandise; they can afford to have cells padded, and the world moves on to their satisfaction admirably. But while admitting all that, we must still admit the blame is ours. The motto of every good citizen today should be what it was years ago. The greatest good to the greatest number. Those who are so comfortably cared for, are but a drop in the vast ocean. Under existing conditions the wail of the millions in torture, either directly or indirectly from the same cursed cause, falls upon the ears of a Christian people with as little effect tending to mitigate, as the cry of the first Christians fell upon the ear of the heathen Nero."

Jacob arose and paced the floor as he continued to say: "I tell you, friend, it cannot last. The people of this country will rise up and knock the foundation from under the liquor traffic in the face of revenue as effectually as they wiped out slavery, were the progress of the country depending upon that revenue, which thank God it is not."

He now seated himself, sat back in his chair, and whirled around and around his pocket-knife that lay on the table beside him. Ike sat in the easy chair that had been given him, a very uncomfortable man. The gray-haired stranger that had poured such messages of brotherly love into his soul had returned to dust. He longed to meet again someone able to stimulate him to just such unselfish feelings as he once possessed; but he ruefully shook his head, and said in his heart, "the man before me understands the situation better than anyone I ever met, but he cannot help me. Were a Prohibition president placed in the chair

at the coming election, it would be too late for me."

He arose hurriedly and bade Jacob "good-day," saying "he would see him again before he left."

"The days slip away very fast here," said Jacob. "I'll take a walk over to Jabez' tomorrow early in the afternoon, if you think you will be in."

"I'll be on hand," replied Ike, as he walked away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Before going to the house Ike made it a point to visit the fields once known as John Strand's place. The season was not spring, as it was when poor neglected little Tim lay dead; which event called him that way the last time. He did not try to persuade himself it was the reason that made his heart so heavy. Though there was no song of birds, or rustling of soft, green leaves, he was prepared for that. Since that time, every one of his kin had been torn from his father's house, and yet, that was not the millstone around his neck. How few they are today, Ike, who have any more sympathy for you than you had for John Strand!

After viewing the fields, and meditating at length, not like the hopeful, wholesouled and intelligent Ike, but like a mere walking machine, he dragged through the fields, entered the house, and mechanically threw himself into a chair.

"Jacob Klomp is a pleasant, sensible man, isn't he, Ike," asked Jabez, as he and Peggy seated themselves with a view of being companionable the remainder of the day.

"He is both pleasant and sensible," replied Ike, "and can go as deep down into a man's heart with his pleasant sensible words as any man I ever had the misfortune to meet."

Peggy looked at Ike in astonishment, and said in a great hurry: "I'm sure he wouldn't wound anybody's feelings, Ike, with the least intention of doing it."

Ike did not reply. Jabez had made up his mind to be prepared for anything. It was evident Jacob

Klomp had, or had not, made a favorable impression, and what Ike said could well be interpreted in two ways. He asked: "Are we to understand you think it a misfortune that you met him, Ike."

Without looking to the right or left, Ike calmly replied: "It may be a misfortune for a man to be made feel how much more miserable he is than his friend."

Jabez remembered Jacob Klomp had said, "I believe it is something persuasion has nothing to do with," and his own convictions were every bit as strong. He looked at Ike, and said below his breath, "you might as well try persuade a man that's gradually throwing up his lungs to not cough; it was to satisfy Peggy and not myself that I did this."

Peggy brightened, and said: "Some people have their misfortunes in their own hands, and can turn them right into fortunes if they want to."

"I am sorry Jacob Klomp cannot agree with you," was Ike's laconic answer.

After Ike went out, Jacob did what every man once a country boy can do the moment he sets his foot within the boundary line of the farm—whistle—but it was so faint that one standing a few feet away would be hardly able to hear. It seemed to be all in his soul, and he listening himself so intently to something he loved to hear, that he was afraid a more forcible display of breath might drive it all away.

Dream on, Jacob, for since the souls of men were ransomed by the Precious Blood, no man ever had a fairer dream.

The sound of the rumbling wheels of the out-bound train was coming nearer and nearer. Ike thought that minute of Ruth, and said something about the city, and when he got home.

“But you’re not thinking about home so soon, are you, Ike?” asked Jabez; “you’ve hardly been here long enough to be benefited by the coming.”

“I think I’ll go back the day after tomorrow,” said Ike. “Ruth was not very well when I left, and I have been thinking about her a good deal. I really should go back tomorrow but Jacob is coming over; it will probably be our last visit, and I will stay on that account.”

“Well,” said Jabez, “we must submit to what you say; but I believe supper is waiting, isn’t it, Peggy?”

“Yes,” answered Peggy, who, looking at Ike, said: “I kept dinner waiting for you, Ike.”

“I am sorry,” said Ike.

“Sorry and glad,” said Jabez, as they faced the tea-table. “Sorry we waited, and glad to take dinner with Jacob, isn’t that how it stands?”

“But I did not take dinner with Jacob,” answered Ike, whose face was now more expressionless than a statue—all of which he intended.

“Missed your dinner between the two houses?” queried Jabez.

“That is just what I did,” said Ike.

“Why, how did that happen?” inquired Peggy.

“Mr. and Mrs. Klomp thought Jacob went out for the day, and went to town on business; they had not returned when I left. It is probably my fault that both Jacob and myself were not here for dinner. I met him this morning under an old chestnut on the river bank, and instead of inviting him here, went home with him.”

“And Jacob is hungry, too?” asked Jabez.

“He must be,” answered Ike, as he smiled for the first time during the dialogue, probably thinking Jabez was judging Jacob by himself, who bid fair to not leave much on the plate he had been helped to.

"That's right," said Jabez, who was glad to see Ike's smile. "If a body wouldn't mix up a little fun with real living our faces would grow out of shape for the want of a good laugh."

"What's wrong with Ruth?" asked Peggy. "I don't remember of hearing you say anything about her being sick."

"Maybe I did not," said Ike, rather distractedly. "I don't know that she is sick, but the thought came to me a while ago that when I left home she was in bed, and not feeling well."

"If that's all," said Jabez, "you might as well stay where you are, for if she was choosing a nurse this minute, it wouldn't be you she'd choose."

Ike looked at Peggy with a smile that did not at all suit his countenance, considering the condition of his feelings at heart, and said to Jabez:

"You can count upon me staying tomorrow."

"So far, so good," said Jabez, who continued as they left the table: "If you could suggest any method of being entertained to your liking, for the rest of the evening, and tomorrow until Jacob comes, Peggy and myself are listening."

Ike's forced laugh came again to the rescue as he said, "I was just about to suggest for my pastime a nap of indefinite length."

"Very well," said Jabez, "you can have your own way."

Ike went to his room with a heart heavy as lead, that so weighed him down he had not a love left for the beautiful world that so charmed him when a thoughtful boy he roamed through field and forest, exploring with thankful heart the part of God's creation lent to the Draque family.

It was still the privilege of Bounce to see that things

were conducted properly, according to his dogship's ideas of the proper, in the vicinity of Jabez' door-yard and garden. This evening he was particularly nettled over the appearance of a rat that had come from the direction of the granary, and dared to cross the path that led from the kitchen door, at a remarkably safe distance from himself; it may have been the distance, and a knowledge of his inability to lay a tooth on the provoking little animal that so aroused the vehement in his nature, combined with the tantalizing manner in which that animal stood for a second, and measured the distance from Bounce to himself, and then from himself to the straw-stack that stood near by.

"You'll have to do something to stop Bounce, Jabez," said Peggy. "Ike nor nobody could rest with that racket about."

"Ike's not going to rest much," answered Jabez, "and Bounce might as well be an excuse for keeping him awake as any other. He's not in a condition to sleep if there wasn't a sound within five miles of us. Well as he conducts himself, and pleasant as he appears, he's suffering in a way you or I don't understand, for he hasn't taken a drink since he came."

"He may have made up his mind to let it alone," said Peggy.

"He may have, and I haven't a doubt he often did the same before," replied Jabez.

"After all, have you no hope, Jabez?" asked Peggy.

"Not a bit," said Jabez; "it's a great deal, Peggy, to ask a man to let alone the only thing known to him that will cure such suffering as he's undergoing, and that nothing kills the effect like the cause he's had ample opportunity to know. He was put on the wrong track, and he's gone so far there's no turn back. We may

put it down as fact whenever he can lay his hand upon the comforter he's going to do it; and so will every one in his condition, man or woman."

It was as Jabez said, Ike could not rest; he arose and paced the floor. The town that first appeared in the wilderness in the shape of a log school house, drug store, meeting house, and blacksmith shop, was not far away; he might in a short time make his way there, and then—but it would not do, Jacob Klomp was to be there the next afternoon, and he promised to see him—he must fight. The greater part of the night he walked up and down, up and down, his room until near morning, when he threw himself on his bed, and from sheer exhaustion he slept. He arose late, and worried through the day in expectation of Jacob. About the middle of the afternoon Jacob presented himself and asked at once for Ike. Ike responded to the summons as mechanically as he had crossed the fields the day before. Jacob noticed at once the lifeless appearance of the man before him, and said, "You are sick, I see."

"I wish you kept the old sheep story till now, Ike," said Jabez; "it would send the blood dancing through your veins in a way that would revive you."

"He may have a better one to tell, who knows," said Peggy.

"No he hasn't," said Jacob, as he laughed heartily. "In all our experience together I cannot think of anything that happened as ludicrous as that." Then turning to Ike, he asked: "How would a walk suit you?"

Ike's expression was comical, as he replied: "It might answer, but I walked pretty steadily all night, and consequently have not the same desire for the exercise as the man who slept soundly; however, as my company is the very best, I'll try it."

Jacob had resolved to have another talk upon his

favorite topic with Ike, but as the two walked on slowly and in silence something asked him why he should so persecute his friend. It is useless to explain to the one suffering from malaria, who is alternately perishing from cold, and burning with more than tropical heat, that to remove his trouble, and the danger of countless others being afflicted in the same way, it is necessary to drain the malarial swamp, when that draining must be done by the sound in body. As if in answer to that voice, or something that spoke to him as noiselessly, he framed his thoughts into some such words as these:

“It is not my object to make the miserable more miserable by dealing blows to those already down, but to arouse the sound of body to a practical sense of duty. When but sixty thousand votes were polled for our Abolition candidate, we hardly hoped to realize so soon that slavery was a thing of the past. With next to no agitation as yet on the Prohibition question, I venture to affirm we might count upon sixty thousand who are heart and soul in the cause.”

Ike put an end for the time to his own unpleasant reverie by disturbing Jacob in his, which was anything but unpleasant, since it was self imposed, and his heart in it. In other words, he had resolved to take pleasure in doing unpleasant things for the public good. The spell that held both was broken by Ike's asking the question:

“This stepping is rather monotonous, isn't it, Jacob?”

“No, not to me,” came the quick reply, “but if you find it so, I am ready to indulge in any pastime that may meet with your approval.”

“That, I leave entirely to your superior power of invention, as my native energy seems to have deserted

me," said Ike, as he seated himself on a large boulder.

Jacob quietly took a seat beside Ike, and said: "I am forced to think more of God, the prime inventor, in solitude like this, in the presence of so many of His wonderful inventions, and to wish to invent only in accordance with His will."

"So are we all, I think," replied Ike, who, looking directly at Jacob, said, "It is something like the ideal habitation you spoke of yesterday."

"Yes," continued Jacob, "we are cut loose from everything inharmonious, not forever, but for a little while."

Ike took off his hat, ran his fingers slowly through the short hair of his finely shaped head, and said, "While your remarks yesterday were intended to be general, I felt they were very personal. The stress laid upon the pronoun, I, was painful."

"I am sorry if they wounded," answered Jacob.

"You need not be," responded Ike. "I'll promise you may count upon my vote for the desired change in conditions that now exist, protected by law, as the man who bought and sold human beings was protected, and that is as much as I can promise."

"I am glad to hear you say that," answered Jacob. "Every step in the right direction has a telling effect. You may depend upon it, the day is coming when the liquor traffic, with its outgrowth of crimes and punishment, will be a blacker and more damning stain upon the civilization of our country, than slavery with all its indignities and injustice. Its foundation, apparently so solid, does not rest with the seller and manufacturer—nor internal revenue, that in the eyes of some holds it so intact—but with public opinion, that is pliable as yonder sapling, when taken hold of by hands not mercenary."

Ike said not a word. The west wind had been blowing briskly for some time; but now the two felt its great force as it rushed through the clump of trees by their side, and sent the few remaining scarlet and dead leaves to their grave, and yet, not satisfied, playfully whirled them around in eddies after they had reached their tomb. It was a relief to Ike to be able to get away from the painful subject he had been contemplating. He looked at the gathering clouds, and said, "It is nothing but wind."

"That is all," said Jacob. "If it were not so late in the season, it would be necessary to look for shelter."

Both sat for awhile longer, each deeply engrossed with his own thoughts. They arose and bade good-by on the spot where Ike had promised to work in the cause of Prohibition, as far as lay in his power, and took different paths to the homes that were sheltering them for a few days.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

All the quiet charms of country could not keep Ike an hour longer than he must stay. The first train, whether midnight or morning, would take him on his return trip; that he decided before Jacob Klomp was out of sight or Jabez' house was reached. He felt uneasy about Ruth, as he thought of her, and said, almost aloud, "It was the first time I struck her, often as she dared me."

Ike had stopped, and looked after Jacob several times, as he walked on maybe out of his sight forever. Now, as Jacob crossed a fence, he turned to see if Ike was still in view, and catching his eye, he waved a farewell with his hand, which Ike returned as they were wont to do when boys.

Jacob was exceedingly melancholy that evening when alone. He thought of the Ike of former years, and contrasted him with the Ike with whom he had just parted, and the following thoughts came fast into his troubled mind:

"If Ike was an isolated case the world he came in contact with would have great sympathy for him, and a remedy would be eagerly sought; but because we can multiply the case by ten hundred thousand, and then the story not be told, we accept the condition as one that will not admit of change, and journey on, groaning under the weight of a burden we imagine too great to throw off, precisely as the good living, honest minded men viewed the slavery question a short time ago. There are many, too, who in silence oppose the degrading traffic; but if they would accomplish any-

thing, they must arise and put that silence in motion. Motion is the wonder worker. Stagnation is death; it speaks of the grave and gloom, and the return to nothingness of all material things. The sun moves, and that motion gives life to all manner of creation, both animal and vegetable, of which we have any knowledge. When the machinery of our bodies is unable to keep moving, the spirit goes out. Rest is found upon the other shore; but is it not a part of the great plan with which we are familiar. Action is the condition of life in this world of ours, and intelligent action, with truth and justice in view, brings about the best results."

Jacob stopped and looked around. The wind was sighing through the bare branches a most sad refrain; was it for the green leaves it had played so coyly with all the summer, and that were now strewn on the ground? He looked up beyond the clouds, and thoughts came fast, but with no one near to hear what he had to say he was obliged to soliloquize.

"That on some far off planet there may exist a race that can breathe and live; that may bask in light and shadow, and enjoy all the beauties and good of vegetation, floral and otherwise, regardless of our great luminary, has nothing to do with us in the face of more important facts. This is our sphere, and we are not blind workers. We have a spark of that Intelligence that called all things into being, and as Christians we believe it a priceless gift, concerning the use of which the Supreme Intelligence will call us into account. Neither are we ignorant of the fact that we are called upon to lay aside ambition and personal interest, in so far as they conflict with truth and justice and universal good."

He took from his pocket a memorandum book,

opened it, and ran his finger over the pages, until half-way down the third or fourth page, when he stopped, held his finger close to the spot, and looked away from the book. Such was his thoughtful position, when Klomp called to him.

"Jake, you can't live on rambles and country air a whit better than I can. You'd better come in and eat supper with your mother and me."

Jacob placidly replaced the book, and entered the house saying, "You are not afraid I will lose flesh, are you, father?"

"You haven't much of it to lose," answered his father, with a significant toss of his head; and then looking at Mrs. Klomp as if he would like to have her approval, continued: "If you'd take a little wine or beer every day like that son of Schiver's you'd soon be something to look at."

"The loss of his mother in his young days, and a stepmother as pilot, much as some of the neighbors objected, had a good effect you think?" asked Jacob.

Klomp stopped awhile to think and said, innocently as a boy not out of his teens would say it, "It's not much piloting the stepmother did."

"I understand," said Jacob, "he was his own pilot sooner than was good for him, and he chose a way that was agreeable but not good. I have seen very little of him, but I have seen enough to be certain of that. He is welcome to his flesh, father, when it is at the expense of so much that is better."

"Such habits didn't put much flesh on Ike Draque, I notice," said Klomp, now inclined to be serious.

"No," replied Jacob, "Ike took his medicine to keep him stirring. He was an active, restless fellow, and not likely to lay up much flesh under any circumstance. He never stopped in one place in idleness

long enough to accumulate an ounce of fat, while Schiver's son takes the world easy."

"That's what Ike was," replied Klomp, "and more's the pity he's disabled, when he was always trying to do good."

Jacob looked at his father quizzically, and respectfully said: "If I had not the good fortune to be placed in a college—all of which I have to thank you for—where those of the faculty I most loved and respected made it a matter of conscience to not touch, I would probably be in the condition of Ike or Schiver's son."

"I don't believe it necessary that you should," said Klomp.

"But do you not think it highly probable, father?" asked Jacob.

"Well, no," answered Klomp. "It did me no harm, as well as many others that I know of."

"Do you think it did you any real good?" asked Jacob.

Klomp chuckled to himself as he replied, "I can't say I ever took enough to benefit me much."

"No," said Jacob, "but John Strand, and Tobe, and Ike, and Schiver's son took enough."

"They took too much," said Klomp, as he shook his clenched fist over the dish before him, and then rested it on the table in a manner not the most gentle.

"You have certainly touched the pivot, father, upon which this flourishing liquor traffic so gracefully turns," replied Jacob, with a sad, determined look, as he laid his hand on the table, gentle but firm, and said, "but depend upon it, it will not satisfy serious thinkers in the near future."

"Jabez seems to think that money is the back-bone of the whole thing," replied Klomp, apparently not caring much whether such was the case or not.

“Jabez may or may not be right,” answered Jacob, “but if he is, the backbone, important as it is, depends upon other things to hold it in position. I think the prevailing wrong opinion that it is right to drink moderately and habitually a poison, from the effects of which there is no escape, but that surely undermines all constitutions, though in varied ways, is the prop that holds the ugly back-bone of the liquor traffic where it is.”

“Jacob looked steadily at his father, and asked: “Suppose you and every other well-meaning man in the country, father, were convinced of that fact, how strong do you think that back-bone would be?”

“Well, Jake,” replied his father, slowly, “when it comes down to the point that the people see it’s wrong, it ’ill not take long to break the back-bone of the critter.”

A broad smile played over his face as he thought of the time when a couple of active, earnest workers set him seriously thinking about a question he had heretofore thought none of his business. And now the voice of approbation from all the good and great, as well as the thanks of those made free, made him feel happy that he had so nobly acted his part.

He sat without speaking for some time, as did all. He was probably taking a view of the disabled critter, and the effect upon the commonwealth. The rising generation was basking in sunlight and peace, for there was no serpent. No ragged, abused, half-fed children, lost to love and care paraded before him, with old, sorrow-stricken faces. The jails and prisons of all kinds dwindled down to a few, still enough to accommodate those brought there when the enemy was dead. The wholesale murders, so numerous that not a little spot a mile square, however thinly popu-

lated, can boast as being a place not blood-stained, and the consequent wholesale strangling, as well as the countless suicides of the poor victims of alcohol, who, like the gladiators of old, saw no escape from man or beast but death, were alike things of the past.

And he really resolved that, "if what Jake said was true, and maybe it might, for he knew a heap," to be as liberal with his vote as he was on the former occasion of which he felt so proud. He was the first to speak, and as if to prepare himself for an uncommon task, he shoved his plate directly in the center of what was termed his place at the table, looked at it as if it held a place of great importance in the visible creation, and then said, "The black man is of another race, but when we were called upon to see that justice was done by him not one of us shirked."

"If I have been correctly informed, there was considerable shirking for a long time," said Jacob, smiling at his father, who he saw a little more yielding. "Stray shots from Tobe and later from Ike were necessary before much progress was made in the aforesaid direction; but in every new step taken we must be prepared for that."

"That's so," said Klomp. "I remember the day like it was yesterday, I made up my mind to vote the Republican ticket. Tobe never could do much with me, but Jabez was always a rock of sense in every way, and he made me understand how he was right, at last."

"Shall I have the honor of being thought sensible?" asked Jacob.

"It 'ill do later on to be positive about that," said Klomp, with a toss of his head. "I'll wait till I see a prospect of the candidate you're reaching after."

"He will be on hand, and before long," said Jacob.

“Then the cry will be, no intoxicating drinks in our country, from shore to shore; and then will be the time for every man to show his mettle. Remember, too, father, the race we expect to free and help is our own as well as the other we boast of doing so much for. And we can simmer it down finer than that. There is not a citizen of these United States who by so voting is not helping to eradicate a curse that has claimed for its own some member of his or his father’s household; and the bondage from which we would release them is a thousand times more disgraceful to civilization.”

“I’ll remember it, Jake,” said his father, as both agreed to drop the subject, and left the supper table.

But with Klomp the subject proved one that would not drop. The question now interested him in a way it had never done before. He had argued with Jabez in the field a whole forenoon, as well as at various other times in divers places, and had never yielded an inch of the theory he had fastened upon, which was: A man should be allowed to drink what he pleases so long as he interferes with no other man’s affairs. And yet he could see clearly all along why John Chinaman should not be allowed to indulge in opium, and for the first time he stopped to ask himself the question, “Where’s the difference?”

He tugged awhile at his chin whiskers, and then ventured to say to Jacob, “So you think, Jake, alcohol has an effect on the system that the will has nothing to do with, much like the poison of a rattlesnake or a mad dog, that lays a man out in spite of him?”

“That’s precisely what I believe,” said Jacob, his firm manner denoting the strength of his conviction.

“I knew a man that went raving mad nigh two

years after he was bitten by a mad dog," said Klomp, in an abstract way, as if his thoughts wandered altogether from the subject. "I saw him a few days before the first fit, and you'd think he was as sensible as you or I. He had several fits, and after coming out of one he was as sensible as before it, only weak, and wouldn't harm a child; but, somehow, he knew he was dangerous, and asked those around him to see that he did no harm. Now, Jake, I'll show you where my doubts about what you say come in. The dog bit that man in spite of him, whereas the man, working in delirium from alcohol, took it himself."

"I find that the stumbling-block with every one to whom I talk, father," said Jacob, "and yet to me it is plain, the latter is more to be pitied. The former knew the bite of a rabid dog meant death, and the enemy came openly. He might cross a fence, there was a possibility of escape; while the latter was destroyed by stealth. He was led by friends through pleasant ways, with the approval of public opinion, backed by the example of men Christians looked upon as workers in the vineyard of the Lord."

Klomp made no reply, but said shortly after as he looked at the time, "the hours slip wonderfully fast, Jake."

"Yes," said Jacob, "it doesn't take long to grow old," and he pointed to his own gray hairs.

"Ugh!" interjected his father, "Jabez and Draque and myself thought ourselves old men twenty years ago, and we're likely to live ten years yet. You can't always go by the years and the gray hair."

"No," said Jacob, "the truth is, a man is always as old as he feels. Some men die of old age at seventy, and others at ninety, just as some men are disabled by alcohol at twenty, and others not till forty. Age to

the individual means the time given him to travel a certain road. The one who wanders around a long time, and the one whose years are few, must go out by the same gate; and with as much certainty can we say that alcohol produces in all men similar effects. Because the time is longer in some cases than others before those effects are apparent, it cannot be affirmed such effects are not being produced. I have seen men, and so have you, father, dying of delirium tremens, against whom no one could bring the charge of drunkenness."

"It's a fact," said Klomp, slapping his hands as if a new idea dawned upon him. "Will Langon, that came here with the rest of us, when a man couldn't see the length of himself ahead for the trees, and a jolly good fellow he was, all the days of his life, went that way."

He turned a questioning look at Jacob, and said, "It maybe you've heard of him?"

"I heard of him, but remember very little of him," said Jacob.

"No," said Klomp, who was now in a reflective mood. "He took a tract of land a little out of the way. We couldn't all be in a pile, you see. He was an industrious fellow, and it didn't suit him to cross so many fields to spend an evening at Hibe's; however, he came sometimes, until at length he concluded he'd save time and keep some on hand at the house." At this point Klomp took his handkerchief, carefully wiped and re-wiped his face, and went on. "When beer came in fashion out here, which was a bit later than whisky, Will took exceeding to that, and kept his keg. He was always working and a first class neighbor he was, too, until one day he was laid up with a pain. They brought in as good a doctor as could be found, and he

said it was lung fever he had. He prescribed for him, but beer was not in the prescription, and Mrs. Langon saw that things were carried out according to the doctor's prescription."

Klomp stopped again, and mopped away at his face with the self-same handkerchief, then said: "You'd hardly believe me, Jake, but I, with three or four others, were called in to hold that man in bed; he thought the pictures on the wall and the chairs about the room were men coming to kill him, and he struck out right and left till he died from exhaustion."

"And you knew it was the want of long accustomed stimulants and not the fever that caused his death?" asked Jacob.

"I'll be bound if I saw it then, Jake, or never until now," said Klomp, rising and very much excited.

"A candid physician would pronounce that a case of delirium tremens, superinduced by pneumonia," said Jacob, who said "good-night" to his father, and two minutes later the room was dark.

Klomp muttered to himself as he groped his way out in the darkness. "Jake's nobody's fool."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ike had been home with Meg and the children a half hour or so when Jacob laid his head on the pillow that night to think of him and some others he was especially interested in outside the ten hundred thousand he was so certain he saw unquestionably crippled. Their malady not of such a nature as leprosy, or they would be given a place somewhere, and left alone to die; nor like hydrophobia, where the man who has rabies is humanely handled. He saw his sick scattered over the whole world, at the mercy of the policeman's club and hangman's halter, as their families are at their mercy when the paroxysm is on.

"But those cases are few, and it can be easily done," he hears a voice beside him say.

He looked up in surprise, and a personage stalked before him very tall and erect, and unyielding in the extreme, yet obliging enough to be willing to carry on a conversation to an indefinite length. The name of the individual was wound around the turban in bright letters, and read, Justice. The bright, deep-set eyes saw everything, from New York to San Francisco, and from the North to the city in the gulf, and complacently smiled on the scene. Jacob read the name on the turban, and looked for the scale in the hand, but the arm hung by the side as if dead from the shoulder. He rested his eye on the apparition, and exclaimed, "You are not Justice, but a phantom calling yourself such!"

In tones melting and meek, the figure named Justice replied, "I am the voice of the people."

"I recognize you as such," was the answer that came from his heart, and stuck like a knot in his throat that seemed to almost choke him as he appealed to Justice as an individual whose private opinion he valued, and asked:

"If a hundred mad dogs were let loose, each claiming its thousand victims, would it be just to club and strangle those victims, and open the public highways to the rabies?"

The figure looked down at the limp arm, Jacob thought appealingly, and said again, "I am the voice of the people."

"The people are not here. Why parley with the apparition," said Jacob, as he settled upon his pillow to consult with self after the following manner.

"The more unjust and barbarous would it appear were those victims, some innocent boys, and all, unthinking and ignorant of results told, and the strong arm of the law in the voice. You may go near the mad dog every day, and play with him if you like. You may let him snap at you, there is no harm in that. You may let him tear your coat if you find any pleasure in it, but don't let him give you the fatal bite."

Jacob's heart throbbed on, till at last the weary mind was oblivious to any ache there might be there. The atmosphere around Ike's home was as unwholesome as before. The trip brought no permanent good result. Ruth was worse, and harder to care for. She had grown thin and had a pitiable look on her face. Meg was weary and heart-sick, and Ike was startled at how much older his father looked in those few days. In the morning, at an early hour, he was seated by an uncurtained window overlooking the porch, where the ivy's brown vines were so closely twined that a passer-

by could not see inside, with his head buried in his hands, and with no light load upon his heart, when Draque stepped cautiously up to him and tapped him on the shoulder, saying, "Ike, I don't believe Ruth 'ill ever get well."

Ike was on his feet so soon that Draque backed out of his way in astonishment. He looked at his father a good while before speech came to him, and then he said, "I did not know there was anything serious the matter with her."

"It's serious enough, Ike, when her little back is broken," said Draque, as he choked with indignation toward Ike, and turned his back to him, while he dashed the tears away. In a moment he faced him again and said, "I've forgiven you everything you ever did, Ike. I've talked to you and tried to make you give up the drink when nobody else would bother with you, but now I have no more kind feelings for you forever when you could abuse a helpless little thing like that."

He walked away without again deigning to rest his eye on Ike. The color left Ike's face, and every inch of that once active man was still save the aching, breaking heart. If he had gone to the bedside and wept over the little sufferer, Draque could not help relenting, but no, Ike showed no signs of sorrow that friend or foe could see. But notwithstanding his stolid appearance he was one of the most miserable of men, and certainly not miserable because heartless, as some were prone to suspect. The one friend he was always so sure would sympathize with him and give help and advice, and point out the way that had become such an enigma—when even Meg could see nothing but untold misery in the future—had cast him off forever. And Ruth; poor little Ruth, with a

broken back, that he would gladly have his own two hands chopped off to make whole. He would face bullets more bravely than he ever did on the battlefield, and that with a full knowledge of being hit by every one, could he take back the blow he had dealt Ruth. 'Tis hopeless remorse that will never heal a broken back, combined with the knowledge that he had weighed his strength in the balance, and found himself wanting, that made him the speechless and seemingly heartless creature he appeared.

He again took the seat he had left upon hearing his father's startling words, and braced up a little better than he was able to do earlier. As he sat there, his chin cleared his chest about an inch and a half, and his thumbs caught the arms-eyes of his vest in such a manner that his fingers came together under his chin. If pen in mortal hand or brush of artist was able to picture the real condition of the internal man as accurately, Ike would be tenderly lifted from that place of torture, and soothing words would be poured into the despairing soul, that never hopes to hear such words again; for the human heart still beats in sympathy for those who are unjustly judged and condemned. But, alas! Through all the long ages, Ike, justice to your fellow-sufferers has been the cripple it appeared to Jacob Klomp, and so it will be to you.

Jacob was astir early that morning, for the days were growing few in which he was to have unbounded freedom every hour of the day, to place his thoughts and attentions just where he pleased. All distressing and unpleasant thoughts vanished with the apparition, and did not again appear to disturb sound and refreshing sleep.

Klomp had for years kept a man on the place, but,

according to his own version, "he was by choice general manager, and while he didn't feel any the worse for the wear, intended to be." He still did a great many chores, and in busy seasons some of the hard work, and with considerable pride in his manner he said, "with as little fatigue as many a youngster." In such respects, he and Jabez were as like as two peas. After Ike's departure, Jabez went to the field where he had left off duty upon his arrival, looked about, and laid out plans for the future. Klomp had "laid the harness off," and had no intention of putting it on while Jacob was at home. Shortly after breakfast he went into the sitting room to have a talk with Jacob, for he never tired hearing what he had to say. He found him busy with his pen in hand. Several sheets of paper lay before him on the table, all well filled.

"You must have been at it early, Jake," said Klomp, pointing to the table; "that looks like as if you had a day's work already done."

Jacob looked up and said, "I have only begun."

"If that's the case," said Klomp, "I'll leave you alone. I see Jabez over in the field there. I think I'll go and say good-morning to him."

"It sometimes takes you a long time to say good-morning, father," said Jacob. "Please don't be too long about it this morning."

"If you're in any hurry I'll not go at all," replied Klomp.

Jacob laughed heartily as he thought of his father's last adventure with Jabez in the field, and consequent little riot at home on account of invited company, and said: "I am in no great hurry; if you are back in time for dinner it will be satisfactory. This letter informs me I might find an opportunity of airing my

opinions in a little town a few miles away, and would like you to drive me there this afternoon, if convenient."

"I'll be on hand," replied Klomp, looking very suspiciously at the papers; "but if you write at that rate till noon, I'll not promise you Pete 'ill be able to haul them."

"I will not overload Pete," was Jacob's assuring reply, as he prepared for further work on the paper before him.

Klomp left to say "good-morning" to his all the year round friend and next neighbor. He made his way through the field somewhat faster than he was accustomed to do when out on a looking-around tour, which Jabez was observing enough to notice, and said to himself, "Klomp means business this time, sure. I wonder what's up now?"

It slipped Klomp's memory that he started out purposely to say "good-morning" to Jabez. His mind was active as his limbs, and he had thought over a great many things as he crossed that field, which evidently drove the original purpose far away. The thoughts that had claimed his attention for the last few seconds he bundled about as follows, and presented to Jabez, as he took more time to step the last few steps between them:

"You wouldn't have to knock me down today, Jabez, to bring me to see you're sometimes right where I'm wrong."

Jabez looked at him, and smiled as he said, "I said to myself when I saw you coming, something's up. What is it?"

"Nothing in particular," said Klomp, "only I'm about ready to wilt on the question you and I had it hot and heavy about the other day."

“I knew well,” said Jabez, “if you could hold out against Jake you were not the timber I took you for.”

“I’m not the kind that stands out against anything that’s reasonable and just once I see it,” replied Klomp.

The two talked on in a more even tone than when last they met. They made no striking gestures like opposing factions at war. Klomp did not intimate to Jabez he had gone completely over, but there was an understanding that brought the friends closer together than heretofore. Klomp was home in time to drive Jacob to the town he had in view, and right proud he was, too, when he drove his horse as near as he could to the speaker’s open-air platform, and listened to Jacob tell the people gathered around certain facts concerning the destructive traffic they certainly had not realized, if they ever thought of, before. Jacob said “his business was not to aim particularly at the poor little rumseller; he could start in a dozen directions from where he stood and lay his hand upon that little man.” He pointed in the direction of a near saloon, where the door was screened and the lower part of the window painted white, and said, as he pictured the man whose name was above the door in large letters:

“That man is a viper, it is true, but it may be he is a viper unconscious of the venom of his sting; he is making money, and violating no law he knows of. The something in nearly every man that renders him capable of nice discernment between right and wrong is dead in that man; it is, therefore, cowardly to level blows at him. While the great fountain from which he is supplied is full to overflowing, you may count upon sufficient outlets to keep that mammoth reservoir in nice equilibrium; whether this or that particular

man sells over the counter or not—and there is not a level-headed man in the States incapable of seeing it. What good, do you think, would have resulted from inducing or compelling individual slaveholders to set free their slaves? While the law that protected men in holding others in bondage remained the same there would be forever men who would avail themselves of the opportunity of compelling their fellow-men to hand over to them the fruit of their toil. As unavailing, whatever means may be taken to cripple individual dealers, such a method would but cripple the individual aimed at. It is utterly useless to try to limit consumption while manufacture is unlimited, and it is plain a half dozen manufacturers could flood the whole country.”

Jacob looked around at his audience, and said, in a manner most fascinating: “Friends, we want to eradicate the curse. Suppress is, to us, a word so meaningless, in the face of such injustice as we are compelled to witness daily, that we can find no room for it in our honest hearts.”

A few sent up the prolonged cheer. Many wore grave faces and silently moved away, having not yet weighed his words in such a way that the scale tipped in his favor; but it was evident they had never before been brought so face to face with the truths he so earnestly presented.

After all was over Klomp drove a little closer to the speaker's stand to accommodate Jacob with a clearer passage to the buggy, which not a few stood watching until out of sight, bearing away with it their plain farmer friend and the man who that day told them facts so in opposition to accepted custom and the general condition of things.

Klomp never had much regard for horseflesh that

could not travel. When he found himself fairly beyond the throng, he gave the bits one or two short jerks; his dumb friend understood as well as children understand the call to dinner, and away they spun over the road toward home. But, as the sun had set before they started, twilight thickened rapidly into darkness, and long before they reached home Klomp thought it wise to slacken their speed. He gave the reins a certain pull the horse well knew the meaning of, and slowly they sauntered on. Neither he nor Jacob had broken the silence on their journey from town till now. Fast travel is not conducive to concentrated thought, and even less conducive to the expression of thought, especially to the driver, when it is necessary to be on the lookout for holes in the road and deceptive little bridges, with sometimes a single plank. In some of the cornfields they passed the corn was husked, and in others cut and ready, all of which they could observe now that their gait permitted.

From any position taken the dark forest was still a beautiful background, though stripped of its awful majesty when the Indian went out. That piece of wonderful mechanism called the savage, who, without books and what we are pleased to call intelligence, felt the forest was only his temporary home; that across the valley of death lay the spirit home, so surely to be his—was more sublime than the forest he was driven from—sublimely soul-inspiring and beautiful as it is, with its massive trunks and graceful foliage, its endless labyrinths and echoing dells.

From a piece of wood Jacob thought blacker than the rest came the hungry cry of a coon, and from a cornfield a long distance from that wood went up the cry of a brother coon certainly faring better. Klomp chuckled to himself in his humorous way, poked Jacob

in the ribs with his elbow, pointed in the direction of the cornfield and said, "That coon's in clover."

"Yes," said Jacob, and through the darkness rang out an honest manly laugh, "and he is calling to the coon not in clover, saying, 'There's good corn here—there's good corn here.'"

"I'll be blamed if I don't believe they have a language of their own, Jake, and understand each other," said Klomp, as he listened to the cry of hunger from the woods and then to the answer of plenty from the cornfield.

"The animal in the cornfield is but a coon," said Jacob, "and yet he is not insensible to his brother's suffering. He does not wish to put the bonanza he struck all in his own stomach, but takes the time to call loudly and often to the one afar off and hungry."

"And the other is coming right this way," said Klomp, who was now as deeply interested in what was passing before him as a mathematician could be in his calculations or a religious in the voice he heard calling him to leave all and follow the Lamb.

"Yes," said Jacob, "but it will take him some time. He cannot cover all that ground in a few seconds. I think we can hardly wait for his coonship to take possession."

The remark brought Klomp to realize their gait was unnecessarily slow. He gave Pete one gentle hint that he might step out faster and still go slowly, which hint Pete immediately put into execution.

Neither the comments nor movements of the two reasonable animals had the least effect upon the two unreasonable ones. The coon in the midst of famishing surroundings still continued to bewail his condition, and his friend "in clover" still kept calling him on. Klomp said again, referring to the coons;

“Whether they’ve a language or not, Jake, we can’t be certain, but I’ve noticed all my life that they wind up at last in the cornfield.”

“You had some disagreeable assurances of that fact yourself, I’m sure,” said Jacob.

“Indeed I had,” replied Klomp. “Many a time I spent half the night hunting them out of my fields.”

“Only to drive them to some other man’s field, I suppose,” said Jacob, who, after lending a still more attentive ear to the pleading and encouraging cries, continued: “They are capable of teaching us wonderful lessons, destructive though they may be at times.”

“We either haven’t or don’t take the time to listen to those lessons always,” said Klomp. “Besides, they have a way about them that puts a man in the humor of not listening.”

Jacob laughed, as he replied:

“I suppose it is annoying to a man to have some of his crop eaten by them after all his labor. But you are a good churchman, father; you believe a man’s full reward is not to be looked for here.”

“That’s what I believe,” said Klomp; “but a man often thinks very little about his belief until he’s reminded of it by another man—and I find you pretty good at reminders.”

Here Klomp stopped, drew down the corners of his mouth, and said:

“You’re a good deal like your mother, I believe, Jake, and she’s a pretty sensible woman.”

Jacob said nothing in direct return for the compliment, but as they rode on he said:

“There are very few men who do not require some outside force, to put in motion the good that is in them. The fuel is within—the torch from without. That the man ever lived who had that fuel kindled without a

torch from the external world, I question. Also, the more fuel, or soul, a man has to set on fire, the more attentively will he listen, and the more will he make others feel some of that which is within him. The names of Plato and Shakespeare and Milton are forever before us, and our own Lincoln, who, with a master-stroke, proclaimed the slave a free man, because they acknowledged the Power within them and courted the torch. They did not teach, and humanize, and elevate mankind without labor. When a coon can give us so forcible a lesson on duty as we have just heard, I think we must stop and listen, or acknowledge the soul within us is small."

Jacob stopped talking only to think the more. They were nearing home, and Klomp liked to hear the sound of a human voice; perhaps more for that reason than any other he said:

"Then we have two lessons here in a nutshell, Jake. The one is help those that need it, and the other is work hard to do it."

"Those lessons are not altogether new to us, father," said Jacob, as he laughed aloud. "Still, we must admit we were given some very particular points to-night."

Jacob was certainly what Jabez said he was—"a good-natured, sensible fellow;" but in his most serious moments his father could provoke a laugh.

He left the hungry coon in the woods, knowing well he would find the cornfield, for his brother coon would not stop calling until the goal was reached. Though the time might be a little remote, he saw, too, as fairly on their feet the multitude among whom Ike was numbered. He felt sure there was fuel enough in this great country that, once touched by the no alcohol torch, to lay forever aside laws supposed to be just, but that are not.

"I'm hungry myself as the old coon," said Klomp, as he dropped the reins at his own door.

Mrs. Klomp had a pair of nice spring chickens ready, and he fell to work. Slower movements might be pronounced more graceful, but it can be said with truth the farmer generally has questions of more importance to deal with. The supply would hardly meet the demand did every farmer pose as a model of grace.

Mrs. Klomp had many questions to ask concerning the trip, and her information was invariably received from Jacob, consequently Klomp had ample time to take note after his hunger was appeased. He had been sitting for some time looking from Jacob to Mrs. Klomp and back, when patience deserted him, and he said:

"Jake, leave something on that bone for the dog."

"Don't be in a hurry, Ezekiel," said Mrs. Klomp, looking up; "give those that were talking time to eat."

The clock in clear, mellow tones marked off another hour as the actors around that table arose; some of them feeling as individually responsible for the talents given them as the judge upon the bench could feel, who must pass sentence according to law, whether the law has been sifted until the word is synonymous with justice or not.

CHAPTER XXX.

While picking the chicken bones Jacob had found time to tell his mother he must go. The good woman was evidently much worked up over the announcement. Klomp was incapacitated for further merriment, and during the succeeding twenty-four hours the spirits of all under that roof were remarkably low. Jacob had been with them much longer than they at first dared hope he would stay. The coming and staying were bright places in their lives, but the going brought a pang that, had he not come, they would not have felt.

So wonderfully blended are joy and sorrow the one cannot be without the other. Like light and darkness, or heat and cold, as far as we know anything about them, they are alternate; when one comes the other goes. Somewhat resembling that part of the earth upon which the sun does not shine for months some travel on till the end is near with clouds overhanging, which phenomena is cleared away by the consoling promise—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Mrs. Klomp helped Jacob pack his satchel, and carefully stowed away in a corner that looked a little empty a roll of the best butter, which at that season could be done without a fear the doing so might be a cause for regret.

Klomp, who stood back looking at the performance, said to Jacob:

"That's the last thing any man in the world but yourself would think of taking. That place in the

corner looks as if it was made for a bottle, so most every other man would think."

"It is the realizing that fact, even more keenly than when I left home, that is compelling me to pack so hurriedly," answered Jacob, as he snapped the buckle on the last strap of the packed satchel. "Those who see the evil consequences of the drug, and the cure—which is prohibition—must set to work immediately."

Klomp looked steadily at him but did not speak. Jacob felt his father did not oppose his plans, but was merely struggling with regrets that his son should spoil his own comforts to contend with an evil from which he had nothing to fear, and said:

"You know I am better equipped than Tobias Lenk; he could not count upon a half dozen sympathizers in the whole state, while those who are in sympathy with the Prohibition cause are numerous, but need stirring up."

Jacob had done excellent work with Ike and his father, and was now about to step into a larger field. He did not anticipate that every man he spoke to would be ready to place his vote in the right place, but such knowledge was only going to put more determination in him.

When he grasped his father's extended hand in the last "good-by" he said:

"That the people of this country should prohibit is but just, and it lies altogether with the man who has an object in view, whether that object is attained or not."

As he hesitated a moment, he caught his father's sharp look, and apologizingly said:

"Relying upon the Almighty's arm must always be understood, I'll admit."

He was off. Klomp walked slowly away, feeling a

little sorry that during his long life he had so strongly advocated what his son so pronouncedly condemned, and what he himself did not longer hesitate to acknowledge an evil. He turned and looked after the outgoing train till nothing could be seen but smoke, and said, as he stood watching:

“I saw the day I little thought the wood lying around us in piles to dispose of as best we could would ever be put to such use as that. Jake is right in saying when men are very determined to do a thing it 'ill be done.”

While Klomp was thus discussing matters in his own mind, Jacob was going through a similar process, much after the following manner:

“Homer's voice is heard through ages, not merely because he lived and enjoyed God's bounteous gifts along the streams by which he wandered, but because he grasped with his whole soul, worked with a determined will, and put ammunition enough between the covers of his little book to carry. And I expect to find some one just as capable who will tell the American people that, with all their steady advancement in the right direction, there is still a great wrong to be made right. Posterity will read with disgust how our beloved land was flecked with prisons—miniature Coliseums, where poor helpless creatures were strangled, not by barbarians and Nubian lions in an open arena where there was some show for defense, but after being led along the path they followed by the golden chain of public opinion—after having been offered time and again, by superiors and dearest friends, the poison that makes madmen, and which with malice to no man they accepted—after having partaken of the bait that swells the revenue of Mother Country and her lawful emissaries of destruction—when, having

arrived at the point where reason is unbalanced or the body disabled, as is the case with Isaac Draque, they must from such time forth be unmercifully dealt with; for such is the law. Not by barbarians and wild beasts, it is true; the sentence is pronounced by the flower of intellectual excellence, in science of government, and sanctioned by the voice of the governed, which removes the revolting and makes the barbarity more in accordance with the refined tastes of the nineteenth century."

The picture before him was too unbearable for further contemplation; he nervously shoved his satchel to one side, while the climax presented itself as follows:

"We have not the show for arguing the justice of such proceedings the slaveholders had when the Scott decision aroused the indignation of justice-lovers throughout the North, and with our advanced civilization such things cannot continue. Nor can we place the blame at the door of those we allow to scatter devastation; we are individually responsible, and our people slumbering. It is necessary to set this great body of voters seriously thinking, and that is all that is necessary."

A sharp whistle and a slacking of speed announced they were nearing a stopping place. Jacob looked around to see the familiar streets of his own city, and his eyes shown with delight as, close beside the incoming train, they rested upon the form of a friend and well-wisher. The two men walked along in close conversation, attracting no attention.

The puffing of the locomotive that pulled in the car upon which Jacob came was heard at intervals as the big thing was trying to shift to another track, or back out of the way. And the shrill whistle of one

nearing the station was the commanding way the dumb machine had of telling all to clear the track. So that one not accustomed to our earth and the things thereon might think those massive, swift-moving locomotives real living beings; while we who abide here, and are familiar with the workings of machinery, know that the motive power, correctly speaking, is in the minds of men. It is true we call steam and water propelling forces; but behind all that lies the power that moves, that which directs—Intelligence. Just as back of this earthly propelling power centered in man there must be One who set that power in motion. Those who appreciate most fully the value of this immaterial power strive harder and aim higher after perfection, and it can be truly said of Jacob he was blessed with clear perception.

He saw how man, as time wore on, looked over creation and drew to himself, out of its vast resources, material and power which he utilized for the benefit of great numbers. He saw the river dammed and the mill constructed where there was never one before. He saw steam gathered into a cylinder and rushing over miles of country, carrying with it its cargo of human life. But such progress is not in his line of march; he is striving after points whose summits are crowned with truth and justice, and, like the Ike of former years, he threw himself into the coming struggle for the attainment of both.

He and his friend carried on their conversation for several hours after they reached his house. That what they had to say and were about to do would affect future generations very materially for their good, Jacob had not a doubt.

Doubters are always poor workers. The shadow of a doubt drags a man down; he never finds himself an

inch ahead of the starting place. Had Columbus doubted land was beyond the great ocean he cast himself upon, his faint heart could never push ahead and rise above what appeared to the whole world insurmountable obstacles; he could never quell the mutiny of dissatisfied mariners, who, discouraged, saw nothing but a watery grave.

Klomp arrived home after seeing Jacob off, strode into the house in a dejected manner, and sat in Jacob's easy chair as if hoping to receive some comfort from that now that Jacob was not there.

Mrs. Klomp came in to take a seat in another place that had been particularly comfortable when she had Jacob to look at and listen to. Her eyes were swollen, and Klomp knew well how she had spent the time while he was away. He was afraid he might betray some weakness himself, and did not venture to say a word for several minutes. When silence became intolerable, he said, looking nervously across the room at Mrs. Klomp:

"I never thought rightly of all Draque had to suffer till a short time past. We never had any great trouble in our family, while Draque has been punished all along. When Amanda died he was ready to go under, and then Bill was brought home to him riddled with bullets. Mrs. Draque couldn't live after that, so his home was broken up; and now I believe Ike and his family is a greater heart-break to him than it all."

He turned his eyes from Mrs. Klomp to the table beside him, where his right hand rested, and watched his forefinger as he moved it backward and forward in making some inextricable pattern, that, after all his trouble, was only a blank, and said:

"Jake thinks that Ike and the like of him are more to be pitied than blamed, after all the trouble and

expense the country's at building prisons and hiring hangmen."

Mrs. Klomp was one of the best of women, who did not bother herself with matters that had nothing to do with home comforts, and was queen of what mankind are never tired of showing up as woman's sphere; but had she been able that day to talk right to the point like Peggy, she would not have lowered herself in Klomp's estimation one whit. She could talk fluently and with great ease and sense about the consistency and adaptability, or advantage, of this and that thing in the prospective about the house and neighborhood. In fact, there was such a charm about her words and her sense such that Klomp thought he saw straight through it—"how Jake got his way of making people see things another man couldn't."

But laws of the State or country a woman had no business meddling with, and where she had no business, Mrs. Klomp had no desire to investigate; consequently her reply to what Klomp said could not be expected to have much weight. She smoothed back her silver locks as she looked around her tidy, comfortable sitting room, and said:

"It takes Peggy to get roused up over such things as that, but I suppose the woman has reasons that I haven't. Poor thing!"

Mr. and Mrs. Klomp sat there, having nothing further to say. There had come a time in their lives when Mrs. Klomp knew nothing about and could not be interested in what claimed Klomp's whole attention; and "Jake at the bottom of it, too," thought Klomp.

CHAPTER XXXI.

On a cold drizzling evening several days later Klomp came into the house, saying to Mrs. Klomp:

"It's been a broken day and I might as well end it visiting. I've been so much taken up with Jake and what he had to say I haven't seen Jabez for a while past."

He picked up the hat he had laid down and was moving on when Mrs. Klomp said:

"Your supper."

"It's a fact," said Klomp, stopping, "however interested a man may be in a thing, he mustn't forget to eat. Jabez and I tried that once and it didn't work well."

The meal was dispatched with few words, and Klomp felt he was at liberty. Jabez' thoughtful face was always a study, and, according to Draque, "Peggy had more grit than a dozen women." As Klomp entered, he saw there was an expression on both faces altogether new to him, well as he knew them, and which made him feel he was intruding. Jabez quietly handed him a chair, saying:

"We always expressed our thoughts to each other freely, though often we disagreed, and we had serious questions to contend with that cost many dear friends their lives; but the hardest blow I ever felt, Klomp, has been struck me now."

He faltered, and staggered back. Klomp was standing beside the chair; he offered him the strong hand of a true friend, with sympathy in the grasp, and

wishing to relieve him from further details, said, "I heard about Ruth."

"Oh; we'd become reconciled to Ruth's misfortune," shrieked Peggy, "hard as it was; at least we said, 'Thy will be done;' but how can we bow to this. It is not God's will. It is not God's will." Jabez handed Klomp a slip of paper that had reached him only an hour earlier. It was the message that contained the happenings of the early morning, and that brought desolation to their door. Meg was dead, and such confusion reigned about Ike's home, no one thought of them before. Klomp sank into insignificance in the presence of the great sorrow; he felt how trivial anything he could say must be. How could he offer consolation to Jabez, who had always been the consoler, and so strong.

The drizzling rain that had so broken the day for Klomp was over. The dark cloud that hung over the earth like a pall from early morning was rent in a dozen places, and through every rent could be read a message from Above. Nature stepped in as consoler, and sang to those three her everlasting hymn of praise. There was something touchingly sympathetic in the low moan of the wind. It did not bring with it the softness of May, or the odoriferous breath of June, but flung itself against the walls of the desolate home and moaned like some live creature that had come to offer consolation, and because it could not find entrance, wept.

The bright red clouds hung thick over a piece of wood Jabez called his own, and told the story of how the sun was not far below, while near the horizon a spot was nether blue, and there, as from the beginning, at that hour and that season, shone the evening star. Jabez always loved the stars, and in his younger

and more poetic days, which were also his hard-working days, had said, "they came to see me before the chores were done in the evening, and did not bid me farewell until they saw me well at them again in the morning."

As he looked out the sight of the star, combined with the pleading of the wind softened him into resignation; he lifted up his voice laden with the refrain of all nature, and said, "God be praised."

Klomp's full heart could now in words give utterance to a little of what it felt, and he said, "I said to Mrs. Klomp before I started how I never thought rightly about what Draque had to suffer, and though we've both had ups and downs, you've been a good deal like me, Jabez, in this respect till now."

"Yes," said Jabez, "but I had hoped to die seeing Meg left over the family that need her so much."

He moved closer to the table, opened the family Bible, turned to where he thought the words suited his case, and read aloud. He closed the Bible and said, "We're going to Ike's, Klomp, only we're waiting on the train; we have about three quarters of an hour to make it, and I think if Jess has the horse ready we'll be moving that way."

"Let me not keep you," said Klomp, rising."

"I'm glad you dropped in," said Peggy, "you can let the neighbors know; we wouldn't like to go and not a friend know of our trouble."

Mrs. Klomp's eyes opened wide as she saw Klomp step in so soon after leaving, and move solemnly around as in a funeral march. He turned over a book or two, searching for the Bible that was not always before him as before Jabez. Something said to him very forcibly that he had lived a long time without trouble, and so had Mrs. Klomp, but whatever might

be going to happen, "he hoped Jake would be spared."

Mrs. Klomp scanned him closely, and said, "You're back very soon, I didn't expect you for a couple of hours yet."

"Yes," said Klomp, "I'm back soon," and then continued, "there's an end to everything, I'm beginning to realize, for the first time I came away from Jabez with a heavy heart."

"I wish Jake was here to cheer you up a bit," said Mrs. Klomp, with a sigh. She did not ask why his heart was heavy, her own was heavy, and she thought she had the secret.

"Under present circumstances he'd only make my heart the heavier," said Klomp, "telling me what men should do and they're not doing, the more so, being as I have to count myself among those that haven't worked the right way."

Klomp proceeded to tell the tale of death, the tale no human being, arrived at the age of maturity, has not heard in connection with some dear friend, many more than once, and every time the tale is told there must be some aching, bleeding hearts. But circumstances that throw the horrible around death are invariably nursed in alcohol and malt; that, Klomp, though blind so long, could now see as clearly as Jacob.

Mrs. Klomp was startled by the news, and exclaimed, "That's sudden; for she was alive three days ago!" She then proceeded to question concerning particulars.

"I can give no particulars," said Klomp. "The paper read, Meg is dead, and if Jabez knew more he didn't say, nor did I question."

That settled, there came thoughts about the funeral,

Although Jabez had said nothing about that, Klomp felt he could be more certain in his presumptions, and said in reply to Mrs. Klomp's questions concerning where she would be buried, "They'll take her to Draque's burying place, likely, or Jabez may lay her beside the spot he's marked out for himself and Peggy, for Ike has no lot in town, and isn't likely to have."

Two days later, in the evening, Meg's grave was ready. Jabez brought her as near home as he could, and the many years seemed as nothing since he helped Klomp mark off the lot given to the dead.

"Meg looked peaceful," the neighbors said, though how she could look so happy leaving Ruth many could not understand. But why not? The still, small voice that spoke to the Red man not a century before, on that very spot, and pointed beyond the clouds, could be heard as well by her. The last vision that passed before her fleeting soul may have been stamped with the peace of heaven, and left its image there.

What aroused curiosity and excited indignation among the townspeople was the fact Ike was not at the funeral. Some one ventured to ask, "Is he sick?" which a friend of both families answered with the single word, "No." Dark scowls could be seen on many an honest face, as the word was passed around, and many a law-abiding citizen felt, if he could only lay his hands upon him he would give him what he justly deserved. Only Jacob Klomp, off in his own city, and Jabez, the one man who had most reason to feel revengeful, and possibly one other, who, though not a relative, stood very near the grave, were prepared to say, "the blame is ours."

Jabez and Draque waited until the last shovel full was placed on the grave, just as they had when poor

John Strand was laid in a grave not two rods away. Draque shook his head and said to Jabez as he stepped closer to his side, as the two moved away, and Draque was about to stop awhile at the graves of mother and Amanda and Bill:

“I always had a warm feeling for John Strand, and could forgive him; but father and all as I am, it’s a hard struggle for me to say I forgive Ike.”

“I forgive him,” answered Jabez, without a tremor in his voice.

Draque stood for some time looking at the three grass covered mounds. The occupant of each grave had twined around his heart particular claims of love, and all had been severed—one, so many years ago. He was to be Jabez’ guest for a few hours; it was inevitable, trains never come but on schedule time. He hung back as if loath to enter the house, and when Jabez moved faster, said, “I feel my family has brought great trouble upon you, Jabez.”

“We all as unknowingly helped to bring trouble upon you,” answered Jabez.

Draque did not understand, and looked at him in astonishment. Jabez did not give him time to rally from his surprise to ask “How,” but said, “When we cast our votes with the Republican party we signed Bill’s death-warrant.”

“But some things can’t be helped,” said Draque, not satisfied he had just reason for feeling Ike could in the least be exonerated from blame.

“And some other things can’t be helped a bit more,” said Jabez, taking his arm to help him up the steps. They were seated but a short time in the room where Ike’s presence so often lent a charm, when Jabez said, “You were the first man in the place to go back on drink, Draque.”

"Yes," said Draque, very solemnly, but I didn't do it in time."

"Like myself," said Jabez, "you couldn't do a thing before you felt you were right. I voted a ticket or two that helped keep the chains tight on the slave, not knowing I was doing wrong."

Jabez accompanied Draque back to the city to see again the home Meg left, and the children.

Mr. and Mrs. Klomp spent every evening with Peggy while Jabez was away, though they were very unlike all other evenings spent there. Peggy didn't give up to uncontrolled grief, but was extremely quiet. Mrs. Klomp had very little to say, and Klomp not much. In answer to something asked about Ruth, Peggy said, "I will keep Ruth while I live, and am able to care for her, and expect Jabez will bring her back with him."

But Ruth clung to grandfather Draque, and would not leave him. Draque caressingly gave her hair the same stroke he had accustomed himself to, and assured her he would part with all he possessed sooner than with her. So whatever became of the other children, Ruth was to see fair play while grandfather Draque lived, at least.

Sometime after Meg's funeral, a very pointed article denouncing the liquor traffic appeared in a daily; it was hooted at unmercifully by prominent men, and pillars of law and order. Some surmised the editor was paid a good round sum for the insertion; for the people were hardly ready to think an editor could so far overlook his own interests as to side with the insignificant few, who agitated the overthrow of a traffic that was such a solid factor to the country in the shape of revenue. The writer of said article was in all probability Jacob Klomp, for on its face it bore evidence of being the production of a far-seeing, intelligent man.

The editor also proved to be a man who was not to be influenced by bribes, but like Garrison, determined to stand on his own feet, though all the world was against him.

Some of Meg's friends who had attended the funeral service at the house, and had also read the article Jacob took such pains to make clear, had their sympathies aroused, though from an entirely different standpoint, and were going to prove themselves his right-bower. One pale faced, earnest looking man, well up in years, who had known Ike for a quarter of a century, or before he severed his connection with the lawyer who taught him "the law," was decidedly the originator of the agitation movement from said point of view. This good-hearted man placidly looked into his possessions to see how comfortably he was circumstanced, and consequently how independent he was; and suggested to a close friend, whose nest was as well feathered as his own, that as both were out of the reach of want, with no one leaning upon them unable to provide for themselves, they might turn their attention toward fighting the liquor traffic. This they decided to do, even if they could not just then for the reading of such pointed, and in all truth, such consistent articles as were then going round, bring themselves to believe the blood of the strangled drunkard cried aloud to heaven for vengeance, just as the blood of one mad from rabies would cry, if pronounced by intelligent voters unfit to live, and slain after having buried his teeth in the flesh of his nearest kin.

Abel Beech was not blown into the state to suck the best of every flower, and then to be blown out; but was a fixture, born then and there expecting to die. The growth and prosperity of the state and country depended upon him in just the way the growth and

prosperity of states and countries depend upon the upright, honest individual everywhere—there is no true growth without them.

While comfortable, he could not be looked upon as a man of great wealth; such men have hardly the patriotism Abel had. It has been said long ago, "riches take wings and fly." Sometimes they do, and sometimes they take with them their possessors; they transplant them to most congenial spots where the cries of the poor and oppressed never reach their ears. There was no hope for Abel ever being so transplanted, nor had he such a wish; he must in his own state, and among his own people, exert himself for the best until the end. He had long watched the prison doors closed on criminals of a certain class, and had deplored the fact, but as yet, with not a particle of feeling in him akin to that in Jacob Klomp. He saw no injustice done the physical wreck stretched before him on the street, absolutely unable to rise, yet being rapped over the head and shins by a club in the hands of a policeman.

Abel was the Pharisee and that man the Publican, and he thanked God he was not like him. But with a tender heart, and almost fatherly affection, he turned to the ragged, shivering, half-starved little child of the man before him, and said, "I will help you if I can, and there is no other way to save you, but to take from your parents or guardians the article they drink to excess"—he stopped at the word excess, rumped and smoothed a paper he held in his hand, and said: "Other men have thrown overboard altogether the word excess, and very intelligent men they are, too; but it has sounded in my ears so long I can hardly familiarize them to other words. The appeal for help from the thousands upon thousands of children should be listened to as

attentively as was the cry of the slave, and their wrongs ought to speak as loud to listening humanity. There's one cheery aspect about the thing, we know the remedy is certainly in the hands of the people."

He drew a long breath, and said: "There's little Ruth Draque, crippled for life by a blow from her father, who was, until late, as intelligent and sensible as any man living, and when we see such from men of his stripe, what are we to expect from the poor and ignorant? Shall we let them go ahead and maim and cripple their own children, and not lift a finger to prevent it, only imprison and hang and the like, after the deed is done? I think such time is past."

So it happened Abel Beech enlisted under his banner scores, who, with him, saw the necessity of a new party with a new name, just as years before other men saw the necessity of a new party, when the best element of both parties would merge in order to demonstrate to the world that Justice shall reign.

Broken-hearted Ike had again been brought face to face with a terrible calamity. He did not realize until long after the funeral that Meg was dead; experienced and intelligent as he was, he was as incapable of realizing facts at times as was plain, simple-minded John Strand, when want stared the family in the face, and little Tim was stretched before him a corpse.

Abel Beech met Ike about a fortnight after the funeral, and did not think it worth while to speak, but gave him a crushing look of contempt, which the lawyer and soldier, and, above all, the man, was not slow to understand. A spirit as proud as ever he possessed arose for one moment in resentment, and then sank to the lowest ebb of despair.

The paper with the much-abused article concerning the liquor traffic came under Jabez' observation; it

suited him exactly, for he saw the justice of the thrusts. He read and re-read, and, like Tobe, laid it away in his coat-pocket for further use. He handed it to Klomp some days later, with his finger on the piece he would like him to read.

Klomp brightened as he finished, with a vision of his son by his side, and said, "I'll be blamed if it's not just like Jake. I've listened to him so long I'd know it among a thousand."

"Whoever he may be he knows well what he's talking about," said Jabez.

"He's got it into his head right stiff," replied Klomp, "that some day in the future there'll be as clean a sweep made of the liquor business as there was of the slave."

"He's right," said Jabez, "and more will realize after the sweep is made, a greater evil has been put under foot."

"It beats all," said Klomp, very thoughtfully, "how long it sometimes takes a man to see through a thing that's clear as day."

"One thing at a time appears to be as much as a great people can well handle," said Jabez.

"I'll be bound if it doesn't look that way," replied Klomp.

"The saying was always a stronghold with Tobe that one good man couldn't do all the good that was to be done in the world," said Jabez.

"I couldn't expect Jake would do as much good as Washington or Lincoln," said Klomp, "but even they couldn't be more earnest or bent on doing right than he is."

"Earnestness in a man impresses a people more than anything else," replied Jabez. "It's something there can be no make-believe about; plain people can

detect the want of it, often more readily than those that boast of great knowledge, and when once they see it's not in him, a man may as well stop."

"Yes," said Klomp, whose face was glowing with enthusiasm; "no matter how fine the words a man may use, he can't make much out of them, if every inch of him isn't in what he says."

Jabez took the paper he guarded with such care from Klomp and replaced it in his pocket. A shadow flitted before him, and he bowed his head. Sorrow had claimed him for her own that moment. Dead Meg had not been laid away long enough to not claim an overwhelming part of her father's heart. As he thought of her and her struggling family, his bowed head and stooped shoulders were in striking contrast to Klomp's erect form.

Nothing further was necessary to tell Klomp that, though Jabez was the first to open the conversation which passed between them, he might now be pressing the concerns of the outside world too closely upon his friend, who for the time was so surely absorbed with his own, did he attempt to say more. He rubbed the pile on his slouch hat against the grain, then rubbed it back in place—all the time he felt a lump in his throat, and knew how unable he was to speak a word of comfort suitable to the time, for Jabez was thinking of Meg.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Another year has rolled away, and in the city home Jabez and Peggy so often look into in spirit, with such heavy hearts, Draque was trying to please and entertain Ruth.

He sat in Meg's rocker with the child on his knee, long after the other children, forgetful of all trouble, were enjoying sweet sleep. Ruth was uneasy, and pouted because grandfather suggested she should retire with the rest. Draque repented the suggestion, and said, "Don't mind it, I'll sit up half the night if it 'ill be any comfort to you, Ruth."

After a half hour or so Ruth became quiet, and settled her head on the old man's shoulder. Draque said to her softly, "Ruth, you're sleepy now."

"Oh, no! I'm not sleepy," answered Ruth; "I can't sleep in that room any more," and the shudder that passed over her frame went into Draque's.

"Why can't you sleep in that room?" asked her grandfather, while the cold chill that still clung to him and made his teeth chatter, reminded him of the ague chills of long ago.

"Because I see mamma there, crying all the time," answered Ruth.

"You had a dream, child," said Draque as he drew her closer to him.

He could not insist further upon Ruth to go to her bed; she might rest where she could, and where she had chosen, near to him. His soul was filled with every perplexity. He reluctantly admitted he was encompassed with bitterness as with a garment, and left in

his old age with not a pillar in his family upon which he could lean. The son who in youth and strong manhood was so promising, proved the dagger that stabbed him deepest. To a certain extent he blamed himself that Ike was what he was; but as the same color has many different shades, so he had not reached the pinnacle upon which Jacob Klomp and Jabez rested, which made his condition the more bitter.

Were his son the hopeless victim of gout or fatty degeneration, he would submit, as he always had submitted, to the inevitable. He would undertake to put Ike's children on their own feet, and would part with his farm in an endeavor to allay the torture of Ike's malady until the end came. Had not those afflicted as already mentioned, their life and health in their own hands, as surely as Ike, or did Ike with any more certain knowledge of what he was doing throw his away, were questions that never came before Draque for serious consideration, as they had come to Jacob Klomp. The prevailing opinion, that will should be able to counteract the deadly effects of a sometimes slow, but always sure poison, had fastened itself upon Draque and left in a strange mental position the man who told Ike years before, "it did mighty bad work."

While he felt the blame was in a measure his, he did not feel it in just the way he would feel blamable had he given to the thoughtless lad a blunderbuss he knew kicked, and sent him out to hunt rabbits, knowing the one at the butt end was in almost as great danger as the thing at the muzzle, had the boy come home from the hunt crippled for life.

Draque's spirits were surely at a very low ebb, but despair, the damning crown of woe, he never allowed to enter. The thought of a neighbor whose family

was prosperous, all doing the right way, and who, though twenty years younger than himself, was unable to move, being afflicted with dropsy, turned his attention somewhat from his own trouble. He drew a long breath that almost awakened Ruth, and said, half aloud:

“Anyway, it must be a deep hole a man doesn’t try to get out of. I’ll pull through the best I can with Ruth and the rest of the family till spring opens up. I never liked the short, dark days for making a change of any kind.”

Again he looked at the sleeping child in his arms, and said, “Poor thing; If I could only lay you straight what a comfort there’d be in that. The hump growing on that little back makes my heart sorer than any trouble I could take about Ike, for he has the years, and ought to know what’s what, while you’re innocent of any knowledge of the hard world that’s before you. I’d thought all along that at this age I’d be able to lay down the oars, but I see while I’ve life I must pull out against the tide that’s carrying everything the Draque’s have away. To begin, I must find a place for you, Ruth, for my old arm is giving out, and I’ll not take you to where you’ll see your mother crying all the time, either.”

He crossed the room with Ruth in his arms, his swaying gait indicating his burden was heavier than he should carry, and laid her on his own bed. For awhile time wore slowly on; one dark day succeeded another until the shortest came, and then Draque loved to watch the lengthening. How each morning the sun rose a little earlier, and each evening set a little later, just as it did when mother looked after the house, and Bill did the chores about the farm, and Ike came home to see them sometimes.

Concerning family affairs, the winter, as well as the winter before, were repetitions of winters for awhile past, only Meg was not there "to help put things to rights." Draque saw he was better able to manage than he had thought he would; for the broken-hearted look Meg wore so long before she died, and particularly after Ruth was crippled, was harder for the tender hearted old man to witness than to perform the extra labor her death made for him a necessity.

He now seldom begged Ike to try to do or be anything but the enigma he was to his father and the bulk of mankind. Sometimes a match for the most profound reasoner in town, and again, as surely an imbecile as he from whose countenance the God given faculty—intellect—never shone. At other times, and for reasons unaccountable, he thought he had executive ability enough to run his own house, which was the most provoking of all his moods, and which compelled Draque to be on the alert, looking after him. Draque had not retired after putting Ruth in bed, when Ike came in; his father saw at a glance he had nothing to fear, for Ike was in the sleepy stage of the disorder, and was making his way the best he could to his room. Draque watched him while he could see him, and then listened till he was satisfied he was down, and said, loud enough to be heard through the hall from end to end:

"You're a wreck, Ike, and home-made; you didn't have to go out in the world to meet the temptation as we often hear it preached."

His face wore a puzzled look, and he slowly shook his head as he continued, "But who'd have thought with the wise head that was on you it would ever come to this."

Jacob Klomp would have told him, a wise head has

nothing to do with the effects of poison taken into the system, but that different degrees of constitutional strength will oftentimes cause its workings to vary. But Jacob was off in another city, and the good he was doing would never have a bearing upon the household where Draque presided, at least while the old man lived, which fact no one regretted more deeply than Jacob. Ike, the friend of his boyhood, whose heart bled for the oppressed, and whose intellect and will never stopped short with self as a consideration, was a brand beyond his picking. Regardless of what others thought, Ike still considered himself very capable of doing business, and the manner in which he manipulated the wealth he had accumulated during the prosperous part of his life, was nobody's business but his own. The vulture in human form that is forever on the lookout for an opportunity to enrich himself by taking the advantage of those driven to the wall, had his shrewd eyes leveled on Ike.

His larger practice was as certainly a thing of the past as was slavery and the civil war, and money he must have; therefore he did precisely what Tobias Lenk did, parted with his possessions for a small consideration which the lender saw he would not be able to meet when due. Thus, the beautiful house that was the home and shelter of Ike's family, passed into other hands for less than half its value. In addressing the people of that place years before, when endeavoring to impress upon them the fact that though Washington had possessed slaves there would yet be no slaves for any man in the country to own, Ike had said:

“One fact may overstep another fact, just as one circle may describe another circle indefinitely, yet leave untouched all the beautiful and perfect in the circle first described.”

But it would take Jacob Klomp to show those same people now that Ike had some claim upon their respect. The last acts of a man's life determine his worth, at least from the moral standpoint; as has been proved, even from the penitent thief, until now, and that Ike was unrepenting day after day was about the only thing his townspeople saw. Until they could see that neither reform nor repent, but get well, were the correct words, their attitude toward him must necessarily be very severe.

When spring came and they were forced to leave the city, Draque returned thanks to God that the farm was still his own, and he was able to provide a shelter for Ike's four children. He thought, too, necessity was compelling Ike to realize his true condition, and if such proved the case, what a blessing their loss must be; for he would part with his farm, as with everything else "to see Ike the man he was." The things he had left with Peggy to stow away were brought to light, and the farm house fitted up again. Hiram Blank had taken a great deal of Draque's money in his time, and he lived longer in a log cabin than some of his neighbors. He said to Jabez, as the two were looking around:

"I'm glad enough I stopped where I did. If it hadn't been for you, Jabez, I wouldn't have a roof over my head any more than Ike."

Jabez merely bowed his head in assent. Draque continued:

"A thing that keeps me up wonderfully well is, Ike's young enough yet to make up for all he's lost." He nervously turned over a clod with his foot, and said, "I'll wager there's as much law in his head as ever there was."

Jabez very solemnly answered, "It's not impossible,

and you couldn't wish it more than I do, Draque. The children are as dear to me as to you, but it would be wise, I think, to not count too sure upon it."

Jabez knew from Draque's look he did not get the idea he wished he should, and said in explanation, "When the fever is bad in those parts, Draque, we sometimes hear of a man getting well, after two or three doctors said he must die, and sometimes they say a man is not bad at all and that man dies. I take it it's the same with Ike's trouble; if he's not bothered any more, some change that you nor I nor the doctors know anything about, has taken place."

"I see," said Draque, almost as puzzled as ever, "a little while ago I hadn't a hope, but since Ike's lost everything, he seems more like himself."

"I believe with you that as far as Ike's will has anything to do with it he'd be all right, but I look at it this way," said Jabez. "A man may will to not have malaria, but if it's once gotten into his system, will hasn't much power over the thing. You know of the score of men that went from those parts to work in the neighborhood of the Maumee River some time ago, how many of them were laid out helpless with malaria, and some others came home as well as they went? Now, whatever it is that fastens itself upon some and leaves others untouched is the puzzle. The singular thing is, a man may seem well for weeks, and even months, when he's laid out again as flat as ever, though far away from the place where he contracted his trouble; and it's just so with this drink curse."

There was a long interval of silence, after which Jabez said very earnestly, "I'd advise you to keep a tight hand on what's yours, Draque."

The wind that blew across the fields, and the thousand things that spoke to him from all sides, with

voices as youthful as when first he heard them, sometimes made Draque forget he was the old man he was, with Ike's children to care for instead of his own.

The north lot was separated from the garden and orchard that surrounded Draque's house by a creek, and along its banks Ruth loved to play. The whole place delighted her; she had no longing for the city home she left, and her grandfather was satisfied. The water in the creek journeyed over pebbles, and swayed the water-cress growing between. Ruth thought the water would break the tender-looking plants, and spent a great deal of her time holding one and then another plant upright with a little stick. Sometimes she would be for hours the solitary human in the close neighborhood of the stream where everything pointed heavenward. The cow-slips flecked its banks, turned their yellow faces to the golden sun, and with it hymned His praise who made them all, while the little blue-bell bowed its head in listening adoration.

Klomp came unobserved upon the child one morning when she was most deeply interested in her favorite bunch of water-cress, holding a piece of board before it so the water would not carry it away. He asked, "What are you about, Ruth?"

His voice was not a familiar one; it startled Ruth; she lost her balance, and fell into the creek.

Klomp picked her out instantly, and said, "You're scared, child, but not hurt; there's not water enough there to drown you."

"I wasn't afraid of the water," answered Ruth.

"I see," said Klomp, "it's me you're afraid of."

"I'm not afraid of anybody," coolly answered the child.

"I came on you too quick, that's it," said Klomp, "and all I'm afraid of is, you'll get a cold from the dip; the water is a little too chilly yet to be pleasant."

Klomp accompanied Ruth to the house, and said to Draque, "I picked Ruth out of the creek."

Ruth turned a pair of indignant eyes upon him, but said nothing.

Draque looked at Ruth's wet garments, and Klomp said, "I'd be sorry if she'd take any cold out of it, the more so as I frightened her into it."

"I hope no harm 'ill come of it. I don't borrow trouble of that kind," said Draque. "If she'd lived here all her life you might roll her in that creek and it wouldn't hurt her, but I can't say what effect it will have on a city girl."

Here he turned to Ruth and said, "Eh, Ruth?"

"I know it would be a lonesome place if anything happened Ruth," said Klomp, imagining he knew all Draque did about a loss of such nature.

Ruth had skipped to get a dry gown. Draque's piercing eyes went through Klomp as he watched him steadily, while he said:

"There was a time, Klomp, when the thought of a grave worked me different from what it does now; there was nothing inviting about it. I closed the doors on me and mine, and felt happy we were all safe around the hearth. It was a terrible thought to think a neighbor was picked off now and then. Some of my father's family were laid in dark places, too, very dark places. I hadn't a fair vision of what was beyond, but since Amanda died, the cold ground never held a Draque."

Ike had been trying all the morning to make a rail-fence look as if the Draques were back on the farm again. His father had said to him the evening before:

“The fence over there is standing, and I don’t think the corn ’ill interfere with the wheat, but if trespassing was its nature there isn’t much in the fence to hinder.”

The task was not as much to his liking as the same task would have been thirty years before, but the Draque determination showed itself, and he pulled through. He had many a disagreeable task to perform in those early days; but he and remorse were then strangers, whereas, now, remorse bothered him more than the rails he handled. The beautiful past, with all its bright prospects, so ruthlessly swept away, flitted before him. Remorse seemed to be tearing his heart out; he could feel the buried fangs still working deeper and deeper in. If he could only talk to Jacob Klomp for a half hour, as he had some months before, he might find relief; but Jacob was as far out of his reach as the visions with which he was tormented.

Draque understood Ike was not happy, but the misery he was undergoing on account of the drug he was forced to abandon was a consideration that did not trouble him much. He was over-elated with the prospect that Ike was about to do well again, and said to himself twenty times a day, as he watched him going about the place from one thing necessary to be done to another, “If Ike continues to show a disposition like that I’ll not keep a man like him making rail-fences, that I’ll not. The farm is good for a house in town, and the Draques ’ill see better days yet.”

Ike soon found that muscle developed swinging the ax, and such various exercises as he was compelled to take in boyhood was not proof, after a lapse of years, in similar emergencies. He was glad to meet Jabez and Klomp in the evening at his father’s hearth, and join them in the expression of honest opinion.

Jabez as cordially extended his hand to Ike as if their family experiences had been the most pleasant, and Ike's sensitive nature felt in the grasp, "There is nothing of the hypocrite in Jabez."

Remorse never played its self-condemning pranks more cruelly than it did with Ike when the good old man loosed the hold on his hand, took his chair, shifted his position slightly from one side to the other, while his hand went into one pocket and another, with the movement, in search of the handkerchief Ike would have died to be able to see replaced unneeded with the past that necessitated its use as a blot.

Draque waited until Jabez was thoroughly composed, then began: "There's hardly as fair a show here on the farm as there was years ago, Jabez. We've got out of the way of farming, Ike and I."

"I know it will go pretty hard with you for a while. The first man you had here let no grass grow under his feet; he kept everything up well. But the last that came took all he could out of the place, and didn't trouble himself much about the condition it would be in after he was through with it. But it seems to be the spirit of the times, Draque," said Jabez, who turned to Ike and asked, "Don't you think it looks that way, Ike?"

Draque could not wait for Ike to reply, but said hurriedly: "I saw the day in those parts when a man would rather inconvenience himself than cheat his neighbor."

"There are such men in those parts yet, Draque; don't think we're all gone," said Jabez.

"It's hard to tell where those strange fellows come from with their uncivil ways," said Klomp, who had not spoken till now.

Ike had been meditating on the question Jabez asked

him. He felt more and more every day how he had been a victim of their thrift, and said when his opportunity came: "I think the spirit you spoke of is the spirit of some, and unfortunately those some had it in their power to make the times—at least, for us."

"There's a movement on foot that's bound to take such opportunities out of the hands of some," said Jabez.

"What do you call it?" asked Draque.

"It's name is not very well known yet," said Jabez; "but a few of us call it Prohibition."

Ike did not remember that consciousness such as is necessary to take cognizance of facts clearly had been a stranger to him for months since he held conversation with Jacob Klomp; consequently what Jabez had to say was information, but not a surprise.

"Jake has been hard at it since he went back," said Klomp.

"I manage to keep my eyes open in that direction yet," replied Jabez; but changing the subject abruptly, he said: "Peggy startled me last evening when she said she'd read that Schiver's son blew his brains out at a place some distance from here, where he had an uncle living."

"I knew he'd come to an end in some such way," said Draque, shaking his head very sadly. "The last time I saw him he made me think of John Strand, and I wondered who'd pick him up."

Ike sat mute, with his handsome brown eyes steadily fixed on his father; but in his heart he madly condemned the misunderstanding existing in the minds of men, as it once existed in his own, when he mercilessly condemned John Strand. He turned to Klomp, knowing Jacob had, some time during his visit home, spoken to his understanding, as he had to his own,

when he sat in the big chair by the window that day he met him at the river, that sweetly glided on, not a hundred rods from where he now sat, and said: "It is a fact hardly credible that intelligent men could have believed all along Frank Schiver's trouble was one that could be thrown off at pleasure, much as another man would lay off his coat, when so many good hearts and strong minds had proved to them it was not so, in being carried away in the tide side by side with the heartless and weak."

His lips quivered. The three men were looking directly at him, each man thinking he might have more to say. In the depths of his soul there were words unspoken, which at present he felt powerless to utter. Presently Klomp said: "I'm sorry there are so few that have Jake's ideas."

Draque looked eagerly at Klomp, expecting to hear from him more fully what those ideas were, but turned his head suddenly in a different direction at the sound of Ike's clear voice as he said:

"His ideas are correct; no man ever came so close to a man's actual condition, outside the man who is the sufferer, and whose misunderstood suffering, according to law and equity, as the words are understood, debars him from the right to expect or hope for human help or sympathy."

Ike hung his head just a little, as if he was thoughtfully considering some grave question pertaining to a client. He then looked up and said, and there was a tremor in his voice that went deeper into the hearts of his hearers than the words he uttered: "In the list of human maladies even parents and friends have taken exception to one, and called it crime."

Klomp did not often show nervousness or irritability. It was only when a great truth dawned upon

him, or he was fighting against something he thought wrong, that he maneuvered, as Jabez good-naturedly called his movements at those times. Many things Jacob had made clear came before him with Ike's remark—so vividly, he arose from his chair and sawed the air with his right arm. At this point Ike begged to be excused, and was about to leave the room when his father smiled and said: "That looks bad, Ike, to let the old man outdo you in a night's talk."

Ike stopped long enough at the door to say: "I know each one will be satisfied with his company without me or I would not leave."

Klomp had let his hand come to a standstill on the back of a near chair, but remained standing, and said, addressing Draque as if he was the only one present: "It's a pretty nice point, that, and it takes some reasoning to be able to see it clear, and the trouble is right here." He looked wistfully around and continued: "Jake—or Jabez there—could tell it better than I, but I'll endeavor."

"I always knew and said many a day ago that it did bad work," said Draque.

"Yes," said Jabez, "you said it, and acted upon it when Klomp squarely turned his back on what he says now."

"It didn't save Ike, though," answered Draque.

"Yes," said Klomp, regardless of the last few remarks, "and the bad work it does is so bad sometimes that the torture from it can only be made bearable by taking a little of the cause of that torture. I never saw the doctor, and Jake said he didn't, that knew of anything that would take the place of alcohol in making the suffering man at all comfortable; and the plague of it all is, it does double work—it takes away the torture the man intends it should and the reason he has

a will to keep at the same time." He said as he sat down: "I may not have made it clear, but I'd like to see the man Jake couldn't make see it."

"Draque doesn't see it yet as you and I see it, Klomp," said Jabez. "While he acknowledges it does bad work, he is still a fair representative of the American people; he condemns the destroyed and not the destroyer."

The clock that had marked off the long hours when mother looked for the letter from Bill that never came struck 10, and Jabez and Klomp departed.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Draque always took "a peep" at the children before he retired, as he knew Meg did. He found Ike's oldest boy with a sick stomach, and in a raging fever. He was not easily frightened at children's sick spells such as he had been long accustomed to, and set to work "to cure him up before morning." But when morning came he was worse, and the little fellow by his side sick too. Draque left the two boys to look at Ruth, and found her sleeping soundly and naturally, despite the tumble she had gotten in the cold creek.

"It beats all," said the old man, going back to the boys' bed. "If it was Ruth, I'd know it was from the chill she got, but what's the matter with those lads I don't understand."

He consulted Ike, and a doctor was summoned at once; but, notwithstanding all that, in twenty-four hours after the doctor's first visit, the two boys were laid in their bed side by side in death. Diphtheria, known as putrid sore throat, had snapped the golden cord for both. The townspeople listened to details concerning the double death, and thought it good news, "as the little fellows had not a very bright prospect in life at best." But the good-hearted country neighbors, who saw Ike's great sorrow for his dead boys, unanimously deplored the event, now as Ike was trying to do better. So it happened, the night after Ike had told his father and Jabez and Klomp that Jacob Klomp was right in his diagnosis of the malady he had set out to contend with on such a different war-path from all his predecessors, who had the welfare of

the human family at heart, he was the sole male heir to the much respected name—Draque.

Mr. and Mrs. Klomp were alone and quietly seated in their easy chairs at home that night after they had been to the boys' funeral. Every sound was trebly louder than they had ever heard the same sound before. The song of the cricket that broke upon their ears at intervals sounded as if the cricket had purposely secreted himself in some hollow-sounding globe in order to magnify to them his little voice. Sometimes the wall would creak with no provocation they knew of, and they would find themselves listening for a footstep overhead. The two had simultaneously turned their heads in the direction of a sound, and in doing so their eyes met. Klomp then said: "There was a good many of the Draques, but at this rate they'll soon all be under.'

"It does seem there's been nothing but funerals in that family all along," replied Mrs. Klomp.

It would be hard to tell the relief those two remarks gave them. The cricket came out of the hollow globe, and when they heard him again he was in his old place in the chimney. Both wondered their attention had been turned to the other sounds, that now were nothing more than the twigs of an apple tree slapping the wall, or the not uncommon sound caused probably by the momentary relaxation of warping timber.

Mrs. Klomp brightened, feeling there had been a load taken off her heart, and said: "There are times when a neighbor doesn't hardly know how to go about offering help to a neighbor. Sorely as the Draque's are stricken, I don't know how I could be of any service to them."

"I take it they're not in need of any help that you or I could give," said Klomp.

"A while ago I was picturing them all in my mind," said Mrs. Klomp, "and could see nothing I could do for them, however willing."

"I was going over the same myself," said Klomp, "and stopped short just about where you did. However, I think if Jake had his way there'd soon be an end put to about everything that's horrible in human misery."

Mrs. Klomp looked up and said sweetly, also with the rising inflection: "The grave isn't horrible, Ezekiel?"

"Draque can tell you more about that than I can," replied Klomp. "It was not the grave I was referring to, but the cause that brings so many there in such inhuman ways. Frank Schiver was put into a grave the other day with fewer brains than the Almighty gave him, and the minister didn't seem to think responsibility rested anywhere but with the dead man himself." Klomp shook his head and clenched his fist as he said: "I'd like to see him after Jake talked to him for an hour."

When the dead of a whole neighborhood are gathered into one not remarkably large burying ground, past events connected with the lives of those lying around awaiting the last trumpet present themselves forcibly to the observing eye. The evening was pleasant and Ike's voiceless boys had called him to the graveyard. Since he was a boy himself roaming through the fields or spending an evening at Hibe's, where he took from his father the glass that "did him good," he never had such opportunity as now for reflection. John Strand was the first mutilated victim laid there to rest. And the graves of many others Ike had known as well were, as the world looked at it, as unhonorably filled. He was now the friend of all those whom people intending to be lenient with at best

called unfortunate. But how unavailing his friendship! He was branded, like Cain, with the curse that brought them to such tragic ends, and over which he might have as little power. Tobias Lenk had aroused his sympathy more than he had thought "men of his stamp could," but Tobe had always been a foremost man in the good cause that enlisted his own sympathy when but little more than a boy, and he had said, when Tobe's distress first became apparent: "Some agent man cannot satisfactorily account for must have been at work when Tobe went astray."

While Ike was thus meditating upon the past, Draque was having a serious time with Ruth. She had seen her mother taken away in a beautiful coffin, and was lonesome and very sorry she had to go to heaven and leave them all behind. But she had followed her brothers to their grave. The deep, dark hole and the clods rattling on the coffin lids aroused emotions in her heart never felt before. She could not get any further than the deep hole, and the horrible that clung to it banished everything else. In answer to her grandfather's words of consolation she shook her head, and, sobbing, said: "Mamma went to heaven, but brothers are alone in the field."

Her grandfather took her hands in his and said, not to her but to any one who might be near: "She's like I used to be. Some kind heart will have to keep pointing until she sees it all, and then peace will come, like it came to me." He stopped a while and then said: "If I could only comfort the little thing I'd be satisfied now."

Ruth thought it all strange, and looked at her grandfather through her tears.

Ike returned to the house worn and haggard looking after his vigil with the dead, which did not escape

Draque's notice. He said very kindly: "You need rest more than I do, Ike; you'd better try and sleep some, and I'll stay by Ruth."

Ruth was sobbing piteously and calling for her brothers. She was not satisfied with the bed they had that night, and refused to go to her own. Draque told her her brothers were happy, much happier than she was or ever would be on earth.

She looked at the grandfather, who never told her a lie, and her eyes followed the direction of his finger as he pointed heavenward, until they rested upon the shining stars. For a while her little spirit soared, then her eyes dropped, and grief was uncontrolled. Draque patted her cheek and said no more, knowing exhausted nature must soon succumb to sleep.

Ike did not act upon his father's suggestion; he knew sleep would not come at his wish. He sat dejected and heart broken, looking from Ruth to his old father. Draque looked at him and said, cheerily as he could under the circumstances: "Our burden is getting light, Ike. God is taking care of them all."

Ike was like a statue—dumb; yet, while it speaks not to the ear, unravels a history to the eye.

Ruth straightened up the best she could. As she looked from her grandfather to her father, her face wore a more serious expression than had ever rested there before. She looked in her grandfather's face and said:

"Grandpa, I heard a man say papa is to blame for it all."

"All what, child?" asked her grandfather.

"Oh, everything!" answered Ruth carelessly, as she snuggled closer to his side.

"Everything?" asked Draque. "Plenty of good things fall to the lot of everybody, and you can't

say any one is to blame for good things, can you, Ruth?"

"Good things don't come to us like other folks," said Ruth.

"Who told you we hadn't our share of good things as well as other folks?" asked Draque.

"That man said it," answered Ruth, "and he said I'd never be good for anything either, with my back broken."

When Draque looked up he saw he was alone with Ruth; he smoothed her hair and said: "We've made a mistake, Ruth, but you don't understand. I ought to have more sense. It won't mend matters, either, to say a word further."

Even a greater mistake had been made than Draque had supposed. Before he turned the key in the door that night he knew Ike was not in the house. He thought of a dozen places where he might possibly be found, but indignation rose to such an extent that he would not endeavor to find him if he could, he said.

"Has he not a right to face the bitterness of life, brought about by his own conduct, at least as brave as his old father?"

Draque reasoned in the same hackneyed way he had reasoned many and many a time before when reason with Ike was not in its proper groove. And the enlightenment Jabez and Klomp, with Ike's help, had endeavored to throw upon the subject, was as unavailing as Tobe's persuasive arguments opposing the well-rooted slave system had been.

He had early and boldly proclaimed that "drink did mighty bad work," yet he expected Ike to step along as if the bad work had not been done.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Abel Beech and his friend had been around a great deal in the last six months, working and taking notes. Abel's reflections, after a day spent among the sufferers from alcohol, were not the original reflections of Jacob Klomp. As a matter of course, he looked at things as the majority did, and had a certain pride, too, in his own good judgment. Those who claimed his attention were indirect sufferers. The man who lost his center of gravity or in any other way showed individual helplessness, had no claim of Christian charity upon him. The shock received from Jacob Klomp's assertions some time before he had quite overcome. At this point, to be of real service to those he wished to serve, he believed it absolutely necessary that he should overcome said shock. He said to his friend, after reading certain startling articles very attentively: "I'll have to do some loud thinking before I can arrive at that point."

All of which Jacob would allow was but natural, and which no reasonable man will gainsay when he reflects that truth does not take possession of the average man at once, but takes hold of him imperceptibly and generally through agency, about as the vine reaches the summit of the pole, and without which prop it would never climb, but creep

The Apostles, in telling eternal truths, had much the same difficulty to contend with. Their preaching and telling ended only with their lives, and then all who heard did not believe. The spoken truth has been sounding through ages, and has yet many con-

quests to make, and among those yet unbelieving are numbered some of the most enlightened. Jacob Klomp had said, and the saying had been widely circulated:

“We drain our coffers, and are in continual turmoil fighting the effect—a method unworthy the sense of our people. Neither is such proceeding logical; the cause is what every man should aim at. With a sense of pain I realize our coffers are to a great extent replenished from said cause. The deeper I look into the laws concerning the question now being agitated, the better prepared I am to tell you. Our Solon is yet to come.”

Since Meg's death and the departure of Ike's family from the city, Abel had been doing his best to alleviate the woes of those he thought deserving. Much as he knew of the squalid poverty and bitter woe of whole families, once he set about hunting and helping he learned more in six months than he could have dreamed of in a lifetime.

He traveled about like a toad far from and in search of the banks of the familiar and necessary pond, feeling so much depended upon something he must do, and he did much toward helping many. But the wheel turns around, and with every revolution new claimants for such charity will be placed upon the arena.

Abel did his best to fill the jails with as many of the unfortunates as he could lawfully place behind bars, in order to give the poor washerwoman an opportunity to ply her avocation unmolested and provide her children with a crust. One family in particular claimed his sympathy. They were next to roofless and did not own a bed; straw and old blankets thrown in corners served as such. Conspicuous among the latter was the familiar army blanket, that had done service when

the man who hid under it now was a soldier and strong. Between washing, scrubbing and begging the mother obtained the miserable crust that kept life in herself and three children, and sometimes provided for a husband, often absolutely helpless as the little child at her feet, who was a peaceable good-for-nothing, always drunk.

Abel's first step here was to undertake to drive that man out; but a man cannot well be driven who will not go. That he was a disabled man, and a claimant upon Christian charity, not one of the intelligent class Abel conversed with seemed to realize. Abel, like many another successful man, was always a good man but never a soldier. When the demand for soldiers was pressing and drafting resorted to, he was the fortunate possessor of a few hundred dollars, which wiped out the call to arms that hung over him, and it is quite possible saved him, too, from being as the man before him, who was a soldier for a long time, and when he came home, the war being over, did not appear able to get into the way of the push necessary to send a man in business or profession to the topmost round. He had been a sociable man, and loved to talk of camping, and long marches, and battlefields. He had been brave, and helped to save the Union. Why should he not tell the story over the sparkling cup? It was customary and quite proper. The habits of a man's life for three or four years may go very far toward forming that man's character. While the wreck's life alternated between lounging on the camp ground and desperate encounters, Abel was daily acquiring a knowledge of human nature, in a business way, that finally made him the independent man of means he was.

It may not be amiss to remark here that such golden

opportunities to acquire fortune seldom occur in this or any country as were spread out for those who did not feel inclined and were not compelled to shoulder a gun and march to the front during the civil war. They unquestionably hold the advantage for their children to this day, because they learned business while the soldier learned war.

It did not occur to Abel he might push a little too hard upon the harmless good-for-nothing he was dealing with now. He had often been picked up and housed by the county for quite a number of days at some other man's expense, and had been turned loose, always with the privilege of going back to the place he called home, where he rummaged about the pantry until he found a bite of something his wife had washed or scrubbed the day before to provide. Then, after resting until he felt toned up, he sawed wood for a day or two till he got the means that gave him another ride to the jail or county work house, where he found his expenses paid as heretofore.

Abel thought he was too easy-going, and variety might be what he stood in need of after all; consequently, before his term as guest of the county expired this time, Abel and his co-workers resolved to act.

They found a comfortable shanty in a remote part of the city, and, with their consent, transplanted that man's family and their belongings. The head of the house did not return for several days after the family had departed, and was a moderately surprised man to find the door more securely fastened than he had ever found it before and nobody inside to open it for him. He banged away for a while, and then began to realize the place was empty. He sat for a long time on an old wooden bench under a tree near the door, evidently endeavoring to concentrate his shattered reason-

ing powers on something that was all the world in importance to him. Alternately his face wore a puzzled and then a pained expression, but nobody cared for him; that he knew full well. He had no interests at stake a human being he ever heard of would turn a finger to uphold. He was not on the best of terms with the neighbors, and was sure not one of them would tell where his family went if he should ask. His reasoning brought him to this certain conclusion—what was to be done he must do without help.

Night was fast gathering, and his first outlook must be for shelter. There was a little window on hinges in the back of the shanty he knew how to open, or, if the worst must be done, he felt he was able to break it in. He found that no attempt had been made to secure the window, which he opened with hardly an effort, and crawled through. The blankets were gone, but the pile of straw was there, upon which he stretched himself for the night. Maybe in the big world full of Christians some one thought him worth trying to help, but if that one existed he did not know it. Why did it happen he was such an outcast when he began life so well; Jacob Klomp is telling the people he is an outcast because the mistake has been made of placing his disorder in the moral, instead of the physical category of evils, where it surely belongs. In the morning he emerged through the window he entered, and moved on with the machine-like dragging of limbs peculiar to those of his class. The great wonder is that such a brainy, clever people as we are did not see long ago that Public Opinion regarding this misunderstood and misused class was far astray.

There is no outlet for excuse but the one—it is natural to be blind to evils that come under our observation daily; but to turn over and look at evils at a

convenient distance without gloves. Bull-fighting must truly be a disgusting spectacle to one not accustomed to the sight, but after Jacob Klomp is through telling, our people will have an opportunity of viewing far more revolting spectacles that have taken place beneath their eyes, and with their full approbation. They will see that many a barbarity greater than a bull-fight has been perpetrated, perhaps upon some member of their own family.

The witches that tormented the Yankees in the East, and were punished so severely for their witchcraft, would be looked upon today, not as demons, or their emissaries, nor as persons under moral ostracism; thanks to the progress that moves hand in hand with truth.

We are prone to blame those Yankee fathers, but why they are more deserving of blame for that frenzy of killing witches than the Body American is to blame for the wholesale savagery of the times, is something that will not appear quite clear to the narrator of past events in the twentieth century.

There was nothing better in prospect for the man who dragged himself away from the shanty that morning than another term in the work-house, and even that boon he had not the means to procure. He moved on, thinking how sometimes "he struck it lucky." There is a certain feeling of humanity for another, born of understanding, in those who have undergone or are undergoing like evils, that one who is a stranger to those certain evils never feels. The man who sometimes "struck it lucky" had hope of finding such a friend. He knew better than to ask a Christian for the dime or two that would buy what would put his heart and nerves in a more comfortable working condition; but if he came across a scape-grace

like himself, who had but that amount to his name above what he needed for his own soothing draught, he knew he would get it. He could not think of home, or wife and children, nor would the latter care for him, if in his condition, until relief was found.

The nearest saloon was the nearest gate to comfort he knew of, and thither he directed his steps. He clutched with more than brotherly affection the hand of a handsome man who stood outside, with his back against a lamp-post, his feet firmly planted on some bricks that were higher than the rest of the pavement, and his head bowed until his chin found a resting place. The touch aroused him; he looked vacantly around, and then settled a half intelligent look upon the figure by his side. To understand the case before him took but a moment; he carefully drew in one foot, and then the other, until he stood a tolerably erect man; put a finger and thumb into his vest pocket, and dropped what he took from thence into the hand of the man beside him, who instantly left the friend he found, and turned to the saloon. It may have been less than a half hour afterward that the man who with such eager haste appeared before the dispenser of deadly drugs, emerged from the same place, somewhat limbered in the joints, and ready for a day at wood-sawing.

Nothing more was heard of him for several days, when in a part of the city quite remote from that whisky shop the people were shocked by several reports of a pistol, and then a woman in their midst dying. The murderer made no attempt to escape, and offered no resistance whatever when being placed back of locks stronger than had ever secured him before. How the man found his wife so soon puzzled Abel Beech, but it can be told in a few words. The

next friend he fell in with after leaving the man at the lamp-post, was in the neighborhood of his old home the day his family went away; he was a man who was about the streets a great deal, in every part of the city, and saw some things, too. He knew the "wagon for hire," and the driver's face was familiar; he took his friend to the spot.

Abel felt chagrined that he had been so frustrated in his work of charity, but he would go a little further; he would see the children were placed in an asylum, and also, would do all in his power to see that their father would not need stimulants much longer.

Abel met Jacob Klomp a while after, when the murderer was being tried for his life. Jacob's face wore a very sad, serious look, for everyone he met about the court house that day was bloodthirsty, and to him the whole spectacle was sickening. He had an acquaintance with Abel Beech that warranted him recognition, and he said, after Abel approached and halted near to him, "I hear you had a hand in this."

Abel began at once to explain, and said, "I have devoted my time for a while back to charity, and have seen women and helpless children so misused and abused. I have seen children cruelly neglected by their own mothers from the same cause. I felt I must begin somewhere; in fact, I felt it to such an extent that it would be misdemeanor on my part to not act. I had the idea all along that it was outrageous in a Christian people to allow children to suffer so at the hands of those that should protect them." Here he stopped long enough to see the rope around the neck of the man he thought so merited it, and continued: "When a man has ideas he would like to see acted upon, he must say or do something that will convey those ideas to others."

"I heartily endorse the bulk of what you have said," replied Jacob, "and as heartily deplore the fact that you are wrong in locating blame." He looked thoughtfully at the man before him and said, quietly: "You will have to go back farther, my friend, before you touch the right spot. The physician who would cauterize every sore upon a patient regardless of the poisoned current passing through the system, does nothing but make his patient more unsightly."

Jacob made no further attempt to express unsought opinions. Abel had heard many a thing Jacob said before, and that sounded in his ears with the same earnestness they had been spoken; but there was something in this last soft speech that went to his soul. He reasoned himself on his way home; it was not the truth that was in it, any more than in words spoken by Jacob at other times, that while different, meant about the same thing. It might be the unfortunate part he had taken in the affair that troubled him so. Whatever it was, his charitable emotions were somewhat checked; should he ever come across a similar case, he would think a long time before he would take just such another step.

The sympathetic friend who had given the murderer money to buy his first drink, that lonesome morning when he went forth without home or family, found his own pockets empty many a time since that occurrence, and was compelled to manage about the same way the murderer had managed for relief. For several days he had been trying to sober up, and at such times was a remarkably intelligent man. He looked over the daily paper when he could get one, and this morning saw what he thought an overwrought description of a heartless murderer. As he continued to read about circumstances relating to the crime he

became entirely himself. Shocking reality served to stimulate for the time, so much of the man that at other times was dead without the aid of stimulants.

He stepped on toward the court house, so familiar to him for many a long year, not knowing that he was going to do anything in particular, but still he must go. He knew every nook and corner of the building, and was neither awkward nor out of place, shabby and neglected-looking though he was, when he appeared before judge and lawyers and people awaiting the verdict, and said:

“Early in the fifties I first raised my voice upon this very spot in behalf of the slave. There were very few who listened to me that day, gentlemen, who thought I was right. I again speak, and with an experience that enables me to know what I say is truth, and tell you the man before you is an object of charity, and not a criminal.”

The surprise had hardly subsided, when Ike sat down exhausted. No attempt was made to remove him; it was evident he was well known, and probably still respected by a few.

Jacob Klomp was the only friend Ike met that day; they talked long and earnestly. Ike knew he was understood, and like a child shed some tears he was no longer able to keep back. Jacob tried to persuade him to go back to the farm, but Ike said: “No. I am but a burden to my father, and will never again by my presence add sorrow to his bitter cup.”

“How does it happen you are here, Ike?” asked Jacob, after he found it useless to try further to face him toward home.

“I could hardly explain so that you would understand,” replied Ike, “how it came that I am in the city, but as to being where you see me now, I will

relate with pleasure. I happened to meet the man in there," said Ike, pointing toward the prison, "the day I put on my uniform; he was a soldier, home on a furlough, and came around to see what the new soldiers looked like. After the surrender at Appomattox I met him again; we lived in the same city, and journeyed home together. He accompanied me to my house, and partook of the customary hospitality, the toast being, 'The Union forever.' "

Here Ike stopped, and after a struggle with his feelings, continued: "Since that time I have often met him in my wanderings, and an irresistible desire to do something for him brought me this way."

Had Jacob spoken what was in his mind he would have said: "The man you would help, Ike, is a doomed man. The populace clamors for his blood; with wolf-like propensities they sniff the air to detect, if possible, any opposition to their grewsome thirst. Never were spectators in the arena more eager to witness the bloody combat." But he knew Ike was not the man to whom he should speak such cruel words, and simply said, "You can do nothing for him, I fear."

"No." said Ike, "I have not the same certitude back of those promptings to do good I felt twenty years ago."

For a long time not another word passed between those two, who, in youth were so nearly alike in strength and mental vigor, whereas now one was so disabled and the other strong. Jacob regretted parting with Ike when he knew he had no where to lay his head that night, and said:

"Ike, I am going to take a run up to father's tonight, and think you'd better come along; we spent some pleasant hours there together; suppose we try it again; it will do both good, and will please me exceedingly."

Ike looked at him, and said: "There is no one in the world I would rather please, except my father. I have failed to correspond to his wishes, and must decline your invitation."

"I am sorry," said Jacob, and after a moment's pause, he said: "We parted before, Ike, and there was a prospect of us not meeting again, so you thought, but here we are, and before leaving you I would like to say, never allow yourself to be so pushed as to feel you have not a friend."

"I shall always remember that friend," replied Ike.

The conversation ended, and the men journeyed in different directions.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In as short a time afterward as a steam engine could carry him over fifteen or twenty miles, Jacob was springing up the steps at his father's door.

Klomp opened the door, saying, while he wrung Jacob's hand, "I'll be bound if ever I got as great a surprise, Jake."

"I could not help surprising you," said Jacob, laughing, "for I have been surprised myself. I had no intention the day before yesterday of being where I am now, but unaccountable circumstances bring about unaccountable events."

"What's happened now?" asked Mrs. Klomp, as she came to greet her son, much alarmed.

Jacob looked at his mother in an assuring way that at once settled all anxiety on her part, and said: "Enough has happened, mother, that is not quite as far from home as slavery was, but still is far enough from this household to not cause present alarm."

Klomp looked at Jacob expecting further explanation, which he was not slow to give. He said: "I had read about the murder here in your city, but paid no attention to anything but the fact."

"You'd have something to do," said his father, interrupting him, "to keep yourself posted on particulars of every such fact as that. We'll forgive you for it, your mother and I."

Jacob smiled, and said: "I was informed through the mail, the man in prison for the crime was Isaac Draque."

"Oh, Ike's wife is dead," said Mrs. Klomp; "she

died long before that woman was killed. I don't see how they could get it so mixed up."

"I knew that, too," said Jacob, "and probably had it been any other man than Ike I would have taken the time to investigate; but when Ike's name was mentioned by a man I thought had the opportunity to know, I dropped everything."

"It was intimated by some that Ike's wife didn't get fair play," said Mrs. Klomp, shaking her head, "and then Ike's leaving so soon after coming to the farm, that's how they got mixed up."

Klomp turned a sharp eye upon Jacob, and said, "You got word from some one about here that it was Ike?"

"Yes," answered Jacob.

Klomp saw it was not Jacob's intention to make him any the wiser as to who that man might be, and said: "You needn't tell me any more, that man doesn't trouble himself much about what's happening of the kind."

"He certainly takes Ike's interest to heart," said Jacob, "whether he thinks he killed his wife or not."

"They're not always the surest killed, Jake, that are shot on the spot," said Klomp. "They might as well have hung John Strand for killing his wife as that man."

"That he was as guilty is certain," said Jacob, "but some cases are hard to prove, and others hard to understand. I suppose there is where the difference lies."

"If justice is what we're aiming at, it's plain it's a bad mess we've made of it," answered Klomp.

"That is the idea I am endeavoring to impress upon the American people, and feel confident that with the help of God and His workers on earth I will do it," replied

Jacob, his face glowing with enthusiasm over the bright prospect in store for the children of men. He suddenly turned to the table where his mother had an old-fashioned bowl filled with flowers; he lifted one and then another with his finger to see how many were familiar, or if she had one among them he did not know, and said: "The flowers grow as they did thirty years ago, don't they, mother? There is but one here I have not seen a hundred times in the garden." Singling out that one, he asked, "What is this?"

"Your aunt Lucinda sent me the seed from the East with a great long name to it I could never remember, and I call it Cindy's flower."

"I see," said Jacob, "it is the only stranger that has crept into the garden since I was a boy."

Mrs. Klomp was highly delighted that her flowers were still appreciated by Jacob, and said: "I'm glad you remember them all. You see, as I grow old, I don't care to add to my garden; it takes considerable care, and the flowers we had long ago always seem to me the sweetest."

"You get out of misery's track in a hurry, Jake. I think no man living could beat you at it," said Klomp. "You left a poor fellow with a rope around his neck for a flower."

Jacob took the chair he had left, saying: "When one thinks with me as you do, father, I never waste breath going over the horrible, already too many times told, but seek recreation, either in planning how I can best carry out those correct ideas of mine, or peacefully resting in the lap of God's wonderful creation as you find me now. Besides, my mind has been very active for several months. While I am here, with your permission I will breathe the air, and enjoy the sounds that are so health-giving to both body and mind."

"You always did about as you pleased around here, Jake, and I'm thinking it's a pretty late time of the day to try to correct you now," said Klomp, laughing. As soon as he could look a little serious, he continued, "That you're not a spoiled child you owe to your mother's good managing." Here Klomp could not help laughing again, which provoked Mrs. Klomp to say:

"I think you can get out of misery's track about as soon your son, Ezekiel."

"That's just where the trouble comes in," said Klomp, who put on a serious look at once. "As soon as a man begins to feel very happy himself, he forgets it's in his power to make those that are very unhappy a little more comfortable, and I'll own up it was a fault I had to be always a little slow."

He looked over his glasses at Jacob, and said: "Slow may not be the fittest word, but I hadn't the stuff in me that sees without being shown."

Klomp's voice did not drop at the word shown, to the extent it should, which led Jacob to think his father had directed a question to him.

He said: "It is the Yankee's way I believe, father, to answer a question by asking another. I think you had the stuff in you, but were too completely taken up with the farm to give proper attention to the little plant."

Mrs. Klomp now had an opportunity to laugh, and helped wonderfully to give the appearance of light-heartedness to those in the room, for Klomp looked serious, and Jacob's smile was very faint.

"We'll drop it," said Klomp, shaking his head. "I know you'd be too considerate to say otherwise even though you half thought it, Jake."

Since Jabez' first lazy watch dog eyed his master,

who seemed to be at a loss to know how to take John Strand, Jabez always looked to intelligence in a dog more than anything else. Whatever dog Jabez owned seemed to know more than the common dog; whether the dog learned of Jabez or Jabez sought until he found a dog possessed of such qualities, is immaterial, but that a wise dog always guarded the Ghent household, the neighbors all knew. From the door yard across the fields came the deep, base bow-wow that penetrated into Klomp's sitting room, and claimed the attention of the three there.

Klomp said: "That's a wonderful knowing dog Jabez has; he knows when there's a stranger in the neighborhood without laying eyes on him."

"I suppose I am responsible for all this racket," said Jacob.

"You're the only one calling himself a stranger in those parts that I know of," replied his father.

Jacob rested his elbow on the table and looked as if he might be gazing upon something a thousand miles away, and said: "The American people are intellect worshipers, and among the lower animals as well as among men, those that manifest greatest intelligence certainly claim our admiration."

"Jabez sticks to it that the father of false gods in this country is money, Jake," said Klomp.

Jacob stopped awhile longer to think, and then said: "We have two idols we are inclined to worship, though in doing so we sometimes lose sight of all that is really good, and those little gods are money and intellect. The good old pagan without the Bible to guide him, never lost sight of truth and justice, while very intelligent men, nowadays, with Bible in hand, allow both to disappear when the money god rises before them. Intellect without truth is next to worthless. The

Sophists knew as great a number of facts as Socrates did, and could talk fluently by the hour, yet what was all their knowledge compared to the truths Socrates would point out to them."

Klomp looked at the son he thought able to make other men see anything he wished, and said: "Those fellows that have the stuff you talk about, Jake, often have little else to display, and must consequently appear to a disadvantage for a while."

"I understand," said Jacob, looking serious, "men naturally deal in one or two things to the exclusion of all others."

"That's what they do," said Klomp, "and I'll be bound if it doesn't seem the sensible way, too."

"It is the sensible way when we deal with professions or mechanics' tools," said Jacob.

"I often heard it said," said Klomp, laughing, "that a Jack of all trades is master of none, and those money and intellect men you spoke of may keep that saying in view." After a moment's reflection, Klomp continued: "Truth and justice and the like are not apt to make the show on sight that gold and silver and cleverness do—that may be the reason so many lose sight of them, if they ever got sight at all. But don't let up, Jake. I've lived long enough to see it proved, the fellow that gets hold of one or the other, or both, is bound to bring a people to see at last that what he deals with should be considered first."

"I have no idea of giving up, father," coolly replied Jacob, who sat with eyes fixed on the table adorned with the bowl of flowers.

Klomp resumed talk, saying: "When I was a good many years younger than I am now, I didn't take much stock in the man that laid down his hoe to talk justice; but in the course of time Jabez took that out of me."

Here he stopped short and looked at Jacob, saying, while he laughed aloud: "It's queer, isn't it, Jake, what a train of thoughts an intelligent dog will bring up?"

"More insignificant things than the bark of a great dog often set men thinking and acting," replied Jacob.

"That's true," said Mrs. Klomp. "Rome is where it is because a flock of geese flopped and cackled, so I've read."

"Cool down over there, Bounce," roared Klomp, "or we might make you responsible for a complete revolution of whisky laws here in America." He turned his head and said, gravely, "Eh, Jake?"

Jacob's affirmation was contained in a smile he bestowed on his mother, as he went outside to breathe the air and hear the sounds he had spoken of, and his father promised him he should enjoy.

While Jacob was outside having what his father called "his fling," that father was mentally trying to unravel a knot. That it was not his first attempt at the same hard knot he acknowledged, and this time candidly pronounced himself unable to loose that knot, often as he tried it. He abandoned the attempt, saying to himself, "When Jake comes in I'll put it to him."

Those mental perplexities that often arise, and leave the mind in as uncertain a state as they found it, even after laborious investigation, present themselves to plain people, as well as to those whose business it is to deal with such more generally, to the exclusion of those common problems that give way but to physical force. The thinker thinks and the worker works; that the thinker may stoop to a crowbar is not probable, but that the man with plow and ax in hand is not

often a sublime reasoner cannot be presumed with the same certainty. No occupation in life can completely control the workings of the human mind. We find our sweetest poets in the humblest walks. Our most illustrious statesman and second father of his country laid down the ax as Cincinnatus of old did the plow, to steer the ship of state aright.

Away in the dark forest we find some lovely flowers, not cultivated or watered from water-pots in men's hands, but moist with the dews of heaven.

When Jacob resumed his seat in the sitting room, Klomp said: "Since I went clean over on the whisky question, Jake, I've been bothered a good deal, as to how Draque can keep the attitude he does; when I thought drinking whisky was the correct thing, Draque wouldn't look at it. He's stuck to his principle, too, since the day he quit, but he doesn't seem to get any further. Although no man living has been more sorely punished by whisky than he has, he wouldn't lift his finger to make you or I or any other man quit, and it isn't that he's an unfeeling man at heart, either."

Jacob was considering what his father had said, and did not appear ready to answer that minute; in the interval Klomp thought of one man, and said: "Except Ike; I think he tried hard enough to stop him." Klomp was becoming restless, when Jacob at last said:

"Draque is by no means an exceptional case; in numbers, those of his sort come next to the habitual moderate drinker. That indescribable something that holds a man to false theory and practice, has played havoc with many a well-meaning man before Draque had the opportunity to so distinguish himself. Draque believed it wrong to drink intoxicants, and had substantial reasons before him for so believing—namely,

that his example might have been a help toward impoverishing John Strand, and ultimately leading to his death. Also, it began to dawn upon him, his habits kept him longer in a log cabin than some of his neighbors. It is evident the sum total of the bad effects he saw the day he swore off was contained in those two circumstances. Many a man lets drink alone from similar considerations. Afterward, his desire to save Ike from such fate or catastrophe as happened John caused him to try to exert a saving influence over him. How many such really good men we have in the world, father—but they are not the kind, that, while casting off their own load, help to unburden others.”

“Oh!” said Klomp, quite excitedly, “I’d put Draque’s example for good in the face of a dozen moderate drinkers.”

“So would I,” answered Jacob, “but the question you were anxious to have answered was: How is it that Draque, who has not drunk for years, fails to understand your enthusiasm, and mine, on that question, and I cannot help answering: It is because he was actuated by no motive beyond the mere accidentals that brought about John Strand’s death, and his own half poverty. He only saw that fruit on certain branches of the tree were bad; whereas you and I see the whole tree is a poison even to its smallest root. Some men are slower than others in taking in situations; they take in a part readily enough, but a natural lifetime is all but too short for them to grasp the whole.”

“I’ll be blamed if you’re not right, Jake,” said Klomp. “It took me a natural lifetime to see what’s now as plain as day. Draque’s but a little older than I am, and nobody knows what minute the truth about the whole matter will come to him as quick.”

All disposition to talk further on the subject appeared to have died out, when Klomp suddenly aroused, placed his right knee to rest upon his left, pitched his head a little back, and said:

“As my mind carries me back over the time since there was nothing here but trees, a few log cabins, and here and there a wigwam belonging to men of another race, that had to step out to make room for us, I see how thinkers and workers have played smash with everything as it then existed because it was for progress and the public good. A railroad was run right through my best field over there, and I couldn't help myself; it went through crosswise, too, and made a bad break of it.” The pupils of his eyes dilated as he continued: “I had it in wheat one year and meadow the next, and mebbe they weren't good crops I got off it. But the men in the Senate and Congress seemed to know what was good for the place better than I did—although, when I was chopping down the trees and taking out the roots on that same lot, not one of them was born. The individuals that are benefited by the lawful traffic that we would put a stop to for the public good can turn to some other fields for a harvest, like a good many around here did. There's nothing unjust in asking or even compelling them to do it. Don't let up, Jake.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

That night, when Draque sat alone with Ruth, all his brilliant hopes for better days were gone; that they would never leave the farm for a city home, he now felt sure. The blow he had just received was but a repetition of many a hard one struck before. He arose to his feet, put Ruth upon hers, and said, "I've often carried you, Ruth, but I'm losing strength and must ask you to walk now."

Ruth straightened her crooked back the best she could. Young as she was, she was beginning to realize something was expected of her, and taking her grandfather's hand, she said, "I'm strong enough to walk all the time." As they walked on she said, "I can help you, too."

Here her grandfather tottered and might have fallen had Ruth not given him support. Her eyes shone with delight as she exclaimed, "I can hold you up, see!"

"I'd have gone over that time, sure, only for you, Ruth," said Draque.

"I know I can be some good," said Ruth, as she walked on still holding her grandfather's hand. "That man didn't know everything, did he, grandfather?"

"No," said Draque, smiling, as he stopped to rest the hand she was not holding, on her head.

"I'm real small," said Ruth, "but I'm older than I look, and I'm going to try to do work just like other folks. I'll sweep tomorrow, and do the dishes with sister, and I'll help you in the garden." Then chang-

ing her happy tone to a very serious one, she said, "I won't play any more."

"What would the place be like, Ruth, if you stopped playing?" asked her grandfather.

"I don't know," answered Ruth, solemnly, as if she saw it would be a strange place for herself, "but that man shan't say any more that I'm good for nothing."

"Your grandfather never cared what people said, Ruth, if he felt himself he was doing the best he could, and why should you?"

"I wasn't doing the best I could; I played all the time, and I can work," said Ruth. "I'm not as bad as some folks, either, if I am little, and have a crooked back. You know the circus we went to in the city, grandfather?" she asked, looking up.

"Yes," answered Draque.

"I saw a man there that didn't have any arms at all; he was working with his feet, and could do lots of things. I'm not as bad as that, am I?" She turned a pair of questioning eyes full upon her grandfather's face.

Draque was silent for a spell; he had something to say to that poor, hopeful child, and was trying to get it in shape, but her piteous sobs scattered all. "There, Ruth, there," said Draque, "don't do that, you'll not have to work like that man."

"I'm not crying for myself; I'm not sorry for myself," moaned Ruth, as she pointed to her brother's empty bed.

Draque consoled her the best he could, and sat by her bed listening to her sighs that came at regular intervals, long after she had fallen asleep, as if the heart ached on regardless of the mind that was now oblivious to every woe.

When morning came Draque made no further ado

about Ike's disappearance than to see Jabez and ask if he was there. Both questions being answered in the negative, Draque hurried back. Ike was missed by the good neighbors, and it soon became generally understood he was not there; but that they could do anything in the case that would help either Draque or Ike, nothing ever prompted them to consider. Had the widow Langon's son, who several times acted queer and was thought not altogether right, wandered away from home, every neighbor in the township would scour the country until he was found and placed where he would neither harm nor be harmed.

But Ike was looked upon as a man above the average man in intelligence; that he should be allowed to go where he pleased and do what he pleased no one questioned; not even his old father, after all he had seen and heard, thought him unable to take care of himself as well as other men, if he only would. The widow Langon's son was harmless, but for fear that mood might pass off some day and leave him in a murdering mood, he was looked after. In a locality where there maybe but one insane man, as the people in general understand the word, there are one hundred who get drunk; and all the while getting drunk does not mean that the man who succumbs drinks five glasses, while the man always right-side up, drinks but two; it may be right the reverse, just as one man ruins his stomach and suffers from dyspepsia, eating pretty much the same food that piles fat on another until he shuffles off from fatty degeneration.

Constant familiarity with those suffering from Ike's affliction, render blind alike the voters at large, the judge on the bench, and the jury in the box. Could they but transplant themselves to a country where the inhabitants were free from the physical and mental

condition they call crime, where the government existed in a healthy state and the people lived independent of the traffic that demands a yearly holocaust greater than the greatest Roman tyrant ever exacted before Christianity held sway in Rome, they could see so clearly the true position from afar, that they would unite as one man to save the victim and destroy the cause.

When Draque returned to the house he could not altogether banish thoughts of Ike, though he had resolved to do so. The uncertainty of his whereabouts troubled him more than he was willing it should. He might be wandering about the country, but Draque thought it more probable he went to the city; his thoughts shaped themselves into words, and he said:

“Wherever he may be, I’ll let him go and take care of the little cripple in the house. I’ve struggled long enough with him, and if I had the will now I haven’t the strength. He’s surely old enough and has seen enough of the world to take care of himself, and I’ll never make another attempt.”

Peggy was more upset over Ike’s disappearance than anyone else. She could not fold her hands and be quiet, and Meg’s children crying out for justice; their mother in an early grave, and their father worse than dead, though as good a man at heart as ever lived. Jabez had long before foreseen they might be prepared for anything. Draque had hoped and tried, but he now felt that striving to save Ike was no longer a virtue when the children must be neglected did he do so.

During the time that had elapsed since Ike’s disappearance, Peggy listened to what both men thought of the occurrence, without being convinced it was her place to not say a word.

“I don’t see much that you can do, Peggy,” said

Jabez, one evening as they sat alone. "Whether it's wholly our place or not, we men have it altogether in our power to make laws right and wrong. It's plain some of them are wrong, and the pity is, you have to suffer for it."

Peggy brushed away at her best bonnet, evidently intent upon doing something, and half frightened Jabez as she tied the knot under her chin, preparatory to going out. Jabez drew down the corners of his mouth, and asked, "You are not starting off, too, are you Peggy? It's enough for Ike to do that."

As Peggy hunted around for the umbrella, she said, "I'm not going to keep my tongue still. If I can't help to vote those whisky laws out, I'll make a racket somehow."

"I can't think Peggy that it's wise to start off that way, without any plans," said Jabez. "Tell me, what could you do now if you were outside."

"I'd start all the women in the country on the rampage. I'd smash the barrels and let the stuff run out. I'd do anything within bounds," said Peggy, very much excited.

Jabez shook his head at her idea of within bounds, but saw she was determined, and knew too well what that meant to try to dissuade. Klomp came in as Peggy was about to step out. Through courtesy she turned back, and laid off her bonnet.

"You're back, I see," said Klomp, looking at the bonnet she had placed on the table. Peggy made no reply, but Jabez said:

"Peggy felt like breaking in the walls of a couple of saloons, and didn't care to go bareheaded; that accounts for the bonnet being there."

"Put on your bonnet and I'll help you," said Klomp, turning to Peggy.

"However sore the question when a man sees no immediate way of doing the good he would do, he might as well laugh as cry, isn't that so Klomp?" asked Jabez, who then continued: "A few of us have been some time agitating this whisky question, but it will be a few years yet before our hopes are realized; it's the way all revolutions come about, we must submit."

"Then you don't think the women could help much hammering at the barrels," said Klomp, "and there's where you and I differ. We often differed before, and you were always right, but I'll be bound this is the time you're wrong; if the women would turn out they could do more than you think. This thing of sticking to one way, when it doesn't work, is played out."

"I don't differ with you a bit this time," said Jabez, "but men at large have never given women the credit of being able to do much, and Peggy feels like resenting the insult this minute. All I objected to was too great haste."

"I know they say women never stick to the point," said Klomp, laughing, "but for all that they'd do good work in the way we're endeavoring to work now if they only got started."

"Better work is done sometimes by laying down the implement that's all point, than by staying always by it," said Jabez, "and women can bring a dozen trifling little points to bear upon a thing in such a way that they'll have more effect than the one strong one. We can prove all this right here, Klomp, just as we proved other things awhile ago, by means of the crowbar, and the like."

Peggy now looked more satisfied, and attentively listened while Jabez continued:

"For instance, a sharp ax is a very savage looking

weapon in the hands of a strong man, and you'd be likely to conclude where that point couldn't force its way nothing could. But we've tried it, and know what we're talking about when we say, a saw with fifty or a hundred insignificant looking little points will penetrate in a way the solid one pointed thing never would."

"That's it," said Klomp, turning to Peggy. "There's more ways of killing a calf than cutting his head off. We'll try a good many ways to bring the people to see where their votes should be cast. Let everyone take a hand in it, men and women. I'd advise you, Peggy, being as you can't vote, to go your own way about it, just as it appears best to yourself; whether it's standing outside the saloon door, and making wry faces at every man that dares go in, or talking to the saloon-keeper through the key-hole, shaming him for doing the devil's work, even though that work enables him to provide for his family better than you or I were able to provide for ours."

He turned around to see how Jabez was taking it, and said: "Let the women make a racket of some kind, and they'll set more men thinking seriously about the cursed traffic in six months than Jake could in twice the time." Peggy had gotten over her haste, and sat, with the hands that were seldom idle quietly folded. She heaved a deep sigh, and appeared to find in it relief, then she said: "I'll not venture out tonight, but I'll think the matter over till morning, and then nothing will keep me back. I'll stir the women younger than myself to arms, and I'll follow them with encouragement as they proceed." She wept aloud as she said: "I can't bear to go over to Draque's any more to see my own grandchildren. I'd take them, but Draque won't give them up."

“Draque has no choice, Peggy,” said Jabez. “He couldn’t give them up if it was his wish. Ruth wouldn’t live six months away from that grandfather, and her sister has to stay with her. Ruth’s gone as soon as anything comes to take Draque.”

“Draque’s not going soon,” said Klomp; “he’s wiry, and likely to live longer than those that look stronger.”

“It would have been the happy day for us all,” said Peggy, who had been in deep meditation since she had dried her tears, “if you drummed Hiram Blank out of the place instead of giving him the welcome you did.”

“Yes,” said Klomp, “or kept away from him until he was brought to understand that if he wanted to live here he’d have to pitch in and work like the rest of us.”

“It’s no use, Klomp, it’s no use,” said Jabez, “the qualified American citizen, if he’s a square man, is forced to take the blame on himself; there’s where the blame rests. There’s no use trying to shuffle it upon the saloon-keeper; he has the same right to sell what he sells the slave-holder had to sell his slaves.”

“Well,” said Klomp, as he moved to go, “with Jake working as hard as he is, and Peggy going to start out in the morning, the end is not too far off for all of us to see, I hope.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

After Ike parted with Jacob Klomp he wandered about for many days and found friends. Far into the night on the last of those days he found a bed in a hay-mow, a great distance from town.

The warm rays of the morning sun, now high, shone through a pigeon hole full upon his face, and blinded his opening eyes; it also brought him some cheer, though of the melancholy kind. He never more saw visions of a perfect, happy future; whenever a sunbeam crossed his path, it was one that put him in a reflective mood, and sent him back to the time when his spirit was so buoyant he thought nothing too difficult to accomplish. He rubbed his eyes, looked around, and was satisfied his bed was a hay-mow, but how he got there did not appear to him so clear. He drew himself up some, and rested his cheek upon his hand, while he steadied his elbow on a cross-piece of timber, and looked out the pigeon hole. It was evident he was yet at a loss to know where he was, or how he got there. He remained for some time in that position, and in deep study. At last his eyes brightened, evidently with pleasure, and he drew close as possible to the pigeon hole to survey the whole scene; the survey was satisfactory. He knew the turn in the road before him better than he knew the old book he first laid eyes upon in the law office. He was far out of town, and the road he looked at the one he had been so familiar with in stage-coach times. He pictured to himself the coach, moving along at the usual gait, and himself and the magnetic stranger inside; the stranger

whose soul was so on fire with—no slavery, that he needed but few words to kindle in the magnificent youth beside him the same fire. Ike watched the coach for a half hour or so, as surely as if it was really there; his elbow tired sooner than his imagination, and slipped off the piece of timber it was resting on. For the first time since he awoke he realized the picture before him was of the past, and the present was too horrible for him to endure. He threw himself over the beam, and came down the ladder. Trembling and unsteady he walked along the road, every inch of him affected by the continual use of alcohol, moderate for years, until the effects produced by moderation demanded what the world calls too much, to stimulate the system into anything like a living condition that was not continual suffering. His slow movements along the road would lead an observer to believe his walk was either aimless or meditative. No tramp had ever graced Ohio's thoroughfares with his presence in the days when Ike was accustomed to travel that road in so proud and independent a way, so conscious of his power, and so charmed with all the beauties the Great Creator had thrown in his way.

But it was different now; the civil war was responsible for the peregrinations of many called tramps. As the matrons looked out of the farm houses they thought he might be one, and the farmer, as he looked up from his work, or crossed the field, turned upon him a suspicious eye. But Ike was oblivious to their looks, and careless about their opinions. Rural scenes that first charmed his young soul had not lost all their charm. He looked at divers things that grew by the wayside, regardless of eyes that were upon him, so that meditative might be pronounced his mood. He was slowly lessening the road between himself and his father's

home. Should he return as the Prodigal had and try again to lift the burden of supporting his children from his old father? Simultaneous with the thought, he wheeled around, and said:

“In all my life I never determined to accomplish anything and failed, but this; failure has been so frequent and impossible to avoid, that I am determined to never make another attempt, where my father will see the attempt come to naught as he has so often. I cannot say I have no wish to be exactly what my father would have me, but I do know that so far it has not been in my power.”

Ninety-nine men out of every one hundred, yea, every man in the country save two or three, would lay it down as fact had they seen and talked with him that morning, that he was as truly a responsible agent as they were, and in their eyes, did he do anything the man called drunkard at almost any time is likely to do, he would be as responsible as if he had never been taught and had not lived up to the teaching that moderate drinking harms no one. Such being the prevailing belief whether the person so believing was in favor of saloons or not. The ups and downs of a man's life when disabled from alcoholic drink somewhat resembles a fever patient, and physicians have learned that temperature rises and falls without internal or external provocation, outside of that which exists in the disease itself. But fevers are seldom of prolonged duration; they sweep at intervals over countries or parts of a country, and the devastation left in their track set observing men working to find out the true state, both as regards cause and effect, while the disease that has so familiarly grown, and is not restricted to any country or part of a country, has heretofore claimed but little of their attention.

Why or wherefore Ike's breath came harder now than it had since he found a bed on the hay-mow, may remain for the physician of the future to solve; but such is surely the case. Like the fever patient visited by the physician in the morning, and whose temperature is almost normal, when visited again in the evening is found in a raging fever, for no reason but that the fever is in his system. So Ike's steps were unsteady; he breathed with difficulty, and mental vision such as clearly discerns, is becoming clouded, where awhile before he was a fair specimen of a reasonable man.

The spirit of enterprise was far from dead in Ike's native state. A branch from the great railroad was being built to connect with some other road. Down in the gulley a shanty had been built to accommodate the laborer, the chief accommodation being a supply of the ardent. Ike crossed the fence and proceeded toward the gulley; having arrived there an obstacle loomed up in the shape of no funds. It was not the time of day favorable to friend-finding, for those who patronized the place were on the road. He pleaded eloquently for a drink, but the ears into which he poured his suffering appeals were always deaf to every demand not accompanied with money, and the possessor of those ears had no intention of making an exception here.

Ike felt barely able to stand, and dropped on the wooden bench against the wall, more like an inert body than one animated with life. His proud spirit sank in a way very few were capable of understanding; for the public took no note of his condition, and did he dare to step over the threshold that led to another drunk, the act was plainly and damnably deliberate. No one understood the situation better than

himself, save Jacob Klomp. The objects before him began to reel, and his temples felt as if flying apart, while the words of Jacob Klomp rang in his ears: "Toward every other class of sufferers we are inclined to be charitable; hospitals are built and nurses are trained. The sufferer from alcohol alone is a criminal."

Ike could stand it no longer; he arose to his feet, made his way back of the board used as a counter, and helped himself. The astonished owner of the draught looked at him with eyes twice their natural size, and rushed to save his drug, but he was too late to save all. Ike had secured enough to steady his nerves and take the something from his eyes that made single things look double, and things that were stationary from apparent whirling around.

The keeper of the little shanty made no attempt to throw Ike out. He was like the shanty, small, while Ike was large, and though broken down looking, his strength could hardly be gauged with accuracy, and there were no men but the two within gun-shot of the place. He may have had a motive for being gentle, but when a man refrains from doing an evil deed, people are not inclined to question motive. To look at the good in everyone's actions is one of the best traits of character; that he did not put him out is sufficient. Ike was hungry, but in no hurry. He was an adept at fasting, and sat down to talk with the man, who still showed signs of being taken by surprise. He never told his history or how he happened to take his first drink to the man before him, or anyone. He looked around the place with the eye of a philosopher, and asked, "How business stood."

"It's quiet during the day, but at night it's lively," was the answer received.

"I suppose," said Ike, thoughtfully, "forty years or so have not diminished the interest people take in the saloon."

"That it's steadily on the increase is my experience, and it's not a bad business, either, I can tell you, once a man gets fairly started," said the man addressed, gleefully rubbing his hands.

"It's a business where the proceeds and results seem to make extraordinary efforts to see which will come out first," said Ike, as he looked at the financially satisfied man before him, at the same time contemplating in himself a sad picture of results.

The man addressed thought of nothing but the financial side of the question. He knew well what proceeds meant, but results was a word that had not been entered in his vocabulary. When Ike said, "I am not in favor of the traffic," he was sure it meant something antagonistic, and bristled up as he looked at a half-empty bottle, and said, "I should say you weren't."

"Whatever my faults or misfortunes are, as observers may feel pleased to call them, I stand condemned," said Ike, "but I have enough of the magnanimous yet left in my heart to wish to save the thousands upon thousands who are today paving their way to similar fate."

The man behind the counter had no more use for Ike. He carefully put some loose bottles under lock, piled the drinking glasses and took them back so they would not be a standing temptation to try a barrel, and showed in several other ways he had more to do than talk. Ike started out in search of the road he had left, also for a meal which would answer for breakfast, dinner, and supper of the night before. He sat dejected on a boulder by the wayside to think of Jacob

Klomp, because the boulder reminded him of one occupied by himself and Jacob a long time before, and also reminded him of the irrevocable fate that separated them, not in feelings of individual friendship and esteem, but in the diversity of their paths since boys, and how cruelly he had been decoyed.

While Ike had been thus wandering about, Draque let the farm on shares, and managed the best he could for the few of the Draque family left.

Peggy rose up to fight the saloon-keepers as she had vowed she would. Whenever Jabez was questioned concerning Peggy's movements he solemnly inclined his head, and said: "I don't blame her for trying to do something. Peggy's way is good as far as it goes, and Abel Beech is a well-meaning man, too. I am sure every agitation concerning the traffic will help to put people thinking right. They will be brought to see yet that Jacob Klomp is the man on the right track."

The dew of another night settled noiselessly upon leaf and blade, and moistened from head to foot the form of a homeless wanderer, stretched upon the sod he was born to inherit. The wanderer who the day before had resolved to never place his foot upon that sod again. It is probable he had no thought or knowledge of where he was going, but hit upon the familiar path and journeyed on. He did not stop until he crossed the line-fence, where he laid down to rest in his father's pasture, not far from the green graves of his mother and Bill and Amanda, of Meg and his handsome boys, and there viewing the scenes of his childhood, where there was nothing but peace and heaven and love, save the destroyer that came in the shape of stimulants, and had been so long an agreeable, unquestionable companion, his life went out.

Upon the dead body nature smiled as sweetly as

ever it had upon the living boy. The air was laden with balm, and there was melody in every sound. Not until he who was the cause of the ruin of that splendid physical and intellectual machine came upon the spot, was there anything that would intimate to the observer such a word as disgrace. Draque's agony when he came across the body of his dead Ike was painful to witness. His lamentations were not those of a man leaving his dead with God, as he had resignedly left so many since Amanda went.

It was not that Ike died unattended and alone, without human aid or sympathy. Bill had been picked up on another field, and his gaping wounds told a sad tale to the father's heart of comforts that might have been administered in the last dread hour and were not. Yet how bravely he endured all because Bill was a hero; he was called upon to give his life for his country, and his death was honorable. But Ike had flung his life away for drink; he had disgraced himself and his father's family beyond reparation. The proud family, whose pride was not based upon worldly possessions, but upon honor and right living, had, in Draque's estimation, received a death blow, for death lets no man back to redeem what is lost, and Ike is gone.

* * * * *

Not many months passed, and the first settlers had all dropped off but Draque. In the early morning twilight could be seen a man, stepping slowly across the north lot, surely living in the past; there was no future for him any more on earth, even Ruth had gone. There was barely a perceptible stoop in his lithe, wiry frame, and a tear could be seen coursing slowly down the cheek of the old man, inured to

hardship from babyhood; not the impulsive tear that gushes from the eye, but the tear shed by one long accustomed to conquer, that comes from the very depths of a breaking heart, and that he would fain be strong enough to hide.

That the world would soon be no more forever for him and his was not the burden he bore, but that Ike was a criminal, and died in disgrace. The voice of truth gone forth proclaiming him innocent as his fellow-man, who indulging in the good things of life, piles fat about his heart until he can breathe no more, Draque will never hear.

THE END.

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W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

Franklin Series—Vol. 5, No. 3, February, 1898. Monthly—\$6.00 per year.  
Entered at the Chicago Post-Office as second-class matter.



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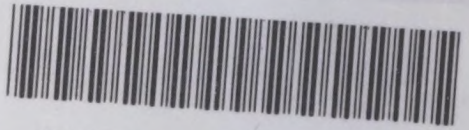








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