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Struggling Upward.

BY

SARAH J. JONES,

AUTHOR OF "DOWNWARD."

"Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die?"



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STRUGGLING UPWARD.

CHAPTER I.

A HANDFUL OF MEAL IN A BARREL.

“Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?”

“Thy shoes *shall be* iron and brass; and as thy days, *so shall* thy strength *be.*”

THE thin, pale-faced woman who stood at the door of the little cottage, with one hand resting on her husband's shoulder, uttered the words in a clear, firm tone; but the man shrank from her touch and the sound of her voice with a little shrug of impatience. He made no reply to the words she had spoken, and not even bidding her good-bye, went away without turning his head.

“Humph!” he exclaimed to himself, “what with tramping about the country, mile upon mile, in a vain search for work or a chance to sell the cattle, in truth my feet feel as heavy as

if they were indeed shod with iron or brass!" And then this man of whom I am telling you started suddenly, and as if speaking to a second person muttered:

"See here, none of that, Walter Gills! Have you come to this—perverting and reviling the Scripture, after having been blest with a Christian mother and a godly wife?"

He strode forward as if trying to trample down the complaining, rebellious thoughts that pressed to his lips for utterance.

Mrs. Gills stood looking after her husband for some time. Then with one swift glance her eye swept over the parched fields which had given bright promises in the early summer. The corn, then green and fresh, now stood in gaunt ranks, dwarfed, shriveled and rustling in the wind. The meadows were brown and the streams were dried up. The lean cattle, crowding close to the fence which separated them from the door-yard, were lowing pitifully. That was the saddest sight and sound of all except one, the hungry look and cry of the little child, now happily asleep; and, in spite of the promise which she had just repeated to her husband, Mrs. Gills' heart was very, very sore and faint. She tried to fortify her faith with other passages, but it seemed to her as if the very words which came to her memory were mockings of her misery and destitution. She repeated

aloud: "He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth. . . . He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. . . . Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry."

With the cloudless, burning skies above her and the desolation all around her—with the mournful lowing of the thirsting, starving cattle in her ears—the temptation was strong upon her to renounce the faith to which she had clung, and which had sustained her through many a dark passage of her life. Turning sharply around, as if to face the unseen enemy who was whispering suggestions of darkness and doubt, she began to walk the floor excitedly, exclaiming:

"'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' . . . 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.'"

Then the voice of the victorious one rose

higher in the sublime triumph of submissive confidence. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' "

The tempter was vanquished as only the sword of the word of God can vanquish him. The hardness was broken up, and falling upon her knees, the trembling woman, faint from long fasting, yet clinging with unfaltering hand to the promises of her God, prayed with strong crying and tears, not for rescue from the starvation which seemed impending, but for preservation from the sin of despair and bitter rebellion, born of unbelief. The conflict was over for this time, but she petitioned for strength to meet the tempter if he should return to the attack. It was a prayer that might have sounded strange to a chance listener. In that isolated spot the suppliant had no fears of being interrupted in her devotions, but felt as if she were alone with her God; and yet, unknown to her, she had a human listener.

Rising from her knees, she took a pail, and emptying its contents into a small pitcher, she went out to the well. The supply of water had

grown so meager that it barely sufficed for the necessities of the family; yet now she deliberately drew all that she could obtain, and divided it with careful impartiality among the thin milch cows and the meek-faced oxen, who patiently waited for their share.

Returning to the house, she prepared a little gruel for the baby, whom she knew hunger would not permit to sleep much longer.

She had used one more spoonful of the handful of meal which was all her store, but she thought of the widow of Zarephath, and a deep calm was upon her soul. Despair had fled away like a black-winged bird, and the dove of peace had come in its stead. It was as if she heard a voice saying: "Be still, and know that I *am* God."

When she had made ready the baby's scanty breakfast, she sat down with a feeling that now it was only her duty to wait.

Presently she heard the little feet pattering across the floor of the adjoining room: he had climbed out of his low crib and was coming after his breakfast.

"Harry!" called the mother softly. "Mamma!" responded the child in the only word he could speak, and the soft arms were around her neck the next moment. Then came the morning bath, in which, unlike most babies, Harry de-

lighted. It was quickly dispatched in these days, however, for water was too scarce to be used freely.

On this morning one of the baby's dimpled fists, which were growing less plump the mother noticed sadly, was kept carefully closed as though it grasped a prize which he feared to lose. The mother laughingly made a feint of opening the tiny fingers; then kissing the chubby obstinate she placed his breakfast before him.

What was Mrs. Gills' surprise, a little later, when, intent upon his poor little cup of gruel, Harry voluntarily relinquished his newly found treasure, and dropped upon the table with a ringing sound a piece of gold!

It was useless to question the child as to where he had obtained it. Could it be that Walter had placed the money in the sleeping baby's hand before going out? The idea was instantly rejected. There was the danger of the child's losing the precious coin, and Walter knew there was nothing in the house to eat, and he had obviously gone away depressed almost to desperation.

How slow we are to recognize the hand of our heavenly Father in the helps that come to us unexpectedly in our dire necessities! We may not look for miracles to be wrought in our behalf, but human instrumentalities are made to

do God's work as truly as are the angels—those bright-winged messengers, who leave their home in the heavenly world and at his bidding come to earth as ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation.

Mrs. Gills sat as one stupefied, turning over and over in her fingers the blessing which had come to her in such an unlooked-for manner; for to-day she had not prayed for food: she had only asked for resignation, for submission, for unwavering love for, and trust in, God. She had petitioned for the spirit to exclaim: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" She had felt that blessing would come in the Master's own good time and way, yet she had never thought of gold.

How much it would buy, and the nearest provision store two miles away! Then she remembered that Dan Eakins would pass along the road to-day with his faltering oxen, to bring the light load of provision which he hauled weekly for the mining company up at "The Quick Gulch," as the sanguine fellows had named it many weeks ago. Their subsequent disappointment had furnished the foundation of more than one grim joke and suggestion of a change of name; but, hoping against hope, the majority were still delving away, while their resources were perceptibly dwindling.

Here then was an opportunity to obtain a supply. True, Dan was not notorious for honesty, and might not return the balance in full, but there was no alternative: she must have something for the baby and a meal prepared against her husband's return. As soon as Dan appeared, Mrs. Gills tied a towel to a stick and signaled.

The teamster called out an unnecessarily authoritative "whoa!" to the poor, feeble animals he was driving, and, dismounting, came up to the house, muttering something about the danger of stopping the team lest it should fall down.

Mrs. Gills met him at the door with little Harry in her arms. The baby hand was again holding fast its golden discovery.

"Harry, give it to the man. He will bring the baby milk," said the mother, coaxingly.

The child seemed to understand the words, and, hesitating but a moment, reached forth his hand and deposited the coin in the rough, outstretched palm.

Dan started a little at the sight of the gold.

"Whew! you are the richest young man in these parts!" he exclaimed, and baby smiled as if he comprehended and appreciated the compliment.

"If you will please come in for a moment I



will make a list of the articles I wish you to bring," Mrs. Gills continued.

"Thank you, ma'am, I'll wait here. I'm afraid that team of mine might undertake to run away," answered Dan, in the usual jocularly of the camp.

The list was soon written with a stub of lead-pencil on a fly-leaf torn from a book. It was headed with "three quarts of condensed milk," and then followed flour, meat, cheese, tea, *et cetera*, in a profusion which surprised the writer herself as she penciled the items.

Placing the money inside of the paper, Dan made a great show of depositing it carefully in his well-worn pocket-book, which he stowed away in his pocket, and resumed his journey, promising to return with the stores about noon.

The sun rose higher and hotter, and true to his promise, just as the twelve o'clock shadow fell across the doorstep, the messenger made his appearance turning the angle of the road in a cloud of dust. The baby, adding a new word to his small vocabulary, was calling out, "Milk, milk!" while the mother was in a tremor of expectation, which only those who have been in similar circumstances can understand.

Dan did not give any very minute account of prices, but he produced a goodly quantity of money, part of which was returned to him in

spite of his protest that he "did not expect to be paid for a bit of neighborly kindness." He seemed in a condition of unwonted excitement, which was finally accounted for by the statement that the woods were on fire some miles below, accompanied by an announcement of the self-evident fact that everything was dry enough to burn like tinder.

"They are prophesying rain down at The Forks, but I must say I don't see much in the way of clouds. The wind is blowing from the east, but it appears to me it is likelier to bring fire than water," he continued.

"How far has the fire reached?" asked Mrs. Gills.

"Well," answered Dan, "it was raging around in the Pine Hill neighborhood at last accounts; but fire, you know, travels rather faster than Larry and Lineback yonder, fast as they are," he added grimly, as he hurried back to his panting oxen and urged them forward to a speed which was far beyond their strength.

When he had proceeded a little distance he looked back, and drawing up with another loud command to his oxen, he seemed about to return to the cottage. Whatever motive impelled him, he halted but a few minutes, and then continued his journey, and to all outward seeming Mrs. Gills was left alone to meet the threatening danger.

Yes, the fire was raging and crackling as though its fury would never be appeased until the whole region was one scene of blackness and desolation; but, unseen as yet by man, an unfailing barrier had been interposed beyond which it was not to pass.

As Dan Eakins had said, the east wind was blowing, and the clouds of which he had spoken with such scornful incredulity were gathering their forces just below the horizon, and when they made their appearance, it was as an army with sable banners, marching on irresistibly. Forward, still forward they came, until the whole heavens were covered with blackness. The sight was so unusual in that long-remembered year of drouth, and the appearance so sudden and so awfully grand, with the long, dark lines drawn up as if for battle, that the lookers-on half trembled as they gazed.

A little later the clouds seemed to burst and pour down their long-gathered fullness upon the licking tongues of fire; upon the fountainless hillsides; upon the parched pastures and dusty roadsides, that drank and drank as if they could never have enough; and then the streams ran down the gullies and gathered in pools in places where drouth had long held undisputed sway.

Little children held out their hands to catch the grateful drops, and thirsty beasts and birds

and creeping things and plants that were ready to perish, drank deeply of the heaven-given draught. Walter Gills, plodding painfully homeward through the pouring rain, enjoyed the shower bath which it gave him, and was glad in his heart that it had come, though quite too late to save his poor, lost crops.

“The grass will grow again,” he said to himself, “and if we can but keep the wolf from the door a little longer—” Ah! he remembered with a start that neither he nor his wife had eaten a mouthful for several days, and that baby’s meal was getting low. He uttered the sacred name of God, but it was not in a tone of humble entreaty or earnest, reverential petition; it was rather an exclamation of despair.

He loitered as he neared the cottage; it was so terrible to enter and tell his wife that he had failed once more—that starvation was one day nearer their home, and he powerless to avert it. Walter Gills recognized the existence of a God, and had a certain respect for his revealed will, but he was as yet “outside the gates,” having no faith and no hope. Alas! for such in the time of trouble!

But his ways are not as our ways. The measure of his plans is larger than the earth and broader than the sea.

CHAPTER II.

GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY.

“Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.”

IN a lonely spot among the mountains a camp-fire was burning in a kind of natural fireplace among the rocks, and a rough bearded man, sitting with his back against a log, was drying his soaked garments before the flame. There was a sound of cattle lowing uneasily now and then at a point not far distant; and this occasional break upon the monotony of the otherwise silent night seemed to deepen the gloom.

The man having dried his clothes, proceeded to prepare his rude supper, which he ate with the relish of one too hungry to be fastidious, and then sat smoking by the fire, turning his head now and then as if listening for the coming of some one.

“At last!” he exclaimed gruffly, as by and by another emerged from the darkness into the light of the fire. “I didn’t know but you had

concluded to go over to the States and get some fine stock. Where are the cattle, Ted?" he concluded still more surlily.

"I haven't brought them," answered the newcomer. "Why, Dick, it was impossible. They couldn't have crossed the spur without being carried, and besides the man owns only two half-starved milch cows and one yoke of oxen." The other man opened his half-shut eyes and looked at the speaker curiously.

"What's that to us?" he asked.

"Wait till I get done!" was the answer. "I heard them talking, and they had nothing to eat in the house but a little meal for gruel for the baby, and neither Gills nor his wife had tasted food for days."

"What's that to us?" heartlessly asked the listener again.

"I tell you to be quiet!" said the speaker threateningly. "You cannot understand unless you had seen and heard the woman with her great hungry-looking eyes; but I tell you she talked and prayed like my mother; and I should have expected to be paralyzed if I had attempted to do what I went there to accomplish. It was nearly daylight when I reached the spot, and I was obliged to hide in the loft of the cabin, which I entered from the outside, and where I saw and heard it all. Oh! Dick, there must be

something in a religion that can hold one up like that! While the woman was out of the room, I dropped my last shiner through a crevice to the baby, who is marvelously like one I used to know, and I saw the little fellow pick it up."

Dick, as he had been called, lay back against the log near which he was sitting, and gave vent to one long, loud guffaw of laughter after another.

The younger man looked on and listened, seemingly undisturbed.

"I don't wonder you laugh," he said, when the noise had a little subsided. "I would have sneered at you for the same thing a few days ago; but, Dick, there was a power over me that I could not resist, when that woman repeated passages that I have read and heard my mother read, about the rain from heaven and food provided for man and beast; and then, with famine staring her in the face, prayed on her knees to be kept, not from starvation, but to be kept from sin—'the sin of doubt and despair,' she said. Think of it, Dick! I verily believe that the rain which came in torrents a few hours later was sent for her sake, for the fire was raging a little way off. The family was having a feast when I slipped out under cover of the darkness—a feast of thanksgiving. I tell you, Dick, I have not

felt as I did then since I got out of jail—no, indeed, not since I was a boy with my mother's voice sounding in my ears."

He paused and seemed lost in reflection. Dick, who had been watching him for some time through his nearly closed eyelids, now said, sleepily:

"You'd better set out as a parson or a Sunday-school teacher. Tall Ted of the Rocky Rangers! It would sound pretty taking."

Ted made no reply to this taunt, and his companion continued:

"Well, I have not been spending the day lying around eavesdropping at prayer meetings. I've got half a dozen cattle corraled over yonder, and I can tell you I am too tired and sleepy to listen to any more sermons or experiences tonight. Get yourself some supper, if you want any; I've had mine."

He paused a moment and then continued:

"I'll just add, as a friend, that if you stay in these parts you had better get rid of all that 'bosh' pretty quick and make up your mind to do your part before the captain gets back, I can tell you."

Dick having finished his speech, rolled himself up in his blanket and lay down before the fire.

Ted proceeded to heap on fresh fuel, and soon

the flames were roaring despite the dampness; but he made no preparations for supper. He sat resting his chin on his hand as if in deep thought. Except for the lowing of the restive cattle now and then, the silence was unbroken save by the snores of Dick and by the hooting of owls.

The watcher sat gazing long and earnestly into the blaze, occasionally shifting his position, as if ill at ease. Memory was busy and his thoughts troubled him. He rose to his feet hurriedly and then sat down again, as if abandoning his purpose, whatever it might have been.

"I'll do it come what will!" he said at length aloud. "I have been on the down-grade long enough, heaven only knows! I'll turn back at any risk, and I'll begin with what comes first to hand."

Rising with an air of determination on his pale face, he resumed the overcoat which had been drying by the fire and disappeared in the darkness.

Not long after the lowing of the cattle sounded fainter and fainter, until the snorer and the owls only broke the dead silence of night.

The early light of the damp, chill morning found Ted (as he was called in the lawless gang with which he had been connected) at the Quick Gulch mining camp.

"Who goes there?" called out Dan Eakins, who was filling a kettle from the bountifully replenished basin which had lately been so near exhaustion.

"A friend," answered Ted. "I want to see Grant Lucas and the other head men of this crowd at once."

"Anything very pressing?" questioned the other. "The boys worked like Turks yesterday and they don't like to be waked till their coffee is ready."

"Very pressing," answered Ted. "I'll take the responsibility of rousing them up."

"Well, what is wanted at this time of the day?" was Grant Lucas' not very cordial greeting when the rousing up had been effected.

"I want to have a little talk with you and your men about this claim," answered the visitor, without wasting time on preliminaries.

"Well, out with it," replied the other, whose long list of failures to secure any success in his labor on the claim had rendered him not very amiable, especially before breakfast. It was an inauspicious moment for telling this man that he and his fellows had been shamefully defrauded, and that the bearer of the message had been a party to the cheat. It was an act requiring real heroism, in this wild, lawless region, where human life is often held less sacred than

property, and murder is not condemned as unsparingly as theft.

Grant Lucas, tall and dark browed, was now joined by others, and a little pause ensued, as all except the leader sat down in a tired way on a convenient log.

"I have no excuses to make and no plea for mercy to put in," began Ted; "but just this to say, that you men have been villainously taken in on this gulch business. There is a prior claim, and we knew it when we sold it to you. If you should find gold, which is not likely, your work would only be labor lost, for your movements are being closely watched."

This statement was greeted by exclamations in different keys, and with different degrees of wrath and astonishment.

"Who told you all this?" demanded Grant Lucas, coolly. "If this state's evidence is a put-up job, we ought to hang you all the same."

"It is no put-up job," protested the informant. "I heard the matter all talked over beforehand. It is the truth itself."

"And you had a hand in this rascality which you are so ready to vouch for?" pursued Grant sternly.

"I cannot deny it," answered Ted.

"Swing him up to the limb over his head!" spoke a voice from the log.

"How much did you expect to make on this new job?" asked another.

"Suppose of course you brought back your share of the steal!" sarcastically suggested a third.

"Honestly, boys, I didn't get a fortune from the transaction," answered Ted, fearlessly facing his jury, "though I got more than I deserved. I did get a twenty dollar gold piece, but I gave it yesterday to a family a short distance below here who were just on the verge of starvation. It really never occurred to me at the time that it was not mine to give."

This statement was received with a chorus of jeering yells and laughter that echoed through the solitudes of the surrounding mountain sides. "That story will hardly pass current here," said Grant, who had not joined in the laugh, but on the contrary looked blacker than ever, his dusky eyes seeming to contract darkness in their depths.

"Did you send the money in a registered letter?" asked another, his voice still full of laughter.

"No," answered Ted, looking boldly into the eyes of his questioner, "I gave it to the baby, who was being slowly starved on corn meal gruel."

Groans and renewed laughter followed this reply.

Grant Lucas made a gesture commanding silence.

"Where is the rest of your thieving gang now?" he demanded.

"Out on a cattle raid," replied Ted. "I was sent after Gills', and that is how I came to be there."

"Sudden and remarkable change in a notorious sinner," sneered one, "went to steal the cows, and stayed to pet the baby!"

Yells of laughter again rose up.

"Have done with your nonsense!" commanded Grant sternly. "Get a couple of ropes and secure the renegade and let's to breakfast. If the first part of his story is true, we will take a holiday, and that will give us plenty of time to attend to his case."

Ted's arms were pinioned and he was firmly tied to a tree, while the camp proceeded to breakfast. There were tempting odors of coffee and broiled meat and much clattering of tin cups, together with some talk and laughter, but not the same amount of boisterous mirth which usually characterized the rough meals of these men thus isolated from the softening influences of civilized life.

Dan Eakins, who usually took his meals with the others, was this morning moving restlessly about the camp, ostensibly doing a great many

things, but really doing nothing. A free discussion of the prisoner and his statements went on during the repast, which seemed to Ted an unusually long one. There were many things said or broadly hinted, which brought a deeper color to his sunburnt face; but he made no answers, even when the remarks were addressed to him.

He had been told by Grant Lucas that after breakfast they would give him another hearing, and that then he was to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, or take the consequences." So Ted reserved his words for the formal statement which he was then to make. After a time had elapsed which seemed to him hours, the meal was concluded, and the men, filling their pipes, proceeded to secure each a glowing coal from the camp-fire, and then seated themselves near the prisoner to renew the examination.

All sat down except Grant Lucas, the acknowledged leader of the crowd, who stood nearly seven feet as he leaned against the tree just opposite the captive, regarding the young man keenly, and holding in his hand a piece of stout rope.

"Now, my fine chap, let us have that yarn all over again, and see if you can stand a bit of cross-examination at the end," he said when the

men were silent, and the puffs of smoke from the pipes began to ascend.

Ted retold his story with not the slightest alteration except the introduction of details which he had omitted before.

One or two of the grim faces softened a little when he told of the prayer that was like his mother's, but when his story was again ended it was pronounced "a most unlikely tale," and not a voice was raised in his behalf.

"Well, comrades," began Grant, after a little pause, "this fellow seems to have come here this morning expecting to be rewarded for saying that he has taken part in the biggest kind of a swindle, and telling, as a set-off, a fine trumped-up story of how he has played the Good Samaritan with other people's money. Is there a man in this camp who believes him? If there is one, let him speak or ever after hold his peace."

There was a pause, and Ted flung an indignant denial at the speaker, who stood manipulating the rope which he held, whether with a view to constructing a scourge or a noose he could not as yet determine.

"I did not expect a reward!" he exclaimed hotly. "I would scorn to accept a reward if it were offered. I came, because I could not help coming, to tell you that you were wasting your

time and strength. As to what I did with my share of the plunder, believe it or not, as you like!"

The prisoner's eyes flashed fearlessly in the stern faces of his captors, as he stood thus bound and at their mercy. He had risked this danger in the performance of an honorable action, and he did not regret it even now.

The next moment out from behind a big tree stepped Dan Eakins, who on this morning seemed to have forgotten his pipe as well as his breakfast, a very unusual occurrence.

"Gentlemen," he began, with unwonted politeness, "that fellow has told you the clean, unmixed truth, and I can prove it. That baby gave me the twenty dollar gold piece with its own hand, to buy it milk and flour and meat and such like down at the Forks yesterday. I got the things, and Larry and Lineback are the oxen that hauled them over. The baby did not seem to be much of a talker, and his mother didn't tell me where he got the money, nor anything about the circumstances, but from the hollow, hungry look in her big eyes and the way her voice trembled when she said: 'You have done us a timely service; God bless you,' I rather judge that there was famine in the camp."

Dan stopped as if for breath, swallowed hard,

and then went on. "There was a two-and-a-half-dollar gold piece among the change, and, believe it if you can, Dan Eakins was the sneaking, thieving cur that put it in his pocket, and then when Mrs. Gills pressed a silver dollar on him for the service, told her that he didn't want to be paid for a bit of neighborly kindness.

"Here's the silver," he continued, handing the dollar to Grant Lucas, "and here's the gold," displaying the bright little coin, "and that's going back to the baby again; and now if there's to be a flogging or a swing on this morning's programme, here's your proper subject."

While Grant Lucas' own hands were untying the prisoner, there arose such a cheer as perhaps those gnarled old giant trees and rocky mountain sides had never heard before. Three-times-three echoed and re-echoed until the solitudes seemed full of voices, and the birds in the midst of their morning songs of thanksgiving paused to listen. The sound might not be musical, but who shall say that it was inharmonious to the listening angels—this spontaneous outburst of approval of a worthy act? If they rejoice over the sinner that repenteth, is there not cause for interest and approval when eyes are turned, however dimly, toward the Father's house, when feet that have been wandering in the mazes of sin are tending, however feebly, toward the paths of truth?

CHAPTER III.

IN THE TRACK OF THE TORNADO.

“Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return, ye children of men. . . . How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. . . . And surely the mountain falling cometh to naught, and the rock is removed out of his place.”

IT was late in the evening of the third day following the events of the preceding chapter when Ted left Quick Gulch camp. We shall still call him Ted for convenience, although he had deserted the lawless company that had given him the name. He left his new-found friends with a light heart, or rather I should say with a light head; for, alas! in the “good fellowship” that had followed he had fallen a victim to an appetite which had already well nigh compassed his ruin. And now with a well-filled flask in his pocket he was making his way up a desolate ravine to “his own private apartment,” as he had laughingly announced before setting out.

Grant Lucas and one or two others, with minds less clouded than the rest, had used their

utmost efforts to induce him to remain with them. They well knew that swift vengeance would not fail to pursue him when it became known that he had deserted and betrayed his colleagues. With Captain Ralph, as he was called, desertion meant death to those who had been initiated into the rude system which held this reckless band together.

The Quick Gulch miners felt a perfect willingness to make a common cause with Ted since he had undergone so great a risk in their interests; but "strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," so with an ill-timed confidence, begotten of drunkenness, Ted smilingly told his friends that his room was a capital hiding-place, besides being warm and dry, and bidding them good-night he started off.

Cautiously making his way in spite of the liquor which had gotten into his head, he proceeded for some distance up the narrow defile of the mountain, and then turning sharply to the right began a steeper ascent by means of rude, irregular steps formed by the piling together of rocks in some upheaval of long ago.

Traveling with difficulty in this way for some time—for his nerves were far from being steady—he came out upon a ledge of rock overlooking a yawning black chasm, and grasping the bough of a tree he swung himself with a hazardous

effort to the trunk, and climbed down several feet, where he alighted on a narrow platform capable of seating about twenty men, and inaccessible except by the way in which he had come. A small cave just back of this platform furnished the secure sleeping apartment of which he had spoken. It was truly dry and warm, and seemed indeed a place of safety, but ah! had it not been for the liquor in his brain, it was the last place which Ted would have chosen as a refuge from those whom he now had the greatest cause to fear.

Alas! this wanderer brought thus providentially under elevating influences, reminded of his faithful mother and her prayers, made to see the horribleness of the pit of iniquity into which he had fallen, had indeed made one effort to turn backward from the downward course which was carrying him to swift destruction; but had he sought for the strength that is promised to the suppliant, and which alone is sufficient for these things? Had he placed himself in an attitude to receive the blessing which he so much needed?

Alas! for the strength of sin! Alas! for the power of evil habit over the heart, even when roused by a sense of its danger! He had yielded to the enemy of his soul, and now, bound hand and foot, he was helplessly awaiting the outward

enemies from whom he had sought to hide himself.

On reaching his supposed harbor he had taken another drink from his flask, and was now sleeping as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of the mast.

There was an unwonted excitement in the camp of the Rangers, when the Captain and the rest of the band returned to meet the astounding news that Tall Ted, one of their youngest and bravest men, had deserted, and besides refusing to bring in his quota of cattle, "had actually had the audacity," as it was expressed, to turn out half a dozen captured by Daring Dick, while the latter was asleep.

The cattle-raid had not proved a success, and this new intelligence added fresh cause for the ill-humor, if it may be called by so mild a name, in which Captain Ralph indulged most freely, when his villainous plans did not succeed.

His first thought was of the mining company, and he turned pale with rage at the thought of treachery in that direction, for the prior claim of which Ted had spoken was held by a man as unprincipled as Ralph himself, who had promised to share with him the gold which he confidently affirmed was sure to be found sooner or later.

While the very thought of such villainy and barehanded injustice is abhorrent to our minds, let us pause here to ask ourselves, if we are always truly just and scrupulously honorable in all our intercourse with those by whom we are surrounded. We may not violently take possession of our neighbor's property; we may not over-reach him in our dealings, nor secretly connive at his injury by helping to defraud him of his rights. But do we seek his welfare in all things? Do we never, by example or precept, help to lead him into ways that are not good? Do we ever by silence, or by vaguely expressed opinions when his good name is assailed, lend our aid in robbing him of what is far better than wealth? Do we ever by raillery at his conscientious scruples in matters that may seem trivial and of no moment to us, cause our weak brother to stumble?

Ah, my young friends! there are thieves, robbers and enemies to good, who do not harbor in mountain fastnesses, and whom the world does not recognize as such. Let us see to it that we are not of them.

I will not dwell upon the discussion which took place among the Rocky Rangers on this occasion. I do not wish to reproduce the evil sentiments, harshly expressed, of these reckless men; nor do I wish to lead my readers unneces-

sarily into a record of their actions in their career of crime. The perusal of the exploits of such men is debasing in its effects. The interest which attaches to many narratives of brigands and persons of like character tends to blunt the sense of right, and makes the reader lose sight of the vileness and deformity of the actors in these scenes.

There is nothing to be admired in a reckless, daring defiance of the laws of God and man. There is no true bravery in rushing headlong into sin! There is no real heroism but in the courage that dares to do the right. And after a course of peril and wickedness, what is the end of all such as have followed a life of sin?

He "shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"—Prov. xxix. 1. . . "The name of the wicked shall rot."—Prov. x. 7.

Suffice it then to say that after a visit to the mining camp, which they found deserted, these men tracked the fugitive to the place of his retreat.

Ted had lain in the stupor of intoxication for many hours, and the light of day was in his eyes when he opened them and caught sight of Sam Fry and Lute Smith, two of his old comrades, sitting, one on each side of the cave entrance, watching him intently.

At first he was at a loss to know where he

was, and why he was there. Then it all came back to his memory with a rush, and bearing with it the terrible consciousness that he was lost! He was sober now, and at once grasped the truth, and understood the fate which awaited him. He had heard the details of a scene which once took place on this very spot, the narrative of which seemed to chill the blood in his veins as he recalled it.

“We would like to give you a chance for your life, Ted, if we could,” said one of the men in a low tone, seemingly touched by the despair written on the prisoner’s pale face. “You have done us a good turn more than once. But it would be of no use; we couldn’t save you, and would only get ourselves into trouble. The whole band will be here directly.”

Ted looked up. The narrow view from where he sat showed him a cloudy sky. The very heavens were dark and frowning and seemed to typify the hopelessness of his condition. Ah, if he had only, in the days gone by, turned his face upward toward the Sun of righteousness!

Then he looked inward and backward over his past life. He saw, as in a quickly moving panorama, the scenes of his boyhood and early youth; his first serious deviation from the right way; his feeble struggle and final yielding to sin. He heard again the voice of conscience and lived

over again his efforts to stifle the accuser. He heard again his mother's warnings and prayers. He saw again the pale, sweet face which grew day by day still paler because of his wanderings. He saw again the father whose besetting sin had brought his family to want and disgrace. Shudderingly he beheld himself following in that father's footsteps; then step by step the downward course that swiftly followed.

Scene after scene came on in rapid succession, clear and distinct, until he seemed to have lived his life all over again in that brief space of time, all down to the present—down to *The End*, as he said to himself, feeling that the book of his life was at its close.

He would have breathed a prayer to heaven for mercy, but he felt that it would be an insult to the ears of the Almighty. There was painful silence, broken only by the rumbling of the storm which seemed gathering.

"They are coming up the defile," spoke one of his companions at length; and despite the dread significance, the awful import of the words, the sound was welcome to the doomed man. Suspense was growing unendurable.

Another interval of silence followed, and then a wood bird, not far away, began to utter a note that sounded mournfully distinct in the solitude; a single, clear, low note that never varied in its

pitch, and came at regular intervals, like the tolling of a bell.

“They have reached the stairs,” spoke the watcher again, and then the mournful note of the bird-call, repeating itself, pierced the dreadful stillness, so heavily burdened with thought and expectation.

A little later—hark! There came a united exclamation from the guard that was drowned in the roar and crash that accompanied the dread, cone-shaped cloud as it swept through the mountain pass carrying everything before it with headlong fury and irresistible force. What was now the puny bravery of the men who had defied even high heaven? What was their boasted strength and daring before his breath which severed the giant trunks of century-old oaks and lifted the rocks from their foundations?

The two who had been placed as guards of the prisoner shrank cowering within the cave, their faces pale with terror at the scene which they had witnessed; and the three crouched together listening to the roar and crash that was now growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

“Well,” said one of the guard at length, “I suppose we are off duty as well as Captain Ralph and the other boys,” and he gave a little shudder at the recollection of what he had just seen.

“They’ll never know what killed them, I

reckon," said the other. "They were all rushed over the black rocks together with the stones and trunks of trees. Well, I suppose that the Captain will hardly ask for mercy, on the plea that he has ever showed any. Ugh! Give us a drink, Ted, to steady our nerves a bit!" he added, seeing the flask protruding from the pocket of Ted's overcoat.

In response to this request, Ted took the flask from his pocket and flung it over the rock as far as he could.

"Now that is what I call disobliging, not to say foolish," said the other. "You'll want that whisky bad before you see any more."

"Very likely," answered Ted, "but at least we shall not have been so beastly as to get drunk in the face of all this."

There was no reply; a feeling of awe was over all three. As for Ted, this second narrow escape seemed to him like a voice from heaven.

"Boys," he said at length with something of an effort, "as you know, I'm no parson and not known very far around as an exhorter, but it seems to me that we have had a sermon to-day that we ought to profit by, especially I. You know what I have escaped to-day, and you know what fate the others have met. You have seen more of what has just taken place than I have,

and if the gang is indeed wiped out, you and I are free to give up the villainous work we pledged ourselves to do and lead honest lives. I don't believe you relish being cut-throats and thieves any more than I do."

"Come now," spoke one of his companions, "that first is a pretty rough word. I've never killed anybody that I know of."

"Nor I," said his comrade.

"Nor I," added Ted, "but if 'the partaker is as bad as the thief,' there can be little difference between a murderer and his followers."

The two made no reply to this reasoning.

"Well, what do you propose to do?" asked one of them at length.

"I propose to do anything that I can get to do, that is honest and will keep life in me until I can do better," answered Ted. "We haven't led such an easy, luxurious life under Captain Ralph that we need to be afraid of hard work. Why is it," he went on, vehemently, "that men will meet toil and privation, and face danger and death itself, to take by force what they might accumulate by honest labor, counting for nothing the peace and quiet of a lawful existence? Are they all ruined and fooled, as boys, by reading the trashy literature which makes such a career seem desirable? The intoxicating delight of daring and prowess—bah! It is not what they

make it seem, and the excitement of such a life has lost its charms for me. I have had more than enough of it!"

"And I, too," responded one of the others.

"But come," added Ted, as if the thought had just come to him, and seeming naturally to assume the leadership of those who had lately been his guards, "it is scarcely human to take for granted the death of all those men. Some of them may be still alive and in need of help."

He arose and ascended by the way he had come, the others following without a word.

CHAPTER IV.

SEARCHING FOR THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

“Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as a* sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.”

FAMILIAR as Ted and his companions had been with the wild region which they had infested and made their home for many months, they were perplexed and hindered at nearly every step of the way in their search for their former comrades.

Trees which had stood as lofty guide-posts had been swept away. Winding paths along the mountain sides had been obliterated by coverings of rock, earth, and broken branches, while the road was in many places completely barricaded with the fallen trunks of immense trees that had been twisted asunder like puny weeds, by the resistless power which had passed over them.

Slowly, and with painful difficulty, these three pursued the route, at all times dangerous, now

doubly so, which brought them nearer to the bottom of the gorge where Captain Ralph and all his followers, except themselves, had in all probability met their death.

Every now and then they were obliged to retrace their steps to seek for an outlet from the almost inextricable mazes of the forest wreck.

If any of those wretched men were still alive, they must, long since, have yielded to despair. Hours must be spent in the desperate and perilous effort to reach the bottom of the gorge, and when they had reached it, what good could they hope to accomplish?

Was it in the least probable that even one could have survived the terrible catastrophe?

"Let's give it up, boys, and go back if we can, while we have whole skins," proposed Lute.

A halt was called and the situation was discussed.

"It will be as easy to go on now as to go back," argued Ted. "We can follow the cañon, and come out at Thunder Gap."

There was extreme peril to be faced whether they decided to advance or retreat, and it was at last decided to go on. Every now and then a loose stone which had been hurled from above would start at the slightest touch, and bound

down the steep mountain side until it was lost in the distance.

The men moved cautiously and silently forward every step of the way, only the falling of the stones and the crackling of the branches that arrested their progress breaking the stillness, when Sam suddenly stopped short and said: "Listen, boys!"

The others were on the alert in an instant. They stood listening for some minutes.

"I don't hear anything," said Lute at length.

"Do be quiet, Lute Smith!" answered Sam, impatiently. "I heard it again, but I couldn't tell from what direction it came for your chatter."

Ted had not spoken, but a little later he pointed significantly toward the left, and then led the way in the direction which he had indicated. The party moved slowly forward, stopping often to listen. No further sound was heard for some time, and then there suddenly seemed to come from almost beneath their feet a groan so prolonged and so burdened with mortal agony that the three stout-hearted men started at the sound.

Stooping down to listen, they found that the groans came from under a heap of debris which the storm had deposited just at the edge of a precipice near them. The slightest touch, ap-

parently, would have sufficed to topple the whole into the abyss beneath.

The three set to work carefully to remove, with their already lacerated hands, the stones, sticks, and earth which hid the sufferer. A cold, clenched hand soon came to light, wearing the large seal ring of Captain Ralph. The work went on and disclosed at length the pale face, distorted with pain.

They did not know whether he was conscious or not, but Ted said huskily: "Keep up heart, Captain: we'll soon have you out of this."

Another deep, long-drawn groan was the response. Was it all caused by physical pain, or were memory and conscience adding to the torture by their lashings?

When the lighter rubbish was removed, it was found that the miserable man was held a prisoner by a large rock which lay across his feet and legs, and which alone kept him from the yawning depth below, as he lay with one side over the edge of the cliff.

While one grasped the imprisoned wretch's hand, the other two attempted the removal of the stone; but it appeared to be firmly lodged where it had fallen, and every effort to move it seemed to serve no purpose but to crush and grind anew beneath its weight the mangled limbs confined under the mighty mass.

At last, after what seemed hours of fruitless labor, the great boulder toppled over the ledge and fell with a crash on the tops of trees, crushing its way far down, as was judged by the echo that came back.

“On some of the others, mayhap,” said Lute grimly. However that might have been, there was nothing for them to do but to attempt to complete the rescue of the suffering one before them, if indeed he had not already passed away from earth.

When they drew the limp form from its perilous position the groans had ceased to come from the colorless lips, and the face was like that of the dead, yet wearing no touch of the chastened peacefulness which dead faces often show.

An examination, however, speedily proved that he was still alive, and no serious injuries appeared to have been received, except the crushing of his lower limbs. A litter was constructed as promptly as circumstances would permit, and spreading their coats on this, they placed the injured man upon it, and then began the desperate attempt to remove him to some place where medical assistance could be obtained.

If their progress had been slow and difficult before, what was it now with the burden they

carried? Yet they did not falter from fatigue or discouragement at the obstacles encountered.

Some distance further on they paused, shudderingly, as right in their pathway they encountered the stark, white face and staring eyes of Daring Dick. Lowering their burden, they made such examination as assured them that he was really dead, and then again took up their line of march.

On reaching the mouth of the cañon the weary bearers were surprised with the welcome sight of the late Quick Gulch Mining Company, in the new quarters of which they had just taken possession; and four fresh men, headed by Grant Lucas, relieved the tired trio of their dreadful burden, and proceeded with it to The Forks, where other sufferers had already been taken.

"Poor wretch! he can harm no one now, and but for you, Ted, we too would have been in the track of the cyclone," was all that was said as the party moved off. The storm had indeed passed in its wildest fury over the spot which had been the scene of their daily labor for the weary weeks which had brought them no returns. The exact locality would now have been difficult to find.

"Poor Gills' house was carried up like a paper box," said Dan Eakins, "and set down over beyond the pasture, scattering everything hither

and yon. Poor Walter was picked up stone dead, and his wife hasn't long to live, the doctor says, though she knows everything. As for the baby, it is not to be found high nor low, and the poor creature calls for it in a way that is enough to bring tears to the eyes of a stone statue."

A substantial meal was soon set before Ted and his fellows by those whom they had lately treated with such gross injustice, and then Sam and Lute lay down to take the rest which they so much needed. As for Ted, the account, rough as it had been, of the poor mother's anguish over the loss of her little one, and the thought of the baby's probable fate, would permit him to take no repose until he had made an effort for the recovery of at least the lifeless remains of the child.

Saying nothing of his intention, he left the others, and following the path of the storm, he saw at length the wreck of the little home under whose humble roof he had lately found a hiding-place. Going on and on, he searched far and wide for a glimpse of the lost child.

Every hollow, every bush that had escaped uprooting and might conceal the tiny form was carefully inspected, but to no purpose.

"It must have been carried very far away," he said to himself. He glanced at the declin-

ing sun and wondered how much further his tired limbs would carry him before darkness should come on. On he struggled, never relaxing his vigilant search for a moment.

An eagle met his eye, circling round and round high up in the air, and he wished for its tireless wings and piercing eye with which to pursue his quest.

The sight of the great bird did not at first impress the young man as having any significance, but the next moment he quickened his steps and was hurrying forward as if he had never known weariness.

Watching the wide, spreading wings, and steering his course by their movements, he pressed on. The direction which he now took led him a little to the right of the path of the storm, and brought him to a belt of timber which bore no traces of the late tornado, except now and then broken branches from other trees which lodged in the tops of those that stood erect, as if in voiceless declaration: "No feller hath come up against us."

Ted now lost sight of the eagle circling above, but he knew that it was somewhere nearly overhead. Searching with wild intensity, which seemed to sharpen his vision as the daylight waned, he saw, not many minutes after, an object near the top of one of the highest trees,

which he recognized, even at that height, as the white apron of little Harry. It had been long since Tall Ted of the Rocky Rangers had addressed a prayer to heaven, but at that moment he ejaculated a fervent "Thank God!"

Then he began to climb the tree, forgetful of his weariness and unconscious that his hands were bleeding. It seemed to him a token of favor that this service was given unto him to do as a love-offering to the faithful mother whose prayers had followed him even in his wildest wanderings.

As he neared the child he saw that it was lodged securely among the upper branches, and one little arm hung down, limp and motionless. A fear came over him. Was it, after all, only the lifeless body that he should be permitted to restore to the mother's arms? He touched it gently. The tiny hand was warm and moist, and when he grasped the clothing and released the light form from its lofty prison the little fellow began to scream lustily.

Holding the child with one hand, descending from branch to branch by means of the other, he scarcely knew how, Ted at last reached the ground. The baby's clothes were stained with blood from his rescuer's torn hands, but he himself was as safe and sound as he had ever been in his own mother's arms. I will not try to tell you

of the injured woman's joy on again seeing her darling. He was sleeping soundly when Ted brought him to her bedside.

The physician regarded her condition as very critical, and feared that the excitement of joy might prove even more injurious than the dumb despair into which she had fallen after the first agony of her grief. But half an hour later the two were sleeping peacefully side by side.

Yet when the morning light streamed into the room the pure-faced young nurse who tendered her services to the injured woman saw that her eyes had opened upon earth for the last time.

"Walter is gone, is he not?" she asked quietly.

"Is it your husband you mean? Yes, he is dead," answered the nurse tenderly.

"I thought he came to me last night and said, 'The Master is come and calleth for thee.' I am ready. Please call him—the one who brought me back my baby in his torn and bleeding hands."

Ted, who had watched all night with Captain Ralph, was summoned as quickly as possible.

"Young man," she said, addressing him, and there was something awe-inspiring in her pure, peaceful tones; "I give the child to you. You saved his life. Will you take care of him and

teach him to fear God and walk in the way of his commandments?"

The listener stood with bowed head and quivering face. It was a moment which he could never forget.

"I'll do my best, God helping me," he answered.

"Then all is well," she said, closing her eyes as if to sleep. And so she passed away.

Far different was the scene which was being enacted in a room not far away from this chamber of peace. The doctors had found it necessary to amputate both of Captain Ralph's legs, and having no anæsthetics at hand the operation was necessarily agony to the subject. Yet this physical pain was not his keenest torture. The thought of his utter helplessness, the thought of the mutilated frame which he must wear through life—if life was spared—was, to the proud, wicked man, far worse than all the rest. He had prided himself on his strength, on his superb height and finely proportioned frame; and now to be the maimed object which on yesterday, had he met it in the person of another, he would have spurned from beneath his feet! He had been the most fearless rider and tireless walker in all the region.

Poor, miserable man! he had no thought for the immortal soul whose growth he had stunted,

whose development he had hindered by indulgence in sin ; whose beauty he had defaced until it had well-nigh lost all likeness to its heavenly Creator. And yet the horrors of the lost were before him. At one moment he would beg his attendants to end a life which must be henceforth too groveling for his proud spirit to endure, and the next he would cry out to be saved from the torments of the lost in the world of woe.

None knew how brief might be the "beastly life" of which he spoke with such blasphemous fury, nor how near the death from which he shrank—the death that never dies !

My reader, if there were no other proof of the genuineness of the Christian religion than the contrast between the state of mind—in view of death—of those who have been followers of Jesus, and those who have blasphemed his name and scoffed at all holy things, no reasonable man could have room to doubt. I know that it has been often urged that the godless can die as bravely as the Christian, and I admit that some, given over to believe a lie as to eternal things, or else upheld by a Lucifer-like pride, have given no sign of the horrors about to be endured, but exceptional cases of this kind cannot render less emphatic the widely general rule that the Christian dies in peace and confidence, knowing in whom he has believed, and the sinner

leaves this world in fearful uncertainty, or appears to enter on his torment in this life.

David Nelson, for years a physician, in the course of his professional career was called to witness many deaths. The tranquil confidence with which some, who had been constitutionally timid and shrinking all their lives, entered on the unseen world, compared with the awful departure of those who had boasted that they could die as fearlessly as Christians, was largely a means of his rescue from the pit of infidelity.

The yoke of Christ is easy and his burden is light. His smile will render brighter and sweeter all the true joys that this life can offer; and oh, when the short space of our journey here is ended, and the trembling feet are standing on the border line between this world and the great beyond, what then can give peace and comfort but the presence of Jesus? What can sustain us except the assurance that we are not "taking a leap into the dark," as a dying deist once said, but going home to our Father's house of many mansions?

CHAPTER V.

A BABY IN THE CAMP.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

MONTHS had passed since the storm had swept like an avenging spirit through the wild region where good and evil lived in such close proximity. In the woodside cemetery the fresh grass was springing green, in spite of the frost, among the new-made graves. The wild birds sang alike above the resting-place of the Christian mother, who had passed away in peace, and that of the reckless outlaw whose life had been one protracted insult to high heaven, and whose death had been despair.

Subsequent bright, calm days had dissipated the feelings of terror inspired by the tornado and its fearful work, and like those who rebuild cities destroyed by earthquakes, many of the inhabitants of this region had resumed their habits and manner of living, without much thought of what had taken place.

Yet there were changes in certain quarters. "The Rocky Rangers" had ceased to be. Of the late lawless band three only had been left; and if it cannot be said that the dispensation of Providence, which had spoken so directly and emphatically to them, had wrought their reformation, it was at least certain that some progress had been made in that direction. If it was only the lopping off of the evil practices which had made the gang a terror and a disgrace to the locality, it was better for those about them; but a more radical change than this was necessary for their salvation from sin and its attendant troubles.

Sam Fry and Lute Smith had pre-empted a tract of land at some distance from the scene of their former career, and were at least endeavoring to live honestly. Ted had cast in his lot with the mining company, which now meeting with better success than formerly, was working industriously at the point known as Thunder Gap.

Some bond of sympathy and fellow-feeling held these men together like a family, and they shared their gains and had all things in common.

On a bright, cool morning the camp presented a breakfast scene similar to that witnessed by Ted on his former visit to the company at

Quick Gulch; but with this marked difference, he was now breakfasting with the others, and there was in addition the novel spectacle of a baby in the camp.

The child was seated on a goods box covered with a blanket, as on a little throne, in the centre of the group, and if those rough-looking men did not crown him as king, the demeanor of some present toward him was certainly that of loyal subjects. Grant Lucas and Ted were talking in a low tone a little apart from the others, and the latter was saying: "No, Grant, you boys have been too good to me by far, but I must look out for myself and the baby. Don't say anything to the rest. I must go to The Forks to-day anyway to see about that last milk. It wasn't the right brand. If they have none that is better we must make some arrangement to get fresh milk," he added in a louder tone, for the benefit of one of the men who seemed to be listening. It was Dan Eakins, who had stopped near the talkers. He now moved off, and Ted continued.

"Of course I shall be obliged to take him away some time."

"Certainly," answered Grant, "but there's sure to be a row in the camp."

"The sooner the better then," announced Ted.

"Yes, no doubt you are right," assented the other, who, although uniformly kind to the child, had never made a pet of him as the others had done.

He now looked attentively at the little one as he held up his tin cup and called out,

"More milk, more milk!"

"Yes, he is getting the rough ways of the camp already," he said laughing.

When the meal was over and the pipes lighted, Ted observed:

"Well, boys, I'm going over to The Forks this morning and—" he hurried on and made a marked effort to speak in a matter of fact tone—"I guess I'll take the baby with me. He is beginning to need some new clothes—and—new milk," he added somewhat incoherently.

"No need to take the child to get the clothes," spoke up one of the men confidently. "His measure will do just as well. My wife—" here he gave a little sigh—"used just to measure around her shoulders and then around her waist and send to New York for clothes, and they would fit to perfection."

"But you know children are more difficult to fit," answered Ted. "Besides I want him to pick something for himself with the money you boys have given him," he continued rather guiltily.

"Pshaw, Ted!" began another, when he was abruptly, and not very wisely, interrupted by Ted.

"I say, men, while I think of it, I have a request to make."

"Hear!" called out several.

"It is just this, that you will never call me by that name again. It's not my name as an honest man, and I wish I might never hear it again."

"Let the past be past," said Grant quietly.

"Thank you," answered the speaker; "that is what I would like, since I cannot blot it out altogether. My real name is Frederic. Please call me Fred; the change will not come very awkward, I think."

So "Tall Ted" was heard of no more in the circle of his friends.

"But see here!" put in one of the men brusquely, "this reads a little like parting requests, farewell revelations and all that kind of thing; and putting this and that together, I want to know if you are thinking of sneaking off with that baby."

"I'd rather not, boys," began Fred, as we shall now call him.

"Rather not!" echoed a chorus of voices, and the "row" which Grant Lucas had foretold seemed to be impending.

“See here, fellows,” spoke up that individual firmly, “don’t be unreasonable and silly. The child belongs to him, and not to you.”

There was no intelligible reply to this, but an indistinct murmur arose like a distant storm.

“I say, T’—Fred, I don’t think it is hardly fair of you anyhow to exercise your rights in this way, even granting that you have them, which I suppose we can’t deny,” said one at last. “You know we are all attached to the child.”

“Much ado about nothing!” proclaimed another with great indifference in his voice and manner. “The sun is getting up and I’m off. Good-bye, everybody,” and he walked off hurriedly as if fearing to lose more time—or courage.

“The truth is, comrades,” said Fred, “these diggings are too small for so many of us, and you all know that as well as I do. Besides I feel as if my duty is calling me away. If any of my friends are living, I owe it to them to try to make some amends for the trying experiences I have caused them. And then there is the responsibility of bringing up of that child. You know I promised, boys,” he continued, flushing hotly at seeing something very like amusement in the eyes of some of his audience; “and promises to the dead should at least be held sacred. I doubt not there are some of you better fitted for

the task—Grant there, for instance—but I cannot delegate my work to any one.”

Grant uttered a low sound that was very like a groan, but made no other answer.

“Well, boys,” said Fred at last, “I’ll bring him back this time, I give you my word of honor.”

So the evil day was put off, and the men went away in squads to their work, while Fred set off for The Forks. His journey led him past the spot which had once been the baby’s home, and past the quiet city of the dead where the little one’s friends were sleeping. The helpless child, unconscious of the change which had come into his life, unconscious of his bereavement, was clinging trustingly to the neck of his foster father, and the confidence awoke anew in the heart of the young man the resolve to do well his part toward the treasure committed to his keeping.

Beside the grave of that mother he repeated the promise which he had made to her, as if she could hear him and be reassured. Ah! if he had but promised it to his God, and petitioned humbly for divine strength to perform that which he had promised!

When the sinking sun was sending long, golden beams through the spaces between the trunks of the big trees of Thunder Gap, Fred

appeared, true to his promise, carrying the baby and a bundle containing, among other purchases, a supply of the "right brand" of condensed milk. The other workers had not yet come in, but Dan Eakins was moving briskly about, preparing the evening meal.

"Your supper smells tantalizingly good to hungry fellows like baby and me," said Fred. "What are you cooking, Dan?"

"Venison!" announced the cook triumphantly. "Got a quarter, of a squaw who happened along about an hour ago. Didn't you meet her?"

Fred answered in the negative.

"Why, I supposed she would go over to The Forks. She wanted 'fire-water' for her pay, but we hadn't any to spare, so I gave her the money after I had made sure that the meat was fresh."

The others soon began to come in. The baby's supper was prepared, and everything went on as merrily as if nothing unusual had occurred.

"What did you get for the child to wear?" was asked of Fred during the progress of the meal.

"Only a little hat and an overcoat. I was obliged to wait for the rest to be made up; but a woman has the job in hand, and the outfit will be all right."

"An overcoat!" ejaculated Grant Lucas. "Who ever saw a baby of that age in an overcoat?"

"Well, he needed something real warm and thick," answered Fred. "I got the smallest one I could find. The sleeves *are* rather long, and it is big every way, but it will keep him from freezing all the same."

Fred got the article in question and tried it on the child. It was necessary to roll the sleeves back for several inches, and the fair baby head, with its yellow hair and blue eyes, peeped cunningly from the depth of the velvet collar.

"Bravo!" called out one, laughing, as the small specimen of manhood was placed upon his feet in the trailing garment.

"Long live king Harry!" shouted another.

"A bumper on that," said a third, and a bottle and glass were soon in circulation round the table. When they came to Fred he made a feeble attempt to pass them by him, but this was not permitted.

"A drink to the baby's health is not going to hurt you, man," protested his neighbor, and the awakened appetite caused by the sight and smell of the liquor, and the never sleeping tempter, completed the conquest of the man.

Alas! that it must be told; evil prevailed! Dan had said that they had no "fire-water" to spare, but they had enough to work the undoing of every man in the camp. All had some redeeming traits of character, and a part, at least, bore like hidden charms some marks of the higher grade of society in which they had been reared. But what is so degrading as the intoxicating cup? The glass went round and round, and there was no further need of urging any one to partake. Stories were told, and roars of laughter went up.

In spite of the noise, the baby fell asleep and Fred put him to bed. He did not take him, as usual, to the shanty which he and Grant occupied together, and in which a snug crib had been arranged for the child, but placed him in the hammock under the oak where the little fellow took his naps by day. He was with difficulty deposited in the swinging cot, still enveloped in the overcoat. It was well, for Fred was not in a condition to reflect that the air was growing colder, and that extra covering would be needed.

When he returned to the company he was called on for a song. Then there arose on the clear evening air a vile bacchanalian song, a profanation of this one of "God's first temples." The other voices gradually took up the chorus

until the great solitudes rang with their unholy mirth.

Another and then another was called for, and the revelry was kept up far into the night under the pure air of heaven. After a time the voices dropped off one by one, until only that of the leader was heard as it thickly reiterated with disgusting repetition the maudlin and haltingly expressed refrain of the last drunken glee.

Then silence swallowed up the disgraceful echoes, and only the moon and stars looked on the sad scene.

There were mothers, wives, and sisters who in their evening devotions, far away, had prayed for the safety and well-being of some of those who had thus debased themselves and laid the strength of their manhood low. But was there one in all the wide world to pray for the baby? Danger was lurking near to his little bed; was there one to send heavenward a petition for his preservation?

The one who had solemnly promised to take care of him had violated the promise lately renewed, and of the sacredness of which he had lately spoken. His boasted protectors had all failed him. Those who would, one and all, have risked their lives in his defence, had yielded supinely to the evil one, to be taken

captive at his will, and now, as strong men bound hand and foot, while stealthy feet drew near, they lay sleeping the sleep of drunkenness!

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMPTY CRADLE.

“They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.”

THE stars had finished their watch, and sunlight was touching the tops of the mountains with gold, when the men awoke from their long, heavy sleep, chilled with the exposure which they had met, for strong drink, instead of rendering a man impervious to cold, as is sometimes claimed, lays wide the avenues for exposure to work its worst upon his system.

Some awoke with headache, others with the miserable confusion of brain which follows drunkenness. There was nothing now apparent of the “jolly good-fellowship” of which they had talked and sung on the night before. Little was said, and that little impatient and fault-finding.

They anathematized the keen air for chilling them so thoroughly, and Dan Eakins for not having a roaring fire and breakfast ready. As for Dan, his plight was no better than that of

the others. He ached in every limb, and every movement cost him an effort. He angrily told his companions to go to The Forks for their breakfast if they couldn't wait till the fire burned in camp.

To Fred, returning consciousness brought bitter humiliation and self-reproach. He thought of his late aspirations after a higher and better life. He thought of his promise to that dying mother whose confidence in him had seemed so strong. He thought of his reiteration of that promise at her grave on yesterday. He thought of his own mother, of whom her prayer had reminded him, and of the yearning with which his heart had lately turned to her memory with ever increasing tenderness and love. What were his aspirations—what were his resolutions worth? He almost wished that the Rangers had ended his life before he had sunk into this last degradation, this last violation of his conscience. But what of the baby? How had the poor little fellow fared throughout the night with no one to give him a drink of milk, or see that he was warm and comfortable? Fred rose with an effort, his head swimming at the movement, and went to the shanty with a slow, despondent step. He almost felt that it was desecration on his part to touch the child after his share in last night's carousal.

“Come to breakfast, then, if you are all so near starvation!” proclaimed Dan ungraciously; and the men crowded around the rude tables. But few were hungry; they drank the hot coffee greedily, even while they complained of its muddiness and pronounced it “weak slop unfit for swine.”

“Then don’t drink it all up before I get a single cup, as you did the last time!” retorted Dan.

One word followed another, and language was thrown back and forth which would not bear repetition. It was a fitting scene to follow that of the night before.

A little later Fred came hurriedly from his quarters, all his listlessness of manner gone.

“Where is the baby?” he asked excitedly.

“I reckon you ought to know,” said Jeff Symmes, the one who on yesterday had been disposed to question Fred’s right to take the child away.

Grant Lucas got up hastily and went to the shanty, soon returning with the statement that the child had not been put to bed last night.

“I expect he has crawled off in the bushes somewhere, while we were asleep,” suggested Dan.

“While we were drunk!” Fred’s reproachful thoughts made correction.

A search was at once commenced. No further thought was given to the coffee, and the broiled venison remained untouched. The quest was fruitless, however, though a circle was formed and every foot was carefully examined far beyond the distance to which the child could possibly have made his way.

"Are you sure you didn't carry him back to The Forks last night?" asked Jeff suspiciously.

"Very sure," answered Fred; and the look of pain in his face was sufficient pledge that he knew nothing of the baby's whereabouts.

Work was not thought of. The men wandered about in groups, and talked only of the missing child. There were fears which no one expressed, as to its probable fate, and a deep gloom hung over all.

As for Fred, his feelings cannot be described. The little one had found a place in his heart which a baby brother had filled in years gone by, and his pain was keen enough, even without the constant goadings of his self-reproach.

They met at the camp an hour later for report, but no one had any report to make. The search had proved so utterly fruitless that not a sign of the thief had been discovered.

As the men sat down in a depressed way, more than one pair of eyes was turned sadly to the little hammock above their heads.

All at once Fred sprang to his feet. "Why, boys," he exclaimed, "I've just thought of it. I remember now; I put him to bed in the hammock last night."

A half shout rose, but died away again as the question of the child's safety there suggested itself.

Fred had been seated at some little distance from the place, but he rushed to the spot before the others could rise to their feet.

Alas! the hope was a short-lived one! The hammock was empty.

"Why, in the name of all that is crack-brained, did you put him there?" asked a voice wrathfully.

"Jeff Symmes, there is no use in asking foolish questions!" protested Grant Lucas. "You know that Fred was drunk last night as well as you and I. The blame rests on us all alike," kicking furiously with his heavy boot a half-filled bottle that lay in the grass, the remains of last night's bacchanal. The bottle was shattered with the blow and the contents splashed around. Would not the gain far exceed the loss if every drop that is manufactured were poured upon the ground?

Fred sat down under the empty hammock as if stunned. A half hope had arisen only to set in a new despair. He thought of the experiences

of the past months. Twice had his own life been spared as by a special providence; twice had he been enabled to save that of the little child, which had later been placed in his care, and which he had gradually learned to love as if it was his own flesh and blood.

Had the baby sickened and died while faithfully cared for, it would have been indeed a blow, but his disappearance and the thought of what fate might await him was rendered tenfold more painful, inasmuch as the disappearance was through his own criminal carelessness and neglect.

It was no consolation to Fred to reflect that had he been in his right mind he would not have been thus careless and neglectful of his charge. He had deliberately put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains. His thoughts went back to the painful eagerness with which he had prosecuted the search for the missing little one in the track of the storm; of the hope of success mingled with the terrible fear that he might be too late, which had seized him at sight of the great, dark bird circling above the spot where he felt that the child had been thrown.

“Grant, will you come with me?” he asked, springing to his feet suddenly, his face white and set.

"Thanks, boys; no one else," he added, seeing others about to offer themselves.

He went off hastily, his friend following his long, striding steps. On and on they went, through the forest, up and down mountain sides, hurrying on as if for life. Neither spoke a word as they traveled mile after mile, Fred keeping in advance and Grant following unquestioningly.

Their way now lay in the direction which Fred had taken on the day of the storm, when he went to find a place of safety in the cave.

On reaching the rocky staircase, before mentioned, he paused for the first time and said huskily: "The eyrie is just beyond those rocks: over there," pointing with a hand that was trembling. "I shall be obliged to descend by this tree. Wait here for me. If I need you I will shout."

Grant nodded assent and Fred soon disappeared. On reaching the platform in front of the cave he went to the extreme narrow end, and, lying down on his face, crawled carefully along a narrow ledge in which it terminated. As he made his way along this perilous projection it grew more and more narrow until the eagle's nest was almost reached, when it widened again perceptibly.

Then came the whir of mighty wings and the wild screams of the mountain birds, and then

the seeker forgot everything for a time in sickening horror of what he might see at the next moment.

A little later he was worming his way backward along the rock by which he had come. A faintness again came over him as he once more reached a place of safety, and he sat down for a moment at the foot of the tree by which he had descended to the platform. When he finally reappeared, Grant had grown uneasy at his long absence and was about to descend to make an investigation.

"Thank God, he is not there!" was all he said on again meeting his friend; yet the thought came to both men, sickeningly, that this was not the only eagle's nest in all that wild region.

"Let us take different routes and meet at the camp," proposed Grant. "Something may have happened there before this time."

Fred assented and they separated, each keeping up the search that seemed hourly to grow more and more hopeless.

In the meantime those who had been left behind had set on foot another hunt and were industriously scouring the woods—all except Jeff Symmes.

Jeff could not forget that only on yesterday Fred had virtually confessed to thoughts of removing the child by stealth. Might it not be,

he argued with himself, that Fred had carried the baby back to The Forks while under the influence of liquor, and had himself forgotten it? He could not suspect him of acting a part, after seeing the look of pain on the young fellow's pale face when he had sat down under the empty hammock that morning, but neither could he shake off the idea that haunted him; so Jeff went over to The Forks to look for the lost child. Like all the others, he was doomed to disappointment.

He made his fruitless trip by a short cut through the woods, but came back by the road. As he went along moodily with his eyes on the ground, he saw in the unfrequented way footprints which must have been Fred's on his return, and also scattered along the narrow road the candy mottoes dropped by the baby as he regaled himself on the treat which had been given him at the store. Jeff also made one other discovery which might or might not be important, he thought. At a certain turning in the road he saw evidences that some human being, or animal, had leaped across the path not far behind Fred, alighting partly in the tracks which he had made.

It was impossible to discover what had made the marks in the yielding soil, but Jeff soon came to the conclusion that the alighting in the

footprints had been premeditated. He saw evidences that there had been an attempt to conceal a trail which he followed for a little distance just in the edge of the wood.

On reaching the camp Jeff found it entirely deserted, and sat down to wait with some impatience for the return of the absent.

The others in their search had found what might prove a clue to the missing child—a small square of pasteboard bearing a printed number and fresh pencil marks, which the finder told his fellows might have been the price-card attached to the little overcoat.

The point at which it was found was carefully noted and a trail therefrom in some direction was eagerly sought for, but without success.

On returning to the camp they found that Fred and Grant had not yet returned, but Jeff was there with his discovery, which though slight might be significant notwithstanding. The little card was displayed, and the subject of a wider and more careful search was discussed. Dan was speedily set to work to prepare supper, for few of the men having eaten either breakfast or dinner, the need of food was beginning to be felt.

Grant and Fred came in not long after, having met a few rods from camp, but their faces told of no good tidings.

"Cheer up, boys; we have what may start us on the right track, small as it is," said Lloyd Watson, the one who had found the card.

He produced the tiny bit of pasteboard and told where he found it.

"Is it the card that was on the baby's new overcoat, Fred?" he asked.

"I saw no card on the coat, but I can soon learn," answered Fred, and snatching the card he disappeared in a moment.

"Wait," shouted Grant; "let some one who is fresh go," but there came back no response as Fred made his way through brush and over rocks the nearest way to The Forks.

While he was on this errand those who awaited the result again discussed the situation. Jeff stoutly declared his belief that something or somebody had followed Fred home last night, repeating an account of what he had discovered in the road.

Dan Eakins, who was turning griddle-cakes, suddenly turned round: "It couldn't have been that squaw, I reckon," he said.

"What squaw?" demanded Grant.

"Why, the creature who sold me the venison last evening," answered Dan.

"Why didn't you speak of this before?" was demanded, sternly.

"I thought I did," was answered in a be-

wildered way. "I hadn't thought of her to-day. Anyway, it couldn't have been the squaw, for she didn't know that we had a baby; she came and went away while Fred was gone with the child."

"Yes, and saw him on the way and tracked him home, no doubt. Dan, I believe you have been a little drunker than any of the rest of us!" was the withering reply.

"Maybe I have," answered Dan, meekly, "but the loss of the baby somehow knocked the squaw out of my head."

The relief was so great that some of the men actually laughed at Dan's crestfallen demeanor and the unwonted humility of his words. Yet the censure which he had received was unjust. He had not been more intoxicated than the others, and he had told Fred of the Indian woman's visit to the camp, and Fred, too, through the befogging influence of liquor, had lost sight of the fact.

"Well, all's well that ends well," spoke Grant again. "If the thieving creature has the child, he is probably as yet unharmed, and when Fred returns we will start out again and hunt her down. The work can wait without spoiling."

In what seemed an incredibly short time, Fred returned, stating, breathlessly, that the

card bore the combination of letters used by the store at The Forks, which stood for the exact amount which he had paid for the coat.

Supper was served at once, and all were on the alert for the big hunt which was now to be entered upon with renewed hope of success.

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CHAPTER VII.

JOY AMONG THE ANGELS.

“Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee.”

ALTHOUGH the path of right and duty is laid plain to those who seek it sincerely; although the voice saying “This *is* the way, walk ye in it,” may always be heard for the listening; how often we are bewildered and perplexed, and ask ourselves confusedly for the way wherein we may walk and the thing which we may do.

Ask ourselves! Yes, there is the secret. We have been following our own inclinations, and have wandered so far from the right way that we have lost sight of it. If we would only learn to believe that there is no good way but God’s way, and that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, and submit ourselves to be guided by the unerring One, how much of trial and sorrow we should spare ourselves even in this world!

Following the straight path we may pass securely and with unwavering confidence through the darkest ways and over the roughest and most trying passages of our lives, because we shall be assured that at the end he will bring us out into a fair place.

We should not accept this truth abstractly, but firmly trust that he will guide us whenever we ask to be directed.

Of all these friends of the lost child, there were few whose thoughts ever turned to that One who has said: "I will guide thee with mine eye;" and "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way;" and while they saw with humiliation and self-reproach the result of their late evil wandering from the right way, they did not view it in the light of a sin against God.

Of all that company of men who again set out resolving to travel until they found the baby, there was only one who petitioned Heaven for guidance and direction; only one who vowed to seek him who called little children unto him, and who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

They went together to the spot where the card had been found, and then separating into several companies, prosecuted their search in as many

directions, radiating from this centre, for no trail could be discovered.

Only Dan had been left behind to look after the camp. This arrangement was very much against his will, and in the face of his statement that "he was the most expert scout in all that country round about."

Fred and Grant went off together, guiding their course by the sun, which appeared from behind the mountain and rose higher and higher, while the two traveled on untiringly, still finding no trace of what they were seeking—the remains of a camp-fire, or some other signs of humanity. They said but little, yet the thoughts of each were busy. They noted the fact when the sun had reached the meridian, but made no halt. There was no time for idling. Every minute might render the chances less for recovering the stolen child, if indeed it had been kidnapped by the squaw, of which fact they tried to feel assured.

And yet, in case they should fail to recover it, death would be far preferable for the little one! The two alternatives presented themselves with horrible distinctness to Fred's consciousness—he who had promised to take care of the child, and he reproached himself anew.

Late in the afternoon, as the two were plodding silently onward, looking out with keen

alertness for the slightest token, a tiny paper fluttering among the leaves caught the eye of Fred, and he hastened to secure it. It was unmistakably a candy paper.

"Eureka!" he exclaimed, hurrying back to his companion. "The baby has been eating the bonbons in his coat pocket, and has given us a clue—bless him!"

The weariness which had been stealing over the two was gone. The speed was increased, and fresh tokens looked for on every side; but they went on and on and found no more papers.

Suddenly Grant said softly:

"Hist! Steal up quietly, and make no sign unless she starts to run."

Looking in the direction indicated by his companion, Fred saw in the way before them an Indian woman stooping down, apparently clearing away the leaves. She did seem to have discovered them, and they drew nearer and still nearer until it was plain that she lacked the quick sense of hearing for which her people are noted, or else that she was simulating ignorance of their presence. She was digging as if for roots. The two stood watching her, still silent. At last she spoke as if to herself.

"Ugh! hard work hurts!" she exclaimed.

"There are some other things that hurt worse," said Grant Lucas, meaningly. There

was silence again, the two men taking a position one on each side of the squaw, at a little distance. She dug away, seemingly untroubled by this demonstration.

Fred was almost uncontrollably impatient to demand a knowledge of the whereabouts of the child, taking it for granted that this was the abductor, but Grant, who had assumed the leadership, gave him a signal to wait.

After a time this member of the taciturn race seemed to grow dissatisfied with the continued silence. Her stolid face grew a trifle vexed and her movements hurried. A little later she broke the silence again.

“Know any white man lost a pappoose?” she inquired innocently, still working away at her roots, and never raising her eyes. “Squaw saw white woman carrying off little white pappoose,” she went on, not waiting for an answer.

“Squaw very poor—dig roots. Give squaw plenty money, bring back little white pappoose.”

Grant smiled in a satisfied way, but Fred made an involuntary movement toward her. From her next words she evidently thought that the movement meant danger, though she continued her digging, and her dusky face showed no change of expression.

“White man kill squaw, white man never see little white pappoose,” she said indifferently.

"No one is going to kill you," spoke up Grant. "We will give you plenty of money. Bring the pappoose safe to this spot and you shall have it. So much," he continued, holding out his two hands to indicate that the quantity of coin which she might expect was as much as his hands would hold.

"Now be quick," he concluded, "and we will meet you here with the money and a blanket to boot."

"No more white men?" asked the Indian woman distrustfully.

"No more," answered Grant, heartily. "Only we two," pointing to his companion and then to himself.

The squaw gave a grunt of approval and disappeared, leaving her roots and the tool with which she had been digging.

At Fred's earnest request Grant remained at the place appointed for the meeting, while he retraced his weary way to camp for the ransom.

"I know the woods better than you. I ought to know them well, you know," he had pleaded, and Grant had yielded the point, only saying,

"You will find the little bag of coin in my box. I have had it a long time, and I'll never find a better use for it, I reckon."

The sun rapidly declined and then disappeared, and Fred was yet far from his destination, but

he felt no weariness now. His joy and relief were too keen to admit of painful sensations. After going some distance he stopped for a few minutes, but not to rest.

Kneeling down in the silent forest he returned thanks for the invisible guidance which had been granted, and renewed the promise which he had made, sincerely indeed, but unconscious of his weakness and inability to keep it in his own strength. It was now renewed with confessions of his nothingness, and of his sinfulness and vileness before God, and with a prayer for forgiveness and for that strength that is made perfect in weakness.

Does it seem an incongruous thing that this man, late an outlaw against both God and man, should be thus humble and repentant?

Let us not forget that there are no limits to the power of God. Peter's heart, even in the midst of his profanity and disloyalty to his Master, was touched and softened into tears and repentance by a look. The thief on the cross lifted for forgiveness and love the voice which but a little while before had joined with those of the reviling rabble, in casting reproach and insult into the teeth of Jesus. Saul, the persecutor of Christ's followers, the proud Pharisee who had kept the whole law and was zealous above all others in exterminating the despised Nazarenes, was ar-

rested in his downward course in a moment, and made to ask in meek submission, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Is anything too hard for the Lord? And why should any who feel that they are sinners, who are conscious of their weakness and miserable condition, hesitate and wait for preparation to come to him?

"All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him."

Dan Eakins was the first to be made glad by the good tidings of the prospective recovery of the baby. He wanted to load all the guns in the camp, and fire them in token of rejoicing; but Fred protested.

"It might alarm the squaw, if she should hear it," he said. "Wait until we have the baby safe in camp, and then you may fire as many salvos as your ammunition will allow."

He lost no time in securing the bag of coin and a blanket, together with a bottle of milk which Dan had kept in readiness, and sallied forth.

What was it to him that his way lay through a trackless forest, and that he could only guide his course by the stars! He felt no fears and no weariness; but the nearer and nearer he came to the spot where he knew Grant was keeping watch, the keener grew his eagerness and impatience to be there.

Had the squaw returned, and had she really brought the child! he asked himself over and over, as though he could get an answer to his question. At last he saw the fire-light, and he knew that he was almost there. A little later he startled Grant by rushing upon him with the question:

“Hasn't she come yet?”

She had not yet come; and the waiting time must be endured for a while longer. They replenished the fire, and prepared to spend the night in that wild spot. Neither slept much, although they watched and lay down by turns.

The slow hours passed and brought no sight or sound of the expected visitor. Had she played them false, and only bargained with them in order to give herself an opportunity to escape?

Fred thought of the cunning and treachery of the race, of which much has been said. He thought also, even at this moment, with shame, that his own race had no room for favorable comparison.

Grant did not partake of the apprehensions which disturbed his friend.

“She will be sure to come,” he said; “I saw it in her eye when I told her she should have both hands full.”

Fred tried to believe that his companion was right and to take courage accordingly.

And Grant was right. In the early light of morning the squaw suddenly made her appearance, standing near a tree not far from the fire; but no child was to be seen.

"Where is the baby—where is the pappoose?" asked Fred breathlessly.

"Where is the money?" she answered, holding out her hands in the form of a scoop as Grant had done.

"It is here," answered that individual, producing the bag and jingling the pieces.

The woman gave another grunt of satisfaction, and unfastening a strap, swung a basket from behind her back, and there was the baby sure enough, but wrapped in an old tattered blanket, in place of the bright new overcoat in which he had been stolen.

"Bring the child's coat to the camp, and you shall have the blanket I promised you," exclaimed Grant, tossing back to her the dirty wrap, and folding round the baby the one which he had intended for her.

"Oh, let her have the blanket," spoke Fred, too glad to see the child again to care for minor matters. "We can wrap the boy in my overcoat now, and she will bring his back to him another time."

"Not while the world stands," answered Grant grimly, as he yielded up the blanket. But he

was mistaken ; the little coat was returned not many days after.

When the transfers had been duly made, the woman began to examine the contents of the bag.

“ There is some copper in the pile, as you will find,” said Grant, “ but there’s considerable silver, far more than you deserve ; and now if you can manage to steal this pappoose again, you may have him.”

“ Burning Star steal him? *Me* steal him?” asked the squaw.

“ Yes, you, and nobody else,” answered Grant unyieldingly.

“ Ugh ! White man like fire-water better than Indian !” was the answer, a pungent thrust at the white man’s weakness and misdoing, as well as a virtual acknowledgment of her own. The blow was felt. That they should have lain in a state of drunken insensibility while this woman had robbed their camp unhindered, was a thought that brought a flush of shame to the faces of these two men in the presence of this degraded, untaught child of the forest.

“ Steal him again if you can !” repeated Grant defiantly.

The little fellow was cuddling his small, dirty, cold face against Fred’s neck, and if there were tears in the strong man’s eyes, he had no cause to be ashamed of them.

The successful party duly arrived in camp. The baby was joyfully welcomed and washed by Dan, and then he proceeded to fire the guns, partly in honor of the return and restoration, and partly as a signal to those who were still on the search. No signals had been agreed on, but those who heard the repeated discharges rightly construed the sounds to mean good tidings.

In the course of time they began to come in by two and two, and the cheers that followed each new arrival gave fresh courage to those within hearing.

It was many hours before the tired men retired to take the rest which they so much needed; but they did retire at last. The baby was safe in his crib, and all could sleep in peace. But ah! there were some to whom sleep refused to come. There were sad, tumultuous thoughts that would not be silenced. There were memories that no effort could sweep out of range of the mental vision.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NAMELESS GRAVE.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the first fruits of them that slept.”

THERE was a spot not far from the camp which the miners were wont to speak of as “the little grave.” Fred one day asked an explanation of the name, and was told that although the place was always called by that name, no one of the men now in camp knew anything about its origin unless it was Grant Lucas, who always showed a strange unwillingness to talk about it.

“Grant has been known to spend half a day clearing the broken branches and dead leaves away from the spot when we were here before,” said Fred’s informant, “and yet when some of the boys asked him whose grave was there, he always answered that he could not tell. There is nothing that looks like a grave; but there is a rock with a date cut in it, and we fellows have always understood that somebody was buried

there. Grant knows all about it, and if he will tell any one, he will tell you."

Fred, however, did not feel at liberty to question his friend on the subject, since learning of his reticence. He went to the spot not long after, and was surprised to find the inscription of such recent date. There was no name, nor anything to indicate who was resting there. Perhaps the name of the sleeper was known only to God.

The evening wind passed through the leaves above with a soft whispering sound, and the slanting sunbeams falling through the mountain gap, lighted up the place, seeming to the mind of Fred an unspoken promise that the nameless one was not forgotten before him who, far away in the land of Moab, laid away one to rest until the resurrection; "and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

The thought was comforting to the visitor at this lonely grave, in view of the probably unmarked tombs of his own kindred—the thought that God knew the place if man did not.

His musings were interrupted by the sound of footsteps behind him, and he looked around to see Grant Lucas approaching. Fred felt a little doubtful as to what Grant's feelings might be on finding another thus sitting near the spot which he only had seemed to hold sacred. He

was looking very grave, and remembering what had been told him of his friend's reserve on the subject, Fred began to cast about in his mind for some irrelevant remark.

He had not pursued his inquiries, and it was no idle curiosity which had brought him to the grave; yet he felt an embarrassment at being found there. At last he said something about the beauty of the sunset view from the place.

But Grant did not appear to have heard him. He sat down near his friend and looked off through the Gap flooded with the sun's last rays, apparently lost in his own thoughts. At last he spoke:

"Fred, I heard you asking Lawrence about this grave some time ago; and I heard him tell you that if there was any one to whom I would talk on the subject you were the man. He was right on that point. You have respected my reserve and have asked no questions, and I am going to tell you."

"Don't tell me if it hurts you to talk about it, old fellow," said Fred, pressing his hand.

"It hurts me not to talk about it," answered Grant, "and you are the one person to whom I feel like talking. In the first place, there *is* a grave under that stone. I made it myself, and buried there a little child who, had he lived, would not have been unlike the little fellow

over yonder in camp—the same blue eyes and yellow hair. Time might have made changes in the appearance of the two, but at three months old (for they were nearly of one age) they were so much alike that it was easy to mistake one for the other.” The speaker sat looking away into the now darkening Gap, and was silent for some time.

“His mother named him Henry,” he went on, as if to himself, “for her father and grandfather, and called him Harry. Then Mrs. Gills gave her boy the same name, for she said, since they were as much alike as two peas, it would never do to call them by different names.

“The two mothers were like sisters in their attachment for each other, and were not often apart very long at a time, especially if either was ailing, and so it came about that they were together on that terrible night of June 15, 18—.

“Mrs. Gills and her child were both sick, and Gills was absent from home, so my wife and I shut up our cabin and went to Gills’. Toward evening on the day of the raid, Mrs. Gills’ baby was seized with spasms, and I went over to The Forks to call a doctor. It was during my absence that the wretches appeared and carried off my treasures. I never could understand how they came to spare Mrs. Gills and her baby. She could remember nothing of the occurrence;

it was all a blank which she was never able to fill.

“When I returned with the doctor she was lying white and weak, but unharmed, with her child clasped to her breast. She was ill for a long time afterwards, but both mother and child, as you know, recovered.

“There were no soldiers near at the time, but the men from far and wide, with guns, followed the trail for some distance. It was on the return, after days of fruitless effort, that, wandering apart from the rest, I found the baby lying among the leaves just there,” pointing to the spot. “There was no blood on its bright hair, and no signs of bruises. I have always believed that the heartless savages compelled my wife to leave it to die of hunger and exposure.

“It came to my ears not long after that a couple of hunters had found a woman’s body horribly mutilated and past recognition, and had buried it as decently as circumstances would allow. And so the last, horrible act of the tragedy was over, and I went into the barracks of Fort —, and killed the red skins until I was sick of the sight of blood, and felt willing to die in my turn.

“But that was not yet to be. I fell ill and was taken to a hospital, and afterwards discharged. You have noticed perhaps that I have

never taken to the baby as some of the others have done. I can't help it—the feeling that comes over me. It is not that I grudge the little fellow his life, but the sight of him brings back to my mind that awful night, and the question comes to me over and over, Why was this child spared to survive both his parents, and the little sleeper here taken away, leaving me without a tie to earth? Or why were Gills and his wife swept out of life when they would have been glad to live for their child's sake and that of each other, while I—”

The narrator's voice had not wavered during the whole recital, and Fred could not help feeling that he had nerved himself well for the ordeal of telling his story; but here he broke down and wept like a woman.

Fred pressed his hand in silence. Grant's voice was the first to break the stillness.

“I am not so hard and bitter as I was once,” he said, “and I think it must be the presence of the child after all. I turned my back in stiff-necked rebellion on my dead wife's Bible when Mrs. Gills offered it to me; but now I would give much for a sight of the book she loved so dearly, though I might not prize it in the way she did.”

He paused and then went on sadly: “I have nothing to cling to that binds me surely to my

lost ones. I am not even sure that this is my child's grave, for of course the face was changed in the time that had elapsed. I believe that it is; but one thing I know, my wife and child are dead, or have found a fate that is worse than death."

The moonlight was now flooding with silver light the spot where the golden glow had lately faded. Fred racked his memory for something comforting to say to this bereaved one.

At last the mourner spoke again: "I believe there are some of us set apart as vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction," he said, gloomily. "I believe I might have been a Christian if my wife and child had been spared to me. I believe in Christianity; I know it is true, but I cannot make it a personal thing. I suppose it was not to be!"

Then Fred found his voice:

"Don't give way to such thoughts, Grant!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "There is a psalm which I have heard my mother read until I know it by heart, that says, 'The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' Those who are made vessels of wrath are the ones who have turned away from the offers of mercy. You believe in the great hereafter; don't lose the happiness you may yet secure! Don't miss the hope of meeting with your dear ones yonder!"

Grant made a little impatient movement.

“I want them here,” he said; “and I will believe in heaven’s mercy toward me when my dead come back to my arms.”

The two men went back slowly and thoughtfully to the camp, leaving the little tomb in the white moonbeams that lay like a blessing over the spot. No chiseled marble reared its pure form over the little one’s remains, but the giant forest trees stretched their great boughs above it like protecting arms; and the sun’s last rays were wont to rest there, as if in assurance that the lonely little grave was not forgotten. It is true that in winter the wind swept sharply through the leafless trees, and the snow lay deep and cold above; but,

“What does it matter since God doth know,
Under the flowers, or under the snow?”

And, oh! what a fountain of consolation was that from which this stricken one was thus bitterly turning!

It is when the wounded heart is made to feel the absence that in this world knows no returning, the silence that is always unbroken, that we are brought to believe the words which our risen Lord has spoken, and are brought to know the blessedness of the truth of an immortal state, the grand, comforting doctrine of the resurrection

of the dead, and made to see the light beyond the river, illuminating the mountains of peace and the valleys of blessing, and are ready to go over and meet our Redeemer and his and our loved ones, that we can say joyfully with the great apostle: "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? . . . Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER IX.

LED BY A LITTLE CHILD.

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.”

MORE than a year had passed over the gold seekers of Thunder Gap since the events recorded in the last chapter. Time had brought its changes to them as well as to others in the region. Rich veins of the precious metal had been discovered in various localities. A railroad had placed the hitherto isolated and straggling population in closer communication with the outside world.

“The Forks,” with its one store and two or three dwelling houses, had formed the nucleus for such a town as not infrequently springs up in the course of a few months in our western country, and now bore the more pretentious appellation of Goldburgh. It boasted a church, a **town hall**, a school-house and several hotels and

stores, together with other buildings which were used as traps for the feet of the unwary.

Life appeared to be flowing on in the old channel with "Grant Lucas and his men," as the miners were generally styled; and yet some changes had taken place among them also. Several comfortable cabins had been built for their accommodation. Some progress, too, had been made which was less perceptible to the on-looker. One thing may be mentioned—there had been no repetition of the disgraceful orgie which took place on the night on which the baby had been stolen from their midst.

Some of the men still indulged in the "poison," and went to the town for a night of dissipation occasionally, returning hilarious or quarrelsome according to the effect produced, but the challenge given to the Indian kidnapper, had proved one which she had not been able to accept, if she had possessed the inclination to do so.

Fred had made no further mention of taking the child away. Perhaps the universal devotion displayed at the time of its abduction, had made him feel that such a move would be unjust. Besides, he had, unknown to the others, written and rewritten to the address of the friends whom he had left far toward the rising sun, and had

received no response. Failing to hear directly, he had written to different persons whom he had known in his old home, and after long waiting there came back the tidings from one, coldly indifferent, as it seemed to him :

“ I believe your folks are all dead. The old people are, I know, and I can learn nothing of your brother and sister, though I have taken some trouble to make inquiries.”

That was all. There was no hope of again meeting with his kindred in this world, and there were no messages from those who had passed away. Was it strange that he grew silent and sad? He had wasted time and opportunities. He had chosen a course which had led him far from his home and loved ones, and now the thought of his mother and her prayers for him was burdened with remorse.

Fred had seemed to his companions a wonderfully changed man since the loss and restoration of the baby. Profanity was banished from his conversation, and the sabbath observed as sacredly as was possible under the circumstances ; and in spite of the solicitations of some, not a drop of strong drink had passed his lips since that disgraceful revel.

Most of the men respected the change though they did not understand the cause ; and as he was a cheerful and agreeable companion, and al-

ways ready to oblige, he was a general favorite next to the baby.

But now he was silent and melancholy, seldom speaking unless spoken to, and often rousing up with a start when addressed, as if his thoughts were far away.

Little Harry, though still known in the camp as "the baby," could now talk quite plainly, and Fred had taught him to repeat, night and morning, the prayers which he himself had learned at his mother's knee. No one knew of this, except Grant Lucas, who always, when present, remained respectfully silent while the baby voice repeated "Our Father," or the short evening prayer of thanks for the blessings of the day and a petition for protection for himself and his friends through the silent hours of the night.

The sight of the little kneeling form and the sound of the childish accents, indeed, touched the stern-looking man who listened, more than he himself knew, and thus kept alive thoughts and memories which he had often tried to stifle.

One Saturday night, Jeff Symmes came back from town under the influence of liquor, and a little disposed to be quarrelsome.

"Where is the baby?" he demanded in a boisterous tone, looking about for the child: "I've got some apples for him."

One of the men around the camp-fire spoke.

"Better put them away till morning," he suggested, "Fred has just taken the boy to bed."

"Nonsense! It's not eight o'clock yet!" exclaimed Jeff, with an oath.

"He tries to keep the child all to himself, and mopes around like a sick owl!" and he started for the cabin; but Grant, hearing his approach, had fastened the door.

He came back to the others, furiously angry, and reported, "a prayer meeting or something of the kind going on over there," with a contemptuous toss of his head toward the cabin.

Some of the men laughed uproariously at the idea, though they would have been puzzled to tell why they did so.

"That reminds me," said one, when the noise had subsided, "there's to be a great speaking time over at the Burgh to-morrow. Some big preacher is to hold forth at the church in the morning, and in the afternoon a great gun of an infidel lecturer will follow at the town hall. I say, boys, let's all go over."

The proposition was generally agreed to.

"It will be a good chance to hear both sides," remarked one.

"And to bet on the chap that wins," coarsely suggested another.

"Good as a horse-race or a prize fight!" mumbled Jeff Symmes thickly.

Grant and Fred now made their appearance in the group.

“Been holding family prayers?” asked Jeff, sneeringly.

Fred flushed hotly. He was unusually sensitive to ridicule, even from his boyhood. Grant, however, was cool enough.

“Don’t talk, Jeff, till you get sober and know what you are talking about,” he answered quietly.

“I’m not drunk, and I’ll whip any man who says so!” retorted Jeff, interlarding his speech with profanity. He staggered to his feet and made a dash at Grant, who caught his arm, and seizing him by the collar conveyed him unassisted to a shanty near by, and pushing him in, fastened the door from the outside.

Sunday morning dawned bright and beautiful, and a hallowed quiet seemed to reign over all things. Nothing was heard except the morning songs of the wild birds. The men were not yet stirring. Dan had just kindled the camp-fire, and the smoke curled lazily up among the trees. But little Harry was wide awake and doing his best to rouse up the other occupants of the cabin.

“It’s morning, it’s morning!” he called out in his clear, childish voice. “Wake up, F’ed, and

have breakfast. F'ed and baby going to town to-day," he concluded, remembering the promise of the previous evening.

But Fred was sleepy and did not move. Climbing on the rude bed, the child proceeded to pull open the heavy eyelids with his little fingers.

Finding that there was no more sleep for him, Fred sprang up hastily, and the baby shouted with laughter. Having made his own and the child's toilet, Fred went out, saying:

"You stay here with Grant. I'll bring you your breakfast by and by."

"Baby wants to go. Baby wants to see the boys," answered the child.

It had long been apparent to Fred that the society of most of his companions was not good for the little child, who was very intelligent and quick to learn and repeat whatever he heard. But petted and pampered, treated to candy by one and then tossed over to another for nuts or apples, and given a ride on the shoulder by a third, the company of "the boys" held strong attractions for him, and now, when he found that Fred had really left him behind, he began to cry lustily.

Fred went to the fire and began to prepare something for the child to eat. A few minutes later, Jeff Symmes made his appearance. He

was sober now, but his head ached, and he felt in no amiable humor.

“What have you been doing to that baby? I heard him crying as I passed your quarters,” he said menacingly.

“Oh, he doesn’t like it because I made him stay with Grant, that is all,” answered Fred, intent upon what he was doing.

“Yes!” was retorted, “you try to keep the child from coming near any of the rest of us fellows, you and Grant Lucas. You’re getting some high and mighty notions of late.”

Fred was stooping over the fire and did not answer for a moment; then he rose up from the muffins he had been turning, his face flushed with the heat of the fire, and the knife still in his hand.

“See here, Jeff,” he said, “Grant has nothing at all to do with it. As for myself, I’ll be honest with you. I don’t like to hurt your feelings after your kindness both to the baby and me, but my first duty is to God and the child,” he continued reverently, with sudden courage which was a surprise to himself.

“It does trouble me to have the little fellow hear some of the language which you boys use. He is beginning to catch up nearly everything he hears, and I tell you, Jeff, if he should learn to swear, I should almost expect his mother to rise out of her grave and reproach me.”

Jeff was a little touched by his companion's frankness and evident feeling, but the remembrance of his late humiliation, coupled with the unreasoning dislike which he had conceived for Fred, overcame all better feelings.

"Humph!" he exclaimed, contemptuously. "Well, since you are so solemn and sanctimonious, you'd better not lie for Grant Lucas. The fellow has been nagging at us boys almost ever since the child began to talk about our language. Some of them have given in to him, but I'd like to know," he continued, growing more and more furious, as his companion showed no signs of anger, "if we are all to be compelled to chew our words and talk nothing but pious cant because a stray urchin happens to be among us. You'd better go back to the thieving gang you came from, and take the young one along with you!"

Grant had pacified the baby by giving him his watch to play with, and appeared on the scene just at this juncture, and before Fred had time to reply.

"Still drunk and quarrelsome!" he said, severely. "Jeff Symmes, if you don't mend your ways, it is you who will be set adrift. Now let us have no more of this kind of talk. Do you hear?"

Jeff, in a low tone, muttered something that

had an oath at the end of it, and gave an evil glance at Fred; but he said no more, and no further notice was taken of him.

Wonderfully diverse in respect to outward appearance were the people who wended their way to Goldburgh church and took their seats upon that bright Sabbath morning. There were miners and prospectors of all grades. There were keen-looking, well-dressed business men, and elegantly attired women. Again, there were men in faultlessly fitting, fashionable clothes, with heavy gold chains and rings and diamond shirt studs, and faces that would not bear close scrutiny in the open light of day.

There, in a front pew, was the florid-faced, portly proprietor of the Grand Hotel, and by his side his equally portly wife, resplendent in silks and jewelry, and at no great distance a former member of the Rocky Rangers, the late terror of the region, with a pure-faced little child in his arms.

Those who had come to hear the great preacher, expecting to have their fancies pleased with the dash and air of challenge betokening the theological athlete, were disappointed.

The minister was rather below than above medium height, and his pale, clear-cut face was such an one as the ignorant and idly curious

would not readily read. There was no thunder in the prayer with which he opened the services; and when he announced his text there was a sudden vanishing of the last remnant of hope on the part of those who had come to the house of God to witness the victory or defeat of man.

Clearly, so as to be heard by every one in the remotest corners of the house, and yet with a subdued cadence, came the words of holy writ: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The speaker's language and style of delivery were marked with the dignity which becomes the ambassador of heaven; but the plainness and earnestness with which he presented the truth seemed to place him in direct communication with the lowliest and humblest of his hearers.

He laid before them the gospel invitation in its freeness and fullness as illustrated by the Master when on earth. He told the story of his meek, unselfish life of holiness and purity, and it sounded new to those who had been familiar with it from their childhood. He portrayed the character which bore no taint of sin, yet never held itself aloof from sinners. He drew the striking contrast between the self-

righteous Jews who regarded the touch of poor, sinful humanity as defilement, and spent their time in washings and other ceremonials of purification, their hearts meanwhile impure in the sight of God, and the pure, spotless One who freely mingled with the multitude, and made it the opportunity of doing them good.

He told them how the Master avowed plainly that he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; how the common people heard him gladly, and the hypocritical Pharisees hated while they feared him.

There was fixed attention while the speaker dwelt with tender truthfulness upon the Saviour's attitude toward fallen man. He represented the gracious kindness of a king who should freely offer terms of pardon and peace to all his rebellious subjects that should come to him and kneel for forgiveness at his palace gate. But this Lord of lords and King of kings humbles himself to go to the lowly hovel of the sinner and knock for admittance that he may confer his gracious favors.

He explained, so that a child might understand, the significance of the beautiful imagery. He told his hearers that whenever they were moved to turn away from the evil and seek the good, Christ was knocking for admittance. Whenever they felt aspirations for a purer,

higher life; whenever a sense of the danger and defilement of sin oppressed them; whenever the offer of salvation was presented to them, they might know that Jesus was standing at the door of their hearts. He urged them to admit the gracious visitor, and receive the blessing promised.

There were those in this motley congregation who heard the truth and received it. Man might not see a quick result, but the seed sown would, in the Master's time, germinate and bring forth fruit. There were also present the hearers whose impressions, if they received any, were as the morning cloud and the early dew.

"Pray tell me, who is that tall young man over there with the little child in his arms?"

It was Mrs. Pope who started the question, and it passed from one to another till it reached the ears of Jeff Symmes, nursing his malignant feelings even in the house of God. His next neighbor was a young man who, with no visible means of support, spent money lavishly and boarded at the Grand Hotel.

"That," whispered Jeff, "is Tall Ted of the Rocky Rangers."

The answer was passed from mouth to mouth, and Fred, thoughtfully setting out to return to camp with his charge, little knew how many eyes were following his movements.

With those present, who were like the Athenians, this "new thing" furnished a subject for a considerable amount of hearing and telling.

"It is true the band is broken up, but he ought to be arrested and punished for what he has done," said some.

"That child is doubtless one he has stolen and is holding for an immense ransom."

"It seems to be fond of him."

"It knows no better, poor innocent! It should be taken from him at once and placed in the care of some proper person."

The last remark was made by Mrs. Pope, who had been struck with the child's face and regarded herself as eminently the "proper person" referred to.

"There is no time to be lost, I assure you," she concluded, turning her keen, black eyes in a commanding way upon the man to whom Jeff had confided the hateful secret.

CHAPTER X.

“WHAT IS TRUTH?”

“Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

IF the Christian minister had addressed an audience of respectable size, the infidel orator was listened to by a crowd. The hall was filled to its utmost seating capacity, and many were standing in the aisles.

There was an air of interest permeating the throng assembled, and when the speaker was introduced a hush of expectation followed, that was soon gratified.

There were a few smooth, polite, introductory remarks, and then the orator launched into what many present thought to be a burst of unsurpassed and startling eloquence, embodying a vast amount of apparent logic.

The lecturer held a Bible in his hand from which he read picked passages now and then, after which he proceeded to refute the statements,

“correct the mistakes,” as he expressed it, of the garbled extracts which he had made.

The lecture was an alternation of satire and fierce and angry sounding denunciation, with an occasional sprinkling of what seemed, to the young and unsophisticated, candor and dispassionate argument. But “the heavy artillery,” as one afterward styled it, appeared to be his favorite mode of warfare. And if the believers in the religion of Jesus Christ had been his most cruel enemies, he could not have spoken of them with more of scathing dislike and scorn.

He profaned the holy day by repeated attempts at witticism, calling forth peals of laughter from some of his audience, and evidently used all his efforts to bring into disrepute the cause which he was opposing, together with all its adherents. But like all of his class, he had nothing to offer instead of the belief which he sought to demolish.

These persons talk with high sounding phrases of a pure morality; but the purest morality which the world has ever known has gone hand in hand with religion, and the unfairness which marks their attacks proves them to be strangers to that of which they speak. Morality is honest and truthful.

The very existence of these scoffers has been foretold, and also the terrible destiny of such as

shall continue unbelieving until convinced too late to receive the salvation which they have scorned; when it shall be said unto them: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish!"

But there is an experimental knowledge of the truth of religion that is a surer foundation for belief than the words of others, however true and well founded.

When the man born blind had received his sight, he needed not that any should tell him of the sense which had just been given him. He could say: "One thing I know; that whereas I was blind, now I see." And Jesus, the great healer, has said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;" and again, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Ah, my friends! he who can say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," need not fear any thrusts from the caviler at his belief, and is wiser than the wisest of worldly sages.

It is the duty of the Christian teacher to answer all honest doubts which may arise in the minds of those who come under his teaching. Such doubts are often suggested directly to the mind by the arch enemy of souls, and also by his servants.

But there is a vast difference between doubts which trouble the minds of sincere seekers after

the truth, and the gross misstatements of actual facts frequently made by those who assault Christianity. There is both deplorable ignorance and willful falsehood at the bottom of much of the invective against religion; and much of it remains unanswered, not because it is unanswerable, but because it is too puerile and empty to deserve notice.

Were it not for the fact that these blind lead others who are blind also, it were useless to waste words upon their puny efforts to batter down the walls of salvation.

When you hear or read the defenses of Christianity, remember that these are only made for the benefit of those who have been, or may be, misled by the lies of false teachers.

It is stated by Rev. C. T. Whitmore in the *London World* that "Of twenty infidel lecturers and writers who have been prominent in the last thirty years, sixteen have abandoned their infidelity and openly professed their faith in Christianity."

Most of the crowd assembled at the town hall of Goldburgh left the place of meeting well satisfied with themselves, as well as with the speaker and his lecture.

There were attempted reproductions of his witticisms and caricatures, and renewed laughter at the remembrance of them.

There were some whose consciences, not yet dead, were quieted by what they had heard; and more who, having listened and laughed, would soon forget the speaker and his words in the next diversion that offered itself.

But there were others who were troubled and perplexed by the statements, or rather misstatements, to which they had listened; and others still, who, knowing the truth, were confirmed by the unfairness of the arguments, and the flimsiness of the falsehoods of the boasted "champion of the truth."

The lecture was duly commented upon in the camp at Thunder Gap.

Jeff Symmes pronounced it "the most sensible thing that had ever been heard in Goldburgh;" and said, "that man was smart and knew what he was talking about."

"Well," answered Grant Lucas, "he is naturally smart enough, I suppose, but take my word for it the ground he stands on doesn't feel as steady under his feet as he would like others to believe. If religion is all folly and imagination, what is the use of wasting so much breath in fighting against it? What is the use of so much fire and noise? Whoever heard of anybody getting out a twenty-pounder and firing it, loaded to the muzzle, at a shadow? Pshaw! the man

refutes his own arguments. And if the believing of a fanciful story can make men live better lives and die in peace, what is the use of undeceiving them, when you have nothing to offer them in its place? If the 'poor dupes,' as he calls them, are happy in their delusion, what is the good of enlightening them, just to have them know that there is no future for them?"

"Oh, I suppose," answered Jeff, "that he hates to see people making fools of themselves, pities them for their folly."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed the other. "There was little of the ring of pity in anything I heard from him. That was one of his weakest points. What is the reason of his feeling so spiteful and malicious toward the believers in 'this fable,' as he styled it? Why does he take such a Satanic satisfaction in thrusting at Christians and the church everywhere? He wants to believe that he is right; he wants other people to believe it too, but he is far from feeling certain about it, and he is conscious that others are happier in their views. Nobody who is very acute will be convinced by his fine speeches."

"He had a bigger crowd than the preacher," remarked one.

"Oh, yes," was answered. "He'll get the crowd every time, and plenty of cheering and all that, for the biggest crowd is on Satan's side,

and men who are on their way to perdition like to be told that the Bible is a lie, and that there is no punishment in store for them, whatever they may do. But most of them," he went on musingly, "are, like their leader, only trying to shut their eyes against the light."

To say that the companions of Grant Lucas were astonished at his words would but feebly express the sentiments with which they listened to these remarks from one whom they would never have suspected of being a contender for the truth. Grant went on:

"He said some very fine sounding things, and some that were very funny and made his hearers laugh; but I don't think that anything he said made anybody feel sorry for any wrong that he had ever done, or awakened in any one a resolve to do better hereafter. As for me he only reminded me that the truth of the Bible has been too often proved, and too long believed, for such men as he to do it much harm. The only wonder is that sane men do not always live up to their convictions. Heigho," he concluded, stretching out his arms with a yawn, "Dan, aren't we going to have any supper to-night?"

Upon receiving this hint, Dan set about the culinary duties which fell to his lot, and Grant went to his cabin. He soon returned, however, and sat down again among the rest.

“Is Fred teaching the young one the catechism and the ten commandments?” asked Jeff Symmes sarcastically.

“I don’t think Fred and the baby have come back yet, after all,” remarked Grant, addressing no one in particular, and ignoring the ill-natured fling. “I thought he came over directly after the sermon this morning.”

“I reckon he has fallen in with some of his old chums,” pursued Jeff, but no one paying any attention to his sneers, he finally relapsed into silence.

The supper was prepared and eaten. Some special dainties, as they were considered in the camp, were set aside for the baby, but still the missing ones did not make their appearance.

Some of the men began to suspect that Fred had taken the opportunity to remove the child as he had once planned to do; but Grant Lucas did not share in the suspicion. Yet what could his absence mean? On parting from Grant at the church door he had announced his intention of returning at once to the camp. It was then about noon; now the sunlight was creeping up to the tops of the mountains and still he had not come.

“I wonder if that same squaw has not carried off both of the dears?” said Jeff, no longer able

to keep silent, on witnessing the concern of his comrades.

“You ill-conditioned rascal!” burst out Grant angrily; “if I hadn’t had you under my eye nearly all day, I should suspect you of some foul play in this matter. You would be more comfortable yourself, and less of a nuisance to other people, if you would drink a little less of that bad whisky that you get over at Pope’s.”

“Who says I get whisky at Pope’s?” demanded Jeff.

“It doesn’t matter who says so, and it doesn’t matter where you get it, so long as you are drunk enough to be insufferably ill-natured nearly all the time,” was the answer.

“I say the Popes are fine people,” persisted Jeff. “Pope is a clever fellow, and Mrs. Pope is a great lady.”

“Gigantic!” laughed one of the men. “I should say she would bring down the scales at about two hundred!”

“Are they friends of yours?” asked Grant of Jeff.

“Well, yes, I took dinner there to-day by special invitation, and made the acquaintance of some tip-top people, Mr. Chickham among the number.”

Two or three of the men laughed simultaneously at mention of the name of Mr. Chickham.

"If you have made Chickham's acquaintance, look out or you will be a plucked goose before you are many days older," said one.

"What do you mean?" demanded Jeff, with an effort at dignity.

"Only this," answered John Norton, the speaker, "that Chickham is one of the most noted gamblers in all this part of the country, and the next time you take dinner and champagne at Pope's by express invitation, you will do well to leave any little valuables which you own, in safe-keeping."

"I am not a fool, as you may find out," answered Jeff. There was a ring of spiteful triumph in his tone, and some of his hearers felt half disposed to resort to force in order to learn whether he knew anything of the cause of the absence of Fred and the child; but the company finally dispersed, and silence fell over the camp, and the missing ones had not yet returned.

Had the holy day brought anything of real good to any who slept to-night under the great trees, spreading their long arms above as if in benediction? There were some among them that knew the truth, but were there any whom the sacred day's rest and privileges had brought nearer to God? There were some who avowed a belief in holy things, but did the incense of

prayer or praise ascend from the hearts of any in that little company? Alas, for those to whom it shall be said: "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not!"

CHAPTER XI.

“MAN PROPOSES: GOD DISPOSES.”

“It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. . . . My times are in thy hand.”

DAY after day passed and no message or token came from the absent ones to the workers at Thunder Gap. Work went on as usual, and an unlooked-for increase in the yield of the vein they were trying, served to take the thoughts of many of the men from Fred and the baby. But when evening came, then it was that the pet and plaything of the camp was missed sorely.

Dan Eakins had repeated to some of the others the words which had passed between Fred and Jeff Symmes on Sunday morning, and more than one suspected that he was to blame for the unexpected disappearance. Yet there was something that was puzzling in Jeff's conduct. He was frequently absent during the evenings, but generally returned sober and was unmistakably troubled at the loss of the child.

He ceased to speak of Fred, and as the time went by, and they became accustomed to the change, some of the others ceased to do so likewise. Grant Lucas, although he had said but little from the first, was determined to unravel the mystery, if such a thing were possible. At the earliest opportunity he made a trip to town with this object in view.

It was about sunset when he entered the place, and many of the people were out driving and walking; but few of them were known to Grant and he gave them but a passing glance, or hurried by without looking at them.

He had reached one of the most fashionable promenades of the town, and was making his way to the house of an acquaintance, when, in crossing the street, he was nearly run over by a carriage that came dashing round the corner. The driver drew the handsome span of black horses back upon their haunches just in time to prevent his being trampled under their feet.

"Keep your eyes open, fellow, if you don't want to be run over," spoke a supercilious voice from the carriage. "Haven't you any more sense than to put yourself in front of such a team as that?"

"Haven't you any more sense than to be driving at break-neck speed through a public thoroughfare?" retorted Grant.

He had recognized his interrogator as Chickham, the notorious gambler; and Chickham had recognized him as one against whom he had a secret grudge of long standing.

A woman's laugh was heard as the two men remained eying each other angrily, Grant clutching the bit of one of the horses and Chickham holding the lines helplessly.

"Well, well, nobody is hurt, I believe; and if you, sir, will kindly let go my horses and step aside, we will finish our drive," spoke Mrs. Pope's smooth voice.

Grant was about to release the horse he was holding, and which was pawing the ground impatiently, when he heard his name called in a voice which was strangely familiar and had grown to exercise a power over him which he could not resist.

It was a voice that always halted on his name, dropping out a letter, and to-night it had a half-frightened sound which went to the strong man's heart.

Sitting in Mrs. Pope's lap, handsomely dressed, from the gold-corded blue velvet cap set jauntily over his yellow curls to the little bronze boots on his feet, but with tears in his eyes, was the baby!

"Please pardon me if I detain you a moment longer," Grant said, with great politeness, ad-

dressing himself to Mrs. Pope. "Will you kindly tell me how you came in possession of that child?"

"Certainly," she replied, pompously, and setting her head back a few inches further; "he was placed in my hands by the proper authorities. Good-evening, sir," with a broad smile that sparkled tantalizingly in her black eyes, as Chickham gave the horses a stinging cut with his whip and they dashed away.

There had been no time to ask any questions concerning Fred, but Grant would not have questioned these persons if there had been opportunity. Looking after the carriage, he caught one glimpse of the little gold-corded cap, as the horses galloped down the street at the imminent risk of some other pedestrian who might chance to be crossing.

"How are you, Grant? How are you, Grant?" came from several voices as he neared a certain eating and drinking house.

"Come in and stand treat to a glass of cold tea, all round," called out one.

"You have kept yourself carefully aloof from all your friends lately," spoke another.

"Thank you, boys," answered Grant; "I have been, and am still, very busy, and have lost one of my best men. Can any of you tell me anything about Fred?"

"Fred who?" questioned one.

"Honestly," answered Grant, "I can't give you his other name. He was just known as Fred in camp, and a good fellow he was, too, as ever lived, in camp or out of it."

But Grant could get no information here. The disappearance of a miner was a matter of little moment to any but himself and his companions, and Grant turned to retrace his steps.

"Hold on!" called out one of his former rough associates; "don't be in such a bother of a hurry. Your day's work is done, I reckon, and you might, for the sake of old times, give us a lift to-night in a job we have on hand."

"Hold your loud tongue, Clem Hyde!" exclaimed another, warningly. "You'll tell all Goldburgh! It's to be a quiet job, and a good one," he continued in a low tone, "and if you'll give us a hand, we'll do as much for you some time."

"Excuse me: it is impossible to-night," answered Grant, turning away with the thought that some lawless mischief was about to be perpetrated. He little knew what it was which these men were plotting, nor how nearly the success or failure of their scheme would touch his own life.

Turning into another part of the town, he walked on, aimlessly, as it seemed even to him-

self, yet impelled to proceed. It was nearly dark when, passing not far from the jail, he felt a tap on his shoulder and was asked quietly: "Are you a supporter of law and order?"

"I hope so," answered Grant.

"Then come this way; you are needed," was the response, and following his leader Grant Lucas presently found himself in the street running in the rear of the jail.

The guide entered the yard by means of a back gate, motioning his companion to follow, and fastening the entrance securely after them.

Grant was about to ask for an explanation when the other said:

"We have a prisoner in the jail whom we want to remove to-night to a safe spot until he can have a fair trial. A lot of roughs have planned to take him out of the hands of the law and punish him according to their own idea of justice, and we are determined to foil them if possible. In all probability he deserves to hang," he continued, "but a mob is not the proper instrumentality. This way now. We only learned of the plans of the fellows by accident. One of the gang having drunken a little too freely, talked a little too freely in consequence; ha! ha!"

The officer laughed softly as he led the way. Grant followed and found himself in a hollow

square formed by the projecting wings of the building, and in company with fifteen or twenty men who had been summoned to the spot on the same errand as himself—namely, to aid in maintaining the supremacy of the law.

A light burned dimly, and Grant saw that the men were all armed with muskets and that the faces of all were concealed.

The new-comer was assigned a place in the ranks, and a mask of black muslin, similar to that worn by the others, was offered him.

“What is that for?” asked the new recruit, with his characteristic bluntness.

“Well,” answered the officer, smiling a little, “it will be better, perhaps, for the welfare of those who help to foil those fellows not to be identified by the mob. They are a rough set, and they will carry torches likely; besides, if the prisoner is cleared he may inform on you himself some time, if it suits his purpose. These fellows are not to be depended on.”

“All right,” answered Grant, taking the proffered means of concealment; but he put it in his pocket instead of over his face, and reaching for the musket, which another tendered, he began to examine it with the air of one accustomed to handling fire-arms.

There was an almost oppressive silence in the immediate neighborhood of the jail, and all

sounds from a distance were heard with clear distinctness.

Now and then a vehicle went rattling by the gloomy-looking brick building, where a portion of the guilty pined for freedom, while many, who were equally criminal in the sight of heaven, were grossly abusing the liberty which was granted to them.

Time passed on. The clock in the corridor above told off the hours one by one, even to the slow, solemn strokes of midnight, and still the men stood silently waiting.

The inactivity began to produce a feeling of restlessness, which manifested itself to the quick eye and ear of the superior, who said, firmly:

"Stand steady, men: the crowd is beginning to gather in front of the jail."

There was an occasional shout to be heard, then silence again, until it seemed as if the whole town must be wrapped in slumber.

What must have been the feelings of that prisoner, if he knew the danger which was menacing him! if he knew that more than a hundred men, frenzied by a mistaken zeal for right, but more by the restless spirit which hates authority and defies restraint, many of them maddened by strong drink, were approaching to deal out to him what they called justice, while only a handful stood ready to attempt his defense!

But time wore on, and those composing the guard began to believe that the attack had been postponed, and that they were keeping a useless watch. Entire silence seemed brooding over all things, when suddenly there arose a yell that sounded like the cry of wild beasts, rather than the voices of human beings.

A little later blows were heard on the massive front door. At the same instant the prisoner was brought out at the back, and the guards, closing around him, moved softly yet rapidly in response to the quiet but firm command of the officer.

Passing through the rear gate by which Grant had been brought in, they proceeded noiselessly up the street, their ears filled with the shouts, yells and blows of the besiegers.

Amid such a confusion of sounds it was impossible to understand what was being said; but there was an awful significance in the swelling of the passionate tones, and the blows that resounded above the voices.

The man whom they were seeking to lay hands upon had broken the laws of the land. He had trampled under foot the rights of his fellow-man; but would right be vindicated by the commission of another wrong? Would the outraged law be honored by this wholesale violation of the same? If the judge on the bench

sometimes perjures himself and disgraces his high office by conniving at wrong; if juries carefully selected and shielded from bias and passion, and solemnly sworn to weigh their verdict in the balances of candid judgment, free from prejudice and passion, sometimes condemn the innocent and clear the guilty, what is to be hoped from a maddened crowd of unreasoning, frenzied men, under no control but that of their own unbridled inclinations? Alas for that community where the masses "take the law into their own hands!"—we should rather say where they outrage and violate the law with their own hands.

It was a motley company which the dim light of the coming day revealed guarding the rescued prisoner, far out on one of the roads leading from Goldburgh. They were still tramping on without much of military precision, but with steadfast purpose in their movements. It was barely light when a halt was called at a railroad station, and these men were released from the duty which they had voluntarily performed. The guns were stacked, and the officer, thanking them for the service they had rendered, hurried his charge on board the train just as it was moving out from the station.

It was Grant Lucas' first opportunity to see the countenance of the man whom he had

helped to rescue. The prisoner's eyes were running listlessly over the masked faces before him. A moment later they rested on the one that was not concealed. Their eyes met. There was a simultaneous exclamation.

The unknown man whom Grant had been assisting to guard all night was Fred!

CHAPTER XII.

THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR.

“Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. . . . Mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.”

WE have seen that Fred had long since learned to abhor the course which he formerly pursued. The remembrance of his conduct was deeply humiliating and painful, and he felt that he could never cease to be humble and penitent. The recollection that some of his wasted opportunities were gone forever was painfully oppressive.

If he could have returned to his home and made some amends for the grief which he had caused his best friends for the long agony of suspense, or the pain which a knowledge of his course could not fail to bring! Oh, if he could only have asked and received forgiveness of that faithful, loving mother whose heart he had wrung so cruelly, his life, even as a Christian, would have looked to him more bright and attractive!

Alas! all he could now do would avail nothing. Could he find her grave, he might wet it with repentant tears, and pour out his remorse and sorrow above the loved one's silent resting-place, but no voice of forgiveness could come back to him from the departed.

Reader, do not forget that while Christ is willing and able to save even to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and while he gives us peace in believing, still the bright opportunities which we have wasted can never come back to us.

For the second time in his life Fred had found himself in the cell of a prison. He had been almost stunned at first by his arrest and separation from the baby, who was carried away, crying piteously.

He felt for a time as if his repentance and reformation had come too late; as if his late sense of peace and pardon had been all a mistake.

When he had been arrested before he had resisted violently, but on this occasion he had allowed himself to be taken without a struggle. He did not even ask what offense he had committed. He felt that a long catalogue of offenses stood charged against his name, and though they were canceled at the bar of heaven, earth kept the record still. But in the solitude of his con-

finement he was tempted to yield to sinful hopelessness, to restrain prayer before God, and to give himself up for lost. He reasoned that if God had really accepted him, he would not have permitted the misfortune which had now befallen him.

He did not in his heart question the justice of his fate. He said it was his desert, and he yielded, but it was the yielding of utter despair.

He thought of the little child and its cries and tears, and his burden seemed too great to be borne. But into the despair and darkness of that hour came, like a voice from heaven, the loving message to which he had but just listened: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

He repeated the words aloud with tears of gratitude. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. . . . Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

One after another, texts which the man of God had quoted, and thoughts which he had expressed, flowed into his soul like cool, refreshing waters, and his faith rose up from the dust. He recalled the sublime trust of the Christian woman whose prayer had been the means, in God's hand, of leading him to repentance; and

he prayed, long and earnestly, for a confidence so strong, a faith so unwavering, that nothing should ever be able to make it tremble.

The days went by in unvarying monotony in so far as his outward condition was concerned; but he was upheld by the promises of the word of God; and his jailer sometimes wondered whether the officers of the law had not made a mistake when they arrested this quiet, cheerful young man, who gave no trouble and received the slightest favor with thanks, and whose unostentatious devotions had not escaped his notice. Mistakes of this kind were sometimes made in this region; but, on the other hand, the greatest villains have often tried to conceal their true characters under the cloak of outward piety.

The jailer was perplexed; but he reflected that the problem was one that need not trouble him, and that all his duty in the matter consisted in keeping safe the prisoners in his care.

We have learned from the preceding chapter what led to Fred's imprisonment in Goldburgh, and we now return to the miners at Thunder Gap.

Grant Lucas reached the camp just as the others, having eaten their dinner, were about to set off to work. Jeff Symmes was absent, but Grant, asking no questions and making no explanation in regard to his own absence, recalled

to mind the swaying, shouting throng that had besieged the jail, and felt almost confident that the missing one was one of the number.

"Did you see or hear anything of Fred or the baby?" questioned one of the men presently.

"Yes, I saw the baby," answered Grant.

"Where?"

A dozen voices asked the question, and all listened in interest for the answer.

"Mrs. Pope has him, and says he has been placed in her care."

"Mrs. Pope!" ejaculated one. "I should have given Fred credit for better sense than that."

"I don't think Fred had anything to do with it, poor fellow," answered Grant. He had on the way home debated within himself whether he should allow his friends to remain in ignorance of the fate of these two, or whether he should tell them the truth, unpleasant as it was. He now decided to reserve nothing, and related the story of last night's adventure, while his audience listened breathlessly.

There was no little excitement over the story, and there followed a zealous defense of Fred, which would have told him, could he have heard it, that he had some warm friends in the locality where his arrest had been made.

As for the baby being left in care of Mrs. Pope, "the boys" protested that it was not to be thought of.

"I would not trust her with a wooden doll that belonged to me!" exclaimed Dan, in great disgust. Grant was the only one among them who was calm and could look at the subject dispassionately.

"But we can do nothing. We cannot help it—don't you see?" he said. "We have no claims on the baby except through Fred, and unless he is cleared and can prove that Mrs. Gills gave the child to him, he is lost to us all!"

This was the bare truth, and no one could gainsay it. The men went to their work in gloomy, dejected silence.

The question of the child's removal from camp had proved a troublesome one. It had now been solved in a most unexpected manner, and the solution was far from satisfactory.

Day after day passed and Jeff Symmes did not return to his companions. His reception would have been the reverse of cordial, for all were now agreed that he had been the prime agent in bringing about Fred's imprisonment.

But although correct in their surmises as to Jeff's complicity in Fred's arrest and also in the

barbarous attempt to take him from the jail, they little knew how serious had been the result to himself.

The mob had demolished the front door of the jail, and rushed into the building, wrought up to the highest pitch of madness, and thirsting for the commission of the desperate deed which they had come to perform.

One after another the cells were examined; but the trembling wretches whom they encountered one by one were left unharmed. They did not find the man whom they were seeking.

On and on they went, yelling and howling like demons, as they proceeded on their search.

At last they knew the truth. They had been beaten in spite of their numbers. Their prey had been snatched away from them just as they were about to secure it.

The baffled ruffians were like a pack of hungry wolves that have scented blood. They attacked the jailer and beat him unmercifully, and when his wife attempted to assist him, one of the men dealt her a blow which rendered her insensible.

As soon as it was generally known that the prisoner whom they were seeking had been removed, the mob surged back down the street

to a strongly built warehouse which had formerly been used for a jail, in further search, and a squad of policemen entered the prison to find only a few on the scene of the lawless deed. These were promptly arrested.

Among the number was Jeff Symmes, who a little later found himself a prisoner in the very cell lately occupied by the man whom he had hunted down purely from personal animosity. He knew that it was Fred's cell, for when the light crept in, and he, like a caged animal, was pacing to and fro in the narrow space allotted him, he saw on the wall penciled the name of "Fred," together with the date of yesterday, and underneath the words :

"If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

Jeff was sober now, and he could not repress the thoughts that would rise up to confront him.

Fred had been one of those who had profited by the fraud committed against the Quick Gulch Mining Company. He had voluntarily come forward and confessed his fault in the face of

death at the hands of those whom he had wronged.

More than this, he had carefully saved his earnings since he had been among them, and had repaid in full his share in the ill-gotten gains, besides making reparation to other parties for wrongs done them. He had been obliging and helpful to all, and was much liked in the camp.

Jeff Symmes tried in vain to put away his uncomfortable reflections; but try as hard as he might, he could not deny the humiliating truth that Fred's superiority to himself, and his popularity with Grant and the rest, were the secret of his dislike and of his persistent attacks. And now he had over-reached himself. He was attached to the baby, as were all the rest, and he had not counted upon Fred's being arrested with the child in his arms, and the little one thus lost to them all. Least of all had he counted on being himself brought to his present position.

He had gained nothing and had lost much. He had dined again at Pope's, despite the warnings of his friends, and had drunk freely of the wine which his hostess proffered so liberally, and had afterward lost to Mr. Chickham the earnings of many days in "a quiet, social game," as the gambler had called it.

At dinner the question was started whether the captured ranger were really, as some thought, the notorious Alf. Lambert who shot Charley Wakeham, and Mrs. Pope had said that he ought to be taken from the jail and hung.

Jeff had promised, with what he had then considered an air of great gallantry and prowess:

“It shall be done!”

Now he had done his best, or rather his worst, to redeem his tipsy pledge, and here he was, and what cared Mrs. Pope or her confederate, Mr. Chickham? He had told his companions in camp that he was not a fool, but he now began to suspect that he was.

From his grated window the prisoner frequently saw Pope's carriage, drawn by the dashing, black span, and containing Mrs. Pope's gay figure together with the baby, and generally driven by the elegantly dressed Mr. Chickham in a shining silk hat, and displaying a prominent watch chain.

Jeff Symmes ground his teeth together at the sight. Each time he saw it, he was exasperated more and more, and yet some unaccountable fascination led him each day to look out for the spirited black horses with the silver-mounted harness, and the handsome carriage with its showy occupants.

The child usually wore a grave look on his small face; but one evening when they were driving slowly, he noticed that Mr. Chickham was holding the lines carelessly and looking at the little fellow, to whom he was talking in an amusing manner, judging by the motions of his head and the display of his white teeth.

The baby was laughing and clapping his little hands, and Jeff's anger rose to white heat at the sight.

"They are actually making him happy and contented, and forgetful of his old home and friends!" he said through his shut teeth; and he hated these people who had made a silly dupe of him, worse than he had ever hated Fred.

It was true that little Harry was beginning to feel contented in his new home. He had cried almost incessantly at first, to be taken to Fred, and later when he had seen Grant, the old memories had been revived, and he had troubled his new possessors not a little. But the child was not much more than a baby, and new impressions had soon, to a great degree, effaced the old ones.

He had nearly as many to pet and play with him as at the camp. Not knowing his real name, and not caring to use it if she had known

it, Mrs. Pope had named the child Victor; and with his childish beauty, and pretty baby ways, he did indeed speedily conquer nearly all who came under his influence. The woman had not thought anything about the significance of the name, but chose it merely because she liked its sound. Nor did she entertain any intention of establishing a baby monarchy with herself for one of the subjects. She was a gay woman of the world, caring more for the frivolities of life, which she called "pleasure," than for anything else. She looked upon the child as a pet and plaything with which to amuse herself; to wear the pretty costumes which pleased her feminine tastes, and to be brought forward and shown off to her friends or sent out of the way in charge of his nurse, when she did not want to be troubled with him.

Alas for the poor baby! He had been in danger of growing up a savage when in the hands of his Indian captor; his guardian had often felt troubled in view of the evil influences of camp life on his young, impressible mind; but what were his prospects now? The Grand Hotel was the resort of those who indulged in all vice freely, and with whom profanity was the customary mode of emphasis.

The child had seen a pack of cards occasionally in the camp, and his childish fancy was

attracted by their bright colors ; now they met his eyes too often to be noticed.

Was the consecrated child of a Christian mother to be left to grow up in this contaminating atmosphere ? We shall see.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUNTED.

“Their feet *are* swift to shed blood : destruction and misery *are* in their ways : and the way of peace have they not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

MONTHS had passed since Fred had been taken from the Goldburgh jail and hurried away to a place of safety. Since that time he had waited in a close, ill-ventilated prison for the time of his trial to come.

The out-door life which he had long known unfitted him for the confinement, and illness was the result ; and when he at last emerged from his cell his nearest friends would scarcely have recognized him, so changed was his appearance. A heavy growth of beard, added to the prison pallor on his features, made him seem older by years.

On being brought to trial, he found to his great surprise that the specific charge alleged against him was child-stealing. He pleaded not guilty, and told his story in a straightforward

way, and as no witnesses appeared for the prosecution, the result was a speedy acquittal.

But kidnapping was not the crime for which the mob that he had so narrowly escaped had sought to forestall the law.

As he reached the door of the court-room after his discharge he was accosted by a young man whom he had noticed among the spectators, and whose face seemed to wear a strangely familiar look.

Frederic Barton, his Christian name, was the one which he had given in court, and it was by this name that he was now addressed. Fred bowed inquiringly.

"This way, sir," answered the young man, whose slight, boyish figure was in strong contrast to Fred's tall form. There was no air of mystery about this new acquaintance, but, on the contrary, a brisk, matter-of-fact manner, which again seemed familiar. The two went down the street together like old friends, but not another word was said until they were clear of the crowd that had filled the court-house. For here, as in the more highly cultured portions of our country, there existed among large masses of the people of both sexes that morbid, depraved taste for the tainted streams of criminal proceedings, which makes the court-room the resort of crowds who oftentimes see and hear

that which were better unknown, and which none who are pure-minded will needlessly encounter.

When Fred and his companion had turned the corner, the latter quickened his steps, saying:

"A little faster now; there is no time to be lost."

"What do you mean?" asked Fred.

"Wait a little and I will explain," was the quiet answer. A moment later the little fellow suddenly darted into an alley leading from the main street, and, motioning his companion to follow, entered a tumble-down building a few steps from the entrance. Fred followed, wondering not a little what the next proceeding would be.

The two had scarcely reached the interior when a company of horsemen galloped furiously up the street which they had just left.

"That was a pretty close run," said Fred's companion, shaking his head to one side with a quick, jerking motion; "too close to be very pleasant. Those fellows are after you," he continued. "They are the same gang that Tuttle snatched you away from at Goldburgh. I wish you were there in jail this minute: you'd be safer than you are. But if the hounds have numbers and keen scent, the fox has cunning,

and we'll see what that can do for you. You may trust me," he went on; "I know of one or two good hiding-places, and a few tricks in the way of disguises. By the way, I reckon you have not changed a great deal since those fellows saw you last—the leaders I mean, for I'll venture some of them never set eyes on you."

"Yes, I must look somewhat differently," replied Fred; "I was closely shaven then, and had some flesh on my bones," he added, with a laugh.

"Capital!" exclaimed the other; "so much the better for you. Give me your hat and take this. Now watch through the window on this side, and after I have climbed over the fence on the right I'll drop my handkerchief to mark the spot; do you shoulder that sack of corn and come after me; but go in on the left. Walk slowly and deliberately, so that if any one of them should see you he will not feel it incumbent upon him to follow you. We'll be obliged to take every precaution for both our sakes. If they get you this time they will make quick work of you; and if I am caught at this trick it will not be very pleasant for me. When you reach the house, just open the door and go in as if you were at home. There is no one there; it is a kind of den where I keep house by myself when I am in town."

He went out, and Fred watched his new friend as he strode away with a bundle of hay under his arm. He walked with the air of one who was a little tired, and taking out his handkerchief wiped his face just before climbing the fence. He seemed to stuff the article hastily into his pocket, but Fred saw it fall to the ground.

He now took up the sack of corn, and found that his friend's caution about walking slowly was altogether unnecessary. He had not realized his weakness before.

Bowing under the load, it required his utmost strength to stagger along. As he made his way slowly and painfully he heard the clatter of horses' hoofs behind him, and presently a couple of mounted men passed him at full gallop. They glanced at him, and, dashing on, disappeared. It was not long before they wheeled and came back at full speed, drawing up their panting horses just before Fred.

"Did you see a tall, baby-faced fellow in a black sombrero, and a little dapper chap in a rather broad-brimmed drab felt hat, something like your own, pass along here?" asked one.

"Nay," answered Fred.

"Are you sure you did not?"

"Very sure," answered Fred.

The two horsemen exchanged a word or two

about feeling certain that they were on the right track.

“Will you swear that you don’t know where the fellows are that we are hunting?” asked the other man.

“Nay, friend,” answered Fred, “I will not swear. I have told thee that two persons answering to thy description have not passed me. Let that suffice thee.”

“What have you got in that sack?”

“Corn,” was answered.

“Where are you taking it?”

“Even to the house beyond.”

“Take it along then,” answered one of the men. “Come on, Phil, we are only losing time,” and away they clattered.

When Fred reached the house, panting and exhausted, he found it empty, and he sat down, bewildered and feeling like one in a dream.

The description given by the horseman of the “baby-faced” individual whom they were seeking brought to his mind the little child who was seldom absent from his thoughts. He wondered where he was now, and who had charge of him. He wondered if he had quite forgotten the “F’ed” of whom he was once so fond, or if he would remember him should he again see him. This thought reminded him of his altered appearance, and rising he went

to a small mirror hanging on the opposite wall.

What a transformation! The face that looked from the little carved frame was so unlike his own that he himself would not have recognized it, had he not known that it was the reflection of his own countenance.

A little later his friend entered by another door.

"Well, we have doubled again on the hounds," he said, recurring to his former simile. "You must get away from Plainville as quickly as possible, but we must not be too hasty or we will fail entirely. I'll tell you now, those fellows think you are Alf Lambert, who killed Charley Wakeham three years ago out at Cedar Town. That is what they were going to hang you for before. That is what they are going to hang you for now, if they can catch you.

"I know that you are not the man, for I took a good look at you in the court-room. Your forehead and eyes are no more like his than mine are. But an angel from heaven couldn't convince those fellows!"

The speaker paused and sighed heavily, apparently over the obduracy of men who claimed to be so much wiser than others.

"The officers of the law are on the track of the real man," the speaker resumed, "and they will convince them in due time. In the mean-

time you must be kept dark. If they would let whisky alone for a little while they might be more like men and less like wild beasts. But we must work while we are resting," he continued. "Do you clean this revolver and load it carefully, and I will look up your outfit. I wish you weren't quite so tall," eying his companion's long limbs critically. "I could let you have a suit that would match better with the silk hat which I used to wear at a softer period of my existence, thinking thereby to add a trifle to my respectability as well as to my height. But never mind; gentlemen in seedy apparel often wear silk hats."

Fred laughed heartily at this cool allusion to his shabby appearance, but the other looked as grave as a judge.

He brought the hat, together with a cane, which he said also belonged to the "soft period," and might be useful in an emergency.

"Stand up and let me brush you off a little," he commanded, in an authoritative way.

"There, you look better," he concluded. "Now put the hat on so," setting it rakishly on one side. "Let me see if you can handle the stick. Swagger a little in your gait. There, that will do. Now you must have a cigar, and if anything should happen before you are off, don't forget your character—hist!"

Catching up the sombrero and the drab felt hat, he stuffed them, one after another, into a hole in the chimney which had been made to insert the stovepipe.

One after another, the two hats disappeared, and the little man was sitting with a preoccupied air by the window, examining the lock of an old rifle, when the door was unceremoniously opened and three men entered.

"See here, Simp," said one, who was apparently the leader, "stir out and help us a bit. I reckon you didn't know that the fellow they turned scot-free at the court-house to-day was the chap that killed Wakeham."

"No, that I didn't," answered the little fellow, springing to his feet. "Where did he go?"

"He's lurking in this very neighborhood, according to some of the bystanders who saw him leave the court-house with another man. If we had been ten minutes sooner we would have met them at the very door."

"If Alf Lambert is in this neighborhood he'll find it no safe harbor," was the reply, as the host took a cap from a peg near where he was sitting when the men entered.

"Excuse me a bit," he added, with a quiet nod to the tall man in the silk hat who was lazily puffing a cigar. The tall man bowed,

and his friend went out with the new-comers and did not return until late in the evening.

Fred had looked the picture of easy indifference to the fate of any when the Vigilantes left the house; but before they had gone many rods in their search he was walking the floor excitedly in spite of his weakness and weariness. Was it fear—this emotion which affected him so powerfully? Was it this second narrow escape from the mob which was blindly seeking his life that so aroused him?

Could it be fear which brought the hot flush to the face so pale but a little while before? No, there was no fear in the emotions which struggled for the mastery. His thoughts were far away from his present surroundings, and the remorse and pain of prison experience returned. The sins of his youth again rose up before him to torment him. Though forgiven and mentioned no more by his heavenly Father, they still remained indelibly recorded on the page of his life's history.

Darkness had fallen over all things and shadows filled the room when his friend returned. He came in alone with a lantern in his hand, and smiled in a knowing way as he caught his visitor's eye.

"I have been gone a good while," he said, "but I got off from the fellows as soon as I

could, on the plea that you and I were planning an excursion. I guess there was no falsehood in that, eh?"

"No, I think not," answered Fred.

"Well, then," continued the bustling little fellow, "now we must hurry up and get everything arranged and get some sleep so as to start early in the morning—after daylight, though, for if there is no danger of your being recognized, the more of those fellows that see us off the better. I've got two of the fastest horses in the country—Neptune, the one I intend for your riding, can swim anything in the way of water that you will be likely to meet with this side of the Pacific. I tell you this now, because I may forget it in the morning. Keep him as long as you need him, and bring him or send him back when you have done with him and can do so safely. And now—wait, let me make my suggestions first," he said, as Fred was about to speak; "you haven't much money, I'll venture. Put this in your pocket. I'll trust you to return it when it is convenient, and in the meantime I shall not need it—why, man, what is the matter? You are not above taking a favor from a fellow who may need the same at your hands any day, are you?"

Fred had covered his face with his hands. He did not speak for some time. At last he lifted

up his head and looked steadily at the one who had proved so true a friend to him in this extremity.

“You are too kind and disinterested,” he said, “to incur so much trouble and risk for a stranger whom you may never see again. You must be a true follower of Christ. But before accepting your kindness further, I want you to tell me something about yourself, if you have no objection, and how you came to take it into your head to do this for me. Do you know who I am?”

“No, that I do not,” replied the other, “but I do know that you are innocent of the crime charged against you, that of killing Charley Wakeham. Yes, I’ll tell you something about myself, if you wish,” he added, after a little pause. “But it is quite a long story; just wait till I get us a bit of supper, and then we will have the narrative before retiring.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A PAGE FROM A LIFE'S HISTORY.

“Avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.”

“I WILL make my story as short as I can,” began the narrator, “for the incidents which I am going to tell you are pleasant neither to hear nor to tell. They took place far from here, in the town where I was born. I have often heard my mother say that my father was one of the most steady, upright, industrious men in the community at the time when they were married; and I can remember him as a kind, indulgent father, providing comforts in abundance for all of us. But there came a time in my childish recollection—it came suddenly and without warning—when everything was changed.

“Of course the change was really gradual, but the knowledge of the terrible truth found my little sister and myself entirely unprepared for the blow.”

The hitherto careless face of the young man became strongly agitated, and he interrupted his story to say in a fierce tone: "If there be justice in earth or heaven, those who bring about these changes that seem like a transition from paradise to perdition, will be sorely punished! In place of abundance of food, there was continual hunger. In place of comfortable clothing, there was cold and nakedness. In place of love and kindness, there were blows and curses.

"My childhood, from that time, was one of labor and privation such as would have taxed the strength of a strong man. I have been called 'The Little Giant' in raillery, on account of my diminutive stature. I tell you I was dwarfed by hard work and hunger combined. But the hardest part was seeing my mother and my little sister suffer for the common necessities of life, while the families of those who had been the cause of the hardness of our lot were living in luxury. I was tempted in those days to the commission of arson, theft and murder! Had it not been for my mother and a friend who used often to share her scanty earnings with us, I had not been here perhaps, to tell you this story.

"But I have not come to the worst. One of the principal wholesale liquor-dealers had started two or three saloons, and what with one bait and another, he lured in every man whom he

could lay clutches on, and then plied them with a kind of stuff that not only intoxicated, but made demons of those who drank it. And while his well-dressed boy had plenty of pocket-money to spend, and a chance to get an education, I was obliged to do odd jobs wherever I could get them, and rarely knew what it was to have a sufficient meal."

The narrator paused, and after a time began again with apparent effort.

"Well, I am skirting around the hardest part of my story; but I may as well tell it, and have done with it.

"While in a state of drunken fury, my father shot and killed a man in front of the saloon where he had got the poison. He was arrested, and, after lying in jail for some time, was tried and found guilty of murder in the first degree, and sentenced to be hung.

"Can you imagine how a boy old enough to understand, would feel, fighting with the wolf of poverty day after day, under the shadow of such a cloud? I might make a few cents here and there, perhaps a dollar now and then, and have a comfortable fire and a good supper for myself and those at home; but there was always the skeleton at the feast, the horror that could not be forgotten. The time was drawing nearer and nearer when father was to be hung! And the

time came round too surely, and he was hung. You have read of such scenes often enough not to need any description of this particular one. I doubt whether I could describe it, though it is stamped plainly enough on my memory—the horrible details as they appeared in the columns of the newspapers—the farewell words, the adjusting of the black cap and the noose, the fall of the trap and all. It furnishes always the nightmare of my dreams, and I have lived it over oftener than I can tell.

“But this is unpleasant for you as well as for me,” he said, looking at Fred’s pale face, “and it is growing late too; I’ll hurry on to the end. I was a man from that awful time. I felt that I was aged, though still young in years. I went to work for the man who had ruined my father. I felt that I must earn a livelihood for my mother and sister, but underneath this purpose lay hidden another, scarcely known to myself, a steady purpose of revenge, how or when I knew not, but some time in the future.

“I was faithful in the discharge of my duties, was bringing comfort to those dependent on me; the opportunity had not yet come, but I was biding my time.

“I little knew what was before me. I thought it would be my turn to strike next; but there was yet another blow to fall on me. I was charged

with embezzling money from my employer, and sent to jail. You have been imprisoned unjustly, and you need not that I should tell you my feelings. I was offered my liberty if I would confess; but I had no confession to make, and the weary days went by. I will hurry on to the close. I escaped from the jail wrapped in the cloak of my liberator, who bravely remained behind to meet what fate she might.

“The next day my innocence came to light. The son of my employer had been the thief and had thrown the suspicion on me, or at least had allowed it to rest where it had fallen. Being obliged, on account of some other rascality, to run away from home, he left a letter of confession. He no longer needed me as a substitute to lie in jail and bear the privation and disgrace of theft in his stead, since he was out of reach, and so he nobly confessed!” added the speaker with intense bitterness.

“I vowed to revenge myself on both father and son if occasion ever offered. I believe the old man is dead now. I have heard that he died in the ditch, as he deserved; but if his son is living, and I ever come in contact with him, let him look out!”

There was silence for some time. Each seemed wrapped in his own thoughts. At last Fred spoke.

"But you have not told me what prompted you to perform the great service which you have rendered me," he said in a tone that was so unlike his own that his companion turned and looked at him curiously.

"Why, don't you see?" he said. "I have a fellow-feeling for the wrongfully accused and friendless. And then my foster-sister, the one who let me out of jail, made me promise at the time that I would always try to help the oppressed."

"Have you ever thought," asked Fred, "that a time might come when your promise of succor and your vow of revenge might conflict with each other?"

There was a little start.

"What do you mean?" was asked.

"I mean," responded the other unwaveringly, "that the time for your revenge has come. It is just and right that you should know whom you are harboring and befriending with your means and at the risk of your life. You are Simpson Harris—"

"And you?" asked the other breathlessly.

"I am Fred Rader!"

There was an interval of silence pierced only by the chirp of the crickets, and the two men looked into each other's faces long and earnestly; then, without a word, Simpson Harris, for he

had not disowned the name, rose from his chair, and went out hastily, closing the door behind him.

Ah! what a powerful illustration was here, of the helplessness of the unregenerate soul to cope with temptation. This man had admirable qualities. He was brave and kind. He had proved his willingness to risk his property and even his life in the interests of another having no claims upon him, save the common claims of humanity and misfortune. He was a philanthropist, but he was not a Christian. He had many times performed noble, helpful deeds of kindness, but he had held out against the persuasions of his mother and sisters, "not to leave the other undone."

Now the Master had, as it were, come to him in person with the message: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you . . . that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Who was he that he should decree the death of this one, because of any offense against himself, cruel indeed, but committed when the perpetrator was a mere boy? Besides, was not this one himself under the shadow of the curse which had marred his own life?

Who was he that he should decide that the offender should be hurried out of the world at the hands of a cruel mob, who would put him to death for a crime of which he was innocent?

But then, he, the injured one, had waited all these years for his revenge, nursing his wrongs in all that time. Now the opportunity had come, and should he forego the vengeance which seemed prepared to his hand? What human power could have planned the circumstances which thus appeared to open the way before him?

Besides he might now take ample revenge without lifting his own hand against this one who had so wronged him, and whose conduct, together with that of his father, had cast a shadow across his own mother's life, which nothing in this world could ever lighten. His father had died on the scaffold. His grandmother had sunk under the burden of her grief; his mother ever rested under the unlifted cloud of the same great sorrow. His sister and himself could never forget that their father had been hanged for murder!

Had he not a right to this revenge? Did not his father's memory, coming back from the old, happy days that seemed so long ago, demand it?

As for Fred, he made no attempt to escape

from the house. He felt that if his late friend had turned to be his bitterest enemy, there was no hope for him. He felt that his own crime was not commensurate with the penalty that awaited him, in case of his betrayal; but then there was his father's sin looming up dark and terrible before him. This son had been made to suffer long and cruelly for his father's misdoing, and was he deserving of a better fate?

He did not hope for mercy at the hands of the one whom he and his had wronged so keenly; and yet he felt no fear as he sat there listening and waiting.

Other men had died for their own crimes and the crimes of others. Pardoned sinners had died bravely and fearlessly; and why should he doubt that strength would be given him if his time were near?

He thought of the baby, and prayed in his heart for its well-being and the protection of the great Father.

Then, resting his head on the table beside him, he slept as soundly as if a death the most terrible had not been threatening him; slept to dream of his mother and her prayers; to dream of meeting her in a fair, wide place, with the well-remembered smile on her face.

He never knew how long he had slept when he was awakened by the trampling of horses'

hoofs outside. He raised up his head and waited. Were they surrounding the house before entering, to prevent the possibility of escape?

Memory went back to his rescue from death at Quick Gulch camp, and then took in the fearful details of the danger that menaced him at the hands of Captain Ralph and his men, and later still, his rescue from the Vigilantes when they attacked the jail at Goldburgh. Would there be any interposition in his behalf to-night, or was his time at hand?

Ah, there had been interposition by him who has said: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

A little later Simpson Harris entered the house alone.

"Well, Fred," he began in a quick, embarrassed way, "you said a while ago that you thought I must be a Christian. I am afraid I am very far from being one; but the devil has been beaten this time. Let bygones be bygones; and now I think perhaps we had better take time by the forelock and get out of this before some of those fellows get on the scent again, and give us another call. The horses are waiting. It is too bad that you got no sleep!"

"I have slept, but you have not," answered Fred.

"I am all right," answered Simpson heartily.

“If you are ready, we’ll to the saddle and away before those rascals get a description of your face from some good-for-nothing reporter or other.”

As Simpson was about to extinguish the light, Fred grasped his hand.

“My friend,” he said earnestly, looking into his eyes, “you say you are not a Christian. Let me tell you then that you ought to be one. God has given you the nobleness of soul which you possess that it might be used in his service and for his honor and glory.”

Simpson made no reply except by a pressure of the hand which held his; and the two went out into the darkness together.

CHAPTER XV.

A PLACE OF REFUGE.

“A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. . . . He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favor than he that flattereth with the tongue. . . . Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend.”

FREDERIC RADER and Simpson Harris traveled for many miles without a word, each busy with his own thoughts, and the silence unbroken except by the sound of the horses' hoofs.

It was a journey long to be remembered by these two thus meeting after years of separation. A drizzling rain began soon after they had started, and continued without cessation during the entire night.

At last Simpson spoke :

“I am going to take you to a friend of mine who will harbor you as long as you may need to hide, and defend you with his life if necessary. You will find him rather a queer specimen; but just make up your mind to accept his eccentricities and humor them a little, and you

will get on splendidly together. Don't say anything about your acquaintance with me. I'll introduce you as my friend, and that will be all the passport you will need. There are only two in the family, the man, Black, and his sister, a girl ten or twelve years of age, who is equal to a newspaper reporter for finding out things far and wide. I'll venture she will be able to let you know when Alf Lambert is captured, and anything else you may want to learn. Don't appear in the least surprised at any of their peculiarities. They lived for a time among the Indians, which may account for much that will strike you as strange. The girl's name, for instance, is Raven Wing."

"That certainly sounds like an Indian name," remarked Fred.

"Yes, and it suits her admirably," replied Simpson. "Her hair is, I believe, the blackest I ever saw, and matches her eyes and complexion. Her brother generally calls her 'Raven;' but the Wing should not be lost from the name, for when it comes to a question of speed, you will almost be ready to believe that she can fly. She has a rifle of her own, and is as good a shot as you or I.

"We will reach the cabin just about daylight. Whatever the family may have for breakfast, partake heartily and insure a lasting welcome."

Sure enough, soon after surrounding objects began to be dimly visible in the early dawn, they emerged from what would have seemed to many a pathless woods into a clearing of considerable size, bearing evidence of careful cultivation. Smoke was seen curling from the chimney of a cabin near the forest, and a savory odor greeted the travelers' nostrils at nearly the same instant.

"I can smell that breakfast already," said Fred. "You told me to eat heartily; if it tastes as appetizing as it smells, there is no danger that I shall fail to do my part."

"Then you are sure to win the good-will of your host and hostess," answered Simpson.

"Hello! the house!" he vociferated, drawing rein just outside the yard. A couple of dogs answered the summons, barking threateningly.

Presently the door opened and a man made his appearance, his fine, intelligent face in strange contrast with his rude surroundings. But he paid no attention whatever to the saturated travelers sitting in their saddles just outside the bars; proceeding instead to administer a sound castigation to the dogs with a piece of rope. The animals retreated, yelping, to their kennel, and were pursued by a lecture from their master. How much of this they understood I will not undertake to say. At last the dogs gave a pro-

longed howl, and apparently somewhat mollified by this seeming token of intelligence, the man turned his attention to the waiting horsemen.

Judging by the quantity of words bestowed on the dogs, Fred expected a somewhat voluminous greeting when at last it should come; but in this he was mistaken. The man's volubility seemed to have been exhausted in his previous effort, and he met his guests with a taciturn air that would have done credit to a genuine son of the forest.

He let down the bars and motioned Fred and Simpson to ride up to the door, and, when they had dismounted, led away the horses, leaving the visitors standing at the threshold.

A moment later the door was thrown wide open, and a brown little hand, reaching from somewhere behind it, placed a couple of chairs invitingly before the tired riders.

"Damp morning," said a voice from somewhere, when the two had accepted the proffered accommodation.

"Very," answered Simpson.

"Too wet to travel last night unless there was much need," pursued the voice.

"There was much need," was the response. "I have brought my friend, Fred Rader, to stay with you for a while, and I want you to treat him as you would treat me."

"What is his name?" asked the girl, after the manner of a lawyer cross-examining a witness.

A light broke over Simpson's face. "Oh, you have heard!" he said. "I might have known. Well now, see here, Raven Wing," getting up and facing the girl, "this is the man the Vigilantes are after, but they are mistaken. He is no more Alf Lambert than I am. His name is Fred Rader. I knew him when we were boys."

"All right," answered the girl, emerging from her retired position and stealing a glance at her future guest, as she went out of the room for a few minutes, doubtless to inform her brother of their common mistake, and then proceeded with her preparations for breakfast.

A little later the man came in and the repast was served in a rude way, but heartily relished by the hungry men who had ridden all night in the rain.

Soon after breakfast Simpson took his leave, promising to come again at no distant day, and cautioning Fred to keep close to his shelter until he was certain he could venture forth with safety.

"Keep your eyes and ears open, Raven Wing," he said, significantly.

"Trust me for that," answered the girl heartily, her brother adding:

“Give yourself no uneasiness whatever.”

So Simpson, making his adieus all around, rode off and disappeared in the woods.

The first few days of Fred Rader's stay with Jerome Black and his sister sufficed to show him that they were a fearless pair, willing to encounter any peril in the cause of one whom they had pledged themselves to defend, but that they had little respect for the laws of man, and of the laws of God they seemed to know nothing.

Fred remembered Simpson's caution about conciliating these people by humoring their eccentricities; but his conscience warned him that he had no right to secure even his own life at the risk of the souls of those under whose protection he had placed himself. The Sabbath day was to them no more than any other day, as he soon gathered from their conversation. The first two, however, being rainy, were observed by remaining in the cabin.

The third Sunday which the refugee spent under the roof of his new home was one long to be remembered. He rose early, but on descending from the loft where he slept he found that the brother and sister had breakfasted already, and but for himself the house was empty.

Fred got his breakfast and waited, hoping they would soon return. He had made up his mind to do good as he had opportunity, and he intended to make an effort to persuade these two to join with him in regarding at least the letter of the command which requires us to keep holy the Lord's day. He hoped, without much difficulty, to induce them to abstain from labor at least. But the time passed on and the sun rose high, and neither Jerome nor his sister made an appearance.

At last, about noon, the brother came in sight with his axe on his shoulder. He had no doubt been chopping wood since early morning.

Now you will remember that Fred had not long been a Christian; and he had a career lying back of his reformation which rose up to confront him every now and then like an evil thing from which there was no escape. He knew that he was now a changed man in the sight of heaven, but when he thought of rebuking or admonishing others because of their sins, the mountain of his own past misdeeds would tower before him as if about to fall upon his head. He lost sight of the fact that it was not his own worthiness, but the righteousness of Christ of which he was to tell those who had need of righteousness.

Jerome Black came in with a swinging step,

and placing his axe in a corner of the cabin sat down in a tired way and wiped his forehead.

Here was this man toiling day after day, and cheerfully giving food and lodging to one whom he did not know, while he who was lately engaged in far worse employment than wood-chopping on the holy day was now being kindly cared for and saved from death at his hands.

Hospitality is enjoined in the Scriptures, and might not his errors be overlooked on the score of ignorance, and credit given him on the books of heaven for his generous kindness to the stranger?

We often meet with specious arguments somewhat akin to the above. Newspapers tell us every now and then of some heroic miner or engineer who has braved death in discharge of his duty to his fellow-men; and though he may have denied the Saviour, or never spoke the name of God except in blasphemy, they arraign the justice of a Deity who should refuse admittance to such an one into the abode of saints and angels.

Be not deceived by such arguments; they are suggested by the father of lies.

Fred Rader had been carefully taught, and he knew such reasoning to be contrary to the teaching of God's word; that if we offend in

one point we are guilty of all; that no praiseworthy action of ours can save us from the punishment due to our sin; that besides the name of Jesus there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

He knew that this man was ignorant of, or indifferent to, these things, and that it was his duty to speak plainly to him on the subject of his soul's eternal interests. He knew that the fact of his great indebtedness to the man made the duty all the more imperative; and yet he hesitated.

Why is it that the tongue, so lamentably quick to speak oftentimes when it were far better to keep silence, is so very slow to be heard when God commands its utterance?

Even Moses pleads, "Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice," when the Lord commands him to go and speak to his brethren. And again:

"O my Lord, I *am* not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I *am* slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

"And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be

with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

Is it any wonder that the Lord was angry with him when he still distrusted, and was lacking in confidence? for the distrust was distrust of God, and the lack of confidence was doubting the Most High.

Fred Rader, like many another, sat silent when he ought to have spoken. The hour of noon, the only hour of rest which his host allowed himself on this day which God has sanctified and set apart as holy, passed away, and Fred sat struggling with his convictions.

At last the Sabbath worker again took up his axe and went out, and his guest was left alone, self-condemned for having shrunk from what he knew to be his duty.

He thought, with shame and regret, that he had as good as denied his principles, and that delay had only made his task the harder.

He tried to read; but reminders of the duty which he had refused to perform seemed to rise up from every page, and altogether that Sabbath was far from being one of rest and refreshment.

I do not think that Fred's hesitation was in the least caused by fear for his personal safety in case he should offend his host. It was rather

that unreasoning, sinful disinclination to speak of the things of God.

He might have another opportunity—who could say? but as for the one which to-day he had failed to improve, it was lost forever!

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CHAPTER XVI.

LABOR IN THE VINEYARD.

MONDAY morning came, dark and rainy, and found none of the inmates of the cabin on the border of the forest in anywise refreshed or strengthened, either spiritually or physically, by the Sabbath which was past. Fred had lost much of its blessing by neglecting his duty: Jerome had spent the day in labor, and Raven Wing in roaming over the hills.

There are some in this age of so-called "advanced thinking" who would say that the girl did no wrong in spending the day in innocent recreation.

There are plans made and executed, for making it a kind of gala day for the working classes. The day is largely desecrated as a pleasure day by this and other classes, and this desecration is defended by some who seem to be good people. But let us beware.

We must not lose sight of the fact that God not only rested, but that he sanctified the Sabbath, and set it apart for holy uses.

It is not enough that we abstain from our ordinary labor on the Lord's day. We have no warrant for supposing that its obligations have been set aside.

Our Saviour's acts on the Sabbath, and his words: "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath," have often been brought forward as license for ignoring the sacred character of the day; but if those who catch so eagerly at these things were true followers of our one perfect pattern, they would see and acknowledge that the works of necessity and mercy which he performed, and for the condemnation of which he rebuked the Pharisees, cannot be truthfully urged as license for making the day one of mere pleasure-seeking.

There is much sounding talk of "good to the neighbor," in this age of active benevolence, and far be it from me to condemn philanthropy, one of the duties enjoined and practised by our Master himself; but let us see to it that the "good" we offer is real good. And let us not forget that our duty to our fellow-men cannot conflict with the duty which we owe to God—the duty of obeying his commandments.

An English artist has given us two pictures,—*"Sunday in a Gin Shop,"* and *"Sunday in a Picture Gallery,"* which, together with comments that have been written on them, afford a good

illustration of the tendency of the age to refined Sabbath-breaking, if I may so call it.

It is often urged that whatever is right and proper to be done on any day is fit for the Sabbath. Let us beware of such ideas. If God had thought so he would not have set apart one day in seven. Those who advocate such doctrine are grading the way gently, unknown perhaps to many who urge them, to the abolishment of the blessed institution which our wise and benevolent Father has set up and sanctified, and which no nation and no individual can violate and prosper.

Why should we think ourselves wiser than God? Why should we set up the flickering lamps of our reason, as better lights than the Sun of his omniscience?

Raven Wing had come home late in the evening with her rifle on her shoulder and half a dozen squirrels hanging to her belt. As for Fred, he had retired to his loft with the burden of duty unperformed weighing down his spirit.

He felt that he had been plainly admonished: "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," and that he had wickedly and undutifully answered, "I will not."

Afterward, with the darkness of night resting over the earth, and the memory of his dangers and

providential escapes rushing like a flood upon him, he wondered sadly whether he should be given another opportunity to do that which he had neglected; whether he might yet be able to do as that other of whom it is said that he refused at first, but afterward repented and went.

When he descended to the living room he found a smoking breakfast awaiting him. Whatever Raven Wing might have learned among the Indians she had certainly acquired the culinary art in a higher school. Her snowy bread and golden butter were always of the best, and this morning a dish of fried squirrel was sending forth a most savory odor mingled with the aroma of the coffee.

Fred's appetite was not at its best in these days, but there was still another reason for his declining to partake of the dish which the young hostess evidently regarded as the pride of her board. She pressed it upon him, and, when he still refused, she said, with a very genuine pout,

"You told me once that you were particularly fond of fried squirrel. Those were your very words!"

Tears of disappointment and anger at her guest's contrariness—for such she deemed it—rose to her eyes.

“But, Raven,” he said, “I can’t enjoy these because you broke the Sabbath in killing them. That was wrong. Sunday is not the day for working or hunting, you know.”

“No, I didn’t know!” she answered, with flashing eyes. “How should I know anything about it?”

Was it possible that this girl had never heard of the obligations of the Sabbath? He was more guilty than he had thought, for he had learned from the conversation of the brother and sister that they looked upon it in the same light as other days, and he had taken no pains to inform or enlighten them. Now the girl’s question came to him like an accusing messenger.

He was glad that Jerome had already breakfasted and gone out; he could speak more freely in his absence.

He told his companion how the Lord had rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, and had blessed and sanctified it and commanded its observance. And then he told the story of the wonderful life and death of him who rose from the dead on the first day, and became the first-fruits of them that slept.

He quite forgot himself in his theme as he had heard it again and again from his mother’s lips. And oh, the shame and self-condemnation with which he heard the accusing question,

"Why did you not tell me before?"

He had not expected so docile a pupil in the fearless forest child. Ah, how often in the fear of rejection do we keep back the truth from those who would be glad to receive it!

"Did you learn that from the book you read?" she questioned further. "If I could read, I might know something too. I have a book of my own," she continued in a bitter tone, seeming to mean that he had kept his all to himself, which had indeed been the case.

"I will be glad to teach you to read," answered Fred humbly, "and I will read my book to you, if you wish."

He had accepted the hospitality and kindness of these people, but what had he done for them in all the time that he had been under their roof? This rude child, who was growing to regard him as a brother, evidently felt that she had a grievance against him, and was it not indeed so? How would Jerome be pleased?

"Cannot your brother read?" he asked.

"Yes, he could if he would," answered the sister, "but I believe he hates books. I would like to learn, though. When will you show me how?"

She seemed to think that a few general directions would be all that was needed; and her first lesson proved rather discouraging. How-

ever, she announced her intention of "fighting it out," as if she considered her ignorance in the light of a wild beast that must be vanquished, though the combat were long and hard.

She had a lesson in the morning, and another in the evening, and then Fred turned over the leaves of the book from which he was teaching her to select a portion for the evening reading, which he had resolved to begin that night.

He felt very uncertain as to how Jerome would regard the liberty, but he felt that the word of God was powerful, far more powerful than any words which man might speak.

So he said: "With your leave I will read aloud a chapter or two." As no dissenting voice was heard, he searched for a suitable place. He hesitated. What portion should he select?

It was as if he was directed to the nineteenth Psalm. He commenced reading mechanically, but when his voice rose up on the passages: "The law of the Lord *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord *is* pure, enlightening the eyes;" the reader felt that the Author of the words was speaking to him as well as to his hearers, and that he could leave the Lord's seed without a fear that it would not grow.

When he came to the last verse, that comprehensive prayer of the Psalmist, he had forgotten the doubts with which he had entered upon this duty, forgotten the self-consciousness which had made him begin, filled with thoughts of himself and the probable effect of his action in this matter.

His thoughts and feelings had risen to a higher plane, and when the Psalm was ended, he had no thought of either himself or the others, except the thought that all were in the presence of God; and he said solemnly:

“Let us pray!”

He knelt down. He did not know or think whether the others knelt or not. One did; the other sat looking into the fire with his pipe between his lips. But “the word of God is quick, and powerful . . . a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

I have said that Raven Wing was discouraged at the greatness of the task of learning to read; but she did not give way to her discouragement. She rather redoubled her efforts with every new obstacle to be met.

If my young readers, to whom the ministrations of God's house, Sabbath school and day school are common things and sometimes regarded as tiresome, could witness the avidity

with which those long debarred from spiritual and intellectual privileges often accept truth when it is offered to them, they would prize their blessings more highly, and would also rejoice in aiding to spread the light in regions which lie in darkness.

Jerome Black had always treated Fred with a rough kindness, and had made him feel that he was heartily welcome to his hospitality; but there was a certain reserve about him, which was always maintained in his manner toward his guest, and in some degree toward his sister also. He never talked very freely to any one except his dogs, and this fact again struck the visitor as contradictory to his fine face and the genuine intelligence which now and then gleamed out of his conversation.

The sister had said that her brother could read, but Fred had never seen a book in the house, and Jerome seemed with scrupulous carefulness to burn every scrap of newspaper that found its way into the cabin.

Yet, while he took no part, ostensibly, in the lessons and devotional exercises morning and evening, he never absented himself, as Fred had feared he might do, and the laborer hoped and prayed that the lamp of God's truth might illumine his soul in the Master's own good time.

So the days passed by, and there was no more Sunday hunting on the part of Raven Wing. Jerome frequently took his gun or his axe and went out as before; but on going to the spring on one of these occasions, after he had been out for some time, Fred saw him sitting on a log with his elbows resting on his knees, and his chin in his hands, as if in deep study, while his axe lay beside him.

Another time Raven Wing said:

“ I do believe 'Rome is only pretending to chop wood on Sunday. I haven't heard his axe since he went out.”

On the evening of the same day Fred was reading from the prophet Ezekiel of the threatenings of the Lord against the house of Israel for their idolatry.

“ Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel and Job *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”

“ Who were Noah, Daniel and Job?” asked Raven Wing, with the quick curiosity of a learner.

So Fred told her the story of each, in the order in which they were mentioned; and the girl listened intently. The other hearer was

listening too, though he gave no sign. He had heard the stories before, but the narratives of the Bible have a power to interest—a perpetual freshness which no others possess.

What other book in all the world has been able so to bind the attention of unwilling hearers? has been able to transform and mould anew the hearts and lives of those who are ruled by its precepts?

It was not long before Raven Wing was familiar with many portions of the holy Book, and could also read in easy words herself. Yet she made no further reference to her own book, and took her lessons from Fred's as at the beginning.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WORK OF FALSE TEACHERS.

“Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!* and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts.”

RAVEN WING proved as valuable a scout as Simpson Harris had represented her. She went on an investigating tour every now and then, returning with items of information that could not but prove interesting to Fred Rader, thus shut away from all other communication with the outside world. He asked his messenger to bring him a newspaper several times, but she always said she forgot it.

She went to Goldburgh and saw the baby occasionally, reporting on her return with whom he was, how he looked, how he was dressed, and what he was doing. But she always brought the unwelcome information that Alf Lambert had not yet been captured.

Poor Raven Wing! She had learned many passages from God's word, and showed a willingness to accept its teaching; but she had grown

up so grossly ignorant that her ideas as yet were often darkly confused. She had given up Sabbath work, and really seemed to be trying to observe the day properly, but she had no right conception of him who has said, "Ye shall be holy : for I the Lord your God *am* holy."

A wiser teacher than Fred might have led her more directly to the true source of all good, the Saviour of sinners.

As yet the girl's reformation was but the lopping off of the branches ; the giving up of some sinful habits, while the heart remained unregenerate. Jesus has said : "The tree is known by its fruit."

Thus while Raven Wing was earnestly trying to overcome her ignorance and to do as she was taught, she was yet harboring deceit in her heart. The coming of Fred to the lonely home had opened a new life for her, compared with which the old seemed too monotonous and dreary to be borne.

She had never realized how silent and unsocial her real brother was before this new one came, who paid her for all her labor for him in cheerful appreciation of her efforts on his behalf ; who taught her so kindly, and entertained her with stories of life in a part of the world of which she had never heard before.

She did not want to go back to the old, dull

life before he came, so she brought back, whenever she returned home, the intelligence that the murderer had not yet been taken, and this too without having made any inquiries concerning the matter.

So the days passed by and Fred remained in hiding, when he might have gone fearlessly wherever he wished. The real offender had been captured and duly identified, and the resemblance between the two men was found to rest almost wholly upon the fact that both were slender and considerably above medium height.

Such is the groundless evidence upon which ungoverned passion is ready to inflict summary punishment. Alas for that country or section where unreasoning impulse takes the place of cool, unbiased judgment; where men (and women, too, with shame be it said) raise their voices unsparingly against the barely suspected to-day, and pet and lionize the well-known bandit and desperado to-morrow!

The delay was trying Fred's patience sorely. He was glad to do what he might for the two who so kindly harbored him; but yet he grudged every day, yes, every hour, which he lost in hiding from the lawless men who had been ready to put him to death for another's crime.

How much time had elapsed since the baby had been taken out of his charge! And the longer the effort was postponed, the harder it would be, he thought, to establish his lawful claim to the child.

One day, on her return from Goldburgh, Raven Wing told him that she had seen "the little fellow riding on a little Indian pony," with the fine gentleman who always stayed at the Grand Hotel. "He sat up in his little saddle like a man!" she said, enthusiastically; but her information did not seem to please her listener, as she had evidently expected that it would.

He sat in a listless way, resting his head on his hand, and appeared to be in a deep study.

She watched him with her keen eyes for a little while, a dark expression coming over her face.

"He is doing very well!" she said, impatiently, after a little. "I don't see why you should worry about him. He could not be better taken care of. He has plenty of people to look after him and everything he wants!"

But Fred did not reply.

"He doesn't need you half as much as I do!" she burst out at length, her dark, flashing eyes brighter for their tears.

Fred looked up in surprise.

“Oh, I don’t intend to forsake you,” he said, making an effort to speak comfortingly. “You have been too kind; you have proved too good a little sister to me in my trouble to allow me to desert you when the danger shall be past. But the baby needs me too. I have no doubt that he is well fed and clothed, and has plenty to amuse him; but it hurts me to think of his growing up with those people. They have no regard for what is right, and if he is left in their hands, I doubt not he will turn out a gambler, like the fine gentleman with whom you see him so often.

“That man is utterly bad, in spite of his good looks and fine clothes. Don’t you think it would be a dreadful thing for that little child to grow up to break the Sabbath, play cards, swear and lie?”

“Oh, yes,” answered the girl, but not very heartily. Then she was silent, and Fred seemed again lost in thought.

“It is no harm to tell a lie for good,” she said presently. She did not make her statement interrogatively, but in a dogmatic way, which seemed to challenge contradiction. The hard look deepened on her face, and her features were pale as with repressed emotion.

Fred answered, very softly:

“The Bible says: ‘Lie not one to another. . . .

Speak every man truth with his neighbor;’ and, ‘All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.’”

If Raven Wing had sometimes puzzled Fred with her quick, passionate ways, he was completely astonished now, as with one bound she sprang out of the room and was gone.

Hour after hour passed and yet she did not return. The dinner hour approached, and laying aside the basket-weaving, with which he had been employed, he prepared the meal with what skill he was master of.

At noon Jerome came in from his work. He made no allusion to his sister’s absence for some time. At last, when the meal was concluded, he asked, indifferently: “What started Raven racing up the mountain as if the Sioux were after her?”

Fred hesitated but a moment.

“We were having a little discussion about the sin of lying,” he said, “and I gave her some texts on the subject which must have excited her, I think.”

The brother nodded, but said nothing. However, he still sat in the cabin beyond the hour of nooning, and seemed constantly about to say something and then to repress himself. He shifted his position uneasily, crossing his right leg over his left, and then reversing the posture.

His dogs, which were nearly always in the house when he was there, fawned about him unnoticed. He often caressed and played with them during the Scripture readings, and Fred thought sometimes that he sought thus to show his contempt, or at least his indifference, to the words which were being read. But to-day he paid no attention to the efforts of his canine friends to attract his notice, and at last, to Fred's surprise, he put them both out and ordered them away to their kennel. It was the first time his host had done so since the morning of his own arrival.

"I want to ask you," he said directly, in a way that was entirely foreign to his usual manner, "if you accept everything in the Bible as true and binding."

"I certainly do, sir," answered Fred, unhesitatingly. "I accept it all as true, and all as binding, except the observances which were symbolical of Christ's sacrifice, and which are of course done away by his one perfect sacrifice. There are a great many things that I don't understand, but I think it is a dangerous thing to reject any part of God's word."

Something seemed to tell him that this man was more familiar with the Bible than himself, and he expected a well-planned attack, in which skillful sophistry should appear in the garments

of truth. But his questioner was silent for a moment. He walked to the door and looked out, as if he were afraid of a listener.

“There is something about the book that makes it unlike all others,” he admitted, on resuming his chair. “You would never guess, I suppose, that I am a minister’s son, and that I graduated at an Eastern college with a view to my studying for and entering the same profession. You would never guess that I even took part of my theological course—you need not answer. I can read your reply in your countenance. I never intended to tell my story to any one,” he went on, “but my conscience gives me no peace. It is all because of those Bible readings. I would avoid hearing them if I could. The words come to me as from Mt. Sinai, or the very heavens themselves. I’ll tell you how I came to be where I am and what I am. I was brought up carefully, and taught the right way by both example and precept, but while in college I read a deal of stuff which I had better have left alone.

“The Sabbath question, and other questions of the same kind, were agitated about that time in the so-called liberal spirit that is always ready to grant a hearing to and admit the honesty and sincerity of cavils against all good. I listened to the specious arguments of those who talked

wilily of the Sabbath as being intended as a day of rest and recreation ; of the treadmill life of the working classes, and the inhumanity of requiring or expecting them to spend the day in Sabbath school and church ; of the pure and innocent pleasures which no man should wish to debar them from on this their one day of freedom from the shackles of labor. There was much of this apparent philanthropy that came gushing as from hearts overflowing with love to the race, seasoned and spiced with an occasional spiteful fling at the church and its efforts.

“ It is very easy for the young and ignorant to imbibe the views of such men, because the natural inclinations of the heart are in their favor. There were also pleas for the children—poor innocents, whom puritanical parents and friends curbed and restrained from doing just as they chose on the Sabbath ; and I swallowed it all, until my ‘liberality’ grew apace and I began to think that such parents and teachers were living examples of fanatical cruelty and ignorance.

“ Of course, having espoused such views, I was not long in carrying them out in my life. I was called in question for some of my loose conduct, and so flung aside all restraint and took my stand boldly on the ‘liberal’ platform. My father’s godly life and labors, my mother’s lessons and prayers, were set aside as well meaning

but mistaken things, and I hastened to drink my fill of the stream that was so much sweeter to my carnal taste than the 'still waters' which I had not learned to love—I say I espoused these views. My inclinations accepted them as incontrovertible, but my judgment was unable to endorse them, and protested every now and then against the lie which I was trying to believe. I am no Christian, but I see it all now; I have seen it for years, though I have shut my eyes against the light.

“With myself and the companions I chose, Sunday excursions and other diversions became the order of the day. No one seemed to reflect that the laborers on the steamers and trains, and the wearied-out mothers and tired, cross children that returned, were startling contradictions of the 'rest and recreation' theory. There was often drunkenness and ruffianism, too, but these seemed to be quietly accepted as a part of the enjoyment.

“I could not feel quite free from the pricks of conscience; I had been brought up so differently; but I salved over my wounds with the frequent sight of church members among the Sabbath-breakers, and went on.

“In spite of the good company which I tried to believe I was in, there was one text which my father taught to me before I was able to read,

which I have never been able to forget, which came to me then, and has come to me, I believe, with every Sabbath I have violated :

“ ‘ If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable ; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it.*’

“ I did not then believe, nor do I now, that this passage was intended only for the Jews ; and I knew why I had not been made to ride upon the high places ; why I had not delighted in the Lord. I knew that religion had proved distasteful to me because my heart was not right.

“ The labors of those who have tried so earnestly to pervert the Saviour’s words to their own gross and sensual ideas failed really to convince me. I knew, and I could not forget, that his example was all that the most careful observer of the Sabbath could desire for a model ; that the works of healing and common humanity which he performed, and those of necessity

which he sanctioned, were as far removed from the license claimed for the day as the heavens are removed from the earth.

“Again, I had sense enough to know that a certain amount of discipline is necessary not only to the welfare but to the happiness of human beings, and that true pleasure does not consist in the unrestricted indulgence of our natural desires, and I knew that the men who talked most loudly about the tyranny and cruelty of restraint in the matter of Sabbath observance were as well aware of the fact as I.

“Yet, strange as it seems, I went on, and from being a liberalist, I had not far to go to infidelity. I attended infidel lectures, read infidel books, and sneered with the rest at all things holy, because, forsooth, there were some things which I could not understand, and called all Christians hypocrites because some church members were not the shining lights which they should have been.

“I found what was called great liberality here also, but it was a liberality which turned all one way. It was often said that ‘a man had a right to his sincere opinion.’ The wiser of them knew that this was untrue. No man has a right to believe and propagate a lie if the truth is within his reach.

“You will not need to be told the steps by

which I descended from the position which I once occupied to that in which you find me to-day. My parents were long since laid to rest, and, bringing my little sister out here, I have lived as if there were no God, and have tried to believe the lie, guarding against everything that could shake my fancied security.

“And what a security! I would not, were it mine, exchange the peace and joy in which my father and mother died, for all that free thinkers can offer multiplied a thousand-fold!”

He ended abruptly and went out, leaving Fred in a stupor of surprise.

The case of Jerome Black is not an isolated one. The grade by which he descended is a most easy and natural one. The Sabbath is of greater importance than the masses of the people ever imagine. Were its observance abolished, the evil results would soon be felt by those who are laboring most assiduously for its destruction. The man, the community, the nation that ignores or tramples upon the laws of God can only descend lower unless arrested by divine grace and brought to repentance and back into the right way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE.

“ But let patience have *her* perfect work.”

IT was late in the afternoon when Raven Wing returned. She looked tired and dejected, and kept her eyes cast down until she made the discovery that the cabin was deserted.

Then she began preparation for supper, as if nothing unusual had occurred.

Fred had followed Jerome when he went back to his work, and the two had spent the greater part of the afternoon in conversation. As they came in together, Raven Wing glanced at them furtively, and noticed that her brother's face was even more grave than usual, and that Fred's wore an earnest, pre-occupied look.

The girl pouted a little that no reference was made to her absence, but was somewhat pacified by her guest's praise of some of her tea-table dainties.

The three were unusually silent during the evening that followed. Instead of the usual

lively chat that made the otherwise unwelcome task of washing the tea things pass so quickly to the young housekeeper, the owls were distinctly heard hooting in the near forest, and the crickets had it all to themselves in the cabin.

But after the evening work was done, Raven Wing had her regular lesson, and then Fred read the parable of the prodigal son, and other portions of the holy Book.

Jerome retired soon after the exercises were over, and his sister and Fred sat looking into the glowing bed of coals as if each was reading there something of absorbing interest. Fred was thinking of the story which he had heard, and comparing it with his own.

The two were alike and yet different. They were both records of wandering from the right path. The one had abandoned himself to evil; the other had prided himself on his morality and philanthropy, but had insulted and defied his Maker. Would he also come back to the good way, since he knew that way so perfectly?

As Fred was about to go to his room, Raven Wing turned suddenly, and, jerking out the words as if with a great effort, exclaimed:

“They have caught Alf Lambert and are trying him over at Cedar Hill Court-House.”

Her voice had a hoarse, unnatural tone, and

the distress on her young face was pitiful to see, as she started to hurry out of the room.

“Wait a minute, please,” Fred said kindly but firmly; “I want to thank you for finding it out—”

“I have known it this long while,” she interrupted with an attempt at a defiant air; but her voice broke on the words.

“Then I want to thank you for making up your mind to tell me,” he answered.

“I didn’t make up my mind: I was just obliged to do it!” she burst out.

“Ah, well,” said Fred indulgently, laying his hand on her tangled black hair, “then I want to ask you, should I succeed in getting the baby if I may bring him here for a while, and if you will help me to take care of him.”

He saw her face brighten a little, but she only nodded her head; she seemed afraid to trust her voice.

The next day found Fred Rader at Goldburgh. He thought, as he made his way fearlessly along the streets at noonday, of the time he was there last; of the silent midnight march; of the masked guard which had attended him; of the one unhidden familiar face of which he had caught one glimpse as he was hurried on board the train. He longed for another glance at that

face, but he felt that there was no time to be lost. And yet, perhaps it would be his best plan to see Grant Lucas before taking any steps toward the recovery of the child.

He considered for a moment, and then turned his feet in the direction of Thunder Gap, and in due time was welcomed by his old friends with a heartiness which was unmistakably genuine.

After dinner Fred and Grant strolled off together, and the steps of both involuntarily turned toward the little grave in the edge of the wood where the wild flowers bloomed and the wild birds sang.

Fred could not help remembering sadly Grant's last words to him in their former interview at this spot:

"I will believe in Heaven's mercy toward me when my dead come back to my arms."

The two men sat down near the stone, and, though neither spoke of the subject of the previous conversation, the thoughts of both were busy.

Then they talked of Fred's midnight escape from the Vigilantes, and he related his last adventure, and ended by announcing his determination to devote himself now to the work of getting possession of the baby, and asked his friend what course he would advise.

Grant Lucas evidently did not share the en-

thusiasm and hopefulness of Fred, and his long delay in replying was rather trying to the patience of the latter, who, having been hindered so long, was anxious to begin his work at once.

"Well," Grant answered at length, "if you can prove by a competent witness that Mrs. Gills gave the child to you, I suppose all that will be necessary will be to produce said witness or his or her affidavit to the fact. Otherwise I fail to see how you can succeed. Was any one present?"

Fred had thought this all over, but he had hoped there might be some other way. There was one witness to the dying mother's legacy—the nurse who had taken care of her and had closed her eyes at the last, but who and where was this young woman?

He was in despair, almost, when he reflected how long the impressible little one had been in possession of the people who now claimed him, and was impatient of further delay.

"I have no idea where to look for this witness. I did not hear her name and I might advertise for years without avail. I would take the child by force if I had an opportunity. It would be doing a good thing: they have no right to him!" he said warmly.

"Right or wrong, you would only get yourself into fresh trouble," answered Grant quietly.

It seemed to Fred that his friend was lacking in interest in the matter, and a feeling of disappointment and something very like resentment, took possession of him.

But then came the thought of the little sleeper near them, and of that other one who also rested in a nameless grave, and his feelings softened.

“So far as means go, or any kind of legitimate help, rely on my assistance,” spoke Grant, as if reading his companion’s thoughts. “I have taken care of the money you left with me, and you are also welcome to draw on mine if you need it, but don’t do anything irregular, if you can help it, Fred.”

“I ought not to require warning against such a course,” answered Fred humbly. “Many thanks for your advice and offers of help. But I am wasting your time as well as my own. I’ll advertise for the young woman who nursed Mrs. Gills, and offer a reward. In the meantime I must see the child. I feel as if I could not wait another day!”

A moment later he was sorry he had spoken so. Here by his side was one who had been compelled to wait not only days but months and years.

The two friends parted at the little grave. Many and great changes took place before they met again.

Fred's desire to see the child was soon gratified. He went directly to the Grand Hotel, and in the evening he saw Mrs. Pope descending the steps, holding the little fellow's hand in hers, and listening to his childish talk with seeming interest.

"And I struck him with my riding whip," he heard the child say.

"And did he then stand out of your way?" she asked, laughing.

The childish face grew grave:

"No," he said, "I hurted his face and made it bleed, and then I was sorry. Nurse told me it was wrong to strike him, and it hurted me too, when I saw the blood, and I gave him my—"

Fred did not understand from the child's confession what it was that he had given to make amends for his fault; but Mrs. Pope was evidently much displeased.

"Then you may stay at home, Victor. You were a very naughty boy to give your beautiful, gold-mounted whip to a dirty little beggar boy," she said severely.

The child clung to her rich dress, but she pulled it loose from his hand.

"You shall not go: you are a very naughty boy," she repeated, and pushing him aside petulantly, she entered the carriage and was driven

away, leaving the little fellow standing on the pavement crying bitterly.

There seemed to be no one near, and Fred approached.

“Poor baby!” he said tenderly.

The child stopped crying and looked at him curiously. It was now several months since the two had met, and Fred knew that his appearance was greatly changed; yet his voice and his words seemed to strike a half-forgotten chord in the little one’s memory.

“Poor baby!” he repeated.

“My name’s Victo’,” said the boy in his childish way; but he allowed his former protector to take him upon his knee, and listened in an eager way to a story which he used to delight to hear when he was the baby of the camp.

“The little birds quarreled, and the biggest little bird—” Fred stopped and looked at the listener. He lifted his blue eyes and waited.

“What did the biggest little bird do?” asked Fred.

“You tell,” said the child.

“No, you tell,” answered Fred, smiling. “The little birds quarreled, and the biggest little bird—”

There was a moment’s pause in the narrative, and then—“Pushed the little baby bird out of

the nest!" supplemented the child, clapping his hands.

"I know 'at story!" he said triumphantly.

"Who told you?" pursued Fred.

"W'y—w'y—nurse, I dess it was," he said after a moment.

"Wasn't it Fred?"

The child gave a little start.

"F'ed!" he exclaimed, repeating the name in his babyish fashion, "w'ere is F'ed?"

"Would you like to see Fred?"

"You ain't F'ed," he said in a confused way. "I'd like to see F'ed better than to ride on my pony!" he added earnestly.

"Well, Fred will come to see you soon," was answered, as the young man put the child down and went up to his room.

Later in the evening, when he made his appearance, the razor had restored to his face its old appearance, and the child recognized him at once. Sliding down from Mr. Chickham's knee, he was making his way to the side of his foster-father. But Mrs. Pope had recognized him also.

"Victor, Victor," she called out sharply, "come here!"

The little fellow stopped half way and looked in a pleading manner at Fred.

"Come here when your mamma calls you," said Mr. Pope, stamping his foot.

But Fred had held out his hands, and with a bound the child sprang into his arms. In that moment it was hard to indorse Grant Lucas' advice. His inclinations urged him to carry the boy away without a word; but reason asserted herself.

"Mrs. Pope," he began, courteously, advancing to where the lady sat, pale with anger, "please give me back my little boy. I assure you his mother gave him to me when he was less than a year old. He has slept in a little bed near mine for many months. You will know that I must be attached to him, for you have not known him half so long as I."

The woman's hard features seemed to soften a little at this appeal. She did not speak for a moment, and then she said coldly:

"Can you prove your right to him? Can you prove that his mother gave him to you?"

"I hope to be able to do so, if you will not believe me without proof," he answered.

"Come here, Victor," she said more gently, as the child still clung to Fred's neck.

Fred loosened the little arms and put him down on the floor. He went to her slowly, and bursting into tears, hid his face in her lap.

"Ah, Victor, Victor," she said chidingly, "you must not be a baby; and you must not cry over my new corn-colored silk, or it will not be fit to dance in to-night!"

Fred, unable to trust himself longer, had turned on his heel and was gone.

"You must not make friends with every rough that comes in," continued Mrs. Pope, in a more severe tone.

"'Taint rough, it's F'ed!" answered the little fellow stoutly, dashing away his tears. "I want F'ed to stay here!" he continued in a voice that was almost a scream.

"Stop your noise!" Mrs. Pope exclaimed, seizing him by the arm and shaking him violently, while Mr. Pope laughed.

The child's cries became louder, and his nurse came in and carried him struggling and screaming from the room, Mr. Chickham meanwhile calling out:

"Pull her hair, Victor! Pull her hair," and one or two others laughing heartily.

Such was the atmosphere in which this little one was developing. Is it any wonder that the failure which he had encountered, and the consequent delay in accomplishing his purpose, made it necessary for Fred to pray earnestly for the grace of patience?

CHAPTER XIX.

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE.

“He that walketh uprightly walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.”

FREDERIC RADER'S next step was to insert an advertisement in the *Goldburgh Intelligencer*, with a view to finding the one person who could testify that Mrs. Gills had on her death-bed given her little child to him.

This done, he went to a fine establishment just opposite the Grand Hotel. The cost of boarding at these palace homes was enormous, and Fred had no thought of spending his savings in idle luxury. He hoped to obtain work which would enable him to be near the little child, whom he knew to be surrounded with so many evil influences that he almost shuddered at the thought of their effect upon him.

He found the proprietor of the Goldburgh House visiting his stables, and asked for employment without loss of time.

The man leaned his broad shoulders against

a door, and, inserting his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest, surveyed his visitor most leisurely through his spectacles for some time. Then he condescended to say:

“Well, yes, we happen to need a bar-tender pretty bad just now, as our old one is laid up, and business is pushing. It is steady work, and if you can serve the liquors to my customers instead of drinking them yourself, I’ll give you a paying berth.”

“I’ve no mind to take the place, sir,” answered the applicant, firmly; “I don’t like the business.”

“Eh, what?” ejaculated the big man, “are you particular as to the kind of work you get to do?”

“Yes, sir, I admit that I am somewhat particular,” answered Fred. “If I can secure no other employment, I am willing to groom your horses, clean out your stables, or do anything else that is honest and honorable, for fair wages, but as for selling whisky, I can’t get down quite so low as that, for any price.”

Mr. Hite pulled his spectacles down from his forehead where he had pushed them to wipe his inflamed eyes, after his former scrutiny of Fred, and took another long survey of this applicant for work.

“Well, you are a rare specimen,” he said pre-

sently, still looking at his visitor from head to foot. "Come into the house a bit. You remind me of somebody I used to know over there, somehow," he said, making a gesture with his hand toward the sunrising.

"You say you can't stoop to the business of selling liquor; do you mind taking a drop of the comfort yourself now and then?"

"Thank you, I don't drink, either," answered Fred, as the proprietor led the way to the house; "I used to do so, but I found that it made either a brute or an imbecile of me, and so I stopped."

"Ah! you stopped, young man, did you?" asked Mr. Hite, in a contemplative, absent-minded sort of way. "How did you do it? Tapered off gradually, I suppose."

"No, sir," answered Fred; "'tapering off' to a man of health and strength is tampering with the devil. Physicians may be compelled to use that method sometimes, but a man who has not yet reached the gulf of *mania a potu* had better not think of slackening up gradually. While he is out, he is out, and his wisest course is to stop short."

"Easily said," retorted the landlord, a little impatiently.

"Easily done," replied the other, "in the strength of the Almighty."

"Oh, come now, don't let us have any parson

chat!" protested the man, in a tone and manner which betrayed great annoyance.

"Hello, there, Dick!" he called out to a passer-by, "come in here a moment."

The boy made his appearance promptly.

"Stop your whistling when you are in the presence of gentlemen," said Mr. Hite, with authority. Dick stopped short in the middle of his most skillfully executed strain, but kept his lips in a pucker, as if to be in readiness to go on when he might, and eyed Fred with critical keenness.

Fred smiled under the scrutiny. He felt that he was being measured by his appearance; that his character was being gauged by the clothes he wore.

"Attend to what I am going to say, and don't stare a stranger out of countenance," spoke Mr. Hite, a little more sharply than before. He gave the boy a string of commissions, ending by saying:

"Now be off; and if you fail to be here by eight o'clock, you need not come back at all. Do you hear?"

Dick did not unpucker his lips to answer, but nodded his head in reply, and as he darted out of the yard he took up his tune just where he had dropped it.

"Come in, come in, sir," invited Mr. Hite,

cordially. "Sit down and be comfortable, my friend."

The seeker for employment was again tempted, this time with the sight and smell of the poison which he had denounced. Failing in this direction, the enticements of the gaming-table were set before him by this newly-found friend, as he represented himself; but Fred was proof against all, in the strength of that One of whom he had spoken.

Mr. Hite drew a long sigh, which sounded more like relief than disappointment.

"Well, then, I'll talk with you a little," he said, in a quick, business-like way.

"I am wanting a trustworthy man for another position—a rather responsible one, which, perhaps, might suit you better than that of bartender."

"What is it?" asked Fred.

Mr. Hite proceeded to inform him that he had an extensive cattle ranch at some distance from Goldburgh, and that he wished to engage a brave and honest man to act as paymaster and attend to other business requiring energy and strict integrity.

"The last man I had decamped with his pockets full of my money," concluded Mr. Hite; "but I guess I can trust you."

And so it came about that Fred was employed

at a salary which was far beyond his expectations. So true is it that sobriety and honesty are passports even in the eyes of those who may not themselves stand on the fair heights of integrity and uprightness. Had Fred Rader accepted the proffered glass, or engaged in the proposed game of cards, Mr. Hite would readily have seen that his professions were empty, and treated him accordingly, and would also have been confirmed in his scorn for religion and "parson chat," as he had sneeringly styled it. Instead, he was brought to ponder seriously, even against his will, whether there were not a grave reality in the things which he was wont to scoff at.

Fred's residence at the Goldburgh House gave him many opportunities of seeing little Harry, or Victor, as he was called, and when Mrs. Pope found that Fred made no attempt to carry the child off, she gradually relaxed her vigilance somewhat, although she never ceased to feel a pang of jealous anger whenever she witnessed the fondness which "her boy," as she called him, displayed for the man whom her husband had designated as a "rough," but whom the little fellow remembered as a gentle, tender friend in his helplessness.

The rich-hued leaves of October were waving in the forests, and crimson and gold were flaming amid the russet. The sky was at its bluest, and purple mists hung over the valleys. There was a bracing quality in the air, that elixir-like property which seems to make the life-currents flow more swiftly.

Dick Duffey felt this, though he did not attribute it to any particular cause. However, he whistled his merriest tunes, and scampered through the forest aisles with almost as much agility as any squirrel. His activity to-day was that of the enjoyment of mere existence. He had not been told to-day, as usual, to be back at a certain time or not to return at all.

Dick's errand on this occasion was for Fred Rader, and led him to the cabin at the edge of the wood. He had some little trouble to find the spot. At last, after wandering aimlessly about for some time, hardly knowing what course he was taking, he heard a succession of notes whistled in a rest of his own, and, following the sound, he came in sight of a girl about his own age, her brown fingers tipped a darker shade, as she worked upon a heap of walnuts which she was busily hulling for winter, whistling meanwhile with a skillfulness which rivaled his own best performances.

"Well, did I ever!" exclaimed the boy, in an undertone.

The girl's quick ear caught the sound, and the whistling and work both ceased suddenly, as she rose to her feet and looked in the direction of the spot where Dick was peeping through the leaves.

"Was—that—you—a—whistling?" he inquired, with a very good simulation of shocked incredulity in his tone, and coming forward to where she was standing.

"Yes, it was!" answered Raven Wing, defiantly, "and what have you to say about it, I'd like to know?"

"I—oh, nothing," responded Dick, in nowise abashed at the defensive attitude taken by his new acquaintance. "There's a couplet I've heard somewhere about crowing girls and whistling hens—I don't know as I remember it rightly, but—"

"Don't strain your memory to try to recall it," interrupted the girl, sarcastically. "I don't care for such rubbish!" this with lofty disdain, and resuming work upon her walnuts.

"If you can, will you kindly tell me where Mr. Black lives?" inquired Dick, with suddenly assumed politeness of manner. "I have an errand to his house. I wish to see Mr. Black, and Miss Black, also. I have a message to deliver from my friend, the Honorable Mr. Frederic Rader, Esquire, of Goldburgh, Cashier of Rising Sun Ranch."

Raven Wing had sprung to her feet again and faced her companion, with no effort to conceal the interest which his words had aroused.

“Do you know him? Is he well? When is he coming back?” she asked, as soon as she could get an opportunity, hurrying one question after another.

“Indeed, I do know him quite well,” responded Dick, with a patronizing air. “As to his health,” very deliberately, “I believe he is about as usual. As to his coming out here, I reckon that is pretty uncertain, and that’s why he sent me. You see, Miss Black—”

“What is he doing in Goldburgh?” she asked, abruptly, ignoring his politeness.

The impatient manner of the girl nettled her visitor, and he fell back to his old teasing habit more and more.

“Well, as I was saying, you see, Miss White,” he began.

Raven Wing made an angry gesture, but he went on very innocently.

“He is not doing much of anything in Goldburgh, exactly. The business he’s in takes him out o’ the city a considerable distance. The fact is, Miss Green, he’s cashier and paymaster for Mr. Hite’s big cattle ranch, as I said, and he handles more money, I reckon, than any other man in these parts. I tell you, Miss Brown, he could

vamose any day with enough money to set up a bank; but it's no use imagining such a thing: he's honest to the core, just as sure as your name is Miss Gray."

A bright red spot was burning in each of Raven Wing's brown cheeks, and her dark eyes flashed threateningly, but she bit her lips and remained silent until he had done speaking. Dick's praise of Fred, no doubt, helped to suppress the tumult that seemed ready to burst forth.

"What message did he send?" she asked, simply.

The evident distress in her face and tone touched a chord somewhere in Dick Duffey's heart, and dropping his raillery, he answered promptly:

"He said I was to tell you to keep on studying and trying, and that he would send you a letter soon, and that he would come back as quick as ever he could, and that you must try to be patient; and he gave me this for your brother," producing the letter with which he had been intrusted.

"But hold on!" he exclaimed, suddenly, "you haven't told me certainly whether you are really Miss—Miss—"

He had played upon the name until he had really become confused.

"I have just taken it for granted that you are Miss—Black!"

He pronounced the name with a little explosive sound as it came back to him.

"Or White, or Gray, or Green, or Blue," supplemented the girl, sarcastically.

"Well, now, you see," he began, apologetically, "I am kind o' forgetful like, and more than that, Mrs. Hite declares I am stone color-blind!"

This was too much for Raven Wing, whose good humor was gradually returning with sundry recollections of the promised letter, and more than all, the promised return. She broke into a merry, ringing laugh, in which Dick joined, until the woods rang, and the squirrels peeped out to see what was the occasion of the unusual commotion.

CHAPTER XX.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

“And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.”

POOR Raven Wing! The days passed by in monotonous succession, and despite her work and her efforts to continue her education, time hung heavily on her hands.

She had always remembered her brother as silent and reserved, though until Frederic Rader came to their home she had not thought much about it; but the stay of this new brother had made a bright spot in her life, which caused the returning darkness to be tenfold more gloomy.

She often wondered what could have been the contents of the letter which Jerome had received from Fred. She had seen him read and re-read it many times, and he seemed to grow even more silent than before.

One morning after he had left the house,

she returned from milking to find him searching busily for something. He seemed embarrassed at being discovered, and awkwardly made haste to replace the articles which he was tumbling about.

When asked what he was hunting for, he made an evasive reply and quickly went out. As soon as the door closed, Raven Wing made sundry nods and grimaces, and, going to the window, she watched her brother out of sight, shaking her head at his retreating figure in a knowing way.

Then she ran up to the attic room, formerly occupied by Fred, and presently returned with something carefully wrapped in one of her dresses. It was evident that she supposed her brother to be in search of this treasure, whatever it might be, and was determined to seek for it a safer hiding-place.

Leaving the milk pails with their foaming contents on the table, she left the house. Turning in the opposite direction from that taken by her brother, she struck into the wood, and went on and on through the thick ranks of trees that were now dropping their bright leaves with every passing wind, until the ground was like a beautiful carpet. The gay autumn flowers were still holding up their brilliant heads here and there, and the squirrels were chattering in the

branches overhead, while the late birds were doing their best to make amends for the silence of the departed songsters.

But the girl paid no attention to any of these pleasant sights and sounds. She hurried on, never pausing for an instant, until she reached a spot not far from the one where Dick Duffey had found her at work upon her walnuts.

Then she looked about her, cautiously, as if fearing that she might not be alone. There was no one to be seen, and no sounds arose except the voices of nature, which the girl usually loved to hear. She was now intent upon her purpose. She placed her parcel at the foot of an oak tree, and brought a heavy, decaying log, which taxed her strength to the utmost. She leaned this against the trunk of the oak; then securing her treasure, she carefully climbed up by her hands and knees, with the evident intention of depositing it in a hollow at some distance from the ground.

When she had nearly reached the opening, a fragment gave way on one side of the rotten trunk, and she fell the entire distance, bruising one of her elbows, but still clinging to her bundle. Nothing daunted, she attempted the ascent a second time, and now she was successful.

Hiding the treasure safely in the hollow, she climbed down in safety, and removing her im-

promised stairway, she darted off in the direction of home, smiling to herself as she rubbed her elbow. She had succeeded in hiding safely whatever it was she was so desirous to secure.

It was indeed a treasure whose value she knew not. Besides its own intrinsic worth, it carried with it a secret of which she was ignorant, and which there was another who would have given much to know.

However, all would be made clear in the great Ruler's own good time.

She slackened her speed as she left the hiding-place behind her, and made her way back more leisurely than she had come.

On reaching home she found her new acquaintance, Dick, awaiting her with the promised letter, a Reader, and a copy-book, with writing materials, from Fred. Dick's memory seemed to have improved since their last meeting, but the expression of mischief in his eyes made Raven Wing distrust him even while she was glad to see him.

Meanwhile, Fred was doing faithfully the work which his hands had found to do, and trying to wait with patience for an answer to his advertisement.

He had offered a liberal compensation to the witness whose services he wished to secure, yet

as week after week passed by and he received no answer, he sometimes wished that he had doubled or even trebled the amount.

Finally he felt that the result of this last effort was complete failure; and much disheartened at the unsuccessful termination of this, the only hope which he knew for the accomplishment of his wishes, he arranged his business for the promised visit to his friends in the cabin on the forest border.

We often become discouraged at the miscarriage of our plans, thinking that all these things are against us, and that we are hemmed about, and shut in from the paths of success, and our faith fails or grows very dim; and all the while our heavenly Father is preparing for us a far better success than we could ever have devised or imagined for ourselves.

And, oh, when our joy bursts upon us like a bright, beautiful morning after a night of storm and darkness, how is our happiness mingled with repentance and self-reproach!

We know that the blessedness of heaven will be complete and perfect, but will not its rapturous harmonies know a minor chord of wonder at least, that we should have trusted our Father so little here below? that we should have walked so far from our Saviour while he was preparing our mansions for us?

Fred saw little Harry just before leaving Goldburgh. The child had crossed the street, as he often did, to talk with his old friend. As the little fellow sat on his knee on the hotel piazza the old temptation was strong upon him to take the child by force. His horse was unusually swift, and he knew of many secure hiding-places.

But something held him back from the act as too near akin, in appearance at least, to the lawless acts of the band to which he had belonged in that portion of his life which was now a reproach and a shame to him.

He would avoid all appearance of lawlessness, and try to trust, amid his discouragements, to the arm which holds up the foundations of the earth. But the struggle was a hard one, and made still harder by little Harry himself. When he learned that Fred was going away, he begged eagerly to be taken, and when refused, cried piteously and would not be comforted.

Fred led the sobbing child across to his home, and, placing him upon the steps, gently pulled himself free from the little clinging hands and turned away.

Events were soon to follow which would cause him to remember this parting with keen pain, almost allied to self-reproach.

And yet he knew that he might have en-

dangered the child's welfare as well as his own by stealing the little fellow away, even from those who had no right to him.

He turned down the street without looking back, lest his courage should fail at sight of the pitiful baby face behind him. Ah, when should he see it again?

He went to the book-store and bought some books of easy reading for Raven Wing, and a Bible, on the fly-leaf of which he wrote the name of Jerome Black, and underneath the text: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

Fred's appearance at the cabin was hailed with joy. Raven Wing was delighted with her gifts, and, to her great surprise, her brother accepted the Bible and thanked the giver warmly. But when at the time of evening prayer he too knelt down, she felt that a strange thing had indeed taken place; that a change had been wrought which she could not understand.

A wonderful transformation had indeed been brought about. The barriers of human reason which this man had tried to rear in opposition to the truth—the Christian religion in which his parents had lived and died, had always proved unsatisfactory to his nature, had failed to bring

him peace, and had now been swept away, and he brought back to the immutable rock of safety and comfort.

And what had wrought this surrender? "The word of God which *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

Raven Wing had for some time been conscious that her brother was growing to be very different from his former self. He had for some time seemed like Fred, she thought. In no other way could she describe the transformation even in her own thoughts; but as she turned his Bible softly in her hands, she felt that she might now bring home the treasure which she had hidden away in the oak in the depth of the forest.

When she saw his name, she asked Fred to write hers also in the books he had given her. As he prepared to comply with her request, Jerome said:

"Stop a moment, please. The child has a Christian name, given by her Christian parents. Let it be that."

So the name that was written was that sweet name which, in the glow of the story of the life and death of Jesus, and the pious ministrations which he received at the hands of woman, must ever be a crown of womanhood—the name of Mary.

"I believe you told me that you have a Bible," remarked Fred.

The girl flushed and looked unaccountably confused.

"I—yes, I have, but it is—put away," she stammered.

"Oh, you should keep it where you can lay your hand on it at any time, and read it every day," answered Fred.

She went out of the room with something of her old willful abruptness, and was gone for some time. She showed no signs of anger on her return, but was silent and absorbed in her manner. She sat in the firelight, looking up at the ceiling, as if she were counting the hams and pieces of dried venison which told of plenty of meat for the coming winter. At last she spoke, abruptly:

"Simpson Harris and his sister were here last week. They both inquired about you."

"Ah! I am glad to hear from them," answered Fred, heartily. "Little Nellie is a woman now, I suppose."

"It was not his own sister: it was Miss Baird—Katie, he calls her," explained Jerome. "She is an adopted sister, and indeed ready to act the part of sister to the whole human family, doing good whenever she has opportunity."

Fred remembered vaguely the little figure in the long cloak and funny, big bonnet, who had been known by that name in Lynton, and he was soon lost in memories that must always wear a tone of deep sadness.

He little dreamed that Katie Baird, the Christian worker, whom Jerome Black had pronounced a sister to all, and who now gave her time and attention to the sick and afflicted for months in succession, asking no compensation but a bare support, was the one who had nursed Mrs. Gills, the witness for whom he had advertised in vain.

What a tangled web do human affairs often present, as seen from our standpoint and with our finite vision? But he who has planned the whole has power to bring order out of confusion; blessed be his great and holy name!

The time passed on, and Fred's visit must come to an end. The evening before his departure, at his request, Jerome assumed the position which his guest had hitherto occupied, and read with solemn joy from the words of our Saviour the same parable which Fred had read on another occasion, of the return of the wanderer to the house of his Father, and then there arose a prayer that was like the pent-up sorrow of a contrite heart; a prayer of confession, earnest

petition, thanksgiving and consecration, such as had never before been heard in that humble home.

The next morning while Jerome was absent from the house, his sister told Fred how she had hidden a treasure in the hollow oak, and that it was the Bible about which he had questioned her, and that when she went to find it, it was gone.

“Don’t let it trouble you,” answered Fred, “perhaps some one took it who will read it and find the good way. I will bring or send you another. But tell me why you hid it away in the woods.”

She hesitated, and seemed troubled by the question; but at last it all came out that she was afraid that her brother would destroy it if he found it.

“And just to think that he wanted to read it!” she sobbed, overcome at the thought of her unjust suspicions, and the great change which had taken place in her brother.

“Besides,” she went on, “there was something in it about you, and I intended to show it to you the next time you came,—you and your brothers and sisters, I suppose, and, oh, I don’t know who all!”

“What do you mean?” asked Fred, in a startled tone.

“I didn’t understand it,” answered the girl. “It was some writing in the middle of the book. I know it was your name; it was like that at the end of brother’s letter: I could read that; and then there were ever so many more Raders, whose other names I can’t tell.”

The listener rose up hurriedly.

“Please come and show me where you hid it. Maybe I can find it.”

She shook her head, dejectedly, but went with him and pointed out the hollow tree in which she had placed the missing book.

On the way Fred questioned her as to where she had obtained it at the first. She answered that she had found it in the pasture lot on the next day after the big storm which blew down so many trees and houses.

Fred’s search proved as fruitless as his companion’s. The Bible had evidently been found by some one and taken away.

The young man was much disappointed, and made an effort to conceal his feelings.

“Well, never mind,” he said, “I’ll send you a new Bible, and then I may have the old one for my own if I ever find it, may I?”

“Oh, to be sure!” she answered, well pleased at the idea of a new one like her brother’s.

Was it at all probable that he should ever see it again?

CHAPTER XXI.

SERPENT TOOTH.

“To him who knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin.

“They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.”

WHEN we read the records of Indian outrages, handed down to us by history, or start shudderingly at the stories of the treachery and cruelty of these people of the far West toward their pale face brethren to-day, the cold blooded atrocities committed may well excite our horror.

But can we forget—have we a right to forget—that the Red Man has learned much of his cunning and treachery from his white brother? Can we forget that the vice of drunkenness came to these forest children through the channel of a so-called civilization, a channel which should have conveyed to their dark minds pure streams of light and truth, but which, alas! has been too often muddy with sensualism, avarice, and double dealing?

These thoughts are deeply humiliating, but it is well for us not to forget them, and to bear in mind that we all have a duty to perform, in aiding to put away the evil which has been wrought among these people. Much has been done already, but much yet remains to be done.

Rumors came to Goldburgh, from time to time, of the raids of a company of Indians headed by a chief whose well-chosen name *Serpent Tooth*, awoke horror wherever it was heard. His depredations were the theme of every tongue, and the authorities of the town made haste to ask a detachment of troops from the military post not far distant.

In the prayer for protection, signed by many of the prominent citizens, no allusion of course was made to the fact that more than one of these citizens were liquor-dealers and had furnished strong drink by the barrel to these lawless savages at various times.

The commander sent what soldiers he could spare, and this force was increased by citizens. The camp at *Thunder Gap* was deserted for a time and all repaired to the town, most of those having guns joining the militia.

And now that they felt that their safety was assured, the careless ones of the community went on their ways with their accustomed gayety,

with thoughtless unconcern as to the peril of the lives of those thus sent for their defence.

Then tidings came that Serpent Tooth and his men had turned their course in an altogether different direction, and that no immediate danger was to be feared.

The excitement had subsided, and now an unwise feeling of security took possession of the minds of most of the people who had lately been so greatly alarmed.

As those who live in the neighborhood of an active volcano relapse into a sense of safety when the latest rumble from the crater has died away, so these people forgot that danger had seemed to menace them, and relaxed their vigilance. At last the soldiers were recalled, and only the militia left to defend the town.

Grant Lucas, who had formerly served in the army, was made captain of the squad and drilled untiringly those who were to form the defence of the town in case the enemy should return unexpectedly. And this was precisely what the enemy did. The feint had succeeded to a great extent. The town was now in a great measure off guard, and there were dusky faces peering through the evergreens of the forest back of the little city, and stealthy feet tracking the pathless wilds that offered them no hindrance in their

march and covered their approach from those whom they were about to attack.

The curtain of night fell over the place, and houses were brilliantly illuminated that were in reality abodes of moral darkness. Resorts that were traps for the unwary, with tempting gilded baits, were thrown open to entice the passers-by with the glow and beauty within. For this remote western town of recent growth could boast of gambling dens furnished with a luxurious disregard of cost, and drinking saloons that were perfect palaces of sin. Alas for those whose boast and glory is in the progress of the work of the evil one!

There was no sign of the blow about to fall upon the doomed inhabitants, but there was a stealthy, invisible approach of figures with hideously painted faces, unseen in the darkness, and bearing, not the rude arms of savage warfare, but the white man's weapon, the trusty musket with shining steel bayonet.

Nearer and nearer the foe approached with cautious, silent footsteps, and then the air was rent with the fearful war-whoop that sends terror to the hearts of those who hear, whether it comes as the oft heard signal for the onslaught of those who know no pity and ask no quarter, or whether it strikes the affrighted ear for the first time with an awful, nameless dread.

Had the militia been expecting the assault, and waiting, shoulder to shoulder, to repel it, they must have proved no match for the overpowering numbers of Serpent Tooth's band; but many of the men were off duty, some of them, alas! too much intoxicated to understand the meaning of the summons to arms, had there been time to issue it.

As it was, the small garrison was thoroughly overpowered, though not without a struggle, and those taken alive were hurried to the rear and sent off rapidly in charge of a squad detailed for that purpose. They were to be held as hostages, and, alas, for the fate that awaited them should they be left to the mercy of Serpent Tooth!

The guards all disarmed and taken prisoners, or left with upturned faces where they fell, the town was an easy prey to the savages. I cannot depict the scenes of horror that followed, the burning of houses and wholesale murder of men, women and children, until the marauders wearied somewhat of their bloody work.

There were some who managed to elude the foe and remained in hiding-places until the Indians had left. There were also some who made their escape from the town and took refuge where they might till the danger was past.

The work of destruction was done quickly, and the raiders, many of them, dashed away on stolen horses, taking with them such other prisoners as they chose to add to those already sent off. When the morning dawned there were no signs of the invaders except the horrible work which they had done.

There were the pale, cold faces of the dead; the scarcely less pale countenances of the wounded and helpless; the fire that raged unabated in some quarters of the town; the horror-stricken expressions of those who emerged from their hiding-places to look for their friends and their homes, in many cases to find the former among the dead, the latter smoking, shapeless ruins.

There were three large, wholesale liquor stores in Goldburgh, and these, after the Indians had supplied themselves with "fire-water," were fired, the liquor adding to the flames of the conflagration. It was as if the degraded savages had blindly revenged themselves on those who, in furnishing them with intoxicating drink, had thus aided in their degradation.

The news of the sad fate of Goldburgh was spread far and near, and relief for the sufferers petitioned.

Doctors and nurses came in response to the appeal, and a hospital was established in one of

the largest buildings which had escaped the flames.

Among those who offered themselves to assist in the care of the sufferers were two who had met before at the bedside of the dying—Fred Rader and Katie Baird, the nurse who had cared for Mrs. Gills in her last hours.

Ever since he had obtained his freedom Fred had longed most ardently for the presence of this sole witness to the dying woman's bequest. Now the witness was at hand, but where was "the baby?"

Fred had returned from an unavoidably protracted stay at the ranch, at the first intelligence of the raid, to find the Grand Hotel a ghastly, blackened ruin. The handsome rooms and costly furnishings had vanished with the smoke.

Grant Lucas was among the severely wounded, but although he had professed his willingness to die, having nothing, as he said, to live for, he was still in the land of the living and receiving good medical attention and careful nursing; and Fred had yet again many opportunities of presenting the truth to this one who stumbled in dark places because the afflicting hand of God had been laid upon him, not knowing or forgetful of the fact that "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Fred's efforts were always treated with politeness, but he almost ceased to hope that any impression was being made, and ceased all argument, only reading daily to the sufferer, by his own tacit consent, a portion of Scripture.

There were many days and nights of pain and weariness to the victims of Indian cruelty in Goldburgh; and those who had volunteered to nurse the poor unfortunates were called to pass through long periods of watching without rest. The two who proved most enduring and untiring were Frederic Rader and his friend, Katie Baird, and they were sustained by a strength which was not their own. They were upheld by his presence and power who has said: "Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me."

We sometimes think that those who lived on earth when our Lord was here, and had the precious opportunity of ministering to him with their own hands, were especially blest. The humble little family at Bethany has seemed a household to be greatly envied. But if we receive our Master's words unquestioningly, and act upon them, we may be blest and honored by a service which he accepts as if bestowed upon him in person.

Dick Duffey was among the injured, and his

formerly merry face was now flushed and his eyes wild with fever. He had received a blow on the head which had rendered him senseless at the time, and delirium had followed.

For a while the boy seemed wavering between life and death, but skillful treatment and unceasing attention finally triumphed and he began to amend, though very slowly.

With the first return of reason, he begged to be allowed to get up.

"There is something I must attend to," he said.

"Never mind it now; let it wait," said Fred, soothingly. "You must not trouble yourself about it. You have nothing to do but rest and get well. You are to have everything you need, and a good long holiday in which to get rested and strong."

But the boy would not be put off.

"I tell you I have an errand of my own!" he exclaimed, impatiently, the hot waves of color coming back to his pale cheeks. "I intended to do it long ago, but Mr. Hite kept me so busy, and then something else hindered me," he added, rubbing his hand across his forehead as if trying to recollect what had taken place.

Seeing that opposition was producing the very effect which he wished to avoid, Fred asked the boy what it was which he wanted done, promising to see that it was attended to.

"I'll attend to it myself; please let me!" begged Dick, making an effort to rise. But he had largely overestimated his strength, and soon found that he was unable to raise himself upon his elbow.

He sank back with a groan, and a look of pitiful weakness and pain on his face.

"Come, Dick," said his nurse, with gentle authority, "you will make yourself worse. Can you not trust me to do whatever it is you want done, and have it off your mind?"

"Yes, Mr. Fred, I can trust you," answered the boy. "You will believe that I never intended to break my promise to granny and you. I didn't intend to steal it. I just took it for fun, and intended to take it and give it to her, or put it back in the hollow tree."

A light broke over Fred's face.

"It was an old book; wasn't it, Dick?" he asked.

Dick tried to pucker his lips for a whistle of surprise, but failed in the attempt.

"How did you know?" he managed to stammer.

"Oh, Mary Black told me about it and I sent her a new Bible, and she said I might have the old one if I could find it; so just tell me where it is, and then don't worry any more about it."

Despite his cheerful manner, a dark fear was in Fred's mind that the Bible might have perished in the conflagration. But a look of intense relief passed over Dick's thin features.

"It's down at the shanty in the box under the bunk," he said; adding, "I'm not so good as some, but I'm no thief, now, am I?"

"No, that you are not," answered Fred, heartily. "And now you must take your medicine and go to sleep. The doctor will be scolding us both if he comes and finds you in a fever from having talked so much."

The sick boy was soon sound asleep and resting all the better for having confessed his fault; but Fred's thoughts were in a whirl of emotion, and it required no little patience to wait for an opportunity to go down to the shanty where Dick had lodged. It was just outside of the town, and had in all probability remained unharmed.

Could it be that this Bible was the same which he had seen his grandfather read so often? And if so, how came it here?

The picture of the good old man, with his peaceful, saintly face and snow-white hair, appeared before him. He remembered the tender, reverent way in which he turned over the leaves; and how he, a wayward boy, used to wonder that his grandfather seemed to care but little for

any other book, and think to himself how dull it must be to read the Bible so much. He had since learned something of the preciousness of that word which giveth life, and he felt that it would indeed be a privilege to possess the volume which had been in the hands of those whose memory was now so dear.

But there were duties at hand to be performed. There was medicine to be given; there was beef-tea to be made and administered to those who could begin to take nourishment; there were wounds to be dressed and irritated nerves to be soothed.

Some of the patients were neither prepossessing in their appearance, nor agreeable in their manners, often repaying untiring care and kindness with impatience and fault-finding.

But the physician and the nurse, whether administering either to the bodies or the souls of the sick, must possess his own soul in patience if he hopes to secure the best results.

There were sad memories of the little one given into his care, mingled too with the whirl of contending thoughts. He might now establish his right to the little fellow so unceremoniously taken out of his charge; but, ah! who could tell? The child might now be beyond the reach of earthly care, or among the miserable, ill-treated prisoners who were dragging out a

lingering captivity at the mercy of their unfeeling captors. But however deep might be the gloom in his mind, Fred felt that he must wear a cheerful face and maintain a tranquil, undisturbed exterior.

So the days went on, and several had passed before he found an opportunity to go to the shanty at the outskirts of the town, where was deposited the book he was longing so eagerly to examine.

But one evening the doctor said to him :

“Fred, you should now go out for a walk before the night watch begins. You’ll have a hard night with Nelson and Gilmore. They are just sufficiently convalescent to be particularly troublesome. Don’t come under half an hour; the walk will do you more good than an hour’s sleep.”

The order was willingly obeyed. It was nearly dark, and the cool, fresh air was very refreshing to the tired watcher. He lost no time in making his way to the former lodging-place of poor Dick.

Pushing open the little rickety door, he effected an entrance by stooping, and soon found the box containing the treasure he had come to seek. It was carefully placed at the bottom under the boy’s scanty possessions; but it did not require long to reach it, still wrapped in the garment in

which it had been folded by its former possessor.

Taking a match from his pocket, Fred made a light in the dark little room and sat down to examine the book. There on the yellow fly-leaf, in faded characters, was the name of *Henry Rader*. When with trembling fingers he had found the family record, his tiny light had burned itself out. He made another, and read, with moist eyes, the names familiar to his boyhood.

Then darkness came again, and, bowing his head upon the rude bed, he wept freely as the tide of sad, sweet memories rolled over him. Recovering himself, he went outside, and in the day's last, reflected light he turned to another page, and found recorded by another hand the death of the dear old grandfather who had held this volume as his choicest treasure.

Then followed the death of his father and mother, both bearing one date, and that of little Archie a little later.

He read the pitiful lines again and again with an aching heart. Where was he, he asked himself, when these dear ones passed away from earth? Were neglect and starvation the fate of those who had died in those two days?

He hurriedly turned over the leaf to hide the accusing words from his sight. And then there

met his eyes a great surprise, that fairly bewildered him and made him feel almost as if he were dreaming.

On the new leaf, bearing the heading, "MARRIAGES," there appeared in a free, bold hand the names of Grant Lucas and Olive Rader!

He could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes. He recalled the merry face of his sister Olive as he had seen it last. Could it be possible? Were those two nameless forest graves the resting-places of his sister and her little child?

Deeply did he bewail anew the sin and folly which had led him to forsake his home and friends. How near the life of this last surviving one had come to his own—and now this was all!

The strong man wept again, and retreating again into Dick's humble room, prayed in agony for forgiveness and strength to endure.

When at last he came forth, it was as one consecrated to labor in season and out of season for the building up of the Master's kingdom and the welfare of his fellows. Acknowledging the common kindred of all mankind, he would labor for God and humanity and seek to forget the sorrow of his soul, in the joy of others.

Fred went back to the hospital to meet the rebuke of the keen-eyed old doctor, for "worrying himself over something when he should have thought of nothing but absolute rest."

“Thank you, I am quite ready for my post,” answered Fred, smiling.

“Yes, you will be ready for a post in one of these wards before half of the patients are up, if I do not keep an eye on you,” grumbled the physician. “And they could spare me far more easily,” he added to himself as he reached the passage.

But Fred went on unflaggingly, and the doctor wondered at his endurance. One by one the injured rallied; and one by one the blackened ruins of Goldburgh gave place to newly-erected buildings, and life and gayety began to flow on much the same as before the massacre and the burning.

There were more graves in the cemetery, but the living did not pause to count them. Refugees who had fled at the approach of the Indians returned when their dwellings were made ready for them, and many of those whose whereabouts none knew ceased to be missed, as gradually the marks of the devastation disappeared.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE WHITE SISTER.

“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

THE hospital at Goldburgh was being deserted by one and another, and the faithful nurses were seeing the crowning result of their labor.

Grant Lucas, though still unable to be removed, could sit up in an easy chair, and Dick Duffey had resumed his whistling, the best possible symptom, the doctor said.

Fred had never yet ventured to inform Grant of the discovery he had made of their relationship. He shrank from opening anew the wound which seemed ever rankling in his friend's heart, and which he feared was keeping him out of the kingdom. He wondered sometimes whether Grant would read the Bible which had belonged to his wife, if it were given to him; he knew that he would prize it for her sake, but something held him back from introducing the subject,

from day to day. He read aloud every day from his own copy of the Scriptures, and if Grant would not accept God's word, what was there to be hoped from human associations, even though the most tender and sacred?

One day Grant said to him:

"You ought not to be wasting your time here, Fred. You ought to be on the hunt of that child if you think it is still among the living. I wish I were able to help you. If, as you say, you can now prove your right to him, you ought not to be idle in the matter."

"I assure you I am not idle," answered Fred. "I have two of the best scouts in the country at work, and I must leave you for a day or two soon, to get their reports."

That same evening a boy called with a note from Jerome Black, who had just returned home, and had something to communicate which might prove important.

Fred arranged for his absence, and lost no time in obeying the summons. He arrived, as he had done on the occasion of his first visit, about daylight. He was warmly welcomed, and duly informed that Jerome had reconnoitered an Indian camp some twenty miles distant, which contained three white prisoners, a man, woman, and child. The Indians were hostile, and much precaution had been necessary in order to ap-

proach near enough to see, without being discovered.

Mary had also visited a friendly tribe, but said that she had learned nothing of the child.

"I don't wish to arouse your expectations too much by what I have seen," added the brother. "The child I saw must be of about the same age as yours, and has blue eyes and yellow curling hair, as you say yours has. If this is not the one you are hunting, he is very much like him. But it is my opinion that children of that age and type are all very much alike," continued the narrator. "I tell you this for what it may be worth. As soon as Mary can get some food ready for us to carry with us, we will start out and try to steal another march on the Indians to-night, and you can see for yourself whether this little captive is the one you are in search of. Hurry up, Sis, please," he concluded, as he went out.

But Mary deliberately shaved down the beef she was cutting, and spread the big slices of bread as carefully as if the smoothness of the yellow butter was to prove the chief excellence of the lunch.

"Brother is not used to babies. I know they don't all look alike," she asserted, setting her head on one side and looking critically at the

slices as she piled them up, placing the beef between the layers.

"I believe if I had been there, I should have known whether it was the baby or not, even if I had never seen him before.

"There were no children in my camp," she continued, "except the papposes; and only one white woman. But she is equal to a dozen. She seems like you," she added, with unconscious compliment. "She is not a prisoner, but a kind of missionary or something. They call her 'The White Sister.' She told me that she had been among the Indians for several years. She was a prisoner once, but now she just stays with them to teach them. She says that her friends are all dead, and that she expects to spend the rest of her life among the Indians. She told me her story, and if I have time I will tell it to you. She lost her little child too. Ah, me!"

The narrator, still continuing her preparations for lunch, struck a dejected attitude which would have appeared laughable but for the sadness of her topic and the unmistakable genuineness of her feelings.

"It seems to me that people have a deal of trouble in this world. You see," she went on, in the rambling manner of one unaccustomed to connected and concise narration, "the Indians

came, and they rushed in with their faces painted horribly, and flourishing their tomahawks, and yelling, and—”

Just at this interesting point in the narrative, Jerome's voice was heard calling out :

“The horses are ready ; be as quick ; the sun is getting up and it's time we were off.”

“Well, you shall tell me the White Sister's story another time. Good-bye,” said Fred, as the two hurried out.

“Be sure you fasten up the cabin well, and keep your rifle ready,” charged Jerome. “Did you think you were getting up army rations ?” he asked laughingly, as he received the package of refreshments from his sister's hands.

“Just put that in your big pocket,” answered the girl, with a little air of authority. “If you find that boy he will be half-starved, I have no doubt ; and you will both come back in the same condition,” she added saucily, as the two rode off.

The moon was dropping slowly down behind the tall pines, and the shadows were stealing across the valleys as Fred and his friend waited for the darkness which should hide their approach to the camp whose smoke rose up in the fading moonbeams, yet plainly visible in the distance.

The silence was unbroken; there was not even the chirp of an insect or the hoot of an owl to break the monotonous stillness; and the stars, looking down through the trees, appeared as if they also waited—when hark! A sound of snapping twigs not far from the place where they crouched came distinctly to the ears of both men.

A moment of silence followed, and then they felt rather than heard some one stealing near them.

The two men examined their rifles and waited.

“White man no shoot friendly squaw,” said a voice, softly. “White man hunting pappoose again. Same white man; same pappoose. White man trust squaw; give new blanket all the same. Good!”

“All right,” spoke Fred; “bring the child again and you shall have two new blankets and more money than you got before.”

“Burning Star no want money; no want blankets,” answered the woman. “Much cough in winter; much pain. Burning Star will set very soon. She will go near the White Sister; she will learn more of the Great Father and die glad, like Swift Arrow.”

“Be it so!” answered Fred, heartily. “You shall go with us and we will find the White Sister for you.”

She gave her little grunt of acquiescence and disappeared.

The two men waited, and after a time they heard the barking of the dogs in the camp. Then silence came again and the time passed on and on, and still she did not return, and Fred and his companion at last prepared to accept another failure and retrace their steps before daylight should appear. As they waited a little longer with the forlorn hope that the squaw still might come, a panting sound, as of the breathing of a tired animal, was heard, and a moment later she appeared with a child in her arms.

“Much heavy pappoose!” she gasped, as Fred relieved her of her burden. She was compelled to sit down and rest before she could go any further.

“Too big to carry; too little to walk, and big, fat, white brave and squaw leave him behind when they run off last night while red braves were drunk—ugh!”

“Mamma and papa went off and lefted me!” sobbed little Harry.

Then it was Mr. and Mrs. Pope who had been seen by Jerome, and they had thus basely deserted the child whom they had forcibly kept from his rightful protector.

"Poor baby!" said Fred, using the old familiar name, "he shall stay with me."

"Then I am glad they lefted me!" exclaimed the child, taking comfort at once. "Let us go before the Indians get us."

As soon as Burning Star was sufficiently rested, the party proceeded to the place where the horses had been left, and lost no time in setting out on the return. The journey was a joyful one to Fred. His heart rose up in silent thanksgiving, and a new, fresh hope that he could not understand took possession of his soul. It was as if a curtain had been lifted and he saw something of brightness beyond, which he could not comprehend.

The liberal supply of food prepared by Mary proved most timely. Little Harry seemed indeed almost famished, and the poor old woman ate her share with eagerness.

It was sunset when they came in sight of home and were greeted by the sight of the well-known, cheerful-looking objects of home life. Mary was standing at the door radiant with expectation, but not a little puzzled at seeing the squaw accompanying the party.

"You have recovered one prisoner and taken another, I see," she said, gaily.

"Be still, Mary," said her brother, with gentle rebuke in his tone.

The squaw raised her eyes to Fred's face:

"The white man will not prove treacherous like some of his brothers," she said. It was not a question, but rather a statement by which she had meant to reassure herself.

"Never!" answered Fred. "Fear nothing. You have brought me back my child a second time. I will never fail you," he added, warmly.

She seemed satisfied, and entered the house with the others.

The tired party were served with a warm, appetizing supper, and little Harry was soon sound asleep, while the Indian woman, wrapped in a blanket, had lain down in a corner of the room, where she had insisted on making her bed.

A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth, and, seated in its grateful glow, Fred listened to the story of "The White Sister," which Mary had commenced to tell him on the previous morning.

The girl went back a little further in her story to-night, and told her wondering auditor a story which in some parts was much like one to which he had listened once before, but ended with a startling difference.

It was a story of two families, friends and neighbors; two mothers that were devoted companions; two little blue-eyed, golden-haired children, and two strong, loving protectors.

Then came a time of trouble upon one

family. The young mother was dangerously ill and her baby lay at the gates of death, while the husband and father was absent from home.

The one defender was gone to summon a physician. The sick woman lay in a deep swoon and her child was dying. Tenderly the one watcher bent over the tiny sufferer as the little fluttering life went out, and closed the blue eyes forever.

How much alike were the baby sleepers as they lay in their cradles! and while with tender hands she composed the dead child's remains for the last, long sleep, her tears flowed like rain.

Poor mother, unconscious of her loss! would she ever know, or would she pass from her death-like faint to the better home to find her baby already there before her?

But she must try to save the mother's life if possible. How like the dead she looked as she lay there white and still, with her hands across her breast! The nurse began to use such restoratives as she had at hand, when a fearful yell resounded on all sides of the cabin, and a little later the door was broken in and the savages appeared in all the hideousness of their paint and feathers. The leader was a young Indian who had been friendly to the whites until some white man's treachery had turned him against the race.

He grunted a salutation to the trembling woman and proceeded to take possession of what few valuables the room contained. He then went to the two cradles.

"Boy papposes?" he asked, with uplifted tomahawk.

"Yes, yes, both boys," she answered, eagerly, "but one is dead."

He grunted and walked over to the bed.

"Ugh! dead too!" he ejaculated. "Now make quick to go, and bring the live pappoose. We will want white braves to help us by and by. Come along."

The woman knew that it would be worse than useless to resist; but she dared to delay for a moment to place one of the baby forms on the bed beside the still rigid figure with white face and folded hands.

A spasm of pain crossed her countenance as she bent over the little sleeper for one instant, her own living, breathing darling! Then she took up the dead baby tenderly, and, wrapping it in her shawl, clasped it close to her breast and went out into the night with her captors.

She shed bitter, bitter tears, under cover of the darkness, at thought of her ruined home, her desolate, disconsolate husband, and the little child she had left behind.

But as for the child, she knew it was better

so. To have its brains dashed out before her eyes for crying, or to grow up in ignorance and depravity, should its life be spared, these were the horrible alternatives.

It would be cared for by some one now, she doubted not; and commending her loved ones to heaven's protection, she pressed on.

Watching her opportunity, when she was not observed too closely, she dropped the tiny corpse gently in a sheltered spot, which, dark as it was, she knew well, feeling sure, that it would be found and given proper burial.

Before morning an exhausted prisoner was killed because she could not keep up with the others, and her mangled form was left, an unrecognizable object in the forest, and the shocked, sick heart thanked God that its best treasures were left behind.

Poor wife and mother! Neither she nor any one but God himself could recount the sufferings that followed. And only he knew the struggles of the Christian woman after fortitude and submission to his will.

The thought that her loved ones were safe, was her one earthly comfort; but after a time that also was taken away. The tidings came, through some captives taken later, that another raid had been made upon the little settlement, and that all had perished.

And so the last link was severed, and as the years passed on and she might have returned to the people of her own race, she shrank from the emptiness which a civilized life now offered to her, and gave her days and her labors to the people who had bereaved her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“RETURNING AND REST.”

“In returning and rest shall ye be saved. . . . Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. . . . Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

THE previous chapter contains, in substance, the story of “The White Sister,” though many of its particulars were learned by Frederic Rader long afterward, partly from her own lips, and partly from the lips of those whom she had benefited. There are, doubtless, many details connected with her labors which have never been told, but the results will be known in eternity.

This devoted woman, who had learned to say “Thy will be done,” gave herself to the work of furthering the coming of the Saviour’s kingdom with a true missionary spirit. She taught and labored for the people around her in many ways. She denied herself to do them good. She nursed their sick, and tended their little ones with a tenderness born of mother love.

She told them the story of the cross; and her pure, unselfish life enforced the truth which she sought to instil into the dark minds around her. They said "she was not like her people."

Swift Arrow, after being driven from one reservation to another, was hunted down for the treachery which he had copied from his enlightened brothers; and when at last, pierced by the bullets of those who, having broken faith with him, now executed punishment upon him for a like offense, he sought a place in which to die, with curses in his heart and on his lips for the whole pale-faced race, he found among his people one whom they loved, although a pale face. He found there one who labored for the good of his people; one who wept over the sorrows and wrongs for which, with their characteristic stoicism, they scorned to shed a tear; one who, they said, "talked to the Great Spirit and heard his voice;" one who told them of a happy country where there was room enough for them!

Poor, ignorant, exasperated savage! Is it any wonder that he retorted in bitter wrath and scorn that he did not want to go to the white man's paradise?

Alas for those who make the weak to offend!
Alas for those who lay stumbling stones at the gate of the kingdom of heaven!

But Swift Arrow lived long enough to learn the melting story of the persecuted One who had not where to lay his head; who prayed for his tormentors and died for his enemies. He lived long enough to turn his eyes to the cross, to repent, to forgive and be forgiven.

Grant Lucas was still weak and nervous from the effects of his injuries, from which, however, he was slowly recovering. He sat looking haggard and careworn, his countenance stamped with the gloom that is illumined by no brightness.

Fred had returned from a protracted absence, which he had felt more than he would have been willing to acknowledge. He had missed, also, though he did not admit this, even to himself, his friend's Bible readings and prayers. He was unfeignedly glad to see him, as he came in one bright morning, when the sun, shining through the evergreens at the window, made a bright mosaic on the floor by the side of the sick man's chair. It seemed to Grant, with the weakness of invalidism added to his abiding trouble, that there was an emphatic indifference to his misery even in nature's face, while Fred's countenance wore a look of brightness for which there was no warrant. This thought came to him even in the pleasure of the meeting.

"Well, old fellow, how do you get on?" asked Fred, with a warm clasp of the hand, a grasp that was almost painful to the thin fingers which he held.

"Better, thanks," answered Grant, indifferently. "You have found your boy, I see."

"Yes, thank God! that I have," responded Fred, fervently. "You read it in my face, did you?"

Then he hesitated for a moment:

"I have found something else; something for you. Grant, are you strong enough to bear a sight of the Bible your wife used to read?"

A spasm of pain crossed the sick man's face, his mouth worked, he compressed his lips for a moment, and answered in a steady tone:

"Have you found it?"

"Yes, I have found it — my grandfather's Bible," answered Fred, tremulously. "Grant, how was it that you never asked my name?"

Grant smiled sadly.

"I suspected it long ago. Later I learned the truth; but what did it matter to you and me, so long as all was over?" he added, bitterly.

"Don't, Grant," begged Fred, "don't speak in that way, please. Try to drive despair out of your heart, and make room for thankfulness and joy, lest its coming prove more than you can bear."

“What do you mean?” asked Grant. “What joy?”

“An exceeding great joy. Can you bear it? And will you believe in heaven’s mercy if your wife and child are indeed restored to your arms?”

He saw that his friend might know the truth. Joy does not often prostrate; it is grief and despair that canker in the heart and eat away the life.

He opened the door and brought in “The White Sister” and “the baby.”

“Try to make him understand, Ollie,” said Fred, as he hastily left the room.

I will not attempt to describe to my reader this meeting that seemed like a resurrection. There are scenes that are too sacred for portrayal.

Grant Lucas is now a meek and humble follower of the Master. Almost persuaded to be a Christian, he had long steeled his heart against the influences that were brought to bear upon him, doubting heaven’s mercy because of the sore affliction which had come into his life.

Is it any wonder that his heart was broken up in deep humiliation and tender sorrow for his past hardness, when his loved ones were given back to him, as from the dead?

Is it any wonder that his joy was clouded with regret that he had been found wanting, in the trial which had tried him, that he seemed to hear the gentle rebuke bestowed by the Master on a doubting one of old? "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed."

O my friend, when the Lord shall call us by our names, whether the voice shall come from the deep, thick darkness of sorrow, or be heard in the sunlight of gladness, let us see to it that we answer with eager, loving confidence: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Far away in the West, there is a little mission settlement where a noble band of men and women labor for the good of the souls and bodies of the sinful and oppressed. Its work is not widely known on earth, but its record is kept in the books that are written in heaven. It has a school, and a church in which the pure word of God is read and taught by one who, in his early youth, set apart for that work which is most God-like, once wandered from the way, but finding no rest or peace, came back to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

Simpson Harris and his sisters are among the most zealous laborers in this vineyard, whose in-

gathering of souls at the time of the harvest will not be overlooked by the "angel reapers."

Olive Lucas' work among these forest people had well prepared the way for the introduction of her husband and brother, together with their friends, and all were made welcome for her sake.

As for Fred, his consecration to the Master's service was strengthened and renewed with a baptism of joy at thus finding that God had been to him so much better than his fears; and his time and strength and all that he possesses are devoted unreservedly to the work to which he pledged his life on that day when a revelation had seemed to come to him that all his earthly ties were sundered.

He still finds that to tread the upward path requires unyielding effort and constant watchfulness; but realizes, as all will do who make the trial, that the strength of God, pledged to the support of those who lean upon him, can never fail. He labors with most untiring zeal and fervor for those who seem most evil and unreclaimable, remembering the pit from which his own feet have been taken. And his efforts are not without their reward.

Many, like Burning Star, have learned from his teachings enough of the Great Father and his Son to "die glad."

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